CONKER(QUER) TIME AGAIN: HOW TO WIN AT BOYS' GAMES[1]

Valerie-Lee Chapman[2]
North Carolina State University

Abstract

I examine the gendered nature of university adult education and how women continue to be disadvantaged in the "games" which characterize many graduate and professional programs. How can we change the "rules," or substitute "girls'" rules, for those in play? I suggest that, as women working for change, we first need to acknowledge the discursive practices and structures of university adult education as a "boys' game." I intersperse stories of women learning at university (drawn from my empirical research with women, and my everyday experience), with theoretical insights from post-modern and post-structural scholarship. I suggest we maintain the strategic essentialism of the feminist project, and work within the gendered spaces available to us. We can then make combined use of both gender and liberatory models of feminist pedagogy to improve women's learning experiences in their graduate education.

Résumé

Dans cette étude, j'examine la formation permanente en milieu universitaire sous l'angle des rapports hommes-femmes et la manière dont les femmes continuent à se trouver désavantagées par ces «jeux» qui caractérisent nombre de programmes d'études supérieures et de formation professionnelle. Comment pouvons-nous changer les règles du

---

[1] I acknowledge the invaluable support provided by an Izaak Walton Killam Pre-Doctoral Fellowship, and a Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada Doctoral Fellowship, in the preparation of this paper and its accompanying research.

[2] Valerie was regular presenter at CASAE, AERC and AERA and many in adult education know her and her work. She completed both her MA and PhD in Educational Studies at UBC and was beginning her career as a professor at the University of North Carolina in Raleigh. She was diagnosed in 2003 with lung cancer and despite many treatments, the advance of the disease could not be stopped and she died on September 4, 2004.

The Canadian Journal for the Study of Adult Education/
La Revue canadienne pour l'étude de l'éducation des adultes
17,2 November/novembre 2003 20-38
ISSN 0835-4944

jeu ou leur en substituer qui soient conformes à notre manière de jouer, nous, les femmes? Je propose que, en tant que femmes engagées pour le changement, nous devons tout d'abord reconnaître le caractère masculin des pratiques discursives et des structures de la formation permanente en milieu universitaire. J'émaille cet article d'histoires de femmes qui étudient à l'université (elles sont tirées de ma propre recherche empirique auprès de femmes ainsi que de mon expérience personnelle), en y ajoutant des perspectives théoriques fondées sur la recherche dans les domaines du post-modernisme et du post-structuralisme. Je propose que nous conservions l'essentialisme stratégique du projet féministe tout en travaillant au sein des espaces où s'exercent les rapports hommes-femmes et qui nous sont accessibles. Ensuite, nous pouvons également combiner les modèles de rapports hommes-femmes et les modèles de libération afin d'améliorer les expériences d'apprentissage des femmes dans leur programme d'études supérieures.

Earlier in the Fall, while I was thinking about what I wanted to say in this paper—about women, about change and about university adult education[3]—I went for a run, hoping to get some inspiration. I did. I slipped on a horse chestnut. "Oh! I thought, it's conker time!" When I was a girl growing up in England, a continent and thirty years ago, that was what we called them. *Conkers*, not horse chestnuts. The aim was to get the biggest one you could find, hang it on a string, and smash every other conker in the playground until you ended up with the conquering conker. I remembered, too, the day I was invited by one of the boys at the village school to play conkers. I was thrilled—me, a girl, playing with the boys! It ended in blood. Mine. I transgressed, broke a rule, and one of the boys punched me in the face. My nose erupted and I was sent home in disgrace (not him). I rode home on my bike, blood dripping down my uniform, and my mother screamed at me, "What have you done?" I said, very proudly, "I've been playing boys

---

[3] By "university adult education," I mean the educational activities undertaken by returning mature graduate students (those who have spent some time away from the university, in work of both paid and unpaid nature), as they seek to obtain a professional or master's or doctoral degree, and specifically, degrees which are based in educational studies. This definition includes, for example, practitioners seeking graduate degrees to complement their practice—teachers, administrators, adult educators, nurses, community developers—as as well as those new to the field of adult or higher or initial education. I am particularly interested in the experiences of mature women students, as gender remains an oppressive category within post secondary educational settings (see, for example, Stalker & Prentice, 1998).

games!" I didn't tell her how much my nose really hurt, nor that I didn't think I'd sign up again for conkers, play boys games.

But of course, I did, I do, I will. And when I am reminded of how far the boys still control our playground, I get a bloody nose, all over again. When I see sexist messages on email, when I hear comments from women faculty that feminism is old hat and we should just work hard and prove ourselves, and when I read that nine men—no women—will be granted honorary degrees at my university's May Convocation, I think, Boys games! Again! No one protests much anymore, it's not cool to be a feminist. But I think it's time to talk about some of these things again, to raise questions, to get us thinking.

