

WOMEN'S STUDIES IN FOCUS

Feminist Challenges to Knowledge

Margrit Eichler taught courses on women at the University of Waterloo in 1970/71. She moved to the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education (OISE) at the University of Toronto (UT) in 1975, and was director of the Institute for Women's Studies and Gender Studies (IWSGS; now Women's and Gender Studies Institute - WGS) at the University of Toronto from 1999-2003. She is since back teaching full-time at OISE/UT.

Meg Luxton was part of the collective that taught Women's Studies courses at the University of Toronto in the early 1970s. She is currently the Director of the Graduate Programme in Women's Studies at York University, Toronto.

Abstract

This contribution explores some of the issues that led to the development of Women's Studies in Canada in the 1970s. It offers a report of a workshop on this topic and presents two of the eighteen minipapers that participants wrote for the workshop.

Résumé

Cette contribution explore certaines des questions qui ont mené à l'élaboration des Études des femmes au Canada en dans les années 1970. Cet article offre un rapport d'un atelier sur ce sujet et présente deux des dix-huit mini-exposés que les participantes ont écrits pour l'atelier.

The feminism that emerged in the late 1960s involved a radical break with the prevailing scholarship of the time. Since then, on-going feminist challenges, as well as important challenges to feminist scholarship, have significantly altered the academic terrain from the institutional structures and practices of universities to the core concepts, theories and methods of the human sciences. As directors of Women's Studies programmes, we have been struck by how little material there is on this topic in an easily accessible format. Much of what is available is based on experiences in the United States (US) or Britain and ignores Canadian experiences. As teachers we have been worried about how readily our students take for granted that what is reported for the US or Britain is true for Canada as well. Language barriers often mean that experiences from Quebec are ignored in the rest of Canada. We are also aware that much of the knowledge about these transformations is unrecorded and increasingly unknown. For students today it may be nearly impossible to imagine the universities of the 1960s, with very few women faculty, a curriculum that basically ignored women and gender issues, and an institutional climate that was deeply sexist, sometimes misogynist. We are concerned that as some of the earliest practitioners retire and die, that history may be lost. And we wondered what aspects of this history are most interesting and most important to current debates in and about Women's Studies. Inspired by these concerns, we agreed to begin researching the origins and development of feminist scholarship generally, and Women's Studies specifically, in Canada and Quebec from the mid 1960s to the present. As a first step, we organised a small workshop on Feminist Challenges to Knowledge, held at the University of Toronto (UT) in November 2003. Here we present a summary of the seventeen minipapers and one published paper that participants presented at that workshop and two of the actual minipapers. More selections will be considered for future issues. We present this material in the hope that it will stimulate discussion, identify some of the key issues and debates, and excite readers about possible future research in the area.

The Workshop

We invited about thirty faculty members who had been involved in the development of feminist scholarship and Women's Studies and who, because we didn't have any money, could get to University of Toronto under their own steam. In the end, sixteen people attended:¹ Sylvia Bashevkin (Political Science, UT), Paula Caplan (Brown University and Harvard University), Lorraine Code (Philosophy and Women's Studies, York University), Huguette Dagenais (Anthropology, Laval University), Natalie Zemon Davis (Princeton University; emerita, History, UT), Margrit Eichler (IWSGS at UT and OISE/UT), Maureen FitzGerald (Transitional Year Programme and Sexual Diversity Studies, UT), Jane Gaskell (Dean, OISE/UT), Barbara Godard (Social and Political Thought, French, English and Women's Studies, York University), Meg Luxton (Women's Studies and Social Science, York University), Martha MacDonald (Economics, Saint Mary's University), Linzi Manicom (IWSGS, UT), Shahrzad Mojab (Adult Education, OISE/UT and now Director, WGSJ UT), Kathryn Morgan (IWSGS and Philosophy, UT), Roxana Ng (Adult Education, OISE/UT) and Toni Williams (Osgoode Hall Law School, York). We also had papers from Ursula Franklin (Massey College, UT) and Karen Messing (Biology, Université Québec de Montréal (UQAM)) who could not attend.

We asked participants to produce short minipapers organized around the overriding question: What have been the major challenges from, and to, feminist scholarship in Canada, and how did participants experience them? More specifically, we asked:

- ▶ What brought you into feminist studies, personally and intellectually?
- ▶ Who were your allies?
- ▶ What were the major challenges you had to overcome?
- ▶ What was the scholarship that you thought needed to be challenged by a feminist approach?
- ▶ What aspects of feminist scholarship did you think needed to be challenged?
- ▶ What helped you mount this challenge?
- ▶ What presented the biggest hurdle to doing so?
- ▶ What were the issues debated?

- ▶ What impact have they had on contemporary scholarship?

The minipapers were circulated before the workshop and provided the basis of a lively day of discussion which was a rather poignant and provocative experience for the participants. The papers brought back memories - joyful as well as painful ones - and they raised important questions about Women's Studies as a relatively new field. They also demonstrated both the convergences and divergences of our different pathways. In this summary/analysis, we look for all of these: Where did people come from? Where did our quite different pathways join together? Where have we ended up today? What do the experiences of these contributors reveal about the development of feminist scholarship and Women's Studies in Canada and Quebec?

