

# When Black Feminism Meets Canadian Women's Studies: A Psycho-Social Analysis of Discursive Contradiction and Psychological Conflict in the Classroom

---

Jessica Ringrose, University of London, UK, has published work on race, class and gender inclusive feminist pedagogies, as well as femininity, neo-liberalism and educational achievement, in numerous scholarly publications. She continues to publish work on girls, bullying and the pathologization of feminine aggression.

---

## Abstract

This paper explores how Black feminist curriculum challenges the pedagogy of Women's Studies in Canada through a psychosocial analysis of classroom observations and interview narratives. The difficulties experienced by white women and the traumatic effects for black women in negotiating discursive contradictions that emerge in the wake of inserting Black feminism into Women's Studies are examined.

## Résumé

Cet article explore la manière dont le curriculum féministe noir défie la pédagogie de l'Étude des femmes au Canada par l'entremise d'analyse psychosociale d'observations en salle de classe et de narration d'entrevues. Les difficultés dont les femmes blanches ont rencontrées et les effets traumatiques pour les femmes noires en négociant des contradictions discursives qui émergent à la veille de l'insertion du féminisme noir dans l'Étude des femmes sont étudiés.

---

## Introduction: "Which Me Will Survive?"

In 1973, Audre Lorde addressed a poem to the feminist movement called "Who said it was simple?": "I who am bounded by my mirror as well as my bed see causes in colour as well as sex and sit here wondering which me will survive all these liberations." Over thirty years later, feminist investments in gender sameness, and a struggle to engage adequately with race and difference remain core melancholic and repressive dilemmas of feminist education and Women's Studies programmes worldwide which grew out of the feminist movement (Bannerji 1995; Bhavnani 2001; Cheng 2001).

Tensions over race and difference within feminisms have been explored theoretically in great detail over the past couple of decades (Bhavnani 2001; Weedon 1999). Scholars in Women's Studies in Canada have made significant moves to address issues of difference, through curricular interventions that focus on intersections of gender, race and class, postcoloniality and anti-racist, Black and African Canadian feminism (Dua and Robertson 1999). But there has been far less consideration of the trouble difference presents for Women's Studies in practice in the classroom, when anti-racist perspectives are brought into and added on to an otherwise mostly radical or liberal feminist-based Women's Studies paradigm (Bannerji 1993, 1995; Braithwaite et al. 2004; Carty 1991a; Dua and Lawrence 2000 ). This paper examines the pedagogical effects for students when perspectives such as Black feminism are brought in to challenge the more liberal platforms of feminist

education.

I analyze findings from my PhD thesis, which was an examination of how issues of race and difference were currently being addressed in the curriculum and pedagogy at a particular School of Women's Studies in Canada, one of the largest sites of institutionalized feminism in North America. My PhD study involved researching a course on "diversities of women" within this Women's Studies programme during the academic year of 2000-2001. Black feminism was integral to the course and was introduced through a core text, Patricia Hill Collin's most recent book at that time, *Fighting Words: Black Women & the Search for Justice* (1998).<sup>1</sup>

My goal in the classroom component of the study was to focus on students' experiences of Black feminist curriculum; a strategy that came out of several related concerns. There was a gap in researching student experiences of Women's Studies generally at the time the study was initiated (Bignell 1996). Most of the pedagogical research on specific difficulties of feminist, anti-racist education in Canada was focused on the experiences of teaching this material to resistant or defensive students (Bannerji 1995; Dua and Lawrence 2000; Ng et al. 1995; Razack 1999). Most research on resistant students has focused on white students' responses to anti-racist pedagogies, ironically re-centring the white, feminine subject of Women's Studies (Carillo Rowe 2000). Moreover, most investigations of students' experiences in feminist pedagogical research have come out of research where the researcher was also the pedagogue and such power dynamics no doubt posed certain limits on what students are prepared to discuss.

I analyze observations from this classroom setting, which illustrate how white students of Women's Studies are invested in discourses of feminist solidarity, sisterhood and gender same-ness, which complicate their capacity to understand racism (Weiler 1995). As Dua and Lawrence suggest, such students find it "much easier to become personally invested in the project of changing gender relations than [...] in the project of changing

relations of racialization" (2000).

