

think of this lesson as giving feminist theory a heartbeat. By keeping in mind the women that I have been working with all year, I have been able to articulate a politic that never loses sight of the material realities of women's lives in my academic work and that challenges the impulse, so common in academia, to de-radicalize and de-politicize the work that we do in it. Field-based learning insists on adding a radicalism to my work as an academic by challenging conventional pedagogical notions of how and where knowledge is formed.

My hope is that my field-based learning with its explicitly political agenda has ultimately proved to be blasphemous. I am using this term in the same way that Haraway defines it, that is to say, that field-based learning has led to a healthy skepticism and irreverence for disciplinary boundaries and conventional pedagogy, a process that requires me to stop and evaluate the prevalent assumptions that exist in academia about what counts as education. This kind of blasphemy allows me to value this non-conventional approach to learning; field-based learning, particularly in a discipline such as Women's Studies, adds a new level of politicism to my studies that I could not have attained through any other means. This politicism has challenged me to make my work as an academic be relevant to the greater community outside of academe and it has reminded me of why I chose to do a women's studies degree in the first place: to contribute to a discipline that cared about the women to which, and about which, it purported to speak.

REFERENCES

Alcoff, Linda. "Cultural Feminism versus Post-Structuralism: The Identity Crisis in Feminist Theory" in *Feminism and Philosophy: Essential Readings in Theory, Reinterpretation, and Application*. Nancy Tuana and Rosemarie Tong, eds. (Boulder: Westview Press, 1995.) 434-456.

Haraway, Donna. *Simians, Cyborgs and Women: The Reinvention of Nature*. (New York: Routledge, 1993)

Mohanty, Chandra Talpade. "Cartographies of Struggle: Third World Women and the Politics of Feminism" in *Third World Women and the Politics of Feminism*. Chandra Talpade Mohanty, Ann Russo, Lourdes Torres, eds. (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1991) 0 1-47.

Sandra Gabriele

THE PAIN AND PLEASURE OF PRAXIS OUT IN THE FIELD

Reflecting on the metaphor of "playing" out in the field took me back to my childhood as a "baby-boomer" in a rural community where baseball was one of the most popular games and everyone was urged to play so there would be enough children to make up teams. My knee-jerk reaction to flying objects is to duck and cringe, not reach and catch, and as a child I often simply refused to play. I also suffer from a degree of shyness which causes me to react similarly to my fear of flying objects. When faced with new and challenging situations, I have always had to make a huge effort to stand up and "catch the ball." I have had to work hard to overcome that shyness in order to work with groups, and to function in a public forum when I felt it was politically or morally necessary. As a result, most of my rebellion has been on a very personal basis, my community activism has been largely with small cooperatively organized groups such as community-based daycare and co-op housing, and my feminist activism has been on a one-to-one individual basis. Playing ball and political commitment have thus been parallel forms of pain and pleasure in my life.

In the years just prior to returning to university as a mature student, I took a firm grip on the bat and acted on my political beliefs by becoming an active member of the Riding Association of the New Democratic Party. Yet when I returned to university as a mature student, single parent, and welfare recipient dependent on scholarship funds, I had to move out of the co-op and cease my volunteer work in order to achieve academic excellence and move through the program as quickly as possible. During those years, however, the feminist professors and Women's Studies courses provided a good deal of the consciousness raising I had missed out on earlier in my life, and I looked forward to the time when I could take up my community work again, and, in particular, I hoped to return to the NDP to work with its Women's Rights Committee. The field-based learning component of the Master's

program provided me the opportunity to do this work earlier than I had anticipated and helped alleviate some of the guilt I had been experiencing because of my necessary temporary withdrawal from community work.

Nevertheless, my reaction to the inclusion of field-based learning as a required component of the Masters Program was ambivalent. Initially I felt that the requirement implied that students may not become community activists unless they are made to do so, that academia is not part of the larger community, and that feminist activism could only take place in the "grassroots" Women's Movement. I felt that this requirement denied the most basic theory or principle of the Women's Movement, that "the personal is political," by dictating the terms and timing of the student's political activity. I also felt that it detracted from the important work that feminists are doing within the academic community, work that I admired and wished to emulate by becoming a Women's Studies professor myself. My immediate reaction was to "duck and cringe," and part of me continues to wish that I were in a position to "refuse to play." However, I now realize that my personal strategies *had* served to insulate me within the walls of the academy and reinforced for me the boundaries between academia and the wider community.

I was also initially concerned on a moral level that I would be taking advantage of a group of dedicated, principled women to meet a course requirement. As a student in this situation, I felt both like an insider and an outsider. Although I believe in the WRC's goals, my benefit from membership in this group's activities is concrete, and I will get a mark and fulfill a course requirement. As a mature student and long-time member of the community where I was attending school, I did not have the difficulty the other women in the course experienced, entering an entirely unknown field. Rather, I received a warm welcome both as a student and a party member, and was given tasks and a level of responsibility which alleviated my initial guilt at "taking advantage" of a group.