I heard a lot about boys' games while I was researching my thesis, "*All This Talk!*" (Chapman, 1996).[4] I worked with five women participants, Jane, Lana, Lee, Sonia and Yolanda, to find out how their own experiences as women learning in graduate adult education and professional programs had affected their program planning practice. I interviewed them each three times and then we had a wonderful focus group/feast where we talked about interpretations, food, each other, the study and my work, and what we thought I could make of it all. I'd given each of them an initial life story analysis, and some thoughts on common themes, but I wanted them to meet each other and talk, together, about women learning, and working with learning. I wrote up the study to include my own experience (Sonia had said, "These researchers! They encourage people to use personal narrative, to tell all, but they never use their own stories," so I'm in it too, not wanting to be one of *those* researchers). I then analyzed all the stories, (over 56, short and long, and sweet and sour) to see what our personal narratives revealed about the larger educational discourse.

The stories fall into three categories of experience: In the first, the metaphor is **talk**, where talking is learning, connecting, being embodied, being-with, being personal, creating community, and being-women. Here the women learnt the theory that validated their practice. For the second group of experiences, the metaphor was **opposition**—from the "old, male model" where the women struggled with peers, teachers, committees, and fellow students; they experienced subtle misogyny and covert violence, felt devalued, sexualized, and yet, paradoxically, learnt how *not* to plan

---

[4] Speaking of boys' games: this paper was prepared using APA style guide, **except** for the Reference section in which full first names of authors are given, in accordance with feminist bibliographic procedures (see Tescione, Susan M., 1998).

programs. The third category of experience was the bleakest. Here the metaphor was **power**; the women experienced overt violence and felt the mis-use of power, but they also learnt how to use power to create their own programs. Each of them told me, "It's about power." Who has it, who doesn't, who uses it, who abuses it. Women, they said, were often as bad as the men. I asked them, Can we, as women, fighting, teaching, learning, work toward changing that?

I'd like to say two things before I move on. First, when I talk about boys' games and girls' games, I am aware that there are many more categories of oppression than gender, or sexual difference. I hope readers will understand that I am, in a sense, using shorthand, and that my arguments can be taken to address questions of alternate subjectivities—sexuality, masculinity, femininity, race, class, disability, ethnicity, and ageism. Secondly, I am including some stories from my own life, and some told me by the Five Women: the stories may interrupt, disrupt, or illuminate the main narrative of the paper. I'm claiming a "rhetorical space" for my writing in the academy, and while I don't always play by its referencing rules, I am consistent in using a feminist "epistemology of everyday life" (Code, 1995), to produce a dialectic of individual experience with a theoretics of challenge and change. After all, as Morwenna Griffiths (1996) says about (auto)biographics, "my individuality is shaped by political forces, and what I feel as deeply personal is affected by public systems of control" (p.1). Edwards and Usher (1996) point out that adult educators are, par excellence, "story-telling and story-receiving beings," who might in these "new times" make good use of the (postmodern) turn to textuality and narrative to provide insight into "the contemporary condition" of adult education (p. 217). Let's see, shall we?

There are three specific boys' games I'd like to talk about, and how their rules work to keep us girls standing on the sidelines—cheering, or booing, often puzzled, always anxious... and usually out of play. These games are: *Resist or reproduce the structure*, (or, "Do you really want to make such a fuss, dear?"); *the "posts" game,* (or, "Pick one, any one, madam, 'modern, 'structural, 'colonial, all guaranteed to make you free!"); and *the space game*, (or, "Will that be a public or private space, madam?")

Do You Really Want To Make Such A Fuss?

> I say, Knock, knock, excuse me, the emperor has no clothes on! And they say, Oh, Sonia! Isn't she funny, sweet young visionary, and so idealistic! And then I see professors and I think, what do they really believe they're doing? They're baby boomers and they're privileged

> and I think what this is about for them, is paying off their mortgage, and it's about surviving, it's about getting their kids through university, but they say, Oh, why do you want to make such a fuss?
>
> (Sonia, research participant in Chapman, 1996, p. 301)

As women in adult education we can resist or reproduce, or, at the very least, acknowledge extant power relations, what Elizabeth Tisdell (1993) has called interlocking systems of oppression, and take up our "positionalities" (Tisdell, in Hayes & Flannery, 2000). In the early 90s, Tisdell (1993) found that "the literature dealing with power relations based on gender and race in the field of adult education is minimal" (p.205), particularly as it related to classroom interaction. Furthermore, "the lack of feminist theory which uses gender as a unit of analysis in theory development in adult education and learning" (p.206) has contributed to the androcentric perspective of adult education literature and curricula (see also, Burstow, 1994). And if Althusser was right, as one of my Noted Adult Education Scholars told me, and curriculum is indeed a selection from culture, then adult education re-enforces, at the very least, categories of gender oppression, not only within the university, or classroom, but also into society beyond.

There has been progress since then: Feminist, or woman friendly, pedagogy is beginning to become more evident in the adult education literature, from the early tentative beginnings (Burge, 1990; Caffarella, 1992; Hayes, 1990), to now, when new women adult education students can actually read about *other women* in adult education texts (see Miles, in Scott, Spencer & Thomas, 1998; Thompson, 2000; Hayes & Flannery, 2000), a privilege denied to the Five Women and me. And they can even laugh aloud as they read pieces like Bobbi Sparks' (1998) savagely funny account of how "old, fat women," shunned in academic spaces, have to learn, before they do anything else, to deal with the physical apparatus of higher education—library turnstiles designed for slim athletic young men and those horrible chairs with the confining arms which hold one in so tightly it's impossible to draw breath, let alone provide cogent answers to svelte professorial questions. But in terms of dismantling the discursive structures that perpetuate asymmetrical power relations as they are manifested, say, in the supervisory process, or in the teaching process, change proceeds at a glacial rate in postsecondary education. For example, in conducting a literature review, my fellow author and I found almost no critical material or research on just how graduate supervision operates as a discursive practice (Chapman & Sork, 2001). While scholars acknowledge power as a factor in educational practices (see Cervero, Wilson & Associates, 2000), they still don't seem to

get into the nitty gritty of the everyday, the petty minutiae, the banal, the daily drudgery of the "common place" spaces (Relph, 1976)

