

ARTICLES

PROBLEMATIZING ADULT EDUCATION: A FEMINIST PERSPECTIVE

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Abstract

This article explores androcentrism in the adult education field generally, with a particular focus on North American adult education training. Adult education historicism and enrolments are discussed, though it is the dominant adult education philosophies and approaches that are highlighted—Tough's and Knowles' especially. The emphasis in androgogy on the neutrality of goals, highly intentional learning, individualism, the cognitive, and measurement is critiqued. Promising shifts identified include: the development of a feminist critique, the hiring of feminist faculty, and the creation of explicitly feminist courses. The author discusses backlash, lack of awareness, and lack of integration as problems which both limit and threaten the feminist changes made to date.

Résumé

Dans cet article, l'auteure démontre le fait de l'androcentrisme au sein de l'éducation des adultes en général, au sein de la formation des formateurs en Amérique du Nord en particulier. L'auteure y discute la façon de présenter l'histoire de l'éducation des adultes en regard des faits concernant les clientèles d'adultes. Elle examine surtout les approches de Tough et Knowles. Elle critique l'importance que l'andragogie attache à la neutralité des objectifs, à l'enseignement intentionnel, à l'individualisme, au domaine cognitif. Parmi les changements prometteurs que l'auteure retient, il y a le développement de la critique féministe, le recrutement de professeures féministes et la création de cours résolument féministes. Par ailleurs, on doit tenir compte des difficultés qui menacent et entravent les initiatives féministes déjà en place: ce sont les chocs en retour qu'elles provoquent, le manque de sensibilisation à leur égard et l'insuffisance de leur intégration.

Adult Education is a field of learning and a profession which has been strongly dominated by male thinkers and shaped by male hegemony/hegemonies. It is also a field which has received comparatively little feminist attention. In recent years, advances have been made and a multi-dimensional feminist critique has begun to emerge.

To list some of the major contributions, Hugo (1990) points out that women's work in the field has been rendered invisible by the male historians. Thompson (1983) uncovers how adult education programs for women historically have reinforced patriarchal values. Miles (1989) maintains that a creative response to "women's challenge to adult education" would "strengthen the ...currently embattled social purpose tradition of adult education." Taylor (1987, p. 179) writes "popular discussions

about adult learning, independent and self-directed, notably in Knowles ... and Tough ... did not ... represent adequately my experience as an adult learner." Other important feminist critics include: Faith (1988), Walker (n.d.) Rockhill (1987), and Gaskell and McLaren (1987).

As a feminist who entered adult education at a time when there was barely a hint of a feminist critique, I am heartened by these writings for I have been long convinced that we need to systematically deconstruct and reconstruct adult education. It is tragic when any field with liberatory goals remains mainstream/malestream especially one with so many women in it.¹ The overall purpose of this article is to support that liberatory purpose by extending as well as synthesizing certain aspects of the feminist critique.

The understanding of feminism which I am employing is a structuralist understanding—an understanding shared with my colleagues at the School of Social Work at Carleton University as well as with other feminists throughout the world. While emphasizing sexism, feminists committed to structuralism challenge all systemic oppression including but not limited to racism and classism.

My primary focus of address is North American adult education—Canadian in particular—with adult education as a discipline and area of training. Many of my examples are drawn from the Adult Education Department at The Ontario Institute for Studies in Education (OISE), it being the largest and arguably the most influential adult education department in Canada. While touching on history, I highlight dominant adult education philosophies and approaches. I specifically focus on Knowles' and Tough's understandings and approaches for they have largely dominated North American adult education. I discuss new feminist and positive feminist advances in the field while drawing attention to the severe limitations of those advances, ending with a fuller articulation of the limitation and the anti-feminist backlash.

