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REVIEWS

INSIDE FEMINIST CLASSROOMS: NOT A SIMPLE OR SINGULAR STORY

The Feminist Classroom, FRANCES A. MAHER AND MARY KAY THOMPSON TETREAULT. New York: Basic Books, 1994. 303 pp., $25.00 (cloth), ISBN: 0-465-03302-4.

The Feminist Classroom presents the results of a study designed to explore the pedagogy of 17 feminist teachers and the dynamics of learning in their classrooms. Drawn from six different college and university campuses, the teachers are from diverse backgrounds and disciplines but share a commitment both to women's studies and to excellent teaching. The authors (Maher, a Professor of Education at Wheaton College, and Tetreault, formerly on the faculty at Lewis and Clark College, currently an administrator at a state university) spent 3 weeks on each campus, observing classes as well as conducting interviews with the professors and students selected from their courses.

They resist the temptation to come up with a master narrative of what constitutes feminist teaching, but rather present in-depth portraits of each professor's teaching. Organized around the four themes of mastery, voice, authority, and positionality, they offer particular stories that illustrate a wide range of feminist concerns and pedagogies. Unlike Patai and Koertge's (1994) *Professing Feminism*, which presents a rather uniform and negative picture of what transpires in women's studies classrooms, this study reveals a rich diversity of teaching practices. Their classroom examples and analysis consistently highlight issues of race, class, culture, and sexuality, and by presenting ethnographies of each institution and comparing across them, they can show the effect of discussing such issues in heterogeneous as opposed to homogeneous classrooms.

One major issue that emerges from their classroom observations is that of authority—who legitimately has it? The traditional view holds that experts define the content and questions of their disciplines, and that professors have superior knowledge of these disciplines and thus the authority to convey and teach it to their students. But according to Maher and Tetreault, feminist teaching consists not only of expanding the themes and topics covered in courses, but as importantly of *redefining* who has expertise and thus who is an authority. Arguing that knowledge can be produced by all members of society and not only by credentialed

experts, the authors assert that sharing authority with students is (or should be) a major goal of feminist teaching. Yet they notice that not every teacher they observed and interviewed succeeds in, or even aspires to, this goal. While they are careful never to describe these teachers as taking the wrong approach, they do present them as less advanced in their feminist pedagogy, and attribute this to their own academic socialization, disciplinary barriers, or institutional constraints operating at their respective institutions.

Using different classroom settings, the authors illustrate how teachers work to facilitate the construction of knowledge in the classroom. They stress that as teachers resist acting as the sole "expert," they share authority with students so that knowledge can be collectively produced. Their classroom illustrations involve such examples as students sharing personal reactions to literature or critiquing the findings of mainstream social science for having left out important issues of which they are aware from their own position as women, or as students of color.

Despite their strong and well-supported affirmation of the importance of "construction of knowledge in the classroom," I am still left wondering if there is any place in feminist classrooms for the acquisition of knowledge in the traditional sense. What about the bodies of research produced by experts? Surely there ought to be critiques and questions asked about who does this research, for what purpose, and how it perpetuates social inequities. And certainly students can engage in this kind of critical thinking. But it seems that first, or at least simultaneously, they need to be learning what is considered by credentialed experts to be the knowledge of the field. Familiarity with and comprehension of this literature has as legitimate a place in the classroom as the ability to critique it. But *The Feminist Classroom* seems to suggest that critique is the core, rather than one critical component, of what should transpire in feminist classrooms.

If one of the major concerns of feminist teachers is how to share authority with students, the other one identified in this study is how to be inclusive of multiple cultural identities in the classroom. Here the authors elaborate on their concept of positionality. They argue that the most effective and inclusive construction of knowledge in the classroom takes place when students and teachers acknowledge their positional differences. They present their concept of positionality to contrast with the more static identity politics, suggesting that positionality means that people are defined not in terms of fixed identities, but "by their location within shifting networks of relationships" (p. 164).

Because this book covers such a diverse array of feminist pedagogies, classrooms, and institutional settings (from public universities to private liberal arts colleges), readers are sure to find their own teaching concerns and strategies reflected in at least some of what is presented here. And reading this book will certainly stimulate thinking and discussion, if not agreement, about what constitutes feminist pedagogy.

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WHITE WOMEN AND THEIR RELATIONSHIPS

White Women, Race Matters: The Social Construction of Whiteness, RUTH FRANKENBERG. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993. 290 pp., $17.95, ISBN: 0-8166-2258-2.

The basic premise explored in the book is that race shapes the lives of not only women of color, but of White women as well. The author begins with defining the concept of "whiteness" as involving structural advantage, an individual worldview, and a set of cultural practices that are usually "unmarked" and "unnamed." There are three interesting axioms that the author presents: (a) feminist scholars must remember that they act within and are a part of the very structure they seek to change; (b) experience constructs identity; and (c) there is a direct connection between experience and individual worldview.