And higher and adult education is still a discursive and gendered practice. As I raced by the Women Students Office on campus recently, late for a class, I stopped dead in my tracks to read these statistics posted on their notice board. Total faculty at my university, 1832—77.7% men, 22.3% women; at the lowest faculty rank, instructors and lecturers, women predominate at 64.8%; at the highest level, full professor, women make up only 11.1%; of the 2152 doctoral students—those who will in most cases go on to become faculty, and who will therefore teach at institutions of higher education—women comprise only 39% (UBC, 1997). In a recent survey (Guppy & Trew, 1995), only 46% of the women doctoral student respondents felt scholarship by women was valued, and while 64% of women doctoral students were satisfied with their graduate student experience, 47% felt that the academic environment in their department/school was unwelcoming of *all* students. Over 40% reported that "some professors in their department ridiculed student's work," and 67% wanted "more attention given to gender issues." Overall, students (male or female) with female supervisors were more satisfied, but it is disturbing to note that women students generally felt less supported than male students by their supervisors. How can women work toward changing *those* figures? Surely it's better now? No, according to the latest report from the Equity Office, not much... A hiring goal of 75 more women university teachers was set in 1996, but only 17 more were on staff by 1999 (*UBC Reports*, April, 2000).

We need to make a fuss, disturb the universe of the university, try to de-naturalize our environment and expose its discourses, those discourses that function as a set of rules (there's those rules again!) and concepts, the discourses which regulate what it's possible to speak of, and what is not, what is true and what is not. This is how power is exercised. Foucault claimed that there are no all-powerful subjects manipulating discourses, simply discoursing subjects—everyday people like you and me—who produce and deploy discourses. As Jane said, "because *you* played the game according to the rules, you have to maintain the system because that's what got you there, if you change that perhaps you won't be in the same position of power" (Chapman, 1996, p. 282). Although a discourse functions because of its very taken-for-grantedness, the "everybody knows it works this way, why fuss about it?" of its nature can still be challenged. The Five Women recognized their education was "all about power." They said, we need to speak up, reveal the discourse as we see it, give the structure it supports a

kick on the shin as we walk past it.... Enough kicks, and perhaps the structures will start to wobble.

> Power is not a male issue or female issue, it's a human issue. When people get to a certain level of power then the behaviour can be very much the same, no matter what their genitals look like! I was thinking about that surgeon who took the breast he'd just amputated and threw it at the student nurse, and how we just quaked whenever he was around. But there also was a supervisor, a woman, just a huge woman, you would hear her come walking down the corridor, looking for you, to catch you out... and I think of his anger just coming out all over the hospital, and I think of this huge woman, her anger coming out inappropriately... they both had power. (Lee, research participant in Chapman, 1996, p. 285)

The "Posts" Game: Which One Will Make You Free?

> The first articles in the course were so academic, literally you sat with the dictionary beside you trying to figure out the meaning of this word, and what this sentence said, and at least one or two women dropped that course after the first night because they thought it was beyond their capabilities intellectually. Well what a shame! (Lee, research participant in Chapman, 1996, p. 290)

I want to talk here about the postmodern boys' games that can produce a dislocated, empty rhetorics of theory (see Constas, 1998; Pillow, 2000; St. Pierre, 2000, for a lively exchange on this topic) and can mask/mark much critical, poststructuralist and feminist pedagogy, so that the literature often lacks use or relevance for the local, situated teacher or student. Morwenna Griffiths (1995) sums up feminist reactions to the postmodern very nicely. We move between fear and wariness; becoming equally postmodernist in a "joining" them strategy; anxiety and ambivalence; and straight denial. I am, apparently, what she calls a "feminist post-structuralist," an "active subject" who positions herself, as well as being positioned by others. I "shift." But I am constant in my agreement with the Fearful Feminists like Beverley Skeggs (1991), who says, "Postmodernism represents a hegemonic war of position within academia... an attempt by disillusioned male academics, who feel they are no longer at the 'centre' or have authority and control over knowledge, to win back credibility and influence" (p. 261).

Postmodernism has neither withered nor died in the millennial academic garden, but rather seems to be gathering in denseness and strength, and, if not

flourishing in adult education's acres, it has put out a few manly shoots (see Usher, Bryant & Johnson, 1997, and etc.). But Libby Tisdell, distinguishing between the "ludic" postmodernism of elite academics and the "resistance" postmodernism of "particular marginalized groups" (2000, p. 170), shows us girls how we can use postmodernism—very, very cautiously.