The Wall of Silence

One strikingly obvious factor is that at the beginning almost all of us, in different ways, confronted a wall of silence with respect to knowledge that was relevant to our own lives. We think of it as a wall of silence, rather than a conspiracy of silence, because conspiracy implies that there is a small group of people who know better and who are trying to suppress something, whereas a wall implies that the views of everyone who is within the walled enclosure are limited. The experience of smashing against this wall is still vivid for most of us.

MacDonald, for instance, wrote that "the one moment in university where I 'got it,' in a personal sense, happened in an English class with an obtuse (profound, we thought), greatly admired professor. One day, as he talked about Ulysses and the importance of 'the journey,' I had a flash of realization that he was talking to the men, not me - I was merely a bystander. It was the men he cared about shaping and influencing. It was they who had to find their 'destiny.' My destiny was either predetermined or of little import."

Bashevkin noted that the standard public opinion literature "paid virtually no attention to the treatment of women by major political institutions, notably political parties." Gaskell remembered Talcott Parsons talking at Harvard about the paradox of women investing in education when they didn't go on

to use it in the workforce." Luxton recalled her first year Anthropology professor joking "that his subject was 'the study of man embracing woman,' a joke that was hollow when everything we read was about 'Man' and his place in the world."

Code noticed that "the very idea of a view from nowhere, beloved by the philosophers, is an incoherent luxury afforded only to those who need not concern themselves with 'the practical' - given that her practicalities had a large impact on how she was able to progress." Franklin summed it up as "the professional and discipline-based conceit of the mainstream academic establishment that could deny legitimacy to any feminist inquiry."

Beside the wall itself - a structural factor - there were also many other incidents which were specifically aimed at discouraging us from even questioning its existence.

Caplan described how she was thrown out of the clinical psychology program because of "weak ego boundaries,"¹² which led her to radically question the definitions of many of the therapeutic concepts used by clinical psychologists and psychiatrists. Ng recalled that she was told that she had no intellectual power.

"Intellectual ability is innate, and I am afraid you don't have it" her professor told her. "His feedback was confirmed again and again in subsequent years, and I was convinced, by the time I got my MA, that I couldn't be a researcher even though I liked doing research." Gaskell went through four supervisors in order to finish her PhD thesis. Mojab had such a hard time that she developed an ulcer and was hospitalized for it, and she had to change her supervisor three times. Messing got into fights at Harvard over pointing out that the wall existed by asking:

- ▶ why penis envy was more "logical" than breast envy
- ▶ why Freud's anal stage was inevitable
- ▶ why (as Kissinger and Brezinski told us) the governments of Nazi Germany and communist USSR represented similar stages of political evolution
- ▶ why everyone but her saw (in a Rorschach-type film) that the squares represented males and the circles represented females.

Code put these experiences into context when she observed that she (along with most of us!) did not have the "conceptual resources to explain these incongruities as generated out of the nature of the profession, the canonical structures of the discipline, and not out of my 'own' inadequacies."

The Breaching of the Wall

While we all experienced the existence of the wall, some of us did so more drastically than others, at different periods of time and at different points of our academic careers. But all of us experienced that the wall was breached in some form or other - although not torn down. Indeed, all of us recognize it still exists, quite solidly - but breached. And for all of us, this was an experience that we did not gain on our own, but with the collective help of others.

The re-emergence of the women's movement in the 1960s was critical. Participants came to feminism from a variety of perspectives and political movements. Some identified exclusively with the women's movement; others came from marxist, socialist and liberation movements. Mojab and Manicom, for example, who have changed cultures and countries more often than the rest, located themselves in a variety of liberatory movements, of which the feminist anti-racist struggle in Canada was but one.

All were excited by the new ways of seeing the world offered by the women's movement. We participated in consciousness raising groups (Eichler, Gaskell), and study and thesis writing groups (FitzGerald, Luxton, Manicom). Participation in the women's movement(s) helped to create the first holes in the wall, and made it possible for activists to walk through and explore the newly revealed vistas. As Franklin reminded us, it is difficult to overestimate the importance of the (1970) Royal Commission on the Status of Women:

The Commission gave Canadian women unprecedented opportunities for community building (that they used well indeed) as they collaborated within and across regional, professional and social boundaries...The submissions, the hearings and the Commission's own research produced a body of evidence on the structure of Canadian society, of its organizations, laws and

practices that could not be ignored either politically or academically...the follow-up of the Commission's work can be divided into two broad but interrelated areas:

1. Efforts to address and redress the systemic injustices and deficiencies uncovered, and
2. Efforts to understand the historical and structural roots and reasons for the evidence presented.

The close link between activities in both areas during the first ten to fifteen years after the Commission's report is a uniquely Canadian feature, attributable, we feel, directly to the Commission.