Yet when many of the students of Women's Studies programmes are not white, as is increasingly the case in multicultural urban centres of Canada, and was certainly the case in the classroom where I studied (where 65% of participants defined as not-white, and 50% as Black), the issues become far more complicated than making the decision to invest in either a project of changing gender/sexist or changing racializing/racist relations. We find a messy, dynamic "affective terrain" (Pitt 1996) where investments in radical feminist notions of consciousness-raising around gender oppression and investments in liberal feminist voluntarist notions of individual change through conscious choice (Bullbeck 2001) jostle for ascendancy, and are placed in discursive conflict with Black feminist curriculum.

When Black feminism enters the Women's Studies classroom we find a shift to privileging difference (Brah 1996) between women instead of sameness, radically disrupting the deep-seated logic of a feminist pedagogical imaginary based on unmarked gender sameness, and complicating an unproblematic unity, solidarity and sharing in the classroom (Luhmann 2001). The truth claims that Black feminist standpoint theories make about unequal power structures and hierarchies organized around racism and classism challenge individualizing liberal feminist desires to change the self and others in the classroom as women. This shifts the very goals of change, and disrupts the idea that relating experiences as a group of women is liberating (Orner 1992). Thus, discourses of radical and liberal feminism are in contradiction with Black feminism. What I will trace is how discursive contradictions manifest very powerfully in the classroom as intersubjective conflicts, which are experienced as painful and traumatic by students, and which need to be analyzed. According to a great deal of feminist/critical pedagogical research, such conflicts have tended to be minimized in feminist education, with the classroom naively oriented toward a goal of safety (Ellsworth 1997; Harris 1998; Luke 1994;

Orner 1992). After years of struggling with my own feminist desires for easy pedagogical transformation as both researcher and teacher, I have realized through the stories told by my research participants that there is no doing away with these difficult dynamics (Berlak 1999). My findings illustrate that the simple inclusion of Black feminism into the curriculum does not offer an easy solution to dilemmas of racism. We need to map the complex effects of pedagogic contradictions at work to gain better understandings about how conflicts play out in the classroom, and the varying effects they have on differently raced and classed women in the pedagogic space.

#### A Psycho-Social Approach

In attempting to track the complex processes involved in pedagogic engagement, I have found psychoanalytic educational theory and research (Pitt 1996) and psycho-social theory and methods derived from critical psychology (Henriques et al. 2002) very useful. Educational scholars considering effects of trauma have theorized conflict in the classroom as enabling psychological changes (Berlak 1999; Felman 1992). These scholars posit that the crisis created through confronting what we do not want to know or what we repress is what can provoke learning.

Similarly, British critical psychologists have developed psycho-social (Walkerdine et al. 2001) approaches that expand on Foucault's theories of regulation through an exploration of the relationship between discourse and desire. Employing poststructuralism and psychoanalysis, this approach suggests that contradictions might create conditions for social change. As Henriques et al. put it,

Consciousness changing is not accomplished by new discourses replacing old ones. It is accomplished as a result of the contradictions in our positions, desires and practices and thus in our subjectivities - which result from the

coexistence of the old and the new. Every relation and every practice to some extent articulates such contradictions and therefore is a site of potential change as much as it is a site of reproduction. (Henriques et al. 2002, 430-31)

Thus in the psycho-social view practices and relationships are both reproductive but also subject to change. Change and lack of change is a complex process staged through contradictory psychological and social positionings via competing discourses in any field of engagement, where students embroiled in conflict become defensive and guarded against one another (Hollway and Jefferson 2000). But defensiveness can also transform into shifts and changes within pedagogic subjects (Mama 1995). I use this multi-dimensional approach to trace complex psychological shifts and fixity at the level of narratives in both pedagogic engagements and interviews. But I ask what are the specific costs for which subjects? Given that the central subject of liberation in the Women's Studies classroom has traditionally been white women, an engagement with Black feminism may have unanticipated costs for de-centred others (Black women). This has not yet been adequately considered in pedagogical research (Bhopal 2002).

