

**FEMINIST SUBJECTIVITIES:
SOURCES FOR A POLITICISED PRACTICE OF
WOMEN'S PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT EDUCATION**

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SUMMARY

This thesis offers an account of the processes through which feminist subjectivities are constructed. Subjectivity is a central theoretical concept of the work and is conceptualised throughout from a poststructuralist perspective. Implicit in this perspective is the understanding that subjectivity is social, dynamic and multiple. Drawing in particular on feminist poststructuralist and psychodynamic thought, the theoretical objective of the work is to advance theories of adult politicisation, human agency and critical adult education.

Based on original fieldwork with self-defined feminist women, feminist subjectivity is characterised as a three-way production involving a) different feminist discourses, b) relations in present situations and c) emotional responses.

Taking into account the complex picture of feminist subjectivity which the research provides, the thesis also asks if politicised subjectivities can be produced within the context of women's personal development education. This is a timely question, given the enormous popularity of women's personal development education in Ireland. Such education is predominantly practised within a human relations psychology framework which in turn draws on liberal humanist assumptions about the person, power and the nature of social change. Such practice is shown in this work to have depoliticising effects.

It is argued that personal development education can be practised in politically radical ways, if it draws on theoretical resources outside liberal humanism. The thesis builds on its own picture of feminist subjectivities to make proposals for a practice of personal development education which meets the stated needs of many women for attention to the personal, but without sliding into a depoliticised individualism. The proposals are living, practical and specifically designed for an educational context.

The thesis concludes by arguing that the training of personal development facilitators needs to be informed by a wide range of feminist discourses, especially including feminist poststructuralist theories. It also recommends that critical adult education provide the theoretical resources for politically radical personal development education, by addressing questions of subjectivity and human agency, and by treating gender differences as produced and open to change, rather than as given.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION TO THE THESIS

1.0 Introduction

This chapter introduces the thesis, the key assumptions of its epistemological stance, the social context in which the study takes place and the research questions. The thesis is a study of the construction of subjectivity and it puts forward a theoretical account of the processes through which adult feminist subjectivities are constituted. In taking subjectivity as a primary focus, there is a pedagogical concern to generate sources and themes for a politicised practice of women's personal development education. I posit that the study of feminist subjectivities helps to understand how individual women are both governed by and, more importantly for a theory of change, resist the different forms of power which structure gender relations. The research seeks pedagogical conditions that enable people (women in particular) to engage in ideology critique and personal and social change (cf Lather, 1986: 266). The theoretical objective of the thesis is to advance theories of adult development and thereby to add to theories of adult politicisation and to elaborate on sources and themes for radical pedagogies. Thus, the theory which emerges must be living, as well as specifically educational, that is, distinct from psychological or sociological theory applied to education (cf Lomax, 1994). A focus on subjectivity is appropriate for such a study, because subjectivity is treated as something that is produced and developed throughout adult life.

The first five chapters of the thesis, which comprise Part One, are devoted to investigating the human subject, and especially the female subject, as it is construed by western academic, liberation movement and pedagogical discourses. The implications of this deconstruction for methodological issues are also discussed. In Part One I set out the conceptual and theoretical tools

which I consider necessary for my subsequent accounts of subjectivity, by drawing on recent advances in feminist poststructuralist and psychodynamic theory. This chapter, Chapter One, introduces my epistemological stance and the research questions which have grown out of it. Chapter Two is a discussion of the general poststructuralist opposition to the modern, unitary human subject and the 'principles' of a feminist poststructuralist epistemological approach to subjectivity and change. Chapter Three examines views of subjectivity found in the paradigms of liberal humanism, cultural feminism and structuralism. It also examines feminist poststructuralist uses of psychoanalytic theories. Chapter Four reviews the conditions of production of some different approaches to pedagogy, learning, knowledge and pedagogical assumptions about the human subject. Chapter Five discusses the methodological implications of a feminist poststructuralist stance.

Part Two, which also comprises five chapters, begins with a study of the construction of feminist subjectivities in 1990s Ireland, through an analysis of case material from twenty self-defined feminist women. This is undertaken because of my conviction that if we want to produce feminist subjectivities or other kinds of politicised subjectivities in adult education, we need to have some kind of theory of how they are constructed and what they look like. Chapter Six examines the discourses of women and of feminism which form the content of feminist consciousness for the research participants. Chapter Seven examines feminist subjectivity as a process of relations in the present. Chapter Eight examines how psychodynamic concepts can be used for the development of feminist poststructuralist discourses. Chapter Nine 'tests' the usefulness of the theory developed so far in the thesis for my practice of women's personal development education in a feminist poststructuralist framework. Chapter Nine is the crux of this work. In it, I attempt to go beyond mapping women's oppression or alternatively calling for separate systems of education for women. I attempt to develop feminist praxis which transcends the gap between theory and practical strategies in the classroom. In Chapter

Nine, my attempts to create and produce useful feminist knowledge in the course of pedagogical relations with other women are exposed for scrutiny. The final chapter, Chapter Ten, is a summary of the research findings and a discussion of the usefulness of feminist poststructuralism as a tool for pedagogy.