In other words, the commission created a breach in the wall of silence that allowed us to see and to start exploring the countryside that lies beyond the wall. Some of us used it as our first textbook in our teaching (Eichler, Gaskell).

The Importance (and Unimportance) of Chronological Time

It is possible - and useful, although not our intent here - to construct a chronology as to how events unfolded.³ However, the individual accounts demonstrated that there is no straight line that can be drawn from one set of happenings to another.

The Royal Commission opened up many possibilities, stimulated a lot of activities and the beginnings of institution building - and some of us then in the academy as either students or faculty members plunged into the fray right at the beginning (Caplan, Davis, Eichler, FitzGerald, Franklin, Gaskell, Luxton, Macdonald, Manicom, Messing, Morgan) while others were impeded by circumstances from doing so. Code found herself lonely and isolated as the mother of three pre-schoolers, while Dagenais had to work so hard to put herself through school that she had little energy left for other things.

A third group, somewhat younger, came to the academy after the first holes had already been punched into the wall (Bashevkin, Mojab, Williams and Ng, while Manicom dropped in and out of the university, thus straddling two groups). It is interesting to note that for this third group the situation was no easier than for the others. This was partially a function of discipline/subject matter (Political Science for

Bashevkin, Educational Policy Studies for Mojab, and immigrant women for Ng); for three it was the visceral personal experience of racism (Manicom, Mojab and Ng) and for another the neoliberal attacks on the working class (Williams).

Godard argues that around 1985 was the high-point in the recognition of feminist culture. Fifteen years after the publication of the Report of the Royal Commission on the Status of Women in Canada, both feminist activities and scholarship were at their strongest. Godard notes that in

the preceding years, Canadian feminists had participated actively in the articulation of public policy through the insertion of anti-discrimination provisions for gender into the Bill of Rights (1982) and the televised debate on women's issues involving the leaders of all political parties during the federal election of 1984. Sign of the recognition of feminists' economic and political capital...was the vibrant feminist press that ranged from the marketing magazine with a feminist slant, *City Woman* (1977-85), to the socialist activist *Cayenne* (1984-88), and included the academic journals *Atlantis* (1975-) and *Resources for Feminist Research* (1972-)...Around 1985 was also a key period in the articulation of feminist literary theory and constitution of a genealogy of women writers to challenge the canon of English literary classics.

It is thus clearly of major importance at what point in time (and in which country - see Manicom) we came to Women's Studies, but we can see just as clearly that the effects were mediated by our social and economic origins and situation at the time, our academic status (as students or faculty members), our research interests and (inter)disciplinary allegiances, and our geographical location.

Who Were Our Allies Then?

In all instances, other feminist or pro-feminist faculty or students, and in one case (FitzGerald) a secretary, were named as important allies, as were feminist community members. Particular individuals are named by many (Caplan, Code, FitzGerald, Franklin,

Gaskell, MacDonald, Messing, Morgan) as helping and supporting our own development. Parents and husbands played an ambiguous role: some of us had supportive husbands or fathers (Caplan, Davis, MacDonald), others had to struggle simultaneously on the academic and on the personal family front (Code, Eichler, FitzGerald, Messing).

Regional and professional groups were of importance: Groupe de recherche multidisciplinaire féministe (GRMF) for Dagenais, the Toronto Area Women's Research Colloquia for people in that region, Canadian Society for Women in Philosophy (CSWIP) for the philosophers, Charter challenges and the Osgoode Hall protest over the refusal to hire a feminist dean for the Faculty of Law for the lawyers.

For some of us who aligned ourselves with larger liberation movements (FitzGerald, Franklin, Gaskell, Godard, Luxton, Manicom, Mojab) men and women of these movements became explicit allies. The peace and anti-war movements, the socialist movement, the anti-apartheid movement, the autonomist and women's movements of Kurdistan, the anti-Thatcher movement in England, the Student Christian Movement provided important allies for some of us. On the other hand, Luxton noted that "...we forged necessary alliances with other feminists which meant relinquishing much of our liberation politics for a unity in the women's movement." In a similar vein, Williams mused that the disturbing "possibility for feminists is that our engagement with law through advocacy and reform activities may have empowered law while blunting our critical edge. We need to consider whether the prospect of small gains may have led us to collaborate with law in places and spaces where opposition and resistance may have been the smarter strategy."

What Were the Major Challenges and What Helped Us Surmount Them?

All confronted a phalanx of disapproving male scholars. Some experienced very personal discouragements that questioned their scholarship because of their sex and/or family status (Code), some had internalized gendered feelings of inadequacy they needed to overcome (Caplan, Code, Godard); some did not. Some had to cope with demands by their families of procreation that conflicted with their scholarship (Code, FitzGerald). Resources were sparse, the administration usually not helpful. Research grants were

hard to come by, so when the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC) started its first strategic grant on women and work, due to the efforts of Dorothy Smith and others, this was a welcome antidote.