#### The Classroom

My PhD study involved triangulating methods of classroom observation and interviewing (Coffey and Atkinson 1996). As a participant observer, I took notes on, audio-taped and transcribed each class. I also conducted interviews with the students, the first at the mid-way point of the course, and then some months after completion of the course. Of the total of twenty-three students in the course, all were interviewed once, and thirteen a second time. This allowed me to map some of the subjective changes that occurred for the students during the course and afterwards.<sup>2</sup>

## Feminism, Race and Space

The first evening of sustained discussion in the course centred on issues of race and group identity. It was prompted by Maria, a White, Canadian-Portuguese, self-identified working class woman who used a story about a Black woman friend, who tried to attend the Asian club on campus but was turned away, to question the presence of "Black-only" and "Asian-only" clubs:

Maria: It's even within a university, where you think we're educated, we're learning, we're taking these courses. We're still faced with the fact that certain sectors and certain people just won't allow you to break those barriers, regardless of whether or not you are a woman too. It's not so pre-dated after all, it exists today...

Breanna: But as a black student, I would not expect to go to an Asian student group because Asians need their own space. A person of colour in a white-dominated society goes through life interacting with stores, schools, job situations - all white-dominated spaces, right? So you need to have space with people who are like you where you can deconstruct all the bullshit that you have to put up with in your day-to-day life.

Reta: I agree...To me there's a difference between dominant groups excluding people, because that's a continuation of exclusion and what are we going to talk about, "Oh, we have so much power, we love oppressing people?" White people need to show much more caution and respect when they enter into spaces...

Ramina: So now I have a dilemma. Say I have all the knowledge I can get from books. I want to learn about your culture, where do I go? I want to learn about other cultures, and I am learning from everyone in

this class, but I would like to think that in academia we could be a part of something whole in unity.

Breanna: I'm sorry I'm getting emotionally charged about the discussion. I'm not trying to attack you personally [Maria: no it's okay] but I very, very strongly disagree with what you're saying. [Maria: mmhmm] We are constantly being asked to defend the right to have space. Last week, I moderated a panel for a campus-based organization for social justice. All the people on the panel were identified as queer and of colour, and because of the way it would get constructed you couldn't say this can only be a panel for people of colour to attend. Three white people attended a panel of fifteen, and none of the people of colour felt comfortable voicing their personal experiences...It totally stilted discussion to have white people there. So that's not a valid argument to intrude on the space and say you want to learn.

I read this early classroom exchange as the first concrete disruption of feminism as a theory of attaining emancipation through a politic based on sameness and "unity" as women. Maria's arguments showed evidence of a deep investment in feminist discourses, where gender commonality (based on being a woman) was understood as a remedy for breaking down identity-based groups. Responding to this, Breanna, a self-identified middle class Black-Canadian woman and Reta, a recent Kenyan immigrant to Canada, both explain a theory of privilege to Maria. A Black feminist analysis shifts the emphasis from articulating a generalized condition of being "woman" to the specific experiences of unequal power in lived experiences of politics and education (Collins 1998). This creates a "dilemma" for "learning" in "unity" in Women's Studies, as articulated by Ramina, an Indian immigrant from Malaysia.

We can see the way the dynamics are structured defensively through oppositional discursive investments. Maria uses a discourse of an un-raced feminism that represses and negates difference. Breanna articulates an anti-racist discourse that fetishizes and essentializes differences in colour, positioning white people as intruding onto a panel on social justice and as unable to productively engage with issues like racism. These contradictory, oppositional stagings of blackness and whiteness and questions of what it meant to be anti-racist continued as the course proceeded.

#### "Living Racism": Feminist Desires for Shared Experience

Conflicts over how difference threatened sameness and understanding in Women's Studies took on more dramatic form as the course progressed. At a mid-way point in the course, a Black student, Katherine, expressed concern that the "White women" in the class were not discussing their own positions, to which Susan and Maria responded:

Susan: For me, I grew up in a family where my father was very racist, where my father would say to me, "That black kid, that's a mistake," or you know, stuff like that, based on appearance. I didn't like it but I accepted it...I was brought up with beliefs that make me think a certain way...I think racism is superiority of one over the other, and how do you say no, we're all the same?"

