Leaders in Gender and Education
Intellectual Self-Portraits

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Gender studies has provided a key lens through which education has been examined in the past forty years, having become an accepted and popular subfield in educational foundations studies. Moreover, scholars in gender and education have made tremendous contributions well beyond education, influencing humanities and social sciences scholars across the academy. Hearing the stories of these scholars—their development, education, important works, and thoughts on the future—offers unique insights into the genesis and growth of the field and gives new scholars an overview of advances made. Leaders in Gender and Education: Intellectual Self-Portraits does just that, showing the history of gender and education through the eyes of 16 of its leaders. By recounting their experiences and scholarly work, they trace the development of feminist and pro-feminist research on girls, on boys, and on the issues shaping both gender and education—issues like race, sexuality, neoliberalism, globalization, and more. Importantly, the volume has a global focus, including scholars from the United States, Canada, the United Kingdom, and Australia. This diversity gives readers a broad sense of the progress of gender scholarship in education around the world.

Each essay provides students and researchers alike with not only background on the 16 scholars included, but also the lists of major works—chosen by contributors themselves—direct readers to some of the most important scholarship on gender and education. Taken together, further, the contributors’ thoughts on the future of the field provide glimpses of productive new directions for studies of gender and education.
LEADERS IN GENDER AND EDUCATION
LEADERS IN EDUCATIONAL STUDIES

Volume 4

Series Editor:

Leonard J. Waks
Temple University, Philadelphia, USA

Scope:

Leaders in Educational Studies provides a comprehensive account of the transformation of educational knowledge since 1960, based on rich, first-person accounts of the process by its acknowledged leaders.

The series provides unique insights into the formation of the knowledge base in education, as well as a birds-eye view of contemporary educational scholarship.

The initial volume, Leaders in Philosophy of Education: Intellectual Self Portraits, contains personal essays by 24 leading philosophers of education from North America and the United Kingdom. The second volume, Leaders in Curriculum Studies: Intellectual Self-Portraits, contains similar essays by 18 leading curriculum scholars. The volume on historians of American education contains essays by 25 leaders in this field. The current volume on gender and education has essays from 16 leaders from the United States, Canada, the United Kingdom, and Australia. Volumes on other fields of educational scholarship are now being prepared.

Until the 1950s school teachers were trained for the most part in normal schools or teacher training colleges. The instructors were drawn from the teacher corps; they were not professional scholars. Those offering classes in so-called ‘foundational disciplines’ in education were not trained in these disciplines. Educational scholarship was generally weak and cut off from contemporary work in the so-called ‘parent’ disciplines. Professors relied on textbooks featuring out-of-date, dumbed-down knowledge.

In the late 1950s plans were made to bring a higher level of professionalism to school teaching. In the United States, the remaining normal schools initially became state colleges, and eventually state universities. In the United Kingdom, the training colleges were initially brought under the supervision of university institutes; eventually teaching was transformed into an all-graduate profession.

Commentators on both sides of the Atlantic argued that if education was to become a proper field of university study, educational scholarship itself would have to be transformed. Scholars were recruited into educational studies from social sciences and humanities disciplines to contribute to teacher education and to train a new generation of educational scholars in contemporary research methods.

Under their influence the knowledge base for education has been completely transformed. In addition to major accomplishments in philosophy, history, sociology and economics of education, interdisciplinary work in educational studies has flourished. The series documents this transformation.
Leaders in Gender and Education

*Intellectual Self-Portraits*

*Edited by*

Marcus B. Weaver-Hightower  
*University of North Dakota, USA*

and

Christine Skelton  
*University of Birmingham, UK*
For Harrison and Evelyn Weaver-Hightower, with the hope that they will see the fruits of these scholars’ work.
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Series Editor’s Preface</td>
<td>ix</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acknowledgements</td>
<td>xi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender and Education: An Introduction to Some Leaders in the Field</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marcus B. Weaver-Hightower &amp; Christine Skelton</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Forever Troubling: Feminist Theoretical Work in Education</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jill Blackmore</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Equal Rights, to a Certain Extent: Memoirs of a Researcher into</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mysteries of Gender and Education</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Raewyn Connell</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A “Mother” of Feminist Sociology of Education?</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Miriam E. David</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Life in Three-Walled Rooms</td>
<td>61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Margaret Eisenhart</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A Feminist DNA: Exploring a Political/Intellectual History</td>
<td>71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Debbie Epstein</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Making an Impact?</td>
<td>89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Becky Francis</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A Defiant Research Imagination</td>
<td>103</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jane Kenway</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>An Intellectual Autobiography: The Return of the (Feminist) Subject?</td>
<td>117</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Patti Lather</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Positions/Dispositions: Reflections on Engaging With Feminism and</td>
<td>129</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Masculinity Politics</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bob Lingard</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Revisiting <em>The Making of Men</em> and Other Texts</td>
<td>147</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Máirtín Mac an Ghaill</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
CONTENTS

On a Commitment to Gender and Sexual Minority Justice: Personal and Professional Reflections on Boys’ Education, Masculinities and Queer Politics 163  
*Wayne J. Martino*

History, Place and Generation: Working in Gender and Education from Australia 179  
*Julie McLeod*

Men, Feminism and Education: Personal Reflections 193  
*Martin Mills*

Pioneering Gender Equity in Education: A Love Story (Or, Marrying into a Revolution) 205  
*David Sadker*

Feminism and Social Class 217  
*Christine Skelton*

A Conversation with the Field 227  
*Lynn Yates*
SERIES EDITOR’S PREFACE

The aim of the LEADERS IN EDUCATIONAL STUDIES series is to document the rise of educational scholarship in the years after 1960, a period of astonishing growth and accomplishment, as seen through the eyes of its leading practitioners.

A few words about the build up to this period are in order. Before the mid-twentieth century school teaching, especially at the primary level, was as much a trade as a profession. Schoolteachers were trained primarily in normal schools or teachers colleges, only rarely in universities. But in the 1940s American normal schools were converted into teachers colleges, and in the 1960s these were converted into state universities. At the same time school teaching was being transformed into an all-graduate profession in both the United Kingdom and Canada. For the first time, school teachers required a proper university education.

Something had to be done, then, about what was widely regarded as the deplorable state of educational scholarship. James Conant, in his final years as president at Harvard in the early 1950s, envisioned a new kind of university-based school of education, drawing scholars from mainstream academic disciplines such as history, sociology psychology and philosophy, to teach prospective teachers, conduct educational research, and train future educational scholars. One of the first two professors hired to fulfil this vision was Israel Scheffler, a young philosopher of science and language who had earned a Ph.D. in philosophy at the University of Pennsylvania. Scheffler joined Harvard’s education faculty in 1952. The other was Bernard Bailyn, who joined the Harvard faculty in 1953 after earning his Ph.D. there, and who re-energized the study of American educational history with the publication of Education in the Forming of American Society: Needs and Opportunities for Study (University of North Carolina Press, 1960). The series has been exceptionally fortunate that Scheffler provided a foreword to the volume on philosophy of education, and that Bernard Bailyn provided a foreword for the volume on the history of American education.

The LEADERS IN EDUCATIONAL STUDIES continues to document the growing and changing literature in educational studies. Studies conducted within the established academic disciplines of history, philosophy, and sociology comprised the dominant trend throughout the 1960s and 1970s. By the 1980s educational studies diversified considerably, in terms of both new sub-disciplines within these established disciplines and new interdisciplinary and trans-disciplinary fields. Curriculum studies drew extensively from work in philosophy, history and sociology of education, as is demonstrated by the chapters in the volume Leaders in Curriculum Studies that Edmund Short and I edited for the series. Work in these disciplines, and also in anthropology and cultural studies among others, also stimulated new perspectives on race, class and gender.

This volume brings together 16 personal essays by established leaders in gender studies, the field interrogating forms of masculinity and femininity and their presentation in schools and society. All of the authors write from explicitly
feminist or pre-feminist positions, as (in the words of Marcus B. Weaver-Hightower and Christine Skelton, the co-editors) “gender and education as a field owes its very existence to feminist activism and struggle.” It would be a gross understatement to say that serious academic studies of gender in education were under-developed prior to the 1970s. The authors, many founders of the field, detail early life experiences, first encounters with academic work and gender studies, periods of formative study and early professional work, emergence as leaders, development of mature work, and reflections on the current challenges and opportunities in the field.

Previous volumes in the series have featured leaders primarily from North America and the United Kingdom. This volume includes more authors from Australia than elsewhere, both because that country has produced stimulating work in this field and because the co-editors had greater success in obtaining chapters from leaders there. As usual, I do not make any claim as general editor that the volume presents the leaders in the field, but only a selection of acknowledged leaders, from whose lives and works readers can obtain a bottom-up view of its development.

