

Book Reviews

Women and Leadership in Canadian Education. Cecilia Reynolds and Beth Young, eds. (Detselig Enterprises: Calgary, 1995); xvi + 253 pages; ISBN 1-55059-116-9; \$26.95

Feminism and Education: A Canadian Perspective, Vol.2. Paula Bourne, Philinda Masters, Nuzhat Amin, Marnina Gonick and Lisa Gribowski, eds. (Centre for Women's Studies in Education: Toronto, 1994); xiii + 256 pages; ISBN 0-9694605-1-1(v.2); \$24.95

Anti-Racism, Feminism and Critical Approaches to Education. Roxana Ng, Pat Staton and Joyce Skane, eds. (Bergin & Garvey: Westport, Connecticut, 1995); xvii + 171 pages; index; ISBN 0-89789-323-X; \$16.95 (US)

Repositioning Feminism and Education: Perspectives on Educating for Social Change. Janice Jipson, Petra Munro, Susan Victor, Karen Froude Jones and Gretchen Freed-Rowland. (Bergin & Garvey: Westport, Connecticut, 1995); xxv + 264 pages; index; ISBN 0-89789-437-5; \$19.95 (US)

Many of us who read *Atlantis* are educators, some in post-secondary institutions and others in community-based settings where educative work goes on. The four books reviewed here provide empirical accounts and theoretical analyses of a range of educational practices in various sites. Questions of pedagogy, representation, imposition, power, authority, empowerment, difference, identity, subjectivity--all of these topics familiar in wider feminist discourse arise in these four books, whose contributors address women's and girls' lives, through research/reflection on educational practices. What makes these books particularly interesting is the range of settings examined: from experiences of women and girls in the public school system to a summer computer camp for

boys and girls; from a community-based women's cross-cultural adult education group in Northern Ontario to an on-line course on gender and education for teachers; from the Mohawk standoff at Oka to programs for immigrant teenage girls in Toronto; from the Saskatchewan Urban Native Teacher Education Program to a university sociology classroom; from a community-based program for adolescent mothers to a multicultural summer camp and a graduate feminist methodology seminar. This variety in settings illustrates a first general point about these four books--that writings on education increasingly range far beyond any simplistic notion of "schools" as the central site researched by feminist theorists in education. Secondly, the books taken together illustrate the breadth and strength of scholarship on feminist theory and feminist praxis that exists in education. Many of the insights and empirical accounts deserve to be more widely known in the feminist community, particularly as three of the four books provide analysis and reflection from Canadian settings.

Most closely aligned with the public school system is *Women in Leadership in Canadian Education*. It is the first Canadian book to focus on the experiences of women who serve in leadership positions in elementary and secondary schools. The editors' introductory and concluding essays provide a useful overview of the literature on women in educational leadership positions, and demonstrate how key debates in feminism have begun (finally) to press upon the field of educational administration. Apart from these and the three chapters that critique notions of authority, leadership and power, the contributions are primarily descriptive, providing glimpses of women's leadership experiences in several provincial jurisdictions across the country. We do need these accounts of women's leadership experiences in education; however, most chapters in the book would have benefited from a greater engagement with contemporary theoretical issues. Disconcertingly absent in *Women and Leadership in Canadian Education* is any recognition or

exploration of the intersection of race and gender oppressions. There are no accounts, for example, of the experiences of female principals who are members of the Black or Aboriginal communities across the country. This is a serious omission.

For Volume Two of *Feminism and Education: A Canadian Perspective*, the editors sought papers in areas under-researched in the Canadian context (adult education, computers and education, distance learning). As a result, the essays constitute a substantial source of new empirical analysis. Among the more interesting of the 12 essays are ones that enrich our understanding of the constraints on feminist pedagogy at universities; stretch our conceptualization of anti-racist feminist pedagogy by demonstrating through reflection on practice the work that must be done to weave the two together; disrupt taken-for-granted preferences for face-to-face interactions in graduate seminars through exploring the high levels of communication and collaborative learning that can occur in an on-line conferencing course; and push our thinking about Women's Studies curriculum by arguing the importance of a course on Motherhood and Mothering. Overall, this book is a helpful contribution to Canadian feminist educational scholarship. Since only three of the twelve chapters address public schooling, the text would most usefully provide a feminist perspective in courses in adult education and higher education. Mostly absent, again, are the concerns of women who are racialized "others:" Black women, Aboriginal women, women from immigrant groups. The two chapters that raise immigrant and cross cultural issues are located in the first section of the book (on Anti-Racist /Feminist Pedagogy). The ten chapters in the other three sections (Distance Education, Classroom Practice and Curriculum Content) are silent on these issues.