1.1 Subjectivity

Concerns with history, meaning and subjectivity are characteristic of approaches in the social sciences which have emerged since the 1970s, under varying labels such as feminism, post-Marxism, poststructuralism and postmodernism. The work of Michel Foucault, in particular, has stimulated interest in history. Semiotics and similar traditions in theories of language stress that meanings are produced within social and material relations rather than in relation to objects. The third concern, subjectivity, approaches the traditional object of psychology, the individual, from a perspective which stresses power relations, language and meaning and the part played by unconscious forces (Hollway, 1991a: 185).

The treatment of the subject and the social as separate and different things is seen by poststructuralist theorists as characteristic of modernity. This treatment has led to theoretical situations where there is a division of labour between psychology and sociology. Briefly put, psychology deals with the individual and its dominant version of the the individual is one which is unitary, rational and asocial at its core (the real or true self). It tends to unproblematically view the social as made up of a collection of such individuals (Broughton, 1987b). Sociology centralises the social and structural aspects of life, but without an adequate theory of individual action and agency in relation to these structures. Sub-disciplines like social psychology and interactionism try to overcome this division, but unsatisfactorily, as I show. Psychologists

have not satisfactorily resolved problems with the epistemological status of concepts like the individual, the self and personality, yet sociologists tend to use them unproblematically. Poststructuralists have attempted to overcome this dualism through the concept of subjectivity.

Subjectivity is conceptualised throughout this work, but for introductory purposes it is worth stating that I use the concept instead of the psychological terms 'identity' and 'self', to indicate my attempt to overcome the dualistic notion that the psychological and social parts of the human person are essentially separate territories: one internal and one external to the person. Instead, I regard both the social and the psychological as being in 'a recursive relationship of mutually advancing production and change' (Mama, 1995: 1). I follow the use of the term developed by Henriques, Hollway, Urwin, Venn and Walkerdine (1984), in their leading and ground-breaking text on post-structuralist psychology and its implications for political struggles. The authors refer to subjectivity as 'individuality and self-awareness -- the condition of being a subject' (ibid: 3). Weedon also writes (1987: 32, 33):

The terms subject and subjectivity are central to post-structuralist theory and they mark a crucial break with humanist conceptions of the individual which are still central to western philosophy and political and social organisation. 'Subjectivity' is used to refer to the conscious and unconscious thoughts and emotions of the individual, her sense of herself and her ways of understanding her relation to the world. ... poststructuralism proposes a subjectivity which is precarious, contradictory and in process, constantly being constituted in discourse each time we think or speak.

In this work, I initially investigate the production of subjectivity through a study of how twenty self-defined feminist women experience feminism in the particular social context of late twentieth century Ireland. I examine the historical and social material they draw on and how they creatively relate to some of the discourses of feminism, sometimes transforming them, sometimes producing new discourses and sometimes experiencing personal

transformation.

I work with a theorisation of subjectivity that does not assume a unitary, static subject at its core but instead conceptualises subjectivity as multiple, dynamic and continuously produced in the course of social relations that are themselves changing and often contradictory. I demonstrate the effects of this theorisation on my practice as facilitator of women's personal development education. All of this is undertaken with recent developments in feminist poststructuralist theories (for example, Hollway, 1989, 1994, 1995; Mama, 1995) in mind. However, the theorising is not meant to be a universal theory of human psychic or social development. As Mama (ibid) emphasises, it is a local and specific analysis of adult human subjectivity.