Subsequent volumes in the series will attend to other emerging sub-disciplines and inter-disciplines as well as to fields of curriculum, instruction and teacher education that have been influenced by the ‘new educational scholarship’ emerging after 1960.

Leonard J. Waks  
Temple University  
General Editor
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This book represents the hard work of many people. These include the authors of the chapters, of course, who gave generously of their time and efforts, sometimes under the most extraordinary circumstances. Behind the scenes, though, many others deserve much thanks. Leonard Waks, the series editor, has been both generous and patient with this book’s creation, and he deserves thanks for inventing the series, as well, which has provided insight into the foundations of education in the latter half of the 20th and first part of the 21st centuries. Peter de Liefde, the founder and owner of Sense Publishers, has been similarly kind in the creation of the book. Marcus’ doctoral student, Yuliya Kartoshkina, deserves much thanks for her research assistance throughout the project, finding articles, proofing chapters, and more. Marcus also thanks his wife, Rebecca, for her steadfast patience and her invariably diplomatic, wise advice; without her, none of this would be possible.
The personal is political. It is a slogan that came to define feminist thought in the latter half of the 20th Century. Its provenance is not clear: Carol Hanisch is often given credit based on her 1970 article of that name, but even she says someone else said it first (Hanisch, 2006). Even so, the phrase “the personal is political” wonderfully summarizes an approach to feminist thought that relies on personal experience to problematize the workings of power and domination. The personal serves as a starting point for exploring the workings of power, a means of provoking activism in those who have experienced gendered oppression. For Hanisch and others, the phrase was used as a defense of women’s consciousness raising groups of the 1960s and 70s, a rebuttal of the dismissive claim that these were simply “therapy.” Others, like Canadian sociologist Dorothy E. Smith (e.g., 1987; Griffith & Smith, 2005), expanded that mantra to a basis for research methods, focusing on the lived experience of women—in Smith’s case the “everyday world” of mothers who do much of the (unpaid) work of schooling children—as an entry into the social and structural problematics that shape and constrain women’s lives.

“The personal is political” also defines the chief contribution of this book, Leaders in Gender and Education: Intellectual Self-Portraits. In this collection are the personal stories that underpin the political and intellectual lives of the scholars that both have defined (and will define) the study of gender in education around much of the world since the 1960s. Here these feminist and pro-feminist scholars tell the stories of how they became who they are, and they show how their intellectual and political stances have been shaped through their lives.

We believe, as editors, that such personal stories are crucial to understanding the political nature of what we know and understand about gender and its impacts on education. If we take seriously the position that knowledge is socially constructed (e.g., Gergen, 1999) and that it is shot through with discourses and power relations (e.g., Foucault, 1972), then we must attend to the lived experiences—both of agency and of structures—of those who have constructed the scholarly fields we inhabit. Bob Lingard, in his essay for this volume, puts the point nicely:

Recognising the nature of the sociological will help me overcome my own tentativeness about why anyone would be interested in my specific intellectual journey and positioning in respect of gender issues, specifically gender equity issues in education. The only interest I can imagine that readers might have in this narrative is my attempt to locate my educational and intellectual biography against changing structures and the effluxion of time.
In this book, then, are the intellectual self-portraits—series editor Leonard Waks’s far finer and more fitting name than the prosaic term “autobiography”—penned by 16 scholars who have had significant impact on gender and education research. All of the authors were tasked to describe the field of gender and education as they entered it, explore their own bodies of work and key ideas in the context of their changing professional lives, and posit the main intellectual and institutional issues facing the field today. In doing so the contributors have given readers an unparalleled view on the field’s history, their own personal journeys in- and outside of the academy, and a sense of what may be next for future generations of scholars—the unfinished business of our field.

NOTES ON SELECTION

Because this book seeks, on one hand, to assert one possible vision of the field of gender and education, and, on the other hand, to fete those who have made an impact on a field of knowledge, divulging how we selected contributors seems appropriate. We come with full awareness that had we chosen differently we might dramatically change how the field is presented to readers. All scholarly endeavors must set up boundaries, though, and here is how we did it.

Most importantly, the scholars in this book all work from (pro)feminist perspectives, representing many forms of feminisms (Skelton & Francis, 2009; Weiner, 1994). Many academics and non-academics alike publish on gender, certainly, but not all can be counted as feminist or pro-feminist. We have not, for example, sought contributions from antifeminist or masculinist writers, many of whom have authored widely read and highly lucrative “backlash blockbusters” (Mills, 2003), particularly since the explosion of interest in boys’ education starting in the 1990s (Weaver-Hightower, 2003). These backlash authors are certainly part of the landscape of gender studies in education—many with tremendous influence on both policy and practice (Weaver-Hightower, 2008)—but relatively few have chosen to publish in peer-reviewed journals and other scholarly forums as have our contributors. More than this, though, we eschew non-feminist scholars because gender and education as a field owes its very existence to feminist activism and struggle—the struggle to obtain degrees, to get hired, to publish, to teach, to serve communities, to get tenure, to develop academic programs, to create journals, to hold conferences, to forge a coherent field, all within male-dominated institutions—and that feminist history we both honor and seek to learn from in this volume.

Secondly, we wanted to equally represent scholars working from three regions: the United Kingdom, Canada and the United States, and Australia; these are the countries from which the vast majority of scholarship on gender issues written in English has been produced. We are aware, though, that much wonderful theoretical and practical research has been produced by scholars in and from other countries (see Connell, 2008)—indeed, some of the scholars herein originally hail from these countries and moved to our three focal regions. Moreover, many of the scholars...
herein have worked, lived and researched outside of their country of origin, making them interconnected in ways that eschew the political boundaries of country.

Third, we wanted representation from scholars in different stages of their careers. While this illuminates something about faculty development and career stages, a more important historical understanding might be gained from this. As Yates (2008, p. 474) provocatively argues, “Becoming a feminist in the 1970s was different from becoming a feminist in the 1990s.” The experiences shared by our contributors support this point.

Fourth, we purposely chose scholars who were working at varied levels of education, including primary, secondary, higher, and adult education, whether within or beyond formal schooling. Primary and secondary school researchers are perhaps better represented in these pages, partly due to the more recent start of the sociology of higher education (Gumport, 2007) and partly due to our own personal backgrounds as editors. We believe, however, that looking to scholars across the sectors of schooling illuminates important dynamics of gender that change according to individuals’ developmental and institutional differences. Furthermore, scholars working on different sectors are privy to different conversations among their peers, and hearing about those insights can be illuminating to all readers.

Similarly, we sought scholars who explore differing aspects of gender and education, as well as those from differing theoretical, methodological, and rhetorical orientations. Within the collection are those who have at various times focused on femininity, masculinity, sexuality, social class, race, ethnicity, religion, high performers, low performers, teachers and professors, learners, administrators, policy, curriculum, pedagogy, special education, sports, romantic relationships, and on and on. Further, these scholars started in and/or inhabit sociology, anthropology, history, comparative and international education, educational policy studies, curriculum and instruction, research methods, and more. They use the theories and methods of qualitative research, quantitative research, discourse analysis, single-subject designs, longitudinal designs, postmodern theory, poststructural theory, neo-Marxism, critical theory, queer theory, critical race theory, and many more. The writing styles evident in the collection mirror the practices and fashions of these many disciplines and methods. We believe that these intellectual and disciplinary diversities have been an integral part of the strength and successes of gender and education as a field, and we worked hard to maintain a balance of these.

Putting together a collection like this also presents personal and political challenges, fraught as it is with the dangers of exclusion. As a number of the contributors confess, many (pro)feminist theorists flinch at the practice of foregrounding leaders and at leaving out allies; it goes against the egalitarian underpinnings of much feminist thought. Thus, we want to stress that we do not in any way suggest that these are the only or even most influential gender and education researchers. This is not an attempt to create a canon, and we certainly see gaps ourselves. Many will look at the table of contents and wonder why they or (if they are charitable) their friend or favorite theorist was not included. Many will also see that certain intersectional identities are not well represented. We ourselves are most disappointed that Black feminisms are not directly presented—though
issues of race, postcoloniality, and other key issues brought into our scholarly conversations by Black feminisms arise throughout. To readers concerned about these admittedly crucial issues, we should point out that many more scholars were asked to contribute than could. Some could not fit it into their schedules or the exigencies of their personal lives; some felt they were not worthy of inclusion; some never answered our invitation. Some of those who were never formally invited may have actually made the short list but were decided against because we were trying to balance the criteria listed above. We hope all who were unjustly left out will pardon us.