Male Leadership, Male Power

Historically, as feminists like Walker (n.d.) have illustrated, men, and indeed, *white middle class men*, have occupied the positions of power in the large powerful adult education organizations such as the Canadian Association for Adult Education. They also have dominated university departments of adult education not only as departmental heads but as the full-time faculty. In 1970-1971, by way of example, the percentage of full time male faculty in adult education departments in Canadian universities was 82.7%. (Statistics Canada, 1972). While no official statistics have been kept on class or colour, we know that the vast majority of men occupying these positions were white and middle class. Men have retained this power to a large extent. The latest Statistics Canada figures (Statistics Canada, 1993) for the

¹ For relevant figures and discussions of the implications of the predominately female student constituency for adult education, see Gaskell & McLaren (1987, p. 310) and Hootsman (1990, p. 79). For comments on adult education's liberatory purpose and the relevance of feminism to that purpose, see Miles (1989).

percentage of male full-time faculty members at Canadian departments of adult education is 79.8%—a fairly minimal difference in light of the feminist movement and alleged affirmative hiring policies. From these positions, males have determined the official direction of adult education. That direction at once reflects their views and reinforces their power. The dominance of white middle class men in leadership positions in prestigious adult education organizations has ensured that what is white, middle class, and male is taken as the norm. It similarly has ensured that the directions taken are those that reinforce white middle class patriarchy.

Male-Serving Continuing Education Programs

An obvious indication of patriarchal reinforcement is the nature and funding of continuing education for women. The British situation is a case in point. Thompson (1983) illustrates how historically state funding for continuing education programs for women has favoured courses which reinforce patriarchal values—courses like cooking, sewing, house management. Patriarchal governments as well as the patriarchal adult education field may legitimately be seen as implicated in this problem.

In Canada, the gendered division in continuing education enrolments reflects a similar problem. Note in this regard the 30% female enrolment in vocational courses, as contrasted with the 80% female student enrolment in hobby, craft, and recreation courses.²

The "Official" Histories

Pivotal in the androcentric skewing of the field has been the written histories of adult education. In this regard, adult education is like most other fields of knowledge. As sociologist Dorothy Smith (1987, pp. 241-264) has pointed out, it is mostly men who write the history of fields. As men primarily attend to what men say and do, women's contribution is thereby rendered invisible and the field's history is distorted. This invisibility/distortion further impacts on what gets taught and accepted as legitimate content and approach.

In line with this analysis, the major histories, as listed in outlines for general history or outline of adult education courses, are authored by men—Knowles (1977) Stubblefield (1988), Selman and Dampier (1991) and Thomas (1993).

Examining four typical widely used American adult education history texts, Hugo (1990) found that the percentage of women's names cited in the indexes ranged from three to 10%. By contrast, in the formative adult education years identified by Hugo, 27% of the entries in the major adult education journals were by women. Hugo's rationale for using scholarly journal writing to exemplify women's activity in the field is not clear. Notwithstanding, the point is, even when women writers are published in scholarly adult education journals, these writings are overlooked by the influential male historians. Differences in focus, style, methodology, or perhaps the fact of them being authored by women lead the elite male adult educators to dismiss these articles

² For these and other relevant statistics and arguments, see Gaskell & McLaren (1987, p. 305) and Deveraux (1985, p. 6).

as unscholarly, interesting at best, and then bypass them. Indeed, given that scholarly journal writing has historically been a male activity, Hugo's work may well understate rather than overstate the problem. Reading the histories themselves deepens the problem. Large sections are devoted to the work of individual male educators; and the books read like a tribute to these educators. While certainly ample mention is made of associations, networks, and movements, one is left with the overwhelming impression that there were a few individual "great men" whose unique individual talents and commitments enabled them to create and develop the field and the associations.

Similar biases exist in Canadian histories. General Canadian adult education histories provide raving accounts of individual "great men", for example, Coady, Corbett, and Kidd. Numerous books and articles have been written exclusively on the contribution of one or other of the "great" male adult educators.³ We do not find such accounts of women. Educational movements by women, like the feminist movement, are not counted as adult education. By contrast, the National Film Board, which was largely male dominated and can be associated with an individual male figure—Grierson—is invariably highlighted in adult education history. Even with those highlighted movements in which women did play key roles, the involvement and contribution of the women have tended to be invisible. The Antigonish Movement is a case in point. Search through a standard Canadian adult education history text like Selman and Dampier (1991) and you can find no direct mention of the part played by women.

The Significance of Male-Led Professionalization

The male led and elite emphasis on professionalization and the concomitant stress on graduate training in adult education has been an overriding direction in adult education and has played a profound role in shaping the field. From its beginning, the Canadian Association for Adult Education has stressed professionalization; and from Kidd's directorship onward, there has been a particular emphasis on graduate training in adult education.⁴

Professionalization itself may be taken as a white middle class male value which inherently is in white male middle class interest. The enormous emphasis on expertise and formal legitimized routes to achieving professionalism clashes with feminist values and ways of operating. It disregards personal knowing. It creates a hierarchy, with those who have received doctorates from these routes toward the top, and those who have not taken these routes at the bottom. At the very pinnacle, and indeed setting the direction in the field, are those with professorships in the area. With the majority of the power lodged here, and the majority of the professors being white middle class men, it is clear whose interest professionalization serves.