Maria: You know I was brought up in a house where everything was equal. There was no differential treatment, everyone's the same, and it wasn't until my fiancé, that culture ever became an issue. He's Iranian. They slapped that in his face. It's so hard for me. [halting] It's hard for me [begins crying] to forgive my mother and father. For a good year they were against it. [sobbing] Sorry, it's just hard for me to talk about it. It's hard to go on. [more

sobbing] They had a problem with him. They expected him to convert to Catholicism, because if he didn't they weren't going to show up at the wedding. So for me to hear you guys say, "Look at me, I'm a white person so I don't experience it." [sniffs] But I think for me, I lived it. So when you said, "how do you know that I'm not racist?" " You don't until something like this...It just made me think - am I really racist? For me as a white person, I didn't realize my parents were racist until this situation came up and I was like, you really are racist.

Again, the discussion, begun by Susan, first articulates a discourse of universal desires for commonality and the "colour-blind notions" that ground liberal feminism (Frankenburg 1993). Maria criticizes her parent's racism, but her personal - and highly emotional - claim to have "lived" racism reveals a desire for shared experience and understanding that supersedes recognizing difference. The site of feminist crisis here is the contradiction between desires for understanding forged through sameness, through common experience as "women," which relies on an unproblematized, un-racially-marked femininity (Carillo Rowe 2000) and a struggle to recognize the differences in how the Black women might experience racism. This is a tension Breanna points to again:

In terms of taking responsibility, black women have racist encounters in every stream of life...White women will use excuses to avoid taking responsibility for racism - "Well, I feel too guilty," or "Well, I can't presume to speak for the women of colour." Well we're not even asking you to speak for women of colour we're just asking you to look at racism...

#### Being "Wrong": Colliding Discourses, Shifting

## Investments

The final classroom sequence I want to look at happened near to the end of the course and foregrounds how competing investments in discourses of sameness vs. difference can collide in ways where shifting attachments are visible. This time a conflict erupted during a discussion about adopting children:

Maria: I know I'm going to get a lot of flack for this, but I don't think poor people should have children. But what are we defining as poor? Are we saying homeless? Because I consider myself poor, I'm by no means a rich middle-class person. I come from a family who struggles on a weekly basis to pay their bills, and that's just my reality. I'm trying to be politically correct here and I can't, so I'm just going to come right out and say it what's in my head. I think if you're homeless or in shelters and you're having difficulty supporting yourself, I don't think it's fair that you should adopt a child. And I'll further this argument - I don't think you should have children, period. I'm not saying that you should be sterilized, that people should impose that on you. But from my point of view...there should be a conscious choice. I know if I was homeless there is no way I would let myself get pregnant.

Reta: But if it happens, it happens!

Debbie: For me personally, to be impoverished like that and have children, you're continuing that wheel. I as an individual, as a woman, would not want to have children grow up in that kind of society, and for that reason I wouldn't as a poor person have children.

Both Maria and Debbie (a white Italian immigrant) positioned pregnancy as a personal, conscious

choice through a liberal feminist investment in sameness that equalizes and relativizes experiences of having children (Bryson 1992) ignoring Black feminist models of structural and hierarchical power. Reta, who was visibly pregnant, responded in a low, strained voice:

I'm thinking of very poor people. They are African. They are Aboriginal people. Maybe 80% of the world lives in dire poverty. I think they have the right to have kids. I'm saying it sounds like eugenics, where some people are allowed to have kids if they are not disabled, if they are white, and if they have money. I think maybe we should ask: Why do we have a class society? Why should we not have a class society to facilitate everybody having children if they want to? I'm poor and I'm having another kid because I want to and nobody has a right to stop me from doing that. I'm in school and I have no money, but I'm 36 and I'm not going to wait until I'm 45.

Also outraged, Katherine told Maria:

Say I lost my house? I'm now living on the street, I have no money to feed myself, and I don't know where I'm going to sleep tonight, but I love my kids and they love me and who says that you're going to be better because you have food in your house? You might be a murderer for all I know!