CHARTING THE DEVELOPMENT OF GENDER AND EDUCATION

For us editors, constructing a volume like this conjures fascinating “data” about the development of gender and education in Anglophone countries over the past half century. These 16 essays are like a collection of autoethnographies (Ellis & Bochner, 2003) more so than autobiographies, for all the contributors submit their personal backgrounds for scrutiny using the same social science and humanities lenses that they use in their research. The collation of these individual portraits, then, builds a larger ethnography of a group of scholars, advocates, and activists. By looking across the contributors’ individual stories—narratives of family, schooling, struggle, research, collaboration, protest, policymaking, teaching, politics, administration, and learning—readers discover the larger collective histories of feminisms that have shaped the foundational studies of education since the 1960s.

We can hardly even partially tell the histories of multiple countries over half a century given the limitations of this short introduction (for fuller views see, e.g., Skelton & Francis, 2009; Weiler & David, 2008). And, naturally, the development of feminism (and, later, pro-feminism) in education research has both obvious and subtle differences across the countries surveyed. Context matters a great deal, as the contributors illustrate through their own intellectual, political, and personal trajectories. Yet there are similarities in gender and education research across the world, so some general outlines of the history of the field might aid readers’ understanding of the essays to come.

The formal study of gender and education—that is, the development of courses, certificates and degrees, departments, programs, journals and conferences—got its start in the early 1970s. Yet concern about gender in education had been going on for well over two centuries by then, spawned early in the European Enlightenment as education became imbricated with the hopes of democratic citizenship (Freedman, 2002, Chapter 3). Early debates were on the suitability of females to be formally educated—usually questioning their physical abilities—and, later, on whether they could be educated in the same classrooms as males. While such debates happened in all the countries represented in this volume, the American physician Edward Clarke perhaps best illustrates the 19th century view. His *Sex in Education, or, A Fair Chance for Girls* (1873) worried that girls’ “catamenial functions” (their reproductive capabilities) would be harmed by being put on the
same educational schedule as boys, a “persistent” model. Girls, he opined, should instead practice a schedule of “periodicity” that would see them learning—separately from males, of course—for only three weeks a month (see also Spender, 1987). Despite such arguments, coeducation and the general participation of girls in basic schooling and in higher education continued to steadily increase—as often for logistical and economic reasons as for equity’s sake—across the century following.

Increasing enrollment and coeducation, of course, do not mean that education was becoming equitable for males and females (and even less so when racial, ethnic, and socioeconomic intersectionalities are considered). By the advent of second-wave feminist examination of education in the 1960s and 70s, schools still presented very different experiences to males and females. Explicit segregation defined formal schooling, in both curricular offerings (e.g., shop class vs. home economics; general vs. advanced math; segregated physical education) and in extracurricular activities. The “hidden curriculum” (Jackson, 1968; Lobban, 1975) of gender, too—from what and who were left out of lessons, who was called on in class and how, who was disciplined and how, and even how students interacted in the lunchroom or the playground (e.g., Sadker & Sadker, 1994; Thorne, 1993)—structured the realities and possibilities of schooling for students and educators.

As the new field of women’s studies grew alongside second-wave feminist movements around the world in the late 1960s and early 1970s (e.g., Boxer, 1998), educational inequalities received increasing attention. Feminist thinking on education grew rapidly in the 1970s and cross-pollinated globally with the publication of pioneering books and reports uncovering sexism in schools. In Australia there was the commonwealth government report Girls, Schools and Society (Commonwealth Schools Commission, 1975), which led to a series of policies for girls’ schooling (Weaver-Hightower, 2008, pp. 45-52). In England, Byrne (1978) and Deem (1978) wrote influentially about the issues women faced in education. And in the United States, Sadker and Frazier (1973) illuminated what sexism was doing to girls in the nation’s schools, while others had begun to show how textbooks presented girls with limiting sex roles (e.g., Women on Words and Images, 1972).

The early years of the academic study of gender and education were characterized by struggle for acceptance of gender as a legitimate field, striving for policy and practice impact through women’s movement activism, and efforts to establish the field’s empirical and theoretical foundations. Indeed, these features make gender and education strikingly different from many other foundations of education (apart from multicultural and race studies); the history of education, curriculum studies, and others, by contrast, had a longer record, a more established reputation, and a deeper empirical basis on which to draw.

By the 1980s, feminist education studies as a field was hitting a stride. Books and journal articles were appearing at an impressive pace, and the topic of women and girls in education was represented in the formal curriculum of higher education. In schools across North America and the British Commonwealth, formal policy and informal teacher activism were taking on the sexism and patriarchal
structuring of schools and universities. “Difference feminism”—typified by works like Carol Gilligan’s *In a Different Voice* (1982), which laid out arguments for the difference rather than inferiority of women’s moral and intellectual development—began to vie for theoretical purchase and practical application with more dominant liberal feminist notions of equality of opportunity. That is, liberal feminist-inspired programs for girls in schools might present as role models women who were taking up traditionally male occupations; difference feminism, on the other hand, encouraged the formation of interventions like girls’ science clubs, where “girls’ ways” (in an essentialized sense) of doing science could be validated.

Yet more evidence of gender and education’s growing cohesion and legitimacy as a field arrived in 1989 with the first issue of *Gender and Education*, the field’s signal journal, founded by editor June Purvis, now Emeritus Professor at the University of Plymouth. While many other venues have published gender and education research (and continue to), the appearance and reputation of this journal, along with the formal creation of the Gender and Education Association in 2002, has given form and at least some direction to the field. Some evidence can be seen in the fact that several contributors and one of the editors of this volume either have been or now are editors of the journal: Skelton, Francis, Epstein, and McLeod.

The early 1990s saw a tremendous resurgence of interest in gender and education, particularly in the United States. Starting with 1992’s publication and media frenzy around the American Association of University Women’s report *How Schools Shortchange Girls*, academic attention and practitioner efforts refocused on the continuing problems of girls’ educational outcomes, their curricular representation, and—the newest moral panic—their self-esteem. A slew of popular books captured the imaginations of the general public and professionals throughout the nation (e.g., Orenstein, 1994; Pipher, 1994; Sadker & Sadker, 1994), leading eventually to a renewed federal policymaking focus on girls, especially the Women’s Educational Equity Act renewal in 1994.

For the rest of the world, especially in England and Australia, the mid- to late-1990s, and stretching into the 2000s, is perhaps most characterized by the rise of debates about boys’ education. Public concern about boys’ poorer literacy, grave social ills, more frequent dropping out of school, more frequent disciplining, higher rates of special education, and more, captured much media and policymaker time as well as government and school resources. In the United States, much of this was driven by popular press books on boys as endangered, diametrically different from girls, or as victims of feminism (e.g., Gurian, 1998, 2001; Pollack, 1998; Sommers, 2000; Tyre, 2008; from Australia, see Biddulph, 1998). In Australia, there was even a national inquiry that resulted in a report, *Boys: Getting It Right* (Australian House of Representatives, 2002), which laid out a conservative, recuperative masculinity politics (Lingard & Douglas, 1999) that would guide the use of millions of dollars of new funds for boys’ education (Weaver-Hightower, 2008). While other countries might not have invested so heavily (see essays from Martino, Kehler, & Weaver-Hightower, 2009), clearly boys issues have dominated the last fifteen years of attention in gender and education, leading to a “boy turn” in
research and practice (Weaver-Hightower, 2003) as (pro)feminists have been forced to answer crisis rhetorics about boys. Masculinity studies across the disciplines rose, in part, from this heightened interest in boys, and educational scholars have been major contributors to masculinity studies writ large (e.g., Connell, 1995, 2000; Kimmel, 2008; see also Adams & Savran, 2002).

When viewed as (an admittedly cartoonish) summary, gender and education might seem more coherent and inevitable as a field than one might reasonably claim. Yet gender and education has been marked from the beginning by both internal and external challenges.