Reading played a major role for everyone - some did so alone (Code, Dagenais), some in groups (FitzGerald, Manicom, Mojab, Ng). Reading, as Godard states, is "the time-honoured practice of identification through which many have been hailed into subcultures." This highlights the importance of publishing. The development of feminist presses, in which FitzGerald played a crucial role, was one of the major elements in helping develop feminist knowledge. It also provided venues for publishing work by feminist scholars, thereby helping some of us to establish academic careers.

Most crucial was probably the cooperation between feminist scholars across disciplinary boundaries, in which virtually all of us engaged, both through necessity, because of the scarcity of resources and scholars within our own discipline, as well as through choice. For instance, Morgan recalls "I scrambled to find curriculum materials wherever I could find them - in newspapers, biology textbooks, TV advertising, misogynistic writings of philosophers, in revolting remarks made by white arrogant politicians, in personal diaries, in letters written by well-meaning sexist relatives...and so on." MacDonald writes that "in the early days I viewed virtually all economists with suspicion, other than a handful of feminist radical economists such as Heidi Hartmann, Lourdes Beneria and Jane Humphries" and that as "an economist, I found support among sociologists as well as other colleagues - male and female - interested in interdisciplinarity."

The Magic of Feminism

The papers convey an impression of a magical moment in time - challenging, invigorating, intimidating - a feeling of being intensely alive. Dagenais writes that she came to feminism through reading, but it was only when she started teaching feminist courses that she discovered the magic of feminist studies. Godard identifies 1985 as a "charged moment," an "intensely creative period of thinking which introduced new theoretical paradigms into literary studies" and which "was also a time of great

feminist activism in the political arena, challenging masculine privilege and the legal and economic structures supporting it." Ng writes about "the heady years" when we "ruptured theories and categories that did not speak to our lives," the excitement - generated by reading feminist works in consciousness raising groups (Gaskell) or listening in a large crowd "to Kathleen Gough reworking Colin Turnbull's work on the Ituri pygmies so that the power of women in this hunting gathering society was made visible" (FitzGerald). The prevailing sentiment is perhaps best summed up by Luxton's favourite button that proclaimed "Question Authority!" She continues: "It was a heady time, when those of us building such movements believed there was a possibility of changing the old world based on a politics which assumed that our own liberation depended on the liberation of all..."

Which Scholarship Was Challenged?

Everyone challenged the mainstream in her own discipline, and tried - with partial success - to expand the boundaries of her discipline (anthropology, biology, economics, education, history, law, literature, natural science, occupational health, philosophy, political science, psychology, sociology). However, since all drew on scholarship in other disciplines, probably all saw it simultaneously as a broader attempt to reframe all of scholarship, regardless of discipline (Eichler) and to gain legitimacy for interdisciplinary work.

This resulted in the interesting phenomenon, mentioned by a number of us, of becoming "insider-outsiders." Since all of us present at the workshop made a place for ourselves in the academic world, this gave us the status of insiders, but since all challenged the way in which our own discipline was defined and practised, this resulted in a simultaneous outsider status. FitzGerald lived through the struggle in the Women's Press as the exclusively white group was challenged by women of colour. She notes: "I believe it was my then well-established lesbian identity that gave me a privileged access to the point of view of some women of colour and so opened up a radically different take on gender." Williams quoted law professor Mary Jane Mossman who said that women lawyers could choose between "being good feminists and bad lawyers or bad feminists and good lawyers." Caplan was told that she could never become a clinical psychologist. Morgan for many years did not get a regular job

because what she did "wasn't real philosophy." Messing still found that,

Grant applications for...[her] work have been refused by feminist research committees (SSHRC committee 20) on the grounds that the work is not feminist, and by medical research committees on the grounds (among others) that the problems studied are unimportant and that our explanation of the need for intervention is irrelevant and has no place in a scientific application.

However, for people who came to teaching feminist courses somewhat later and who have a simultaneous abiding concern with anti-racist struggles, the scholarship that needed challenging was not just the disciplinary one, but also the already existing, primarily white-oriented, feminist scholarship. Mojab had to develop "a critical position vis-à-vis White-middle-class Eurocentric, racist feminism and resist it" in order to be able to pursue those issues of burning interest to her. Manicom recalls that,

Coming to Canada in '84, I was struck by the anti-US nationalist identification of feminists. But I was also struck silent by the universalist claims made on behalf of "women" in the OISE classrooms I inhabited. A few of us who shared this sense of alienation - both Canadian-born and immigrants from former colonial sites - formed a "Third World Women's study group." On presenting our work at an OISE conference, circa 1985, we are asked to explain how our analyses of rural African farming and marriage systems constituted feminist scholarship.

In other words, where early feminists were challenged to explain how their scholarship fit within their discipline, or to justify interdisciplinary approaches, feminists with an explicit anti-racist orientation are being challenged to explain how their scholarship fits within feminist scholarship. This is a troubling parallel.

What Was the Impact on Scholarship?