Each woman works to negotiate the collision of intersectional discourses of structural power and liberal discourses of individualism and personal choice, a struggle that opens a window of insight for Maria:

Look I agree with you, I don't want this to be law. You guys have all made very valid points and you've made me think, which is why I come to university. But we're talking about the

five basics. I mean food, water, somewhere to sleep at night, whether or not your kids are going to be raped. Those are necessities. Those are what makes you a human being. My dad was always, like, you take what you can handle and if you can't handle it don't take it. I'll never forget this. One day we were coming out of high school and it was winter, a blizzard outside and I saw this man on the street, he had this sign, and it said: "We are a homeless family," with a wife and two little girls, and I thought to myself, Why? I couldn't handle it and I thought why did you do this? I know it's wrong because I was blaming them for something like you said - they had no control, but for me personally...I don't enjoy seeing it. I could never say this should be gone but I don't agree with it. I don't like it.

The desire to repress hierarchical positions of power grounds Maria's story. As she recounted her horror at a scene of homelessness, we see her deep investment in a working class narrative of struggle, independence, autonomy and choice, as articulated by her father, "you take what you can handle." But what we also see in Maria's admission that she was "blaming them (the homeless)," is her shifting capacity to understand the implications of her own investments in discourses of choice and the surprise of social determination that lies outside desires for "control."

A psychosocial perspective indicates that it is just such moments of conflict enlivened through contradictions that enable shifting investments: "personal and social change occur in consonance, as psychic and discursive events resonate with one another. When such resonances occur they are experienced as sudden flashes of insight, or as primordial events which then reshape the subjectivity and experience of the individual" (Mama 1995, 164). "Flashes of insight" like Maria's are part of the explosive pedagogical process of re-visioning the self

and others, where feminist desires for sameness are disrupted through a Black feminist framing, enacting discursive shift in Women's Studies.

#### Confronting Difference and the Limits of Understanding Through Sameness

As noted earlier, my study also involved interviewing most participants during and after the course in order to gauge continuing possibilities for shifting discursive investment. I was able to document many narrative moments among white women of shifts in understandings of racism and intersections with sexism but space allows me only to explore the dramatic changes for Maria. Her first interview was largely a lament over the conflicts in the course, but by the second interview, she spoke differently about her classroom experiences:

Yes, I'm an immigrant and I've experienced a little bit of limited racism, but nothing to the extent of being black or being Asian or being Jewish. I will probably, not probably, I will never fully understand what it's like, but I guess what I was hoping in taking this course was to get that other point of view and I found that it's almost like ignorance is bliss. At some points in that course I felt like I really didn't want to hear that and I would shut it out, like I don't agree with you, you're just wrong, that doesn't exist. But that is a bias. That is you using your privilege and rejecting that because you don't want to recognize that you may be racist or you may be biased. You want to think that, no, I really do care about you guys and I really feel your pain. So when some of the girls were saying, "No, you can't possibly understand," I'd be like "don't tell me I can't understand." But I really can't.

In Maria's realization that she "will never really

understand" racism, we see a self-analysis that shifts from wanting to shut out (repress) the "other point of view" to a new capacity to acknowledge difference and position herself as a bearer of privilege. In the context of feminist education, this recognition of the "irreducibility of difference" (Butler 2004) represents the crucial site of discursive/psychical shift for many white women, where gender-only theories of patriarchy and gender-sameness discussions of experiencing sexism are disrupted and complicated through the type of analysis made possible by Black feminist theory. What I am interested to consider next, however, is how such culture shift in Women's Studies comes at a very difficult cost for Black women.

#### Problems of Survival in Women's Studies

Navigating these moments of intersubjective conflict was experienced as extremely traumatic for many of the Black women in the class, as evident in Reta's interviews:

It's very hard to talk about issues of oppression. Even though there's a course like this means the department acknowledges that there's a need for it, but they don't really think about the fallout...There's a lot of resistance from the students...That woman [Maria] that was bawling in class...Cry. When you're finished let me know. Because I don't fucking care! Because we cry every flipping day and you don't care. You go about your business...I didn't feel sorry for her at all...because I don't think they're crying because they feel so sorry for us. They're crying because they feel uncomfortable...I mean, I'm human, I feel sorry for white people when I see them suffering, but I don't like it when they cry because the women of colour has to take responsibility for their emotions once again, to start feeling sorry for them.