The problem for feminist students encountering this pantheon of white, male, European (O.K., French) gods is that, if they have learned about adult education as historically committed to the (albeit masculine) Enlightenment ideals of liberation, justice, progress and equality, the lack of a master narrative, the loss of a cohesive political grounding for action, is deeply disturbing. Nancy Hartsock (1990) lamented the Death of the Subject/Author just at the "moment when so many of us who have been silenced begin to demand the right to name ourselves, to act as subjects rather than objects of history" (pp. 163-164), as does Patricia Hill Collins (2001), who feels that essentializing race and knowledge constructions is still politically useful. I don't want to get into the endless and non-productive debate over what the postmodern "really is" (itself a modernist concept), because what needs to be asked is, How does it all work out on the ground? What does postmodernism mean for women who want to work for change in their practice, or their life?

Well, first we need a space to speak. But if Gayatri Spivak is right, there is no room for the subaltern (student) woman to speak, and while postmodernism apparently allows us to theorize difference, it works against the strategic essentialism required of a political project like feminism. For in the zeal to be thoroughly (post)modern, gender itself can be deconstructed, revealed to be nothing more than a 'performance', the effect of a set of contested power relations based in "defining institutions and phallogocentrism and compulsory heterosexuality" (Butler, 1990, p. viii).[5] Radical feminists are aghast (what, no gender?), as are (neo-) Marxist, materialist and socialist feminists. And in the classroom we worry so much about essentializing and totalizing, and our own white, middle class angst, that we can become paralyzed, or held hostage to a fear that in speaking for others (Alcoff, 1992), we are still colonizing. We silence ourselves...

---

[5] In point of fact, Butler's aim has been to keep contesting the category of gender, to keep it in play, to continually trouble gender, but her work has been read superficially. Probably because it's hard reading, even if worth it. And of course, she got given the bad writing prize for her game playing, and it's made her less credible, being in that penalty box. As if Derrida and Deleuze write pelucidly....

Or worse, we adopt the "father tongue" (Tompkins, 1987), and speak like the boys, playing the game with all the right masculine language, thus excluding, in "a discourse not meant for her," the returning women students, who are already deeply dis-eased with the level of theory and vocabulary expected of them. Women like Lee, when she sat there in her adult education classroom. Women like me, who first thought the Foucault referred to in my Foundations of Adult Education class was the boring guy with a pendulum, in that awfully smart novel I'd taken back to the library, unread. (It was only one of two references, incidentally, to Foucault in my master's program).

I suggest that we continue to hold on to the political project of feminism, essentialist or not, recognizing that, as Sandra Harding and Donna Haraway (both good girls, if posties,) have told us, situated, or standpoint, knowledge offers a powerful substitute to the de-contextualized, dis-embodied, un-gendered, objective knowledge of the main/male stream universalistic pretensions of Cartesian epistemology. Contrary to the fears of many women, rightly inspired by critical readings of second and third wave feminism, we need not speak essentially, we need not become ethnocentric, we need not relativize by privileging experience, nor need we be a member of a subaltern group to create a subversive tactic. If one is a member of a dominant group, one can empathetically "start off thought" from the lives of marginalized people (Harding, 1991), without having recourse to the "God's eye view", or "God-tricks" (Haraway, 1991) of Enlightenment epistemology. "Starting off thought" from the view of the oppressed is not about being inauthentic, it's more about "earning the right" (Spivak, 1988) and the ability to speak for others—for political purposes.

Boys' Games: Daily Journal

> Beginning of term: I'm really excited. I am going to take a class in Philosophy and Social Theory! I am sure it's going to be great! The Prof. is a Great Man in his field, very clever, and funny. I liked him when I met him. The students are from all over—Economics, Law, Planning, Geography, English, and just me from Education, they think we're pretty dim, apparently, and I'm also the token OP (old person).
>
> Midterm break, finally. I can't stand this culture of critique. I still don't know anyone's name, but I do know we've all learned the rules here—when you present the reading, make sure you avoid any engagement with the ideas, just destroy any credibility the author may have previously had for you, act like you've read **all** of Said, Spivak and Bhabha and Walter Benjamin—**and** understood them!—

make comparisons and sneer at the writing, the apparatus, and the weakness or fallacy of the argument that's been made.

I notice too, the authors who get the worst treatment are women—not that there're many, 5 out of 22 of the required readings. It's a three hour ordeal, the antithesis of good pedagogical practice. But the Professor is really brilliant... Everyone suffers from performance anxiety—I went into the women's washroom just before class, and the woman who was presenting next was there, in tears, her nose was bleeding, "Just stress," she said. Three students have never said a word, four dropped out. And now it's my turn. I liked the reading, **and** it's by a woman. I know it will be torn apart. I give a fifteen minute presentation, and end by suggesting we use several feminist authors to understand the ideas presented in the article. I pose several questions for discussion. Dead silence. The Great Man looks away and speaks, "Apart from the fact that she has only **one** point to make, endlessly, in this paper—" "But!" I interrupt, "what makes you think a man would have more than one thing to say?" There goes my grade...

But I had to speak, to interrupt the discourse that is reproducing the "old male model" in this discipline, this space, this time. Yolanda said it best, "Education at this level is primarily masculine dominated. I don't care what those guys say, about trying to be feminist, they miss the boat! Some of them didn't even get to the dock! There's still subtle misogyny, comments on your paper like, "Knee jerk feminist reaction," and being shut down in class" (Chapman, 1996, p. 259). Oh yes!