I had initially been apprehensive, as well, that my position of educational privilege would constitute a barrier between me and the

Committee's members. This worry arose, I believe, from the concern expressed over and over in the feminist writings I had been studying that academic feminism had separated itself from its grassroots knowledge base. I found, rather, that the women in the group were extremely varied as to educational background. They also had a level of political savvy and feminist knowledge which sometimes made me feel like a complete neophyte. I soon got over my worry about being academically privileged and concentrated on learning all I could.

In preparing to write this paper, I analyzed my field-based learning experience ethically, intellectually, and contextually. While I had gained some invaluable information and had performed some valuable service, I still felt incredibly ambivalent, frustrated, and even angry about having had to go through this experience. I racked my brain and memory for the reason for this reaction. It was only recently that I finally realized what the problem was -- I had failed to analyze it emotionally.

I had a hard time coming to grips with this lack of insight, since I had been so impressed that the NDP women were trying to address emotional as well as practical and structural barriers to women's full participation in politics. This lack was particularly ironic considering that the experience which had most impressed me had been the reaction of the women to the challenge of racism. I had felt so proud that these women, with whom I felt a sense of sisterhood, had not reacted with fear, guilt or defensiveness to this charge, or to the challenge to do something about it, but had reacted with acceptance, affirmation and a commitment to act. I suddenly realized that I had done exactly what I admired them for not doing: I had reacted to a challenge with my old, fearful, duck-and-cringe reflex. On top of that, I had reacted with anger when my hard-won decision to withdraw temporarily from political activism had to be reversed to meet an academic requirement, and felt guilt that what I saw as a temporary hiatus was being perceived as a lack of political commitment. None of my reactions was logical; the rationale behind the requirement is politically sound and the experience provided valuable and

needed knowledge. At the same time, the field-based learning experience reinforced for me the stress and frustration which seems to be inherent in any form of volunteer work. And it showed me how far I have to go as a committed feminist, not just to challenge traditional sources and targets of knowledge, but to acknowledge what counts as knowledge. While I knew intellectually that women's feelings count, it was the determined analysis of the field-based learning which enabled me to see that my *own* feelings were a source of knowledge. This has been a painful process, made up of anger, guilt, defensiveness, and anxiety. And yet, like the times when I was a child and could be persuaded to join in the game, there were also pleasures and rewards from participating in this process which I may never have realized had I not gone out in the field.

Joan M. Smith

VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN: STUDENTS WORKING IN COMMUNITY AGENCIES

I have been extremely fortunate to have had the opportunity to engage in the development, design and launching of a practicum course, WMNS 440 "Feminist Perspectives on Violence Against Women" in the Institute of Women's Studies at Queen's University. From this challenging and rewarding experience, I can offer a number of suggestions that might facilitate designing similar courses at other institutions.

The opportunity to fund the course design and launching came in the spring of 1994 when the Ontario Ministry of Education and Training (under the former NDP government) put out a call for proposals for community-based educational initiatives that had as their goal the ending of violence against women and girls. The Ministry's intention was to fund pilot projects that could serve as blueprints for other communities and institutions. Our group was one of five that was successful in gaining funding across the province. We were given about \$65,000.00 per year over three years, with a possible two year extension.

We called ourselves the Violence Intervention and Education Workgroup (VIEW) -- a collaboration of projects that included the following participants: the Institute of Women's Studies at Queen's; Magda Lewis and Glenn Eastbrook of the Queen's Faculty of Education; Julia Blackstock of the Office of University Residences; Nina Marshall of the St. Lawrence Community College Women's Studies Program; Terrie Fleming of Kingston Interval House shelter for battered women and their children; and Barbara MacDonald, Principal of Fairfield, a local public school. Pam Young, first as Dean of Women and later as Head of the Department of Religion at Queen's, has administered the project, and Tina Tom, a community activist, is our paid coordinator. This broad base in the university and community, we were told, was a major factor in our receiving funding. The Queen's Women's Studies portion of the grant has been approximately \$21,000.00 over three years, which has been used to buy faculty time to develop the course, see it through the Queen's curriculum review process, teach it for the first time in 1995-6 and, with a one-time supplemental grant from the Queen's Vice-Principal of Finance and Operations, to teach it a second time in 1997-8.

This background to the course has been important in its gaining credibility, for our model was a quite unusual one for an academic unit at Queen's. Having grant money for curriculum development is not typical, and the support of the Ministry of Education and Training, I am certain, defused a lot of potential objections. At the level of the Faculty-wide curriculum committee, we were asked only whether Queen's insurance would cover the students when they were on their placements (it would), whether male students could take the course (they can), and whether a variety of viewpoints would be presented (of course, but not uncritically).

In the Institute of Women's Studies at Queen's, we decided that the VIEW project gave us an opportunity not only to design a practicum course but also to focus it on a vital feminist concern -- violence against women. For me personally, it was a chance to counteract trends in Women's Studies that have caused me some