Historically we're always servicing white people. The white women are like, "look, these black women are attacking us, black women are aggressive," we have a fucking chip on our shoulder, and "I don't feel safe," [in high hushed whisper] they say, and "if only you would say it differently."

In Reta's comments we see the acute pain of witnessing Maria's crying. She describes the impossible dynamics enlivened in Women's Studies, where desires for safety based on sameness and sharing mean Black women's narratives are read as disruptive, as angry and aggressive, leading to a sense of despair and failure over Women's Studies:

Sometimes I say to myself, why am I talking here so much in these courses, I'm not here to have a fucking revolution. It ain't going to happen in a Women's Studies class. I'm not here to raise people's consciousness. I feel like, why don't I just be quiet, save my energy, sit in the stupid class, get along...smile a lot. [laughs] But then sometimes you feel like we have to talk about these things, oh my goodness, you know?

Katherine also found such engagements "unbearable":

I remember there was that one particular day when that girl [Maria] was talking about how poor people shouldn't have the right to have children and...[high-pitched voice] "I don't care; people might kill me for saying this." And I was thinking that far along in a course that we're talking about diversities of different people, like, why would you say that one person has a right to have a child and another person doesn't? I'm thinking haven't you learned anything? What are you thinking?..It's a

matter of fact that there was genocide, that there was rape, that there was slavery, that there is white racism and that we don't all hold the same power. You should have known that. [yelling] Like, it's just a fact! It's not a debate, it's not!...You can move on when you start to take responsibility and say: "I have a vested interest in flipping the scales. I'm going to listen, to talk about which ways white skin has privileged my life...you can't move on if one person is sitting there when there is this constant chipping away at...[pausing] Let them talk. Let them...[pausing and beginning to cry] It gets to you. It really does get to you.

Like Reta, Katherine's statements illustrate the enormous pain of confronting the repressions of racism in the classroom for Black women. Her comments illustrate how focusing on "diversities" is no safeguard against experiencing pain or disappointment in the Women's Studies classroom. The toll of such encounters was also described in depth by Breanna:

People would say things that were concretely racist and it generally fell to women of colour in the class to critique that using their own personal experiences, which can be challenging. That's emotionally taxing work, using personal experience to contextualize these issues for other women in the class, and we're not getting compensation...I think in the context of this class the experiences of women of colour were exploited as a teaching tool for the white women...The course might affect the way that I approach these issues with white women in the future...to make people draw links between their own oppression....But at the end of the day I don't think that that's the most useful thing that I could have reaped from the course. In terms of, for me, what I know

internally? I don't think that I reaped what I had hoped to reap from the course.

Breanna suggested that the course armed her with better knowledge of how to educate white women about racism, when what she needed from Women's Studies was something that would change "what I know internally." Viewed together Reta, Breanna, and Katherine's narratives are pleas for Women's Studies to anticipate their needs as pedagogic subjects and lessen the emotional burdens placed upon them. Their appeals raise ethical issues about how to begin to address the complex and multiple contradictions and burdens of integrating Black feminist and intersectional frameworks within Women's Studies.

#### Some Concluding Thoughts

When Black feminism is brought into Women's Studies we find massive sites of contradiction. I have used a psychosocial framing to show how lack of ease - the conflict borne out of contradictions in discourses and positions - can promote changes. Indeed, I have illustrated how Black feminist intersectional perspectives are enacting powerful cultural shifts in Women's Studies, through my examination of subjective moments of transformation, especially in Maria's classroom dialogue and interview narratives.

But rather than blindly celebrate such changes in ways that return us to the very feminist pedagogical desires for easy liberation (of an un-raced feminist subject) I have been critiquing, we must attend to the difficult processes of change, the ambiguous and painful psychical costs and consequences for some subjects. In this sense the paper is one of taking stock of the effects of negotiating Black feminism in the context of a Women's Studies classroom, signaling what still needs to change (Bhopal 2002). One of the most important findings in my study is that despite the inclusion of some Black feminist curriculum, Women's Studies may continue to centre the White feminine subject as subject/object of

change while Black women become positioned as responsible for valorizing the truth claims of Black feminism, placing them at the vortex of contradictory discourses and desires with traumatic effects.