From early on, critiques originating from within have helped to shape the feminist educational project’s theoretical, empirical, and methodological progress. Marxist and neo-Marxist feminists insisted that capitalism be foregrounded as a primary source of women’s oppression, for capitalism animated patriarchy in fundamental ways (Barrett, 1980). These scholars drew attention to the unique difficulties faced by working-class girls as they moved through the educational pipeline (e.g., McRobbie, 1978). Black feminism—what Alice Walker (1983) called “womanist” thought—also challenged the largely white, middle-class bias of most feminist philosophy and activism. Pointing out the white supremacist underpinnings of patriarchal relations and critiquing the separatist impulse of some radical feminists, Black feminism has pushed for increased attention on the oppressions of girls of color and those in postcolonial contexts (e.g., Amos & Parmar, 1984; Carby, 1982). Later focus on Black boys and men (e.g., Cuyjet & associates, 2006; Davis, 2005; Fashola, 2005; Ferguson, 2000; Noguera, 2008; Sewell, 1997) is similarly indebted to Black feminist work. Queer theory, finally—a later-given name for longstanding work on sexuality and gay, lesbian, and transgender issues—has had a profound impact on gender and education research. Using the work of Butler (1990, 1993, 2004), Halberstam (1998) and many others, queer theory has challenged the very categories scholars use—“gender,” “male,” “female,” and all the categories of “sexual orientation”—as well as their normative implications. The homophobia, heterosexism, and transphobia that underpin schooling were brought to light with the benefit of such theoretical and empirical work (e.g., Epstein & Johnson, 1998; Friend, 1993; Jennings, 1994; Kissen, 1996; Loutzenheiser, 1996; Mac an Ghaill, 1994; Martino & Pallotta-Chiarolli, 2003; Pascoe, 2007).

Other significant challenges to feminism in education have remained or emerged in recent years. This is certainly not a complete list, but a few points are particularly worth mentioning. The boys’ education debates have been a significant challenge, again taking significant attention and resources, and often in ways that promote a backlash against girls rather than a nuanced examination of the neediest boys (e.g., Ailwood & Lingard, 2001; Arnot, David, & Weiner, 1999; Epstein, Elwood, Hey, & Maw, 1998; Francis, 2000; Lingard, Mills, & Weaver-Hightower, 2012; Martino et al., 2009; Mills, 2003; Titus, 2004). While a challenge, boys’ education issues have not completely stopped work on girls’ continuing concerns. Science, technology, engineering and math (STEM), particularly, still garners much research and many grants, as girls continue to have lower participation and
worse outcomes in these fields (Ceci & Williams, 2010; U.S. Department of Education Gender Equity Expert Panel, 2001). Even more, though, a look at the tables of contents of major journals in the sociology of education and other foundational fields reassures one that diverse focuses on girls continues apace.

Shifts in theorizing gender have also created tensions, particularly poststructuralist and postmodern turns in gender theories beginning in the mid-1980s and continuing today. The questioning of categories inherent in these epistemological standpoints has, for instance, created rifts between feminists engaging in policy creation (an intrinsically normative activity) and those “post-” positions deeply skeptical of engagement with policy and the state (see also Yates, this volume). In return, earlier feminists lament the withdrawal from activism and engagement with schools represented in mainly theoretical projects.

Feminist educationalists have also struggled both theoretically and materially with the ascendancy of neoliberalism—the ideology “that human well-being can best be advanced by liberating individual entrepreneurial freedoms and skills within an institutional framework characterized by strong private property rights, free markets, and free trade” (Harvey, 2005, Introduction, para. 3). The state in neoliberal ideology must stay out of the way except to protect markets or to create private markets out of currently state-regulated institutions and resources. Thus schools and universities have come under the threat of market forces (league tables, vouchers, and the creation of academies in England or charter schools in the United States), and the state has scaled back funding and regulation to supposedly allow for the “entrepreneurial impulses” of local actors to innovate educational reform.

Neoliberalism has posed two major challenges to (pro)feminist work in education. First, often the regulation removed from local schools includes progressive reforms like gender equity; conservative views of gender are thus sometimes installed in schools under the cover of “local control.” In Australia, for instance, the recasting of the national gender equity framework following the boys’ education inquiry sought significant leniency for schools to create their own policies “in collaboration with their communities,” leaving it up to chance whether local communities would create equity-focused policies (Weaver-Hightower, 2008, pp. 113-123). The second challenge arising from neoliberalism’s rise involves its identity politics, for neoliberalism asks individuals to internalize personal responsibility (as homo economicus) for all successes and failures, stripping away notions of social contracts and state responsibility for the welfare of citizens. As Francis (2006) has argued, such positioning puts the blame for underachievement and lack of educational outcomes on individual boys and girls not being “worthy” of the investments made in them, so the continued failures and social ills of the working class and students of color prompt funding to get withdrawn or increasingly tied to accountability measures. For those working to improve the education of various genders and sexualities, this presents clear and present resource and rhetorical challenges. Though it wasn't part of their prompt, nearly all the contributors to this volume take up neoliberalism’s challenges in their essays.
AN INTRODUCTION TO SOME LEADERS IN GENDER AND EDUCATION

LOOKING FORWARD

Despite the many challenges that (pro)feminism in education faces, many reasons for hope remain. As one of us has pointed out elsewhere (Weaver-Hightower, 2008, Coda), there is hope to be found in the facts of the case in gender and education: there are progressive potentials in some boys’ education reforms; much work continues on girls; gender concerns grow and recede (witness the early 1990s in the United States); and a base of political support still exists for gender equity in all the included countries. Yet there are even more reasons for hope to be found in the pages that follow.

As part of their prompt, the authors of this collection were asked to look forward for the field. In many essays, a cautious optimism shows through. Yet the reason to pay attention to these voices is not their positivity; these voices are leaders perhaps primarily because they are not afraid to critique the status quo or the revered tales of the past. Each, in her or his own way, challenges feminisms to change, to think more deeply, to better explain themselves, and to be more active in the worlds outside of the academy. It is Kenway’s sense of being “naughty.” It is Francis’ refusal of “nice.” It is Lather taking on a new topic to “work against myself” and to “bring some complication to my more critical, feminist eye.” It is McLeod’s suspicion of the essentializing force of gender inclusivity. The leaders in the foundations of our discipline force us to grapple with the unknown, the unpopular, the inconvenient, and the heretical. As Yates puts it in her essay, though, “It is not comfortable to write about negative side effects of agendas one supports…. But I see it as … the necessary situatedness of work in this area, and that taking up issues of gender in the context of schooling is an ongoing ‘conversation’ rather than a search for a single model or skeleton key.” For us editors, then, hope resides in the critiques made herein, for constructive criticism betrays a love of purpose and confidence in what can be.

Hope also shines through the looking backward in the essays—the historical perspective they give—for things have indeed changed tremendously from when many of the contributors began their own schooling, entered teaching, or started training educators. One cannot but marvel, from this vantage point, at the value and efficacy of (pro)feminist work. It has been profoundly impactful on how education is practiced at all levels, from early childhood to adult education. From the language teachers use (“man” and “he” as universal are disappearing) to their curriculum materials, from enrollment figures to bachelor’s degrees awarded, from sports opportunities to career opportunities, few other social justice movements in education have been as successful as second-wave feminism. This progress might not have seemed so evident at the time, but these backward glances—a periodic stocktaking—inspire confidence that the field can adapt to changed circumstances and make more progress in the future.

NOTE

1 Though not unproblematic to do so (Carr, 2000), throughout this book we make a distinction between feminist and pro-feminist by sex. Feminist we reserve for women and pro-feminist for men.
For the sake of economy, when referring to both we will use (pro)feminist. Conceptually, however, one should avoid collapsing feminism and pro-feminism. As Lingard and Douglas (1999) show, pro-feminism (sans the parentheticals; see Lingard’s essay, this volume) has the following characteristics:

Pro-feminism sees the need to change men and masculinities, as well as masculinist social structures, while recognizing the hidden injuries of gender for many men and boys. Pro-feminists also support feminist reform agendas in education and more broadly, and at the same time recognize the structural inequalities of the current societal gender order, and of the gender regime within educational systems. Thus a relational conception of gender is assumed and the notion that a focus on boys in schooling of necessity requires a turning away from a concern with the education of girls is vehemently rejected. (p. 4)

While many feminists have increasingly come to share these perspectives, we believe it to be politically important to distinguish women as more oppressed by the larger gender order and therefore more invested in its reform.

REFERENCES

AN INTRODUCTION TO SOME LEADERS IN GENDER AND EDUCATION


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My life and intellectual history are closely connected to the late 20th Century rise of the second wave women’s, student and civil rights movements. These decades also witnessed the professionalization of women’s traditional fields of work—teaching and nursing—with their introduction into the academy. But as all feminists know, and my intellectual and personal history illustrates, there is no gradual progress towards the betterment of all or a fairer redistribution of power, and there is no safe discourse of equality. Any restructuring of the social relations of gender arising from local, national or global social, economic and political shifts often reasserts masculine privilege.