The Space Game: Will That Be Public Or Private?

Education happens at the site of the body. It was all about controlling my body!

– Sonia in Chapman, 1996, p. 279

I'd like to spatialize the five women's stories, and my own; it's hard to challenge the old male model, especially in the public spaces of the classroom and the curriculum. This is precisely because public space, far from being the "sphere of universal reason and the transcendence of the disembodied, disinterested, Cartesian observer," where the "liberal ideals of equality, impartiality and universality are achieved" democratically (Duncan, 1996, p.2), is really a space set aside for white, bourgeois, able-bodied, heterosexual males (Rose, 1993; Deutsche, 1996). The gendered dualisms of

mind/body, reason/emotion, immanence/transcendence have spatial corollaries in the exteriority/interiority and public/private dualisms. "Women who have managed to be admitted to active participation in the public sphere have usually done so according to implicitly male rules," says Nancy Duncan (1996, p.3). The difficulties women face in educational settings are exacerbated in public spaces like the classroom. That's because women are intruding into the spaces where the rules of the boys' games are enforced.

Meaghan Morris (in Griffiths, 1995) tells us that "Foucault's work is not the work of a ladies man" (p.228), but I find that taking some of his notions and working with them *spatially* helps me to discern some discursive practices which linger and loiter in murky educational spaces. Foucault only (provocatively) sketched out a theory of resistance, and although he intended to complete a genealogy of gender after finishing the *History of Sexuality*, (as he says in the preface to Volume II), he became interested in first finding out how the early authors had viewed subjectification, but then, because of his early death, he never did give us girls much to go on. He does however, concede gender as a category of oppression—he talks of resistance struggles, of opposition to the power of men over women (Foucault, 2000, p. 329), and he also places the family, as well as schools, firmly in the category of disciplining institutions, [6] along with prisons, factories, hospitals and mental asylums as he lays out his history of the changes in disciplinary power, where the state comes to have, not only sovereign power over the subject's body, but also power over the whole of that body's life. The totalizing control of both populations and individuals is achieved through normalization, brought about by surveillance and self-regulation; this bio-power, as "an anatomo-politics of the human body" (Foucault, 1980, p.139), works through "techniques" (conflations of discourses and practices, with political and social institutions), articulated on the/*our* body.

Regulation and discursive practices in education are about the construction of the teacher's, or the oppressor's, subjectivity/body, as well as the learner's. Madeleine Grumet (1988) compares the male look of pedagogy to the surveillant (Foucaultian) gaze, and notes that "Women watch themselves being looked at...and the surveyor of woman in herself is male" (Grumet, p. 47). Self-regulation. Is that why we worry so much about "essentializing"? Do we think some male rule-keeper is standing just outside

---

[6] What I find interesting is how many of these institutions are staffed by large numbers of women and how many of those women are trained in graduate programs like mine. Of the Five Women in my study, all five worked in such institutions...

the frame of our public space, making sure we play by the right rules of the academy? If he doesn't watch for our rule-breaking, we will. We are like the teachers in Kate Rousmaniere's essay—"*just so tired*" ... of watching ourselves, of teaching the "right" way (Rousmaniere, 1997).

Bio-power works on the bodies of learners, too, especially in public spaces. All the women in my study, but especially Lee, Yolanda and Sonia, talked of having their affective and somatic knowledges devalued, and having to aim for a rational, disembodied objectivity in order to pass courses. The hardest thing about graduate education was the process of evaluation. Yolanda said she felt all of her was judged, not just her work, and her grades were the indicator of whether she had made a space for herself in the university. Sonia spoke of feeling physically marked by a professor who evaluated her work, her poetry and her Buddhist philosophy poorly, and recounted the story of a disastrous attempt to get him to change the mark. She described the workings of the power relations in his office, that private space, as "sado-masochistic":

> Like there's a script happening that is overwhelming, and to break out of the script is almost impossible...outside of that institutional context [space] he would have been the one culpable and needing to explain himself for his cruelty to me in his written remark! Instead he had pushed it all over to me as if I was neurotic and had a problem and that I had to explain myself. I couldn't get out of it, I knew it was not right, I struggled. I wanted it to be clear, I wasn't going to grovel. It was his fault. But I did, I nearly cried. When I went home, I wrote a poem, Herr Doktor, or Herr Professor, your grades are mutilating marks on my face. (Sonia, research participant in Chapman, 1996, p. 278)

Foucault (1980) says, "a few great political and economic apparatuses (university, army, writing, media) control the truth" (p.77), and he refers often to "truth games." He suggests we ask not what is "true," but what effect it has on us and our practice to take something as "truth." Perhaps instead of trying to change the "truths" in public educational spaces, or trying to avoid regulation of our bodies privately or publicly, we should work in the spaces that *are* familiar to us, where *we* make the rules, playing our own games. I am reminded of Marge Piercey's poem, *In the Men's Room*, which begins:

> When I was young, I believed in intellectual conversation

and ends:

> Now I get coarse when the abstract nouns start flashing.
> I go out to the kitchen to talk cabbages and habits.

> Economy is the bone, politics is the flesh. (The Raving Beauties, 1983, p.83).