While celebrating the growth of interdisciplinary Women's Studies programmes across Canada and recognising the significant impact of Women's Studies on other disciplines and academia generally, most participants also noted that contemporary Women's Studies falls very substantially short of the radical reformulation of scholarship that we had initially hoped for. Code noticed that "Feminist scholarship in philosophy is still produced and read mostly by women, many of whom worry about getting an academic job if their résumé is 'too feminist'; courses in feminist philosophy are at best token items on most academic curricula; students enrolled in them are predominately women." Bashevkin wrote that the discipline of Political Science "marches on in its largely accommodationist, system-supportive way, barely stopping to question whether all citizens share a common political history, or a common political culture, and generally resisting the challenge to ask whether pro-status quo orientations in the choice of research questions and approaches itself constitutes advocacy."

The one achievement that we can perhaps claim across the various disciplines is epistemological/methodological: we have been successful in challenging the notion of universal man, of the unattached (male) individual who can observe the world objectively. We have - to a greater or lesser degree - been successful in expanding the methodological tool kit by introducing alternative methods for investigating our various different issues; for instance, by using qualitative methods in economics (MacDonald), social sciences approaches in health studies (Messing), successfully introducing women's standpoints into abstract philosophy (Code and Morgan), changing the literary canon (Godard), and making it acceptable to draw on various disciplines in order to write comprehensive histories (Davis), although none of these achievements are uncontested. Dagenais pointed out that to the degree that these methodological stances have been adopted by others, it has been largely forgotten that this progress is due entirely to feminists. She argued that this has very serious consequences for the future, because it results in false perceptions of our feminist history on the part of younger scholars. Indeed, it was partially this concern that motivated the two of us (Eichler and Luxton) to take up this project.

Moreover, few of us were sanguine about the

current situation. The very success of feminist scholarship, in so far as it is institutionalized in various universities, generates current problems. Morgan described waking up at night "wondering what I (might) have lost through this fight for legitimization in this particular Academy. I worry about the intellectual and political congealing that is a major danger entailed in defining a canon. I have suffered and done battle...with 'Discipline Arrogance' for my entire life as an academic philosopher. I do not want to be embattled with Women's Studies in a similar fashion."

At the level of faculty, several writers noted the privilege some feminist academics currently enjoy. Ng and Franklin point out that some feminists academics have become the new Lady Patriarchs, the gatekeepers of knowledge and the creators of new knowledge. And opposition to feminist knowledge, especially in the form of chilly indifference, is still alive and well in universities and professional organizations (Code, Bashevkin, Messing).

On the other hand, most of us retained a sense of the possibilities inherent in feminist challenges to knowledge. We note Macdonald's point that she is blown away by the new generation of feminist scholars whose sophistication and sense of entitlement leaves her optimistic that we have succeeded in building something new and lasting.

Current Challenges

Most universities now offer undergraduate degrees in Women's Studies. Many offer MAs and three offer PhDs (York since 1992, University of British Columbia since 2000 and Simon Fraser since 2005). But Women's Studies programmes remain marginalised in most universities, underfunded and often vulnerable, surviving because their faculty, expected to do more with less, are so dedicated and the students so vibrant. Some of us worry that, especially given scarce resources and anti-feminist backlash, the emergence of new fields such as gender, sexuality and masculinity studies may undermine, rather than strengthen, Women's Studies. We note that Women's Studies is not, for example, one of the areas recognised by the prestigious Canada Research Chair programme and women have been so under-represented in that programme that a Human Rights complaint has been launched.

Feminist scholars are pulled toward each other by their shared critique of sexism, their mutual

efforts to improve women's situations and their excitement in building feminist scholarship. This builds strong ties among feminist scholars and has been important in securing a place for feminism in the universities. But - has it also undermined the radical edge of women's liberation scholarship as it blends into the broader concerns of Women's Studies? How do we retain a space for radical politics in Women's Studies and feminist scholarship? Mojab argues that liberal feminism is now "at the end of its historical project" and affirms that we need "radical feminist movements that go beyond the liberal project." Davis states that colonial and post-colonial studies and the examination of ethnicity and immigrations have taken over "the pathbreaking role of women's studies." At the same time, feminist scholars are pulled into alliances with others, in our field of scholarship (for example, sexuality studies), or in other political movements, especially of the left, nationalist and other liberation struggles and anti-racist initiatives. How do we ensure women's issues remain at the heart of such agendas?

Contemporary feminist scholarship is shaped by at least two dynamics: a decline of the broader radical women's movement and a professionalization of feminist scholarship. As the activist women's movement loses its place on the public political agenda, feminist professors often face classes where the students bring some basic but often unacknowledged feminism to Women's Studies in a context where the activist women's movement is hard to see. How do we most effectively teach feminist politics in that context? Can our classrooms be sites of political mobilization in the current climate?

Many of us were concerned about the diminished link between activism and scholarship. Several papers noted the decline in political awareness of, and organized struggle against, the continued (or perhaps renewed) subordination of women. Bashevkin noted the decline in women's participation in formal politics and the remarkable public silence about it. Macdonald remarked on the ongoing informal norms that discriminate against women scholars. Mojab and Luxton observed the distance between academic feminism and the rest of the women's movement. Most papers conveyed some sense of the importance of reanimating feminist scholarship in ways that take more effective account of its history. Dagenais noted the serious consequences of misunderstandings about the

history of feminist knowledge production. So the workshop ended with two questions: How do we as researchers and teachers contribute to revitalising struggles for greater equality? And what impact does that have on feminist challenges to formal knowledge?