EARLY YEARS

As a baby-boomer born in 1947 into the first generation of a family of teachers, I benefitted from the rapid economic growth based on the temporary post-war settlement between capital and labour. Education was viewed as a public good and, just as health, a priority for government investment. Teaching offered social mobility to “talented” children of the working class such as my parents, my grandfathers being in small business and “on the trains” and my grandmothers being “homemakers.” In 1937, my parents met at Melbourne Teacher’s College as scholarships holders after teaching as apprentices, a decade before teaching became a university-trained profession. As a child of the 1940s living in a small country town where my father taught, I contracted polio at three, affecting my lower left leg. This was followed by time in hospital, rehabilitation and part-time school until I turned eight. My mother taught me to read, sing, and walk again while I exercised, before she reentered teaching part-time, then full-time, progressing from primary to secondary teaching, only then completing by correspondence an undergraduate degree in maths and science while credentialling as a lay Methodist minister.

My first instance of discrimination arose from being positioned as “crippled,” although this was not how I felt. My parents encouraged my physical activity, which I followed by playing competitive hockey, swimming, squash, tennis—random play rather than the structured treatment advocated by the physiotherapists’ norm. I then encountered systemic discrimination as a teaching studentship to fund my undergraduate arts degree at university was revoked because the doctor stated I was physically unfit to teach. Funded by a federal
government scholarship and my parents, I completed a Bachelor of Arts honours degree in history and mathematics. At Melbourne University, I was amongst the ten percent of school leavers in Australia attending university in the 1960s, and one of the tiny cohort of those from government schools. My sense of marginalization was not fully overcome by my involvement in the large anti-Vietnam War protests beside a friend who had been conscripted and with the sound in my ears of Martin Luther King’s speech “I Have a Dream” recorded by my American History professor.

Systemic gender discrimination became overt in the workplace where, as a married woman just like my mother, I was excluded from the government superannuation fund in which my husband, also a secondary teacher, was a member. I was also ignored in all correspondence about our jointly owned house and bank account, recognised neither as an individual or equal. My mother had always insisted on being named, a battle she fought as an individual prior to the second wave of the women’s movement and for which she suffered in the small country high school where both my parents taught. Equally, my father, a gentle and loving man respected by students and staff for his humour and intelligence, was depicted as passive, as if my mother’s strong femininity meant his weak masculinity. A clear gender division of labour permeated the belief systems, structures and cultures of teaching in the 1960s. Despite my mother’s promotion to a Melbourne secondary school, she was denied transport costs to her new job because her husband “owned the furniture.” After a successful landmark appeal, she was elected Vice-President of the Victorian Secondary Teachers Association from where she won equal pay for women teachers in Victoria and put the first strike motion to stop employment of unqualified teachers, both events occurring in the first week that I commenced teaching in 1970. Over the next decades, she graduated in the first Master of Educational Administration by correspondence cohort, and she was the first female principal of a co-educational high school in Victoria, while she developed child-care facilities, community centres and low rent houses for single mothers. Her history is also my story, informing my activism as a feminist and teacher.

PROFESSIONAL ACTIVISM

A conjuncture of events interlinking teacher professionalism and unionism shaped my first years of teaching. Due to the lack of trained teachers and unprecedented numbers of students completing secondary schooling, in my second year I became Year 11 Coordinator of 250 students in a large metropolitan high school. This meant managing the equivalent of an entire small school, with responsibility for timetabling, welfare, career advice, and, of course, discipline. There was no discourse of leadership in schools or the professional literature, and this role was for me indistinguishable from my elected positions of leadership in the union branch and staff association. Union activism in 1970s Australian schools focused less on wages and more on demanding registration of teachers; opposing
centralized external examinations and assessment practices; resisting teacher inspections; and supporting colleagues facing discrimination. With little government investment in professional development in schools, the weekly *Victorian Secondary Teachers Association News* was the source of educational theory and debates around texts such as the *Manifesto for Democratic Schooling* (Hannan, 1976) and a women’s newsletter after the 1975 International Woman’s Day. Freire’s (1970) *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* and Illich’s (1971) *De-schooling* lay on my bedside table jostling Germaine Greer’s (1970) *The Female Eunuch* and Marilyn French’s (1977) *The Women’s Room*, propped up by the *Little Red Schoolbook*. Reading radical professional literature was widespread amongst my colleagues, an enthusiastic team with whom I initiated and taught Year 8 General Studies that integrated English, history, geography, drama, media and sometime math through project-based curriculum. Such grass root activism reinforced my experiences as to the power of collegiality and how innovation in practice is nurtured through collaborative professionalism rather than top-down reform.

In 1975, having divorced and then backpacked around Europe, I volunteered for the failed Labor campaign after the federal Whitlam Labor Government’s contentious “dismissal” by the Governor General, one characterized by vicious attacks by religious and social conservatives targeting Labor members of parliament who supported women’s right to abortion. This was a lesson in how social and religious conservatives could mobilise public opinion to the detriment of most women. Education was for most teachers and feminists the religion of the 1970s and 1980s, the means to bring about social change and greater equality, and I was on a mission fuelled by this collectivist impulse. Teacher and parent activism mirrored high levels of political participation that informed policy through party committee systems, as was the case with the federal Whitlam Labor Government’s program of reform in health, welfare and education (1972-5). Under pressure from the Women’s Electoral Lobby, of which I was a member, feminist advocates were installed within the government as bureaucrats and advisors (“femocrats”) including a Women’s Advisor to the Prime Minister, who instigated the first Women’s Budget process that led to scrutiny of all policies for their impact on women. As in Scandinavia, state feminism provided a model for gender equity, informing gender-mainstreaming policies in the EU decades later.

State education bureaucracies were during the 1970s expanding rapidly, with principals often distant figures. The loosely coupled 20th Century educational bureaucracies were relatively benign, providing space for school-based reform compared to the tightly coupled corporate devolved “self-managing” market-driven systems after the 1990s. There were no strategic plans, mentoring, induction or succession planning programs. Indeed, in Victoria, bureaucracies “incorporated” representatives of the social movements (teachers, parents) as part of the policy process. Partial administrative decentralization in Victoria during the 1970s meant school councils included elected teacher representatives. Union activism advocating school-based decision-making together with a strong parent movement led to the establishment of Local School Administrative Committees and Equal
Opportunity Officers in all Victorian secondary schools in the early 1980s. Junior teachers such as myself were elected to manage the school with the principal and council. Despite this, my positioning towards authority was clearly more oppositional than compliant, as I practiced (often unreflexively) leadership from below. Not surprisingly, a key theme of my intellectual work has been tracking how feminism as a social, political and epistemological movement has negotiated the changing relations between the individual, the family, the nation state, through education to achieve gender equity and social justice.

MOBILITY AND CAREER TRANSITIONING

Back teaching fulltime in 1976, I commenced a part-time Masters degree at Monash University focusing on sociology, history as well as comparative education while dabbling in media studies—the feminist courses under attack from conservative women in the press. The book pile beside my bed grew to include feminist historians such as Anne Summers’ (1975) *Damned Whores and God’s Police*, who identified the historical stereotypes of Australian women as being either moral arbiters or the source of moral decay in society. Questioning my role as Year 11 Coordinator in the reproduction of class and gender differentiation through my advice to senior school students at a time of the collapse of the youth employment market in the 1970s led me in my Master thesis to an investigation descriptively titled *Education Policy Responses to Youth Unemployment in the 1930s*. Seeking an intellectual challenge after travelling around Southeast Asia and China with the Australia-China Association in 1980, I applied for a doctorate supervised by—and working as a research assistant with—David Tyack at Stanford University, well known for his landmark US historical text *The One Best System*. History was my passion. Tyack illustrated how history could avoid presentism while also writing a narrative that made his texts relevant to contemporary readers. In writing my doctoral thesis, *The Vocationalisation of Victorian Schooling 1900-60*, I was told to “just tell the story” and “not put theory in.” To focus on gender was seen to be a poor career move, although gender was a dominant theme in how schools differentiated through school type, curriculum, and how skill was defined and rewarded in the workplace.