Let's do as she suggests, let's use kitchens, coffee rooms, lunchrooms, the spaces by the photocopiers and the fax machines – and any office that looks private or woman friendly. Let's talk, coarsely, about power, and knowledge, and bodies, and changing how we teach, and how we learn. Above all, let's "make space" in our adult education theory and practice for women (Sheared and Sissel, 2001).[7]

Girls' Rules: Daily Journal

> I'm really excited. I'm taking "Women and Education." I've heard good things about the professor, she's a feminist, and although I'm in Adult Education, I think I'll be O.K. This is my very first course about Women in/and Education. Like Jane, I've come all the way through my Master's program without having any significant experience with women instructors in the Faculty of Education.
>
> We have to do four readings, and then write about what kind of feminist we are. Why do we have to be a kind, I ask? "Well, we can't just **essentialize** and assume all women are the same!" I run into two of the women from my class. "How are you keeping up with all these assignments?" "I don't know," I say, "not at all well, and I'm getting bad marks, she says I'm not critical enough." The other woman replies, "Well, the class is plenty critical, I haven't wanted to speak up, I thought we would talk more about working to change things, but it's all this theory."
>
> We had a good reading to end with, by Anne Manicom. She concludes that far from formulating "rules of practice" we should conceptualize feminist pedagogy as a set of things to think about. Because in some feminist classrooms, (like this one?) even when the "rules of practice"—collaboration, sharing, experience—are adhered to, there is still silencing and no examination of the power relations and dominations in the classroom. I think you have to be respectful, **and** learn how to be a good teacher, because even if you're a good feminist, it doesn't mean you can automatically teach well. That's a hard lesson for me to learn. And so disillusioning, as if I'd thought

---

[7] For those who think adult education is woman and other friendly, check out the Foreword by Phyllis Cunningham, who describes how hard it was to get this book published… not a decade ago, right now!

that a feminist would automatically be a good facilitator, but I should have remembered the Five Women's stories…

Hype About Hybridity: Resisting In-Between...Slyly

Taking Katharyne Mitchell's (1997) point, that poststructuralists who focus on "linguistic and cultural disruptions to hegemonic norms," abstract resistance too far from the "social relations of everyday life," I want to make some concrete statements. First, look at the rules of the academic games we think we play by, and decide if those are boys' rules, masculinist rules. By masculinist I mean: the choice of topics for research; the way that research is to be written up in "un-extravagant, unembellished, unpretentious, unexceptional, un(re)marked" ways (Rose, 1993, p. 8); the assumption of rationality and knowledge as separate from bodies, emotions, values, history, and location (Kerka, 2002); competitive classroom practices; isolating supervisory practices; in short, all the discursive ways that signify that the scholar/teacher of the university's choice is what Donna Haraway (1991) calls the "master subject." White, bourgeois, heterosexual and masculine. Once we acknowledge the rules that govern us, we can think about changing them, or living with them, or making our own rules. We need strategies for learning and teaching which honour "girls' rules" about valuing experience, collaboration, and sharing, *as well as* the boys' rules which value abstraction, theory, and criticism. And let's try to avoid the dualisms that mark the spaces of Cartesian and masculine education; let's try working with "*and's*" instead of "*or's.*" Let's combine (unfashionable) gender models (Belenky, et al., 1986; Burge, 1990; Hayes, 1990) *and* (less déclassé) liberatory tactics to enhance women's learning (Burstow, 1994; Briskin, 1990; Tisdell, 2001). Because they are not mutually exclusive categories (Maher, 1987).

Secondly, I have to say, that although I am (now) a good (feminist) girl, I find much to work with, practically and theoretically, in the "postmodern" boys' games, so I argue for a use of strategic essentialism, with an attention to the way subjectivities are formed—in opposition to, and in complicity with, the Other. It's cool to read Foucault, but please do it warily.... And, hey, Michel, I know you got famous with that quote, the one about the task for us now is "finding out who we are and refusing it" (Foucault, 2000) but for us girls, maybe we need to find out who we are, and then revel in it!

Finally, women have long understood what it's like to live and work in the hybrid territories of Bhabha's "third" and "in-between" spaces, but we girls might be getting tired of those places. Maybe it's time to think about giving up "floating," and taking up "signifying." Meanwhile, by using a

postcolonial "sly civility" (Bhahba, 1994), humour, even, and taking advantage of our private spatial knowledge, we can perform acts of everyday resistance in a sort of parodic academic drag show (Butler, 1993). We just might disrupt the discourses, even rattle the cages/structures that try to contain us. By playing by our own rules, we're more likely to win the conker games out there in the school playground. *If* we want to play…

And a final little note: A few readers of my work, and my stories, always feel dissatisfied—why doesn't it have a proper ending, there aren't any conclusions, shouldn't you say what specific strategies we should use? But that's a bit masculinist, isn't it, having to have a good ending, in order to get published in the Boys' Own Comics? And isn't it the point of a good story, that we can re-tell it, re-story it and re-make it, change the ending, find new endings, or, more realistically, acknowledge the story goes on… and, you know, there's nothing like a cautionary Old Wives' Tale to tell to young girls ready to venture out in the world, and we women are really good at *them*! (Alcoff & Potter, 1993; Warner, 1995)