³ By way of example, see Selman (1982), McLellan (1985), and Armstrong (1968).

⁴ For a discussion of the Association, professionalization, and the roles played by Corbett and Kidd, see Armstrong (1968) and Selman (1982).

Brookfield (1988) explores the relationship between the rise of professionalization and the pronounced shift in adult education away from grass routes community organizing and toward liberal and competency based graduate training. On this basis as well, the interests being served are the interests of the privileged.

From Professionalization to Dominant Models and Philosophies

The privileging of what is male extends to the actual model(s) which dominate the North American adult education field and which are legitimated in graduate adult education training. Given adult education's overwhelming identification with what can be described as "the adult education method", this methodological privileging is of enormous significance.

The privileging of a particular model or limited spectrum of models is itself grounded in the movement toward professionalization. Brookfield (1988) points out that adult education's professional claim to unique expertise was strengthened by identifying and articulating a specific understanding and approach. If trained adult educators were to be regarded as uniquely qualified to facilitate adult learning, then there had to be something unique about adult learning. Facilitation training, moreover, had to address that specificity. Androgogical theory and training answered that need. Feminist views on education, generally found in books and articles of feminist pedagogy, were ignored. By the early seventies, despite the existence of more political understanding both from critical theory and from feminism, androgogy or self-directed learning had become the *sine qua non* of North American adult education. Knowles was ensconced as the guru of androgogy, with other adult educators like Tough doing their own research into androgogy and articulating their own versions.

There is no question but that androgogy and self-directed learning as defined by Knowles and others represent a major advance over traditional pedagogy. It is a dramatic departure from the top-down learning in which the teacher is the expert and students are empty vessels to be filled by the information bestowed upon them. The trust in people's ability to identify their own learning needs and to develop their own learning projects and the value placed upon personal experience and personal defining, moreover, clearly coincide with feminist values in a way that top-down education does not. That notwithstanding, there is an overwhelming elite male bias, more specifically, a liberal male bias, in the literature, the understanding, and the approach.

Problematizing Knowles

An early clue that there is something profoundly wrong with androgogy comes in a foundational book by Knowles (1975). Distinguishing between androgogy and pedagogy, Knowles writes:

The body of theory and practice on which teacher-directed learning is based is often given the label "pedagogy," from the Greek word paid (meaning "child").... Pedagogy has come to be defined as the art and science of teaching, but its tradition is the teaching of children. The body of theory and practice on which self-directed learning is based has come to be labelled "androgogy," from ... the

Greek word *aner* (meaning "man"). Androgogy is defined therefore, as the art and science of helping adults (or ... maturing human beings) learn (p. 19).

The skewing and elimination which is evident here is one with which feminists are all too familiar. "Adult" or "maturing human being" is treated as synonymous with "male". Knowles seems unaware that there is a problem with this equation. This unawareness is shocking given that he was writing at a time when feminist consciousness was at a high point and when there was considerable feminist literature on male hegemony. What is more outrageous is that this definition is still used today. The fact that feminist and other political critiques of this equation are relatively invisible and inaudible speaks to the male professional stranglehold on the field.

The trouble with androgogy or self-directed learning, unfortunately, is not limited to what might otherwise be thought of as the incidental androcentrism of this equation. The larger problem is that certain elite males' modes of operating are being accepted as how all adults actually operate or should operate. Certain white patriarchal norms, in other words are the foundation on which androgogy is constructed.