For me, being single and mobile had created significant possibilities for career enhancement. Stanford offered a breadth of courses ranging from feminist history to ethics with Nel Noddings, comparative education with Martin Carnoy, teacher education with Milbrey McLaughlin, curriculum with Joan Talbert, economics of education with Hank Levin and statistics with Sam Bowles. My doctoral supervisory panel was headed by Tyack with the feminist economist Myra Strober, and Larry Cuban who researched school reform. My grad student colleagues included Patti Gumport and Bill Tierney, both now key scholars in higher education, an emergent field in Australia. Despite my eclecticism, I chose to concentrate on organizational theory, leadership and policy, graduating in 1986 with a Masters of Educational Administration and Policy Analysis as well as a doctorate in history written on a Macintosh computer purchased in 1984.
While such curriculum breadth appealed to my interdisciplinary instincts, my somewhat critical eye due to fifteen years as a progressive teacher practitioner, a geographically marginalised “southerner,” and a feminist alerted me to the America-centric assumptions embedded in organizational and sociological theory. Reading Bowles and Gintis’ (1974) *Schooling in Capitalist America* again reminded me of the function of elite education in reproducing class, ironically a word not used by social scientists at Stanford. Working amongst a critical mass of international students also illustrated the importance of a strong postgraduate research culture, the benefits of coursework across sociology and history as well as quantitative and qualitative methodology in preparation for beyond the doctorate, as well as a structured doctoral program including supervisory panels, colloquia and orals. Such experiences informed my approach to supervision and my involvement with the development of doctoral programs at Deakin University, where with colleagues from the UK such as Rob Walker, colloquia and professional doctorates were first introduced in Australian education faculties.

Back in Australia in 1984, I taught part-time at a different school and lectured at Monash University part-time in the history and sociology of education while completing my PhD in any spare time. I enthusiastically based a school professional development workshop on Wilf Carr and Stephen Kemmis’ (1986) *Becoming Critical* and Raewyn Connell et al.’s (1982) landmark sociological text, *Making the Difference: Schools Family and Social Division*; it was an introductory foray into critical theory and action research less enthusiastically received by my teaching colleagues more due to my poor pedagogy than their ideas. Penalized in a teacher promotion system that focused on seniority and subject specialisms both by my interdisciplinarity and my over-credentialling (2 Masters degrees and a near complete PhD), I applied in frustration for a three-year contract lectureship at Monash University in educational administration. With few applicants with similar qualifications in this emerging field in Australia, I got the job. When asked about my research agenda, I intuitively responded: school-based decision-making.

**BECOMING AND BEING A FEMINIST ACADEMIC**

My research has been informed by these familial, teaching, activist and education experiences in the formation of my academic—as distinct from my teacher—“habitus.” My first article in the *Journal of Educational Administration* was on participation and school-based decision-making informed by the feminist political theorist Carole Pateman’s (1980) *Participation and Democratic Theory* and organizational research indicating how worker involvement in decision-making led to greater commitment and productivity. My first book chapter was on teacher unionism and its role in policy and education reform within the corporate state. I put theory back into a chapter from my PhD for the *History of Education Review* with an historical examination of the reproduction of class through a study of how Melbourne University blocked school curriculum and assessment reform through control of assessment, in this instance drawing from Bernstein’s (1975) notion of closed and open systems. Fascinated by the feminist debates seeking to reconcile...
neo-Marxist materialist theories of labour and class with theories of patriarchy, I used feminist theories on technology, skill and the gender division of labour for a Journal of Education Policy article out of my PhD on the Gendering of Skill and Vocationalism in Twentieth Century Australian Education. Meanwhile, discontented with how the research in the field of educational administration, leadership and policy in which I was lecturing at Monash disconnected from my experience as a teacher, I found solace in a regular academic forum comprising of Melbourne, Monash and Deakin academics in the field. Here I encountered the critical perspectives of Deakin education academics: Richard Bates on power/knowledge relationships, Fazal Rizvi on multiculturalism, Laurie Angus on organizational culture, Peter Watkins’ labour process analysis of teachers’ work, and John Smyth on teacher professionalism that articulated with my own feminist concerns about the mainstream literature. I felt intellectually and politically at home once I gained a lectureship at Deakin in 1987 (Tinning & Sirna, 2011).

At Deakin, with Jane Kenway (see her essay, this volume), whose background was in sociology and feminist theory, our work was to introduce feminist perspectives into the field of educational administration and policy. While Jane initially concentrated on gender equity policy for girls and the marketization of education, my focus was on educational administration and leadership and “the managerial turn.” This was highly competitive “big boy territory,” largely dominated from the US, and wide open to feminist critique. Despite contestation within the field arising from the geographic margins (Bates in Australia, Greenfield in Canada, Grace in the UK and Codd in New Zealand), there was little feminist critique other than in the UK, USA, and NZ focusing on the under-representation of women in school leadership (e.g., Charole Shakeshaft and Gaby Weiner). Given the limited theoretical base of the masculinist mainstream literature, informed predominantly from scientific management, management theory, and structural functionalist sociology, my intellectual inspiration came from reading widely across the prolific feminist theory in philosophy, politics, history, sociology, and critical organizational theory—including the feminist standpoint theory of Sandra Harding (1986) The Science Question in Feminism and Dorothy Smith (1987) in The Everyday World as Problematic: A Feminist Sociology; feminist theorists of the state such as Anna Yeatman’s (1990) Bureaucrats, Technocrats, Femocrats: Essays on the Contemporary Australian State; and the femocrat, Hester Eisenstein’s (1996) commentary on feminism as a social movement and gender equity policy in Australia and the USA.

These texts pointed to emerging feminist debates over the politics of difference, gender/power/knowledge and social justice, and they foreshadowed the rise of feminist poststructuralist theory around the body and subjectivity, much of this by Australian feminists such as Elizabeth Grosz (Caine et al., 1998). Texts I read included Carole Pateman’s (1988) The Sexual Contract; Seyla Benhabib and Drucilla Cornell’s (1987) Feminism as Critique; Rosemary Tong’s (1989) Feminist Thought; Roberta Hamilton and Michele Barrett’s (1987) Politics of Diversity; Barbara Caine, Elizabeth Grosz and Marie de Lepervanches (1988) Crossing Boundaries: Feminism and the Critique of Knowledges; Iris Marion Young’s
FOREVER TROUBLING

(1988) Justice and the Politics of Difference; Linda Nicholson’s (1990) Feminism/Postmodernism; and Seyla Benhabib, Judith Butler, Drucilla Cornell and Nancy Fraser’s (1995) Feminist Contentions: A Philosophical Exchange. These outstanding feminist scholars highlighted how gendered dualisms between mind/body, public/private, and rationality/emotionality embedded in social, scientific, philosophical and political theory positioned women as lesser and weaker, incapable of leadership for example, or, as in liberal theory, assumed gender neutrality in terms of individual or collective experience. Such gender binaries or assumed gender neutrality were entrenched in the literature on educational administration and leadership which was littered with claims premised upon the universality of the male experience, hierarchical principles of scientific management, gender-neutral organisational theory, the competitive individualism of human capital theory, homogenous notions of organizational culture, and research based only on male hero leaders. In what has come to be a much cited pathbreaking chapter titled “Educational Leadership: A Feminist Critique and Reconstruction” published in Smyth’s (1989) Critical Perspectives on Educational Leadership, I undertook a systematic critique of the epistemological, political and sociological assumptions embedded in the field.

THE DEAKIN CRITICAL PERSPECTIVE

Deakin scholarship was perceived to be subversive to the dominant positivism of US scholars in the field of educational administration and leadership in the late 1980s. A Deakin symposium proposal to AERA was rejected in 1987, my abstract’s reviewer commenting that feminism was irrelevant to leadership and educational administration. The threat of alternative perspectives to the established educational administration field became transparent at the 1988 AERA conference. My co-presenters, both male stalwarts of US educational administration positivism, attacked me as a Bates “clone,” damned feminist theory, and demeaned as insubstantial because not informed by quantitative methodologies my feminist policy sociological perspective using Yeatman’s theories of the state to examine how the integration of social movements (women’s and parent movements) into the Victorian state education bureaucracy informed equity policy. Yet support from the audience for my feminist epistemological position that there were different ways of researching and knowing and forms of knowledge indicated that significant theoretical and methodological shifts were underway.

The scholarly environment at Deakin fostered critical perspectives and encouraged collaborative work in teaching and research in an unstructured and fluid organizational context. Stephen Kemmis had amassed scholars around action research alongside the Social and Administrative Studies group recruited by Richard Bates. Together with Jane Kenway, I organised a landmark conference in 1988 that led to the 1993 edited collection Gender Matters in Educational Administration and Policy: A Feminist Introduction; developed national and international networks and feminist scholars to visit, including Catherine Marshall, Gaby Weiner, Nancy Jackson, and Patti Lather, resulting in Lather’s (1991)
influential monograph *Getting Smart: Feminist Research and Pedagogy With/In the Postmodern* (see also her essay, this volume); and developed the compulsory off-campus Gender and Education Masters unit which students evaluated as being theoretically demanding and personally challenging. Our desire to promote feminist pedagogies “at a distance” was achieved through group teleconferences and reading groups, pushing ideas elaborated in feminist critiques of critical pedagogy by Elizabeth Ellsworth and Australian feminists Carmen Luke and Jenny Gore.