Inspired by the enthusiasm of participants in the workshop, we agreed to make the minipapers available to a wider audience in this contribution to *Atlantis*.⁴

Endnotes

1. The affiliations are from the time of the workshop. Some have since changed.
2. "'Weak Ego Boundaries': One Developing Feminist's Story," *Women and Therapy*, 17.3/4 (1995).
3. PAR-L has started to build such a chronology. See PAR-L@listserv.unb.ca
4. We have also joined with Francine Descarries and Wendy Robbins to edit a book which includes the stories of 40 contributors on *Inventing Feminist Scholarship and Women's Studies 1966-1976*.

Mini Paper on Feminist Scholarship

Martha MacDonald is a professor of Economics, Saint Mary's University, Halifax, Nova Scotia.

What brought me to feminist studies?

I entered university in 1968 with little sense of gender inequality and a desire to change the world. After a year of psychology, sociology and economics I felt I had a good handle on the first two, but still didn't understand the economy. I was very good at math in high school and had been encouraged to consider engineering, so economics combined those skills with my interest in social issues. It also attracted me as being a non-traditional field.

In my undergraduate years I had teachers in both sociology and economics who introduced me to different paradigms. I had much more "radical" content in my economics degree than is typical today. I wrote a sociology paper on feminist thought and began to recognize the double messages out there for young women like me. I read what little I could find on race and gender inequality for an economics paper on

discrimination, and I loved the few strong women economists I came upon - from Rosa Luxemburg to Joan Robinson. However, in my heart of hearts I did not get it. The light came on in an English class. One day, as my favourite professor talked about Ulysses and the importance of "the journey," I had a flash of realization that he was talking to the men - I was merely a bystander. It was their journey; they had to find their destiny. My destiny was either predetermined or of little import.

During graduate school in Boston in the early 1970s I got more involved in the women's movement and personal politics. I was active in the Union for Radical Political Economics (URPE), where I experienced the gender politics of progressive organizations. But gender was not part of the economic analysis.

After I wrote my dissertation on segmented labour markets I decided, intellectually, that the elephant in the middle of the room was gender. I read the feminist literature on sex segregation, which ran a separate course. I wanted to link the two. I spoke to feminists about political economy and to political economists about gender. I began working specifically from a feminist perspective in the late 1970s and basically had to teach myself. I dove into the domestic labour debate and feminist labour history. While I was keen to bring gender into political economy, I gave up on neoclassical economics. Thus, most of the formal tools I had learned that made me a professional economist were of no use. I felt like a charlatan claiming status as an economist, when I was doing my real intellectual work by the seat of my pants!

Allies and Challenges

It took time on my return to Canada to find feminist intellectual networks here. A significant opportunity came in 1980 when I was invited by Dorothy Smith to attend the workshop to design the "women and work" SSHRC strategic theme. I forged some important personal and intellectual friendships there and can still recall how excited I was to meet like-minded academic women. From the beginning my academic network was largely outside Halifax and often outside Canada. For some time I had little real intellectual connection to other economists, other than a handful of feminist radical economists. I found support among sociologists, and other colleagues - male and female - promoting interdisciplinarity.

During my early days as an academic my most important allies were the activist women in my community. They were the legitimators of my work and my main source of inspiration and support. I took an "outsider" stance to university life in general and did not see it as the place to put my political energy.

Working within economics, I faced considerable challenges around methods. Even collecting your own survey data was regarded with derision. My interest in qualitative methods predates my feminist work. I recall as an undergraduate telling a professor that I would never claim to understand issues without talking to the people involved. For my dissertation I did many in-depth interviews with low wage employers and workers, and collected survey data. In the end I had to drop all my qualitative findings and go with a standard regression analysis. More recently, I was told to drop qualitative findings from a predominantly quantitative paper on EI. We stuck to our guns and won the award for the best article that year in Canadian Public Policy. I count this as progress!

Early Scholarship, Issues Debated

I was not in the first cohort of modern feminist scholars. Rather, I joined lively debates in progress about the relationship of patriarchy and capitalism, class and gender and the material basis of the oppression of women. Even in economics there was enough scholarship for me to write a review article on "Feminism and Economics: The Dismal Science" in 1983. In my early work I was talking to the "boys" as much as engaging in feminist debates with the "girls." My work was grounded in political economy issues of the day. I got involved in fisheries research because I felt that gender relations were the missing part of the story, as they were later in the debates on restructuring and globalization. I wanted to place women firmly within the overall development process of capitalism. I believed that men would see the light and a better political economy would emerge, with gender as an integral part.

Only gradually did my work become more oriented to other feminist scholars. Within feminist scholarship the main tensions I experienced were between radical feminist and socialist feminist perspectives. The common concern was to understand the dynamic of the system(s) of oppression and thus identify the motor of change and transformation and

derive strategies for action.