In view of my criticism regarding the inattention in the first two books to intersecting structures of race, ethnicity, class and gender, the third book reviewed here, *Anti-Racism, Feminism and Critical Approaches to Education*, is an extremely valuable resource. One of its aims is to bring experiences of "minority" and Aboriginal women into the discourse surrounding anti-racist

pedagogical practice. Many of the authors in this collection are determined to hold ethnicity, race, gender and class oppressions in tension. (The complexities of interlocking axes of inequality make this a difficult task, which is why, I suspect, it is tackled by so few of the authors in the books discussed above). Several articles are instructive for feminist praxis. There is a powerful articulation of an *aboriginal* anti-racist pedagogy that can advance our conceptualisation of an aboriginal feminist pedagogy. There are analyses of how neither multicultural nor anti-racist education has addressed adequately the needs of minority female students. There is an account of teacher education with Metis and Cree women in Saskatchewan which explores contradictions that arise in critical pedagogical practice when the students daily encounter individual and systemic racism and the effects of cultural genocide. Overall, a strength of this book is that it threads together analysis along several axes of oppression, and especially important, it addresses Aboriginal issues in two of the seven chapters. Secondly, because this book only has seven chapters, each of the authors has considerable space to pursue theoretical debates in more depth, which provides a more satisfying analysis for the reader. Finally, because the chapters in the book were presented at a working session to all other authors, and revised on the basis of the collective feedback, there is more coherence theoretically across the chapters.

Of the four books reviewed, the final one, *Repositioning Feminism and Education*, is the most inflected (although not insistently) with post-modernist theory. It is also a remarkable collective product. Written by five women, working on each other's writing and thinking over several years, the book is an inspiration for those of us who argue that truly collective endeavours can be more revealing of the complexities and tensions in feminist analysis and praxis than many individual endeavours. Even more satisfying is that this collective process of *producing* the book becomes one strand of analysis in the layered text. Parts 2 and 4 find the authors in conversation, dissecting the collaborative process itself: issues of commitment, power, difference, purpose, politics and raw reflections on the logistics of working

together (not meeting deadlines, not getting drafts written, assuming roles of the mother, the taskmaster, the nurturer). These sections of "process reflection" lie alongside two longer sections, one on feminist pedagogy (Part 1) and one on feminist methodology (Part 3). All the authors are activists engaged in social change, and at the same time are doctoral students and faculty members, struggling with what they call the "imposition project." In Part 1 they analyse their pedagogical practice in various sites -- a multicultural summer camp, a university teacher education program, and a community-based project for adolescent mothers. Then, each of the five turns to issues of imposition in their various research projects (in all but one case, their Ph.D. research). Life history research, ethnographic research, participatory research and autobiography serve as starting points for examining imposition in research.

Three theoretical concepts are scrutinized in these accounts of praxis in research, pedagogy and writing. As already mentioned, the first of these is collaboration, especially the difficulties of enacting collaboration in a world built on hierarchy and competition. Second, their analysis of imposition revolves around the concern that one's political commitment as educator and/or researcher may turn out to be an imposition on others--yet they recognize that exaggerated concerns about imposition may be condescending and may conceptualize the "students" (or research participants) as agent-less, as passive. A third theme is that of difference: their interest is in exploring how women can work together while respecting difference -- difference within their own authoring project (ethnicity, religion, race, position, philosophy) and with the groups with whom they interact (adolescent girls, student teachers). Working across difference seems to be easier, they argue, when there is a shared commitment to social change. Overall, this book would be effective in a feminist methodology course, as well as in courses on critical and feminist pedagogy. It also speaks to people trying to enact principles of feminist research or feminist pedagogy in all sorts of educative settings.

These four books provide an excellent starting point (the bibliographies alone are

excellent) for graduate students in Women's Studies, Education, Adult Education, Sociology and Cultural Studies who are exploring issues in feminist pedagogy, feminist research, and feminist praxis in educational sites.

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Refiguring Modernism: Volume One, The Women of 1928; Volume Two, Postmodern Readings of Woolf, West and Barnes. Bonnie Kime Scott (Indiana University Press: Bloomington, Indiana, 1995); illustrations; xviii+318 pages; ISBN 0-253-20955;\$18.95 (US) & xviii + 217 pages; ISBN 0-253-21005; \$15.95 (US)

The modernist movement, Bonnie Kime Scott reminds us, used to appear in critical writings as an all-male preserve. Even at the beginning of the eighties, Virginia Woolf was almost the only modernist writer to attract much attention from feminist critics. Since then, the contribution of women to modernism has become the focus of numerous books, essays and conferences: modernism now appears as a heterogeneous and complex grouping. Scott's own anthology, *The Gender of Modernism* (1990) played a significant role in this revisionary process, particularly in publishing forgotten theoretical writings by women of the period. Scott's latest two volume work, *Refiguring Modernism*, presents itself as a rebuttal of Wyndham Lewis' canonisation of himself, Joyce, Pound, and Eliot as the central figures of modernism, the "men of 1914." In the first volume, she traces the affiliations of her three women of 1928, Virginia Woolf, Rebecca West and Djuna Barnes, with their families, with those she calls their "Edwardian uncles," with each other, with other women and with the four men of 1914. In the second volume, she reads some of their texts. Scott has undertaken considerable archival research for this work, and, especially in