The Knowles method, which has become identified with adult education in North American graduate schools, is based on the concept of the highly purposeful autonomous learner. To summarize, Knowles tells learners: See and act as autonomous learners. "Diagnose" your learning needs. Formulate concrete "learning goals". All goals and the values which they reflect are totally acceptable if, though only if they are attainable and clear. Meticulously develop and hone "learning contracts". These contracts should include: general objectives, highly specific goals, concrete methods for realizing those goals, human and other "resources" to be identified and accessed in the process of fulfilling the contract, and explicit observable criteria to be applied in measuring progress and outcomes. Make sure the criteria used are "valid" and the proper "data" is being collected. Pursue the learning as described. Amass or present "evidence" for purposes of evaluating the "learning outcomes". Then, evaluate (pp. 18-43). Adults may or may not operate in isolation throughout the process. Knowles, indeed, values "feedback" and uses words like "dialogue" and "co-learning". Nonetheless, he does not regard interaction with others as necessary. And his use of words like "dialogue" and "co-learning" are misnomers. Operating out of their own isolated independence and proficiency, learners are to decide whether or not to interact with "others" in the process of pursuing their learning goals. The roles explicitly available to other learners are the roles of consultants or "human resources" to be accessed as desired. While Knowles appears unaware of the difference, feedback from consultants is not the same as "dialogue" or "co-learning"; and no one *dialogues* with "human resources".

What we have are elite and indeed alienated males' values and modes of operating singularly valued and turned into method. There is a clear preference of: independence over both dependence and interdependence; isolation over relation; the individual over society; the explicit over the implicit; the straight forward and highly directional over the tentative, the groping toward, and the divergent; the cognitive

over the emotional; the objective over the subjective or intersubjective; and the logical, scientific, and highly measurable over the artistic and non-numeric. Though there is no overt mention of exploitation, and many adult educators would be shocked by this identification, on a very important level, what we have is a model of exploitation. The attitudes of white dominant males are paramount. Human beings along with other aspects of the environment are largely relegated to the status of "resources" to be identified, accessed, and "used".

"Responsibility" is one of the key words in this model. Learners are continually being told that they are "responsible for their own learning". As Brookfield (1988) has observed, the type of responsibility being advocated is the type associated with the "self-made man", and "the American dream". It belies our reality as social beings with necessary connections to all other beings and our responsibility for society and the environment as a whole. Not the needs of the society or the environment but the needs of the individual are paramount and treated as relatively unrelated to societal and/or environmental needs. Given the assumed neutrality over learning needs and objectives, a learner potentially at least, could create a tight contract around learning how to rid his/her organization of Jews or Blacks and be seen as a responsible adult learner. A learner who wanted to learn how to maximize his/her profit, whether or not at the expense of others, could frame a contract around this goal; and if framed meticulously, the contract would be totally acceptable by the Knowles' standard. So, too, would a contract organized around the objective of becoming a "better" or "more obedient" wife. Indeed, I have been in classes where many affluent middle class adult learners chose the maximizing of their incomes as their objectives. And I have been in other classes where becoming a "better wife" was the underlying objective, however that objective was articulated. The facilitator and other class members treated these learners as "responsible" and their contracts as respectable.

"Freedom" is another key concept. The model is seen as promoting freedom; and indeed, to a degree, it does. There is no question but that we gain some degree of freedom by becoming better able to identify needs and to take charge of our own learning programs. Again, however, freedom is being predicated on the myth of the isolated detached human being; the image once again is of the "self-made man". The problem is that, neither freedom nor our existence is that simple. As women, as First Nations people, existentialists, environmentalists, Marxists, and many others are well aware, we are beings-in relation—indeed beings in *power* relations with each other. Our freedom is intimately connected with belonging with Others, with obstacles, limitations, power differentials, interdependence, co-naming, and mutual resistance.

"Self-direction" is a particularly key concept for Knowles and it is related to his naive understanding of freedom. Using the notion of individual freedom as a backdrop, Knowles encourages learners to be self-directed when pursuing their learning contracts; and he assures learners that as free adults, they naturally are self-directed. The simplistic understanding and assumption of self-direction belies the realities of a) the social construction of self and of meaning; b) false consciousness; and c) internalized oppression. Middle class men who internalize white masculinist notions of adulthood and learn how to "succeed in business" only *think* that they are

being self-directed. Women who set their learning sights on becoming a better cook and homemaker are following the edicts of society, whether they use the language of self-direction or not. Without social critique, without consciousness-raising (and this is not a self-sufficient isolated activity) the "self" in self-direction is more fictitious than real.