Postscript

I am late, again, for the Great Man's class. Working two jobs and being a full time student makes time-space compression an everyday reality for me, nothing new or postmodern about it. I gallop down the stairs, and fly out of the doors by the Coolie Verner Memorial Reading Room (no women's pictures in there, just Coolie in his Boy Scouts Uniform, smirking on the wall), and run smack into one of the first year Master's students. Her look of tiredness, almost defeat, is familiar, and then she sees it's me, and grins. "Oh," she says, "It's YOU! After that seminar we had on presenting at conferences, I found the one you and your supervisor did, in the Proceedings in the Reading Room and it was great, how did you get him to do that with you? I've been feeling so disillusioned, coming back to school to start with was so thrilling, now I feel so depressed, it's all so hard. And there's no funding, and I have to work, and there's no support, either emotionally or financially. But you took them on, you won, you changed something, with that presentation! And if you can, I can, so I'm going to stay! I just wanted to say thank you!"

And I leave her, I run across the road, into another space, up the stairs to Geography 223, and I sit and smirk at the Great Man all through class—much to the annoyance of the boys. My conker won!

References

Alcoff, Linda. (1992). The problem of speaking for others. *Cultural Critique, 20*, Winter 1991-92, 5-33.

Alcoff, Linda, & Potter, Elizabeth (Eds.). (1993). *Feminist epistemologies*. London, New York: Routledge.

Burstow, Bonnie. (1994). Problematizing adult education: A feminist perspective. *Canadian Journal for the Study of Adult Education, 8*(1), 1-13.

Belenky, M., Clinchy, B., Goldberger, N., & Tarule, J. 1986). *Women's ways of knowing*. New York: Basic Books.

Bhabha, Homi. (1994). *The location of culture*. New York, London: Routledge.

Briskin, Linda. (1990). *Feminist pedagogy: Teaching and learning liberation*. Toronto: York University, Social Science Division.

Burge, Elisabeth. J. (1990). Women as learners: Issues for visual and virtual classrooms. *Canadian Journal for the Study of Adult Education, 4*(2), 1-24.

Butler, Judith. (1993). Critically queer. *GLQ, 1*, 17-32.

Butler, Judith. (1990). *Gender trouble*. New York: Routledge.

Caffarella, Rosemary. (1992). *Psychosocial development of women: Linkages to teaching and leadership in Adult Education*. (Information series No. 350). Columbus: ERIC Clearinghouse on Adult, Career, and Vocational Education, and the Center on Education and Training for Employment, The Ohio State University. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 354 386).

Cervero, Ron, Wilson, Arthur J., & Associates (Eds.) (2001). *Power in practice: adult education and the struggle for knowledge and power in society*. San Francisco: Jossey Bass Publishers.

Chapman, Valerie-Lee. (1996). *"All this talk!" Stories of women learning*. Unpublished Master's Thesis, University of British Columbia, Canada.

Chapman, Valerie-Lee, & Sork, Thomas J. (1997). Passports please!: Crossing borders in graduate supervision. *Proceedings of the Standing Conference on University Teaching and Research in Adult Education*. Birkbeck College, University of London.

Chapman, Valerie-Lee, & Sork, Thomas J. (2001) Confessing regulation or telling secrets? Opening up the conversation on graduate supervision. *Adult Education Quarterly. 51(*2), 94-107.

Code, Lorraine. (1995). *Rhetorical spaces*. New York & London: Routledge.

Collins, Patricia Hill. (2000). What's going on? Black feminist thought and the politics of postmodernism. In Elizabeth A. St. Pierre, and Wanda Pillow (Eds.), *Working the ruins: Feminist post-structural research and methods.* (pp.41-73). New York: Routledge.

Constas, Mark A. (1998). Deciphering postmodern educational research. *Educational Researcher, 27*(9), 36-42.

Deutsche, Rosalyn. (1996). *Evictions: Art and spatial politics.* London & Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

Duncan, Nancy (Ed.). (1996). *BodySpace: Destabilizing geographies of gender and sexuality.* London & New York: Routledge.

Edwards, Richard, & Usher, Robin. (1996). What stories do I tell now?: New times and new narratives for adult educators. *International Journal of Lifelong Education, 15*(3), 216-229.

Equity Office Annual Report. (2000, Apr. 20). University of British Columbia. *UBC Reports*.

Foucault, Michel. (1980). *Power/Knowledge. Selected interviews and other writings*. (Ed C. Gordon). New York: Pantheon Books.

Foucault, Michel. (2000) The subject and power. In James D Faubion, (Ed.), *Michel Foucault. Power. The essential works of Foucault, 1954-1984, Volume 3*. (Trans. Robert Hurley and others). Original essay appeared in English, 1982 (pp. 326-348). New York: The New Press.

Griffiths, Morwenna. (1995). Making a difference: Feminism, post-modernism and the methodology of educational research. *British Educational Research Journal, 21*(2), 219-235.

Griffiths, Morwenna. (1996). *Feminisms and the self: The web of identity.* London & New York: Routledge.

Grumet, Madeleine. (1988). *Bitter milk. Women and teaching.* Amherst, MA: The University of Massachusetts Press.