1.2 Pedagogy

A commitment to feminism means for me, among other things, a desire to share feminist discourse, in particular, to share feminist poststructuralist discourse. How do feminists do this successfully? In other words, how do we get people to move into existing feminist ways of interpreting the social world, or to produce new feminist ways of interpreting it? And along with interpretation, how do we facilitate action and human agency based on new ways of knowing? One of the ways we try to do it is in educational settings, through pedagogical relationships with other people. One of the issues that we face in finding useful ways of doing pedagogy in different contexts is that we are dealing with real people. Just as a lived everyday politics does not come straight out of an epistemological position or commitment, a successful radical pedagogy does not emerge straight out of epistemology either. Real people argue, question, change the subject and shift the debate. Answers are at best partial (Schratz and Walker, 1995: 90). We need to find ways of moving easily between analysis and synthesis, between theory and practice. We also need to

be able to find paths within a diversity of ways of knowing, which includes contradiction, partiality, contingency, revisability and questioning which opens up the nature of the problems which we face in seeking emancipatory knowledges. In spite of all the conflict and uncertainty that these descriptors imply, our pedagogical approaches need to be grounded enough to allow for action. Yet, in asserting the importance of action, we cannot afford to ignore theory for the sake of practice, for to do so is to run the risk of disconnection (Freire and Macedo, 1995: 382). In recognition of these concerns, subjectivity, as it is theorised by feminist poststructuralists, needs to be a central theme in pedagogy.

Adult education wants to produce critically reflexive people who are capable of shifting social balances towards social justice. How does it try do this? Theoretically stated, how does adult education pedagogy envisage the production of politicised and agentic human subjects? For me, a feminist, with a specific interest in personal development education, the central organising question becomes: under what conditions is critical self-reflection a radical and empowering act for women, from a feminist poststructuralist point of view?

I assert throughout this work that, in taking a feminist poststructural approach to adult development, there exists the potential for us to know things about the human person, the human subject, or, to use my preferred term, subjectivity. Taking account of poststructural developments can help us know more fully who we are and how we and others around us are constructed (cf Cherryholmes, 1988: 149). I think it can be a useful approach to take to theorising radical pedagogies also. What is particularly useful about the language of subjectivity for thinking about pedagogy is that it offers ways of talking and thinking about complexities and contradictions that people experience in their engagement with new discourses, with critical theories and with practices of pedagogy in specific historical contexts. This emphasis on history and context minimises the chances of falling into a universalism unacceptable within a feminist poststructuralist framework. The approach

taken to subjectivity also points to the necessity to make conscious the subjectivities of teachers as well as students in settings of emancipatory pedagogy. Emancipatory pedagogical practices are not aimed only at students, but interrogate the teacher and teaching institutions also.

1.3 Poststructuralism and feminism

Feminism, poststructuralism and feminist poststructuralism are terms used and conceptualised throughout this thesis. They require qualifiers, in order to avoid universalising very particular concepts. Feminism, as I address it,

is resistance to invisibility and silencing. It is the recognition that resistance to gendered power relations is both integral to and distinct from all other resistances to global injustice. Feminism is a willingness to reckon with gender disparities as a universal but 'unnatural' power reality, a structural process affecting both male and female, which can be deconstructed through consciousness-raising and social change. Feminist resistance is articulated through women's movements and through individual actions, including refusals and separations'. (Faith, 1994: 37)

Feminism is far from being a unified body of thought, as the thesis as a whole makes clear. Feminist poststructuralists recognise identity difference and power differentials, in common with other 'branches' of feminism, but avoid speaking with authority for 'women' or for 'feminists'. This is not to say that one can never generalise within a given context, but that generalisation is done with caution and always subject to revisability (ibid). 'Patriarchy' is another term which causes difficulty (Cocks, 1989: 209). The term suggests both centralised and localised male power, unchallenged, and a clearly defined private / public split. The patriarchy as such does not exist (Faith, 1994: 63). Nevertheless, we can speak in various ways of patriarchal relations which structure power, authority and hierarchy and which regulate women's lives.

The term 'poststructuralism' is often used interchangeably with

'postmodernism'. I do not use it in this way, as I do not believe we are in a postmodern era, distinct from a modern one (cf Giddens, 1994a, b). Modernity is based on Enlightenment ideas and postmodernism is seen as involving the realisation that all knowledge is produced, that there are no fundamental 'truths' (Craib, 1992: 101). We do not live in an age when most people reject the idea of fundamental truths. Nevertheless, I accept the idea that we live in an age with a 'postmodern turn' (Hassan, 1987, cited in Lather, 1991: 4) and that the term can be used to mean the shift in material conditions of advanced monopoly capitalism, where diagnoses of the human condition often hinge on the concept of consumption as 'the key to the intelligibility of our present ... [having] replaced class, region, religion, generation and gender as sources of interests and identifications' (Miller and Rose, 1997: 1). This 'turn' is 'brought on by the micro-electronic revolution in information technology, the growth of multinational capitalism and the global uprising of the marginalised' (Lather, 1991: 4). Following Lather, I use the term 'poststructural' to mean the working out of cultural theory taking the postmodern turn into account. Feminist poststructuralism is not an understanding of the world in all its complexity. I have adopted it as a contingent epistemological stance because it offers me a way of engaging with a complex world in ways that disrupt the gender status quo.