Impacts and Challenges

As we established our own field, many of us became less engaged with our disciplines. However, while I and others withdrew from economics in the 1980s, a new generation of women rediscovered the problems of neoclassical economics and mounted an attack within the discipline in the 1990s. Also, the first generation of feminist radical economists turned their attention from labour market (micro) issues to macro economics and once again tried to take on the boys - this time the boys at the World Bank and other international agencies.

The biggest challenges in the university context have been institutional structures unsuited to feminist scholarship, feminist programs or women's lives. Those working outside traditional disciplines face promotion and tenure hurdles; male career norms still threaten feminist scholars. Interdisciplinary programs require more administrative work, which gets little credit in the wider academy; faculty burnout is a major problem in maintaining programs. While I am sometimes disheartened by our overall impact on our institutions and disciplines, I am blown away by the new generation of feminist scholars; their sophistication and sense of entitlement leaves me optimistic that we have succeeded in building something new and lasting.

Mini Paper on Feminist Scholarship

Shahrazad Mojab is a professor of Adult Education, OISE/UT and is now the Director, WGSJ/UT.

My feminism is rooted in four interconnected movements: first, the anti-war and anti-apartheid movements of the late 1970s in the US; second, the struggles against the Iranian monarchy in the 1970s in and outside Iran; third, the autonomist and women's movements of Kurdistan in the early 1980s, and, fourth, feminist-anti-racist struggles in Canada. This trajectory involves feminist anti-imperialist, anti-capitalist, anti-colonialist, and anti-oppression contestations. It is beyond the scope of this short piece to recount in detail these interrelated movements. I will only limit

myself to critical moments with relevance to my feminist consciousness.

In 1977, I went to the United States to pursue my graduate study at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, a campus which hosted one of the most radical and active chapters of the Confederation of Iranian Students (CIS). CIS was one of the most organized and radical student organizations in the US and Europe with branches in a number of Asian countries, too. The impact of CIS radicalism on the US student movements, the anti-Vietnam war movement and solidarity movements in support of struggles in the rest of the world from Palestine to Dhofar, the US labour movement, or the women's movement has been noted by many, including Kate Millett and Robert Scheer.

I received a scholarship from the Iranian government to continue my MA in the growing field of university administration. Neither the university nor the field were my choices. The University of Illinois, like most of the other ten top US universities, was actively recruiting good students in Iran and we were being directed into disciplines perceived to be necessary in the Americanization of Iranian society, in particular higher education. The student movement in Iran and abroad was a real challenge to the dictator Shah. Controlling, disciplining and taming the student movement through depoliticizing universities was always on the agenda of the government. This was to be achieved through the training of a new cadre of university administrators who could reform the bureaucracy of universities and could deter students from anti-government and anti-American activism. I was assigned to an MA program in the Administration in Higher and Continuing Education - the first foreign woman student to be admitted to this degree. I will not go into detail about the masculine, hostile, US-centred and hierarchical nature of this program. Suffice to say that taking an elective course on Third World Education saved my intellect. It was in that course that I was introduced to Freire and Nyerere's pedagogy of liberation. But, because of the condition of my scholarship, I was not allowed to switch programs. I decided to register in two MA programs simultaneously.

It was during these years, 1977-79, when the revolutionary era in Iran began. The CIS was at its peak of anti-Shah activism. I began attending reading

groups on the topic of Iranian history, Marxist philosophy and some original readings of Marx, Engels, Lenin and Mao. These reading circles contributed enormously to my course work. I learned the method of reading critically, the art of analyzing, synthesizing, dialogue, and presentation. This knowledge and method made me aware of other sources of oppression beyond class, mainly gender and race. We celebrated March 8 and May 1st. However, the masculinity of the CIS, the sense of being silenced in my classes, not only because of being "foreign" but also because of my gender and politics, exhausted me and made me terribly home-sick. It was only a few months after the coming to power of the Islamic regime in Iran, and while only in the first term of my doctoral program, I decided to return and join hundreds of other Iranian students who were returning home to take part in the reconstruction of the country in the post-revolutionary era.

The story of my life between April 1979 to August 1983 is yet to be written from the beginning to the end: from arriving as a young, single woman in Tehran, a mega-city burning with revolutionary fervor, to my departure as a mother with a one-year old, escaping through the borders of Iran, Pakistan and Afghanistan. I will, rather reluctantly, forego an account of these formative, exhilarating, sad, and audacious years and begin with another arrival and beginning.

In January, 1984, my husband and I with our two year-old son returned to Urbana-Champaign. It was a scary and depressing return for us, as it was a place where we had left with lots of revolutionary hope. The CIS office on the second floor of the student union building was no longer there, our friends were gone, some very dear ones had been executed in Iran or were still in prison. The sense of guilt, shame, and defeat were inescapable. My husband and I had also to adjust to the fact that we returned as a "family" with its huge responsibility.