As contributors to feminist educational projects we need to become much more reflexive about these contradictions as having multiple effects in the classroom, and come to "expect" and be prepared for student conflict (Harris 1998). But we also need to see that conflict has different impacts for differently raced subjects. Rather than view the inclusion of Black feminist approaches as a cure-all to prior feminist exclusions in the classroom we need to shed light on the potentially traumatic toll for non-white students in Women's Studies (Bhopal 2002; Dua and Lawrence 2000).

The pedagogic and research goal is to refuse to repress struggle and conflict by confronting stories that tell of failure and despair, like Reta's, Katherine's and Breanna's, and to learn from them in order to find new ways to centre non-white learners and take their needs seriously. A psychosocial analysis is part of this process of mapping the psychical and social effects and in this sense contributes to the development of more ethicality, reflexivity and praxis in feminist teaching and learning (Bignell 1996). In doing this, Women's Studies can continue to address Lorde's (1973) poignant challenge, becoming a site where more and differently located students might not only survive, but also thrive.

#### Endnotes

1. The use of work by a Black feminist scholar such as Patricia Hill Collins, from the United States, rather than a Black feminist writer such as Linda Carty, from Canada, (1991a/b), may indicate the continued marginalization of Black and African Canadian feminist scholarship in Women's Studies in Canada (Thornhill 1983). It will be interesting to note whether there will be curricular change prompted by new collections on African-Canadian feminisms such as Wane, Deliovsky and Lawson (2006).
2. For a fuller discussion of my methodology please see

Ringrose (2007).

#### References

- Bannerji, H. *Returning the Gaze: Essays on Racism, Feminism and Politics*. Toronto: Sister Vision Press, 1993.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *Thinking Through: Essays on Feminism, Marxism, and Anti-Racism*. Toronto: Women's Press, 1995.
- Berlak, A. "Teaching and Testimony: Witnessing and Bearing Witness to Racisms in Culturally Diverse Classrooms," *Curriculum Inquiry* 29 (1999): 99-127.
- Bhavnani, K. "Talking Racism and the Editing of Women's Studies," *Introducing Women's Studies: Feminist Theory and Practice*, D. Richardson and V. Robinson, eds. London: Macmillan, 1993.
- \_\_\_\_\_, ed. *Feminism and "Race"*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001.
- Bhopal, K. "Teaching Women's Studies: The Effects of Race and Gender," *Journal of Further and Higher Education* 26.2 (2002).
- Bignell, K. C. "Building Feminist Praxis out of Feminist Pedagogy: the Importance of Student Perspectives," *Women's Studies International Forum* 19 (1996): 315-25.
- Brah, A. *Cartographies of Diaspora*. London: Routledge, 1996.
- Braithwaite, Ann, Susan Heald, Susanne Luhmann, and Sharon Rosenberg. *Troubling Women's Studies: Pasts, Presents and Possibilities*. Canada: Sumach Press, 2004.
- Bryson, V. *Feminist Political Theory: An Introduction*. New York: Paragon House, 1992.
- Bullbeck, C. "Articulating Structure and Agency: How Women's Studies Students Express Their Relationships with Feminism," *Women's Studies International Forum* 24.2

(2001): 141-56.

Butler, J. *Undoing Gender*. New York: Routledge, 2004.

Carillo Rowe, A. "Locating Feminism's Subject: the Paradox of White Femininity and the Struggle to Forge Feminist Alliances," *Communication Theory* 10 (2000): 64-80.

Carty, L. "Women's Studies in Canada: A Discourse and Praxis of Exclusion," *Resources For Feminist Research* 20 (1991a): 12-18.

\_\_\_\_\_. "Black Women in Academia: A Statement from the Periphery," *Unsettling Relations: The University as a Site of Feminist Struggles*, Himani Bannerji, Linda Carty, Kari Dehli, Susan Heald and Kate McKenna. Toronto: Women's Press, 1991b.