Guppy, Neil, & Trew, Marsha. (1995). *Graduate student experience at UBC: An assessment.* Final Report, September, 1995. University of British Columbia, Department of Anthropology and Sociology and the Women Students' Office.

Haraway, Donna. (1991). *Simians, cyborgs and women.* New York: Routledge.

Harding, Sandra. (1991). "Strong objectivity" and socially situated knowledge. In S. Harding, *Whose science? Whose knowledge? Thinking from women's lives.* (pp. 138-163). Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.

Hartsock, Nancy. (1990). Foucault on power: A theory for women? In Linda Nicholson (Ed.), *Feminism/postmodernism.* (pp. 157-175). New York: Routledge.

Hayes, Elizabeth. (1990). Insights from women's experience for teaching and learning. In Elizabeth Hayes (Ed.), *Effective teaching styles* (pp. 55-65), New Directions for Continuing Education, No. 43. San Francisco: Jossey Bass Publishers.

Hayes, Elizabeth, Flannery, Daniele D., Brooks, Ann, Tisdell, Elizabeth, & Hugo, Jane. (2000). *Women as learners: The significance of gender in adult education.* San Francisco: Jossey Bass Publishers.

Kerka, Sandra. (2002). *Somatic/embodied earning in adult education.* Trends and Issues Alert No. 32, ERIC/ACVE, ID 155. Retrieved February 16, 2002, from http://eericave.org/docgen

Maher, F. A. (1987). Toward a richer theory of feminist pedagogy: A comparison of "liberation" and "gender" models for teaching and learning. *Journal of Education, 169*(3), 91-100.

Miles, Angela. (1998). Adult education, feminism and the women's movement. In Sue Scott, Bruce Spencer, and Alan Thomas (Eds.). *Learning for life* (pp. 250-258). Toronto: Thompson Educational Publishing, Inc.

Manicom, Ann. (1992). Feminist pedagogy, transformation, standpoints and politics. *Canadian Journal of Education, 17*(3), Summer, 365-389.

Mitchell, Katharyne. (1997). Different diasporas and the hype of hybridity. *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space, 15*, 533-553.

Pillow, Wanda. (2000). Deciphering attempts to decipher postmodern educational research. *Educational Researcher, 29*(5), 21-24.

Relph, Edward. (1976). *Place and placelessness.* London: Pion Limited.

Rose, Gillian. (1993). *Feminism and geography.* Minneapolis: The University of Minnesota Press.

Rousmaniere, Kate. (1997). Good teachers are born, not made: Self-regulation in the work of 19th century American women teachers. In Kate Rousmaniere, Kari Dehli & Ning de Coninck-Smith (Eds.), *Discipline, moral regulation and schooling: A social history* (pp.117-133). New York & London: Garland Publishing.

Scott, Sue M., Spencer, Bruce, and Thomas, Alan M. (Eds.), (1998). *Learning for life: Canadian readings in adult education.* Toronto, ON: Thompson Educational Pub.

Sheared, Vanessa, & Sissel, Peggy A. (2001). *Making space: Merging theory and practice in adult education.* Westport, CT: Bergin and Garvey.

Skeggs, Beverley. (1991). Postmodernism: what is all the fuss about? *British Journal of Sociology of Education, 12*, 255-267.

Spark, Bobbi. (1998). The academic shunning of fat old women. In Jacqueline Stalker & Susan Prentice (Eds.), *The illusion of inclusion: Women in postsecondary education* (pp. 85–90). Halifax: Fernwood Publishing.

Spivak, Gayatri. (1988). Can the subaltern speak? In Cary Nelson & Lawrence Grossberg (Eds.), *Marxism and the interpretation of culture.* (pp. 271-313).Champaign, IL: Illinois University Press.

St. Pierre, Elisabeth Adams. (2000). The call for intelligibility in postmodern educational research. *Educational Researcher, 29*(5), 25-28.

Stalker, Jacqueline, & Prentice, Susan. (1998). *The illusion of inclusion: Women in postsecondary education.* Halifax: Fernwood Publishing.

Tescione, Susan M. (1998). A woman's name: Implications for publication, citation, and tenure. *Educational Researcher, 27*(8), 38-42.

The Raving Beauties. (1983). *In the pink.* London: The Women's Press.

Tisdell, Elizabeth. (1993). Interlocking systems of power, privilege and oppression in adult higher education classes. *Adult Education Quarterly, 43*(4) Summer, 203-226.

Tisdell, Elizabeth. (2000). Feminist pedagogies. In Elizabeth, Hayes, Daniele D. Flannery, (Eds.) *Women as learners: The significance of gender in adult education.* San Francisco: Jossey Bass Publishers.

Thompson, Jane. (2000). *Women, class, and education.* London & New York: Routledge.

Tompkins, Jane. (1987). Me and my shadow. *New Literary History, 19*(1), 171-178.

Usher, Robin, Bryant, Ian, & Johnston, Rennie. (1997). *Adult education and the postmodern challenge: Learning beyond the limits.* London & New York: Routledge.

Warner, Marina. (1995). Monstrous mothers. In *Six myths of our time: Little angels, little monsters, beautiful beasts and more.* (pp. 3-23). New York: Vintage Books.

UBC Factbook, 11th ed. (1997). Produced by the Office of Budget and Planning, University of British Columbia, Vancouver, BC.