I began my doctoral program in the January of 1984 in the Department of Educational Policy Studies. Neither the program nor any particular course were of interest to me until I took a course on Women and Education in the Third World. This was a turning point in my intellectual development. The class was small and only women, and interestingly enough, a majority were from Third World nations! It was through this class that I found out about the existence of a newly developed program called "Women's Studies." I

went to that office and talked to the director of the program, Dr. Berenice Carroll, and proposed taking a reading course with her and doing my research assistantship in that office. She took me on, and to this date she is my greatest mentor. It was in that office that I got to know Ann Russo and Lordes Torres, co-editors, with Chandra Mohanty, of the seminal book *Third World Women and the Politics of Feminism*. Besides them, a group of radical lesbians, African-American women and women from Third World countries became part of my social, political, and intellectual circle. It was through them that I gradually grounded myself in the school work, dealt with my role as a mother and a wife. My first academic paper was part of women's history month, where I presented the first research paper ever written on the struggle of Kurdish women in Iran.

In retrospect, in my doctoral program, I was challenging masculine, Eurocentric, and imperialist knowledge production. As a mother in a highly competitive graduate school, I also realized that there was a huge distance between feminist knowledge and the everyday/every night experience of women, in particular women of color. Poverty of graduate student years, lack of family support, and being constructed as a "Muslim" orientalized subject, made me develop a critical position vis-à-vis White-middle-class Eurocentric, racist feminism and resist it. It was at this stage that other interruptions happened in my graduate work. One was related to the legality of my student visa situation and the other was political dispute with my supervisor. Another long story to be told at another time, and the reason for me to pass yet another border and become a refugee in Canada in 1986.

The sheltered life of a "foreign" student, living in married-student housing, was shattered by numerous encounters with the Canadian immigration authorities soon upon our arrival in Toronto. The crude and overt racism was utterly devastating. Once more, I will leave a lot out in this period (1986-1993), and limit myself only to my involvement with the 1986 Affirmative Action Bill and its implementation at two Canadian universities. It was at this time that I was fully engaged with the writing of my doctoral dissertation too. In reading and analyzing massive archival records on the daily accounts of the revolution in Iran and the responses of university students, staff, faculty, and in particular women, to change, that is, a

transformation of a secular social system to a theocracy, I observed similarity in the use of the theoretical debate on race, identity, equity, and social justice in the context of Canadian higher education and the Middle Eastern universities. It was in this context that I realized the universality of certain relations such as the ties of state, formal equality, and the market under capitalism, in spite of cultural particularities.

In this era, the late 80s, with the rise of neo-liberalism, not only was achieving formal equality on campuses a massive challenge, but also the rise of "identitarian"-based epistemology impeded possibilities for change and resistance. Feminist analysis was pre-occupied with the cultural-based claims of identity. Therefore, suddenly, I realized that as an imagined "Muslim" woman, I only have access to certain epistemological openings, such as Islamic Feminism. In this cultural construct, there was no place for historicization, and a critical review of colonialism, orientalism, or imperialism. What I was challenging in this era was fragmented, dehistoricized, and de-radicalized feminism.

My feminist consciousness is the embodiment of the internationalization of women's struggles against patriarchy. I, therefore, resent nativist, cultural relativist, nationalist, or subalternist treatment of feminism as a derivative discourse. Liberal feminism was able, after two centuries of struggles by women and men of all persuasions, to impose on the institution of the patriarchal state a regime of constitutional and legal equality between the two genders. Now that we need, more than ever, radical feminist movements that go beyond the liberal project, liberalism finds a new life in theoretical positions that carry the prefix "post."

I often have refused invitations to participate in scholarly events or submissions for publications where I was needed to be the "added" voice of the "other." It has been insisted that I be there in order to present a particular feminist perspective which is highly shaped and influenced by the processes of "otherization," either culturally or politically. Another hurdle is the academic gate-keeping exercise of feminist native-self. As some women of the Middle East are moving up within academia, they monopolize the production of feminist knowledge by claims to "authenticity" and "nativism" at the expense of exclusion of any "native" oppositional voice.

Through my critique of a cultural relativist position on "Islamic Feminism," I have been able to influence the debates on the relationship between universality and particularity of women's experience. I have insisted that, instead of the celebration of particularity, we need to treat universality and particularity dialectically. This means that the particular turns into the universal, and the universal transforms into the particular. Although socially constructed, patriarchy and feminism exist and coexist in conflict and unity. They negate each other and at the same time depend on each other; there can be no feminism without patriarchy, while at the same time feminism aims at negating patriarchy.

From my perspective, nationalism and feminism, too, coexist in dialectical relations, as do globalization and nationalism. If a label is needed to identify my theoretical position, I will call it Marxist-Feminism rooted in dialectical and historical materialism. This is what I will call, much like Mohanty, a critical-feminist-dialectical-transnationality. I am not sure, though, how much this analytic is sharply different from Marxist-Feminist, except to say that it probably provides a clearer analysis of the local, global, diaspora, exile, homeland-hostland, nation, nationalism, and citizenry rights in the era of globalization.