Problematizing Tough

Similar deficiencies are evident in other North American adult education classics despite their subtle differences and their obvious value. The popular Tough (1979) classic is a case in point. Tough too emphasizes precision, goals, evaluation. Tough too treats human beings and the rest of the environment as resources to be used. In certain ways, Tough goes beyond Knowles in the penchant toward measurement. He specifies the exact amount of time which must elapse before a period of learning qualifies as a learning episode. Correspondingly, he specifies that at least 51% of a person's motivation must be to "gain and retain definite knowledge" (Tough, 1979, p. 7) Exactly how one is to go about such measuring is unclear. More significantly, Tough, like Knowles reflects dominant North American male norms by placing a disproportionate emphasis on highly purposeful and explicit learning.

Tough's primary rationales for focusing exclusively on highly purposeful learning include:

- 1) People who engage in a great deal of highly purposeful learning are more productive and efficient.
- 2) There is reason to believe that over half the important changes that a person makes are the result of highly purposeful learning projects. (Tough, 1979, pp. 27-28)

While these values definitely have some relevance in other contexts, it is patriarchal capitalism that gives preference to values such as productivity and efficiency. The rationale which connects purposeful learning projects with important changes is also problematic. While Tough is clear to point out that other types of learning can also be important, he is avowedly focusing on highly intentional learning because this accounts for most highly important changes. The question arises, what makes a change highly important?

Tough uses the person him/herself as evaluator. The question now arises whether or not societal construction and therefore androcentric white classist bias has played a role in the evaluation. Further problems arise with the reference which Tough uses as grounds for his operating assumption that highly intentional learning accounts for most important changes. He cites a 1966 survey in which twenty educators listed highly intentional learning as accounting for over half their important changes. He provides no reference for the survey. It is not clear that educators, at whatever level they are teaching, are the norm. It is not clear that there is any representative gender mix. What does seem likely is that those myriad women who view the general task of raising a child as the primary learning experience of their lives are either not represented in this survey or have been influenced by the researcher's questions to distort their learning experiences.

The suspicion that male and middle/upper class ways of operating have shaped the definitions and understandings is given considerable substantiation later in the book. On the basis of his research, Tough provides a breakdown of the mean time that individuals from different populations spend in "learning projects", with "learning project" defined in the manner already specified. He does not comment on the figures. The insinuation is that the numbers in question reflect a genuine difference in the amount of time spent by different populations in the most important learning of all. The breakdown, from highest to lowest, is as follows:

Professors	1491 hours
Politicians	1189 hours
Lower-white-collar men	907 hours
Factory workers	800 hours
Lower-white-collar women	430 hours
Teachers	395 hours
Mothers	331 hours

(Tough, 1979, p. 20).

From this breakdown men appear to spend way more time engaged in highly important learning than women. People from higher social classes (disproportionately white) spend more time than people from lower classes (disproportionately of colour) though the gender disparity appears to be greater than the class disparity. Teachers, I suspect mostly women, do not spend much time at all. At the absolute bottom are mothers, who, whatever their class, spend a minimal amount of time in highly important learning. Given that the primary motivation for much of mothers' learning is caring—something that does not meet Tough's motivation requirement to qualify as a learning episode or learning project—this finding is not surprising. It does however, help shed light on the construction and meaning of Tough's definitions.

What qualifies as a learning episode—the preferred mode of learning—is the type of learning in which elite white males engage disproportionately and which women, other oppressed groups, and relational people in general, are less likely to pursue. By way of insinuation everyone is being encouraged to maximize this type of learning; so again, an elitist norm is being pushed. Correspondingly, while facilitation is not focused upon, it is the type of learning most pursued by the male elite that adult educators are being encouraged to facilitate. It is frighteningly clear whose world view and values these definitions reflect and whose interests are being served.

New Feminist Directions: Some Advances, Severe Limitations

A gradual shift away from androcentric adult education is occurring in graduate adult education training, in faculty hiring, and in adult education literature. This new direction is largely at the instigation of women faculty and students; and it is primarily women faculty and students who are pursuing the new direction. How strong the new directions are and how lasting they will be is hard to determine. The problem is that there are clear limitations; there is tokenism; and there are backlashes.