In terms of practice at Deakin, there was also a strong convergence between what we as scholars theorised around democratic participation and collegial practice such as electing Deans, which also provided opportunities for young female academics to participate in university wide committees. Deakin, modelled on the UK Open University, became an Antipodean node in the international network of critical scholars such Lawrence Stenhouse, Henry Giroux, Bob Stake, Michael Apple, and Tom Popkewitz. Such scholars contributed to the high quality off-campus course materials produced by interdisciplinary teams and published by Deakin University Press. Doctoral students were similarly attracted to Deakin, for its criticality and flexibility, as Deakin provided non-traditional approaches to entrance and supervision. Deakin’s reputation for “criticality” spread internationally as the “Deakin diaspora” of academics and graduate students moved on to other universities nationally and internationally during the 1990s (Tinning & Sirca, 2011). My intellectual pursuits were grounded by having a baby at forty-two as a mid-career academic in 1989, prompting my awareness as to lack of child-care support. Pregnancy was still viewed as “something private” by some and “not something a feminist did” by others.

**GENDERED RESTRUCTURING, RESTRUCTURING GENDER**

My overarching research program had now developed, on reflection rather than through planning, into an examination of the changing relationship between education, the state, the individual, and the family using the lens of leadership and governance and the analytical tools of policy sociology and feminist theory. Considering the impact of neoliberal restructuring on educational work and gender equity has been a long-term project of inquiry and the subject of three Australian Research Council discovery grants. The 1990s was a period of major educational and workforce restructuring in Australia instigated by the Hawke federal Labor Government and a neoliberal conservative government in Victoria. The latter downsized and marketised government schools, creating competition between “self managing” schools in a devolved system of governance that appropriated the earlier discourse of participation but which, ironically, disempowered teacher and parent organisations. “Choice” was to be exercised by the self maximizing individual without regard for others or “the public.”

The university sector had also been reconfigured post-1989, with Deakin amalgamating with a large College of Advanced Education in ways that had a negative impact on its research culture. Deakin’s Faculty of Education was
constantly restructured and downsized throughout the 1990s as Australian universities became corporatised through the processes of managerialisation and marketization. My research identified a “structural backlash” as the gendered nature of organisations advantaged those in power, largely men, in any restructuring, at the same time the conservative Howard federal Government provoked a popular backlash against feminism, multiculturalism and reconciliation with indigenous people. These studies drew on feminist theories of the state: Yeatman’s (1994) Postmodern Revisionings of the Political; John Clarke and Janet Newman’s (1994) The Managerial State; in organizational theory Clare Burton’s (1991) The Promise and the Price: The Struggle for Equal Opportunity in Women’s Employment, which challenged the gender neutrality of notions of merit, and Cynthia Cockburn’s (1991) analysis of the processes of gendering of organisations in In the Way of Women.

As one who has stayed at Deakin through multiple restructurings, I experienced the sense of loss and grief as my colleagues departed and as executive management was asserted over the academic voice (Blackmore, 1993). Emerging from the study of self-managing schools was evidence of the significance of emotions in organizational change and leadership in times of uncertainty. “Doing Emotional Labor in the Educational Market Place: Stories from the Field of Women in Leadership” (1996) drew a link between emotions, gender and markets within schooling during the reform period of the 1990s. In it I explored how the emotions of envy, desire, hope, greed and anxiety are critical to education markets and the affective economies of organisations in gendered ways, an analysis informed by Steven Fineman’s (1993) Emotions in Organisations, Jennifer Nias (1996) on the emotions of teaching and Arlene Hochschild’s (1984) The Managed Heart. Emotionality and rationality as feminists have long argued are inextricably connected, embodied and gendered. More recently, I have argued that emotionality is not just an individual but a collective behaviour—relational and contextual—and thus manifest in the emotional economies of organisations, in the politics of emotions exemplified by educator’s anger about neoliberal reforms, and in the post-9/11 “structures of feeling” (Williams, 1975) characterized by the generalized class anxiety manifest in educational policies of choice.

**WHY LEADERSHIP?**

Leadership became the lexicon for political, social and economic reform during the 1990s and the solution for devolved governance to self-managing institutions. While as a teacher and academic I have tended to lead informally, often against those in formal positions, leadership has been a useful lens through which to investigate the reconfiguration of educational organisations, academics’ and teachers’ work, and identity. Focusing on leadership facilitates unpacking different perceptions of the unequal distribution and effects of power and how gender works through what Smith refers to as the “relations of ruling.” Exploring women’s notions of being and knowing (Belenky et al., 1997), Nel Noddings’s (1984) ethic of care, and feminist research on women in leadership (Catherine Marshall on
feminist critical policy analysis and leadership; Gaby Weiner on gender equity policies; Miriam David on family/school relations [see also her essay, this volume]; Madeleine Arnot on sociology of gender; Kathleen Weiler on feminist educational history). The danger in my earlier work was to avoid the seductive notion that all women were infused with a sense of care and social justice. Such thinking “set women up” as the “natural” moral guardians of “the social,” recreating Enlightenment binaries that essentialised gender stereotypes, with little potential to produce social change generally or gender reform in particular as male advantage was left unexamined.

Raewyn Connell’s *Gender and Power* (1987; also see her essay, this volume) avoided this theoretical dilemma by focusing on the social relations of gender and how multiple masculinities and femininities are systematically produced in relation to each other through the gender regimes within organisations such as schools and the gender order of society, thus moving beyond simplistic male/female categories. The notion of hegemonic masculinity provided a capacity to understand how there were dominant notions of organizational culture(s) and images of leadership that were masculinist but which individual men did not necessarily “fit” while recognising that there were subversive and marginalized cultures existing in organisations and society. Connell’s theories of gender thus disrupted key organizational theories in mainstream educational administration that assumed a homogenous organisational culture that could be created, managed and directed by leaders. Gender is integral in the production and constitution of such culture(s) in ex/inclusionary ways.

These ideas informed my book *Troubling Women: Feminism, Leadership and Educational Change* (1999), the title drawing from Judith Butler’s (1990) *Gender Trouble*, in which I positioned my work as “feminist post-structuralism with a material bent.” *Troubling Women* focused on what I perceived to be three problematics in educational leadership: how the underrepresentation of women in leadership was a problem for democratic societies in uncertain times when leadership itself was in trouble; how women in leadership were trouble as they symbolized difference and undermined traditional structures and authority; but thirdly how feminists needed to trouble essentialising discourses about women leaders being more caring and sharing, thus conflating “being female” into “being feminist” while ignoring political, racial, ethnic and religious differences amongst women. Feminist research had, I argued, as with research on and by men, produced its own normative discourse that was impeding critical thinking within the field by focusing only on successful women and leadership while neglecting the wider restructuring of the social relations of gender, such as the casualisation and feminization of educational labour. Thus it was critical to shift focus onto material conditions, the ongoing unequal distribution of power and the social relations of gender within organizational and policy contexts. The feminist issue is not just representational equality for women in leadership but also about substantive ethical and value positions. While flirting with Foucault as many feminists did in the 1990s, I was nervous of its subtle determinism, and turned to feminist reworking of Foucault’s notion of power as being both positive and negative and not
incommensurate with the feminist theoretical and practical desire to better understand social change. Foucault’s disciplinary technology captured how women leaders individually and collectively exercised agency within certain cultural, structural and social constraints and performance management regimes.

In an increasingly corporatised university sector, being a female professor required choices about my own positioning. As an elected Deputy Chair of Academic Board from 2000 to 2004 and on numerous executive committees, I oversaw the academy becoming internationalized, curriculum commodified and disaggregated into discrete packages of content to be “delivered” not taught and re-branded as instructional design; academics evaluated by generic “satisfaction” market surveys rather than substantive evaluations of content and pedagogy; and a counterproductive skewing of administration towards quality assurance rather than quality improvement, as indicated by the sidelining of Academic Boards from line management (Blackmore, 2007). At the time, I was examining the impact of restructuring on leaders in schools, technical and further education institutes and universities. The data indicated that many but not all women leaders felt a strong sense of dissonance—similar to my own experience—between co-option into a management culture requiring compliance, and their scholarly commitment to their field and, for some, feminist commitment to social justice. The tension was between “being good” and “doing good.” Academics and teachers alike expressed feelings of disempowerment and de-professionalisation.