The book contains many historical references and analyses to explore these axioms. For example, the author observes how the feminist movement sprang from and was modeled by the class and race struggles of the times. Ironically, the author points out, this foundation did not prompt feminist scholars to confront the issue of race and racism in their writings, theories, research, etc. until quite recently.

The core of the book details a research project in which 30 White women from the Santa Cruz County and San Francisco Bay areas in California were interviewed between 1984 and 1986. The author conducted each of the interviews that lasted an average of about 3–8 hr across 1–3 sessions each. The women who were interviewed are quite diverse in terms of their background. Their ages range from 20 to 93 years; a good number were married but included eight lesbian women and several professional women with no children, some with interracial marriages or partners. This group of women had a higher than average amount of education, and most proclaimed themselves to be feminist in their orientation.

The lengthy interviews addressed a number of issues such as their childhood, working in the community, interpersonal relationships, intimate relations and how they have come to view the issues of race, gender, and racism. One of the most gripping aspects of this book is the number of excerpts from the actual interviews that are included to illustrate various themes. These excerpts, although brief at times, provide an excellent depth of understanding concerning the issues, challenges, and transformations that took place throughout each of these women's lives.

A good deal of attention in this book is paid to the topic of relationships, particularly interracial intimate relationships. While the text concerning this topic is interesting to read, it is not always clear what this tells the reader about the social construction of Whiteness.

Several times the author introduces a topic that is apparently central to the current issue, but stops short of examining it fully by saying that this is, "beyond the scope of the book." This happens in two critical places. One is a discussion of miscegenation that occurs in the chapter addressing the social, political, and legal context surrounding interracial sexual relationships. Second is the implication for why, given that the feminist movement is grounded in class and race resistance, it

has taken so long for feminist scholars to address the issues of race and racism. Both of these points appear to be critical for illustrating the importance of two of the three axioms the author presents in the beginning of the book. However, the reader is left to his/her own devices to explore these issues more fully.

In general, the excerpts are the most compelling aspect of this book. The commentary by the author concerning the responses by the women is interesting, but is often more descriptive than analytic. Because of this lack of critical analyses, the book appears somewhat disjointed from the outstanding articulation of the fundamental issues surrounding White racial identity that are presented in Chapter 1.

From a critical psychological standpoint, the methodology (based on the criteria that guide rigorous qualitative research) falls short. The selection of the interview participants seems convenient and often accidental. The representativeness of these women for offering the series of conclusions that are presented in the final chapter of the book is quite problematic. Selecting all interview participants from one narrow geographical region is especially problematic if one accepts the author's original tenet concerning the social context of racial identity.

In general, the book provides interesting reading. Most noteworthy are the excerpts from the chapter entitled "Thinking Through Race." This chapter explores what race means to these women and how it has affected how they view themselves as well as their relationships with others, both Black and White. While this chapter is particularly well done, it is difficult to determine the exact use for this book as a whole in terms of the class and level of students for which it would be most appropriate. There is insufficient theory, research, and practical application to warrant its use as a primary text for an advanced undergraduate or graduate course. More likely it appears that this book would be suitable for reference and background material for class lectures or an excellent text for a book review as a student project.

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THE LENSES OF BEM

The Lenses of Gender: Transforming the Debate on Sexual Inequality, SANDRA LIPSITZ BEM. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1993. 244 pp., $28.50, ISBN: 0-300-05676-1.

Sandra Lipsitz Bem is well known in psychology. She developed a scale to measure psychological androgyny through the independent assessment of masculine and feminine self-concepts (the BSRI; Bem, 1974), and then used these scores in various forms to predict gender-stereotyped behaviors (e.g., see Bem, 1985). In *The Lenses of Gender*, she presents her integration of historical, cultural, psychological, and biological factors that explain and guide our conceptions of gender.

The three lenses of gender referred to in the book's title are androcentrism (using

the male experience as the norm), gender polarization (using gender to categorize a broad variety of behaviors and situations), and biological essentialism (claiming a biological basis for androcentrism and gender polarization). Each of these lenses is explained in a separate chapter. The remaining two chapters are used to describe Bem's theories on gender identity development using the three lenses and to identify what would change if the lenses were not being used.

The evaluation of any book rests in part on understanding who the audience is supposed to be. In the author's preface, Bem said that she had written "the book that, as a younger feminist . . . I would have most wanted to read" (p. ix). I would argue that the book has its greatest success at this level, as a broad introduction to gender issues in psychology and related disciplines. Although there is no mention of this book as a textbook, I could easily see using it in an introductory class on psychology of gender or women's studies, in the latter case to represent social scientific perspectives. In keeping with Bem's analogy, a person who has not yet become aware of the existence of gender lenses would probably find this broad survey of key studies and issues helpful.