One direction which has been progressively stressed for years is interdependent learning using emergent designs. For decades now, adult education trainer Virginia

Griffin has employed an interdependent learning and emergent design model in her program planning courses. Books such as that of Boud and Griffin (1987) explore individual learner's (both female and male) experience with interdependent and emergent design learning. In such literature, interdependence is emphasized over independence, and emergent design over learning contracts with clear objectives. And the importance of affect, caring, intuition, creativity, metaphor, and humour are articulated. Most of what is described or advocated is not "feminist" per se. It is clear, nonetheless, that modes of operating traditionally identified with women have been integrated and are often emphasized albeit the writers themselves do not so identify them.⁵ While there are some exceptions such as this example, the limitations in the adult education literature are: the adult education lack of feminist consciousness, the absence of critical consciousness and a social change perspective generally, an attitude of neutrality towards learning goals, and the extension of dialogue to formal learning partners or learning groups only.⁶

It is difficult to assess the reasons for these limitations. No doubt some of the women are in a prefeminist or early feminist stage; and some, regardless of stage, may be protecting the feelings of their mainstream male colleagues. We as woman have been socialized to protect men. More direct power dynamics, however, may well be playing the most critical role. Some obvious explanations are: a) incorporating a more overt feminist social change perspective runs the risk of one's work being marginalized and perhaps not published at all; b) the scarcity of feminist colleagues and the overwhelming power held by elite male and male-identified female faculty make it dangerous for female faculty and students to disseminate such ideas. Risks include: isolation, ridicule, denial of tenure, unfair teaching load, and unfair grades.

On the more overtly political side, an important recent development is the emergence of the type of feminist adult education writing discussed in the introduction. Feminist critiques, challenges, and suggestions are now a conspicuous if small part of North American adult education literature even as that literature is defined by those with power. More general political challenges such as those written by Brookfield (1988) are a parallel development.

The problem is while men like Brookfield who write general social critiques have gained some recognition, feminist critiques are not generally being accepted as bona fide adult education by the male elite. Much of the critique is excluded from adult education journals themselves. Much of the literature appears in books on feminist pedagogy and feminism generally, for it is part of feminist pedagogy and feminism

⁵ One notable exception is Marilyn Taylor. Years after having articulated a model of learning, which she felt addressed more her true way of learning than the popular models of Knowles and Tough, she came to realize that the difference in question pertained to gender norms. See Taylor (1987, pp. 179-196).

⁶ There are some exceptions. One particularly noteworthy one is Gwyneth Griffith, who has a clear political, and indeed, Freirian perspective and emphasizes the importance of social change. See Griffith (1987, pp. 51-63).

generally—something which is not problematic in itself. What is a problem is that such pedagogy has not gained general acceptance as a part of adult education, even though most of such pedagogy is addressing adult learning. Again, it is elite males who define what is adult education, and as such do not recognize or accept what does not reflect their views and concerns and what does not serve their interests.

On a different level, another valuable shift has been the advent of some collective political organizing on the part of feminists in adult education. Both nationally and internationally, women of all classes and colours have been coming together to create women's organizations and develop conferences to problematize and change adult education and women's place in it. Particularly noteworthy in this regard is the 1979 formation of the Women's Program of the International Council for Adult Education. Noteworthy also is the 1987 Montreal seminar "The Feminist Challenge to Adult Education" cosponsored by the Women's Program and Institut Canadien d'éducation des adultes. The limitation is that there is little follow-up to these conferences.

Graduate adult education training itself is also being affected by the feminist challenge. Important changes here include: the hiring of feminist faculty in graduate adult education departments and the development of curriculum which include feminist content and process. The changes in the Adult Education Department at OISE are particularly dramatic and merit recognition. Five years ago, there was one feminist on faculty. Now there are four. The curriculum was devoid of feminist content a decade ago. Now, it includes several such courses. The very fact that feminist hiring could be made and such courses developed speaks to some shift in the power dynamic and is likely to result in further shifts.

Initially, I attributed a fair number of these changes to stretching on the part of male faculty. While this may be true of some male faculty, my female colleagues have informed me that too much credit has been given to the men, rendering invisible the very hard work done by the women. The hiring of feminist faculty and the creation of feminist courses came about largely as a result of guerilla warfare on the part of feminist faculty and students. In OISE and other Canadian adult education departments, it came only after feminist faculty and students used the power which the oppressed have and pressured for changes. It came only after they organized, circulated and signed petitions demanding feminist hiring and feminist courses, and after many female students made it clear that they would leave if changes did not occur.