In Performing and Reforming Leaders: Gender, Educational Restructuring and Organisational Change, Lyotard’s (1984) notion of performativity—be efficient or disappear—had analytical value. But I also argued that “being seen to be doing something” had symbolic power without actually “doing something” of substance. Performativity was producing counterproductive tendencies, a focus on measurable proxies (citations, standardized assessment) as a poor substitute for quality and success, diverting the focus from “the real work” of teaching and research. Performativity also changes, as Judith Butler (1990) argues, practices and identities through repeated performances of gender. Stephen Ball (2000) also explored how performativity had local and global policy effects, and how performative organisations produce fabrication and loss of identity. Linking Ball’s work on performativity to critiques of New Public Administration by Newman and Clarke (1996) in The Managerial State, Deborah Kerfoot and David Knight’s (1993) work on management and masculinity with that of Alvesson and Billing’s (1996) theorising of gender and organisations provided a coherent framework for analyzing the way global relations were informing localised social relations of gender in organisations.

Feminist critical policy analysis, particularly through the work of Carol Bacchi (1999), raised the issue of how policy is treated as a solution to a problem rather than being seen as a process of solving a problem, raising the dilemma of categories with regard to equity (Marshall, 1997; Bacchi, 1999). To name women as a policy category essentialised women as a group; not to name them ignored gender inequality. At the same time, shifts in language meant notions of equity or equal opportunity were being weakened by the discourse of diversity (Blackmore,
2006) as difference was reduced to individual preference rather than the legacy of systemic group disadvantage. Nor was there a safe policy haven for feminists or “the other,” as the discourse of male disadvantage was mobilized as backlash gender politics during the 1990s. In leadership it meant reasserting old privileges in new forms of entrepreneurial masculinity.

GLOBALISATION: A USEFUL THEORY FOR FEMINISTS?

Poststructuralism became the theoretical fetish of the 1990s in education theory and, amongst feminists, it supplanted the unitary individual by a multiplicity of subjectivities, foregrounding the power of discourse and positionality through the work of Bronwyn Davies in Australia, Valerie Walkerdine in the UK and a key critique of psychology’s unitary subject in *Changing the Subject* (Henriques et al., 1984). Positionality usefully provided feminist poststructuralists a way to understand how women leaders experienced the contradictions of agency and constraint, their sense of ambivalence and ambiguity, even when in powerful positions. At the same time, while much attention was being paid to the production of gendered subjectivities, black feminists such as Patricia Hill Collins (1990) in *Black Feminism* and postcolonial feminists such as Gutterai Spivak (1988) in *In Other Worlds* were pointing to how globalization was fundamentally reconfiguring the social relations of gender and material conditions of women’s work and lives differently depending on their race, ethnicity and class. Feminists such as Elaine Unterhalter (2007) and Nelly Stromquist (Stromquist & Monkman, 2000) were charting how women and children were bearing the brunt of the structural adjustment programs in the 1980s in Africa and South America. The rise of the Australian Indigenous movement and recognition of how indigenous people suffered under colonial rule provoked national reflection as did Aileen Moreton-Robinson’s (1999) challenge in *Talkin’ Up to the White Woman* to white feminists. Taking seriously the politics of difference, how were white women, including myself, complicit in the whiteness of educational leadership (Blackmore 2010)? Meanwhile, the field of educational administration and policy has remained relatively untouched by theoretical moves in postcolonial, cultural studies, critical pedagogy and antiracist theories, continuing to assume a gender and racial neutrality in the focus on leadership as a quick solution to the complexities of increasingly culturally diverse educational relationships.

The new policy sociology developing from Stephen Ball’s (1994) notion of policy as discourse and text provided a useful tool in analyzing gender equity reform. It recognised the power of policy as discourse, and informed how policy informed leadership practices, created boundaries, could be enabling and disabling, and have contradictory and unexpected effects arising from how policy articulated into practice through multiple readings. Policy’s capacity to “steer from a distance” in systems of devolved governance also explained how academics and teachers felt more controlled than under the former bureaucratic regimes as they internalized the performance expectations. By the late 1990s, globalisation was a concept being mobilised across policy sociology, with early explorations about how the
local/global articulate particularly through travelling policies like neoliberal market theory and New Public Administration. As a feminist, suspicious of any new concept or theory in terms of what it meant for gender equity, I queried whether globalization was a useful concept for feminists, or was it merely obfuscating other fundamental changes in gender relations (Blackmore, 1999)? Questioning the notion of globalisation produced different questions. Where could feminists now make claims for equity if the nation state was weakened? Privatisation and commodification raised issues around the post welfare state as it moved from provision towards regulation. How did post-welfarism change women’s position in work as they took up the slack of the state around care for the aged, young and sick? What does the changing nature of educational governance across national systems and within nation states mean in terms of the role of international bodies such as the OECD and UNICEF for social justice (Blackmore, 2011)?

Further, the fragmentation of the public sector of health, welfare and education due to neoliberal market reforms increasingly feminized workplaces and produced glaring locational disadvantage by the end of the 1990s. My continuing interest in “at risk” youth led to an Australian Research Council research project on the Local Learning and Employment Networks in Victoria, created as a policy solution to better coordinate agencies managing youth transitions from school to work or further education in disadvantaged communities. This study produced evidence of network modes of working and leading, indeed a form of network sociality, and it raised questions as to whether corporate modes of governance can survive in transnationally and locally networked organisations, an issue I am currently exploring around the changing role of the entrepreneurial university.

Yet to focus on the global was not to neglect the local, and the identity work of teaching and leading. Throughout I have engaged in a critique of the dominant paradigms of school reform and leadership, in particular the narrow and reductionist focus of the school effectiveness and improvement movements which have decontextualised school reform and have provided justification for blaming individual schools for systemic failures, most explicitly through standardized testing and the comparison of individual “like” schools. Given the body of research on what produces educational disadvantage, my recent research focuses on what can be done, what is innovative and strategic, in school-based reform within disadvantaged communities. One trajectory explores how interagency collaboration supports resilient students and schools, and the role of government and non-government agencies in the formation of new networks of governance. Another focuses on how leaders can provide conditions for innovative learning environments, utilizing the concept of redesign from the New London Group’s (1996) multi-literacies. Redesign as conceptualised by Pat Thomson and myself (Thomson & Blackmore, 2006) is a purposeful collaborative process, about undergoing fundamental changes in practice, a notion that has informed case studies around spatiality, connectivity and pedagogical innovation in disadvantaged school communities. This body of research continues to highlight how public investment is required to produce systems conducive to enabling
school based reform that benefits all, and education has become a transnational and not a national project, treated no longer as a public but an individual positional good or form of capital.

With the shifting ideological and material terrain post-9/11, Bourdieu’s (1997) notions of field, habitus, capital and doxa have become appealing in my research on the regendering of academic and intellectual leadership in the transnational university, although necessarily reworked by feminists such as Lois McNay (2000) in Gender and Agency. Bourdieu has argued that education as a field has been subjugated to the fields of politics, economics and journalism, thus changing the rules, language and values of the field of education. The media is a recurrent interest since my honours history thesis on The Press and the First Victorian Parliament. Since then, I have explored how Melbourne University used the media to subvert inclusive science curriculum reform; how a Premier of Victoria mobilised the media to manufacture discontent and justify neoliberal school reform (Blackmore & Thorpe, 2003); and how the media represents leadership. These have contributed to theoretical explorations around the emergent area of “mediatisation” of educational policy in policy sociology.

REFLECTIONS ON THIS REFLECTION

As with all narratives, this narrative makes my life history more coherent than it seemed at the time. Much of what I did was opportunistic and serendipitous, out of kilter with the current organizational desire for alignment. My research has inevitably been inextricably intertwined with my life and teaching, in which I have, just as my research participants, experienced ambivalence about the seduction of formal leadership out of a fear of succumbing to the “managerial habitus” which privileges the logics of the market and managerialism over professional and ethical choices. These are new hard times for education and I would argue for women. Evidence continues to mount to the casualization and feminization of educational work; the widening gender wage gap despite women’s educational overachievement; a growing disparity between rich and poor students, schools and communities; and the intransigence of the under-representation of women in leadership. Throughout, social justice in and through education has been the driver of my intellectual work. Most recently, feminist philosophers and political theorists such as Nancy Fraser (1997) on redistributive justice as well as Amartya Sen and Martha Nussbaum (e.g., Nussbaum, 2011) on capability theory have provided new insights. Feminism as an epistemological, political and social movement continues to inform my daily practice in and through research, although feminism is not a unitary movement, more a range of practices and activities that has family resemblances transnationally, and in a constant state of contestation, as I am, over power/knowledge/identity.
KEY READINGS


REFERENCES


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