For those familiar with the psychological research on gender, the book's treatment of some key issues may be unsatisfying. For example, in the chapter on gender polarization, Bem discusses disputes with the concept of androgyny. However, as those conversant with the research on psychological androgyny are aware, there also has been a vigorous debate over Bem's scale and theories on androgyny and gender schemata (e.g., Bem, 1985; Spence, 1985). In the endnotes for the gender polarization chapter, Bem alludes to those lively arguments but dismisses them as "relatively technical controversy" (p. 206). A similar problem occurs in the chapter on biological essentialism, during discussion of the usual controversies, such as the interpretation and significance of the Money and Ehrhardt findings on fetally androgenized girls or the Imperato-McGinley research on genetic males who appear female until puberty. Bem's treatment would serve to introduce a new student to some of the influential studies in this area, but does not represent a new perspective on biological issues.

Bem's work on psychological androgyny and gender schemata has heuristic value and has led to interesting empirical tests of her theories. My own research on these issues has included empirical challenges to Bem's theories (e.g., Signorella, 1992; Signorella, Jamison, & Krupa, 1989), and thus I wish that Bem had discussed more extensively the "technicalities" surrounding her work. Bem, however, notes in this book that she interprets her own research "not primarily as an empirical study of human differences but as a strategy for exposing an invisible cultural lens" (p. 131), and she has written a book that will appeal to those who are comfortable with this approach.

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THERAPY FOR EMOTIONALLY ABUSED WOMEN

Emotional Abuse. MARTI TAMM LORING. New York: Lexington Books, 1994. 140 pp., $22.95, ISBN: 020-919343-5.

When I ask clients if they have been "verbally or emotionally abused," most need some explanation of what that means, and I have struggled to give an adequate description. In *Emotional Abuse*, Marti Tamm Loring offers the first book written for professionals that focuses solely on assessing and treating emotional abuse. She notes that emotional abuse victims are less likely to self-identify than are physical abuse victims and urges clinicians to proactively and accurately assess for this serious concern.

To aid in our assessment, Loring delineates how emotional abuse is different from other forms of abuse and proposes an "attachment-trauma" model of emotional abuse grounded in the current writings of John Bowlby, Judith Herman, and Jean Baker Miller. Loring also draws from extensive clinical experience and two research studies to support her assertions. Loring's feminist approach is evidenced by her allowing research participants to speak to us directly in numerous quotes and examples. However, given that her research populations and examples consist primarily of heterosexual married women, the book would have been more aptly titled *Emotional Abuse of Women*. Loring includes a very brief epilogue on lesbians, children, and men, but it does not justify her broad title, which suggests a more integrated presentation.

Some specific points from her research about how emotional abuse needs to be treated differently than physical abuse include the following:

1. Emotional abuse is a continuous rather than a cyclical phenomenon as experienced in physically abusive relationships. However, Loring contradicts herself later in the book presenting a "connection–deprivation" cycle, that looks similar to the "battering-honeymoon" cycle of physical abuse. Perhaps the time frame is different for the two, but she did not make this clear.
2. Emotional abuse is not always a precursor to physical abuse—on average her research participants had been in emotionally abusive relationships for 11 years with no overt physical abuse.
3. It is not therapeutically feasible to encourage an emotional abuse victim to leave her partner early in therapy because her sense of self has been de-

stroyed, and as Loring states, "there is no self strong enough to detach" (p. 86). Loring recommends clients explore interests, goals, and strengths to rebuild a sense of self before making decisions about leaving a relationship.

Loring does a good job of presenting competing theories and rejecting the use of systems theory as a prelude to presenting her model of therapy. I had to work hard to extract the basic structure of her model, as her four listed components were difficult to differentiate. I am skeptical when anyone proposes they have "a new model of therapy" (the chapter title), and indeed found that her model repeats other basic treatment models for trauma and abuse. Nonetheless, Loring does offer some specific techniques, like the "emotional abuse climate map," that clinicians may find helpful.

After reading her book, I read some other recent chapters (Leeder, 1994; Tolman, 1992) and books on the topic. While I appreciate the new information and scholarly grounding that Loring offers, the other resources described forms of emotional abuse and the psychodynamics of abusive relationships with greater clarity and better formatting. Two such self-help books are by Engel (1990) and Evans (1992), and neither are cited or reviewed by Loring. This oversight concerns me, as I seek suggestions for good bibliotherapy to meet the demands required by a short-term therapy model. For clinicians who want a quick and clear exposure to the issues, I recommend Engel's book or Tolman's chapter. They should then read Loring's book next for its more sophisticated coverage of theoretical and treatment issues. I am glad my university library already has a copy of her book and commend Loring for her efforts to provide guidance to the clinical and research community.

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