Albeit minimal, there is also some shift in the type of research done by some of the male faculty—Tough, for one. Note, in this regard the 1987 article co-authored by Posluns and Tough.⁷ Employing the Tough method of inquiry, Posluns and Tough analyzed the deliberate efforts taken by learners to liberate themselves from sex role stereotypes. There is no question but that the article is flawed and that limited critical consciousness is a problem. Again, there are inappropriate uses of numbers, in this case resulting in such concepts as "eighty seven per cent sex role free" (Posluns

⁷ Posluns is not a male faculty member but a female student.

& Tough, 1987, p. 17). There is the same old emphasis on highly deliberate learning. People, once again, are reduced to resources to be used. What is particularly disturbing, Posluns and Tough recommend that men trying to "liberate" themselves seek ongoing feedback from their female partners, seemingly unaware that such "use" often figures in our oppression as women. These deficits notwithstanding, the focus of concern has been enlarged: Tough is now concerning himself with feminist issues. Furthermore, he no longer sees goals as neutral.

The question remains, of course, how extensive is this new interest in feminism? And what is the motivation of different male "pro-feminist" researchers? To what extent does such research reflect a consciousness shift on the part of male researchers? And to what extent is it opportunism—an attempt to "cash in" on whatever funding is now being allocated for feminist research?

Additional Limitations, the Misogynous Backlash: A Dicey Prognosis

Backlash, resistance, unawareness, and lack of integration are a major problem. And the problem may well get bigger as feminists and feminist content become more visible.

Many feminists who express their views have been meeting with hostility. Responses by North American male adult educators reported to me by my feminist colleagues include:

- You women are RUINING EVERYTHING!
- You're really all lesbians, aren't you? (Lesbian baiting and use of lesbophobia and internalized lesbophobia is an age old tactic in getting women to tone down their feminism)
- If we hire you, will you sign something promising that you won't pressure us to hire another feminist next time there is a vacancy on faculty? (I was asked this question by one male faculty member during a rest period in a hiring interview)

Some of the male faculty are making efforts to understand. Still, they are concerned that what their feminist colleagues are doing is not *really* "adult education". They check with other male colleagues, who reassure them that what their female colleagues are doing, indeed, is not adult education. It confuses male faculty why they themselves are being criticized for teaching courses the way they do. After all, they reason, they are neutral when it comes to goals; so there is nothing really stopping feminist learners from pursuing feminist objectives. The impact of literature and curriculum frame-works which leave out women, women's ways of knowing and relating, and feminist concerns generally are often difficult for male faculty to comprehend. Of course, it is in their interest to be confused, to not understand, just as it has always been in men's interest to not understand "just what it is that women want". Could it be that they are afraid of their new critically aware feminist colleagues and students who raise objections to cherished ways of operating and who threaten their power?

A final and related problem and one with which I will conclude is lack of integration. It is not simply that most male faculty have not ended up changing the

contents or the processes of the courses which they teach. Whether taught by men or women, most of the traditional courses have remained relatively unchanged despite a few token inclusions. Again, the OISE department serves as an example. Feminist content exists in the new feminist courses. Except where they happen to be taught by feminists program planning and program facilitation—courses which this male-dominated field have always considered the “bread and butter” of adult education—remain as before.

An example of the androcentric pattern is the reference list provided in a program planning course in a prominent adult education department as recently as the spring of 1992 (Mayer, 1992). As Brookfield (1988) has demonstrated, program planning is one of that small number of core adult education courses which is considered fundamental by the adult education elite and is found in all schools. Significantly, I did not find one of the references in the spring 1992 list to be feminist. Along the same line, the 1990 reference list for program planning included sixty-eight references (McLean, 1990). Not one I believe is feminist. Indeed, only four of the publications listed are even authored or jointly authored by women.

The creation of special feminist courses is, however, insufficient. Feminist concerns need to be integrated on a course-by-course basis. This integration is part and parcel of the feminist challenge(s) to adult education. In the absence of such integration, what adult education means and stands for will not fundamentally change. In the event of a more severe anti-feminist backlash, moreover, it would be all too easy for departments to rid themselves of the feminist courses.

Concluding Remarks

It has been argued that white middle-class male hegemony characterizes adult education despite “official” claims to equality and neutrality. The field seems skewed in ways which perpetuate the power of white middle-class males and gives preferential status to their elite modes of operating and ways of understanding the world. While important, feminist inroads made of late are limited, reversible, and have been met with an antifeminist backlash. The future of adult education—the liberatory promise, the feminist outcome—remains precarious at best.

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