Cheng, A. A. *The Melancholy of Race*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2001.

Coffey, Amanda and Paul Atkinson. *Making Sense of Qualitative Data: Complementary Research Strategies*. Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications, 1996.

Collins, P. H. *Fighting Words: Black Women and the Search for Justice*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1998.

Dua, E. and B. Lawrence. "Challenging White Hegemony in University Classrooms: Whose Canada Is It?" *Atlantis* 24 (2000): 105-21.

Dua, E. and A. Robertson. *Scratching the Surface: Canadian, Anti-Racist, Feminist Thought*. Toronto: Women's Press, 1999.

Ellsworth, E. *Teaching Positions: Difference, Pedagogy, and the Power of Address*. New York: Teachers College Press, 1997.

Felman, S. "Education and Crisis: Or On the Vicissitudes of Teaching," *Testimony: Crises of Witnessing in Literature, Psychoanalysis, and History*, S. Felman and D. Laub. New York: Routledge, 1992, pp. 1-56.

Frankenburg, R. *White Women, Race Matters: the Social Construction of Whiteness*. Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1993.

Harris, J. "Rock the Boat, Don't Tip the Boat Over: a Classroom Activist's Perspective on Women's Studies, Conflict and Community Building - Women's Studies in Focus," J. Couchman et al. *Atlantis*, 22.2 (1998): 140-44.

Henriques, J., W. Hollway, C. Urwin, C. Venn and V. Walkerdine. "Selections from Changing the Subject: Psychology, Social Regulation and Subjectivity," *Feminism and Psychology*, 12.4 (2002): 427-31.

Hollway, Wendy and Tony Jefferson. *Doing Qualitative Research Differently: Free Association, Narrative and the Interview Method*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 2000.

Lorde, A. *From a Land Where Other People Live*. Detroit: Broadside Press, 1973.

Luhmann, S. "Im/proper Subjects? An Inquiry into Social Differences as Knowledge and Pedagogy in Women's Studies." Unpublished PhD Thesis, York University, 2001.

Luke, C. "Women in the Academy: The Politics of Speech and Silence," *British Journal of Sociology of Education*, 15.2 (1994): 211-29.

Mama, A. *Beyond the Masks: Race, Gender and Subjectivity*. London: Routledge, 1995.

Ng, Roxanne, Joyce Scane and Pat Staton, eds. *Anti-Racism, Feminism, and Critical Approaches to*

Education. London: Bergin and Garvey, 1995.

Young-Bruehl, E. *The Anatomy of Prejudices*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1996.

Orner, M. "Interrupting the Calls for Student Voice in 'Liberatory' Education: a Feminist Poststructural Perspective," *Feminism and Critical Pedagogy*, C. Luke and J. Gore, eds. New York: Routledge, 1992, pp. 74-89.

Pitt, A. "Fantasizing Women in the Women's Studies Classroom: Toward a Symptomatic Reading of Negation," *Journal of Curriculum Theorizing*, 12.4 (1996): 32-40.

Razack, S. *Looking White People in the Eye: Gender, Race and Culture in Courtrooms and Classrooms*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1999.

Ringrose, J. "Troubling Agency and Choice: a Psycho-social Analysis of Students' Negotiations of Black Feminist Intersectionality Discourses in Women's Studies," *Women's Studies International Forum*, 30.3 (2007).

Thornhill, E. "Black Women's Studies in Teaching Related to Women: Help or Hindrance to Universal Sisterhood?" *Fireweed* 16 (1983): 77-83.

Walkerdine, Valerie, Helen Lucey and June Melody. *Growing up Girl: Psychosocial Explorations of Gender and Class*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Press, 2001.

Wane, Njoki Nathani, Katerina Deliovsky and Erica Lawson. *Back to the Drawing Board: African-Canadian Feminisms*. Toronto: Sumach Press, 2006.

Weedon, Chris. *Feminism, Theory and the Politics of Difference*. Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1999.

Weiler, K. "Freire and a Feminist Pedagogy of Difference," *Debates and Issues in Feminist Research and Pedagogy*, J. Holland, M. Blair and S. Sheldon, eds. Philadelphia: Open University, 1995, pp. 23-44.