In particular, poststructuralism offers me a useful and productive way to approach the debates about social change which manifest themselves in the standoff between those who believe that the individual is the source of social change or, on the other hand, those who believe that only changes in social structures will bring about change. I return to these issues throughout the work. Hollway (1989: 27) sums up the importance of this debate in a 'parable':

Supposing in one way or another all humanistic psychological intervention was based on the assumption that change was desirable and that the individual is the source of change; that is that change in feelings, perceptions and attitudes resulted in changed action, and that social change consisted of the sum of individual changes. Suppose that this assumption were wrong. Its effect would be to preserve the illusion

of commitment to change while reproducing the status quo. This would be particularly convincing since those committed to it would be sincere. (Some of you may recognise the critique of liberalism - see Grimshaw, 1986.) To continue the parable, let us suppose these well-intentioned humanist psychologists were criticised by Marxists whose agenda for social change depended on changing basic economic, political and social structures and rejected the notion of personal change. Suppose the humanistic psychologists were understandably disgusted by the crudeness of this position which failed entirely to address their own experience, and that they were strengthened in their own beliefs.

Post-structuralism is about trying to transcend this hopeless dualism, by rejecting both voluntarism and determinism. To do so it requires a theory of the subject which is not caught up in the parallel dualism of individual and society. (Hollway, 1989: 27)

1.4 Political and epistemological commitments

As indicated, I take political and epistemological positions which are feminist, and deeply influenced by poststructural theories. These positions are also conceptualised throughout this study, but for introductory purposes, I summarise them here. Feminism is a politics directed at changing existing power relations between women and men in society. Feminist poststructuralism sees the categories of female and male as socially constructed and rejects the idea that human beings have essential natures, including essential gendered natures. For example, the idea that men and women are identified as such on the basis of 'transhistorical, eternal, immutable essences' (Fuss, 1990: xi) is rejected, because it cannot account for some people's discomfort with existing arrangements and their desire for change. An essentialist formulation of womanhood, even when made by feminists, binds the individual to her identity as a woman and thus cannot represent a solution to sexism (Alcoff, 1988: 415). This objection to essentialism leads to a rejection of reductionist, monocausal or foundationalist explanations. History and genealogy are seen as crucial in the development of ideas, since 'truth' does not exist outside the

social formation.

The body of theory pertaining to feminist poststructuralism is capable of analysing the workings of patriarchy in all its manifestations -- ideological, institutional, organisational, subjective -- accounting not only for continuities but also for how changes take place. It enables us to think about gender without either simply reversing old hierarchies or confirming them (Scott, 1988). It sees women as oppressed by virtue of their sex, but also along other axes of social difference, like age, race, ethnicity, sexual practice, religion, ability, etc. Its anti-essentialism requires that we look on a broad scale at gender identity and at the gendered positions which are available. It recognises the workings of difference, and that women are not a unitary category. It can embrace a variety of feminist, socialist and green politics. It emphasises the constructed, historical and contextual nature of conclusions and knowledge, yet recognises the importance of making choices and taking action for change, however flawed.

In adopting a feminist poststructuralist framework, I take the epistemological position that all knowledge is socially constructed and socially and historically situated. Therefore there is no value-free or universal social theory. I believe that the goal of intellectual rigour can best be served not by claiming objectivity and ignoring the values underpinning one's intellectual work, but rather by acknowledging the commitments, motivations and conditions that have played a part in its production. Feminist poststructuralism is not the only body of theory that can support political and epistemological positions such as these, but it is through reading and engaging with poststructuralism that I, as a feminist woman, have found the clarifications and insights which seemed most useful to me and the most enabling of my feminist practice. Along with subjectivity, among the key concepts which feminist poststructuralists have utilised from poststructuralist theory are language, discourse, difference, deconstruction. Although feminist poststructuralism is not a unified body of theory, there are however, certain basic assumptions which feminist

poststructuralists make and which are evident in their 'contingent and revisable' conclusions (Alcoff, 1988: 431) relating to these key concepts. One of these assumptions is that politics is central to everyday life.

1.5 Politics

Fuss (1990) is of the opinion that if there is any essentialism in feminist poststructuralism, it is the centrality of politics. Politics for feminist poststructuralism refers to opposing and subverting power relations, by revealing the vested interests and social construction process that lie behind them (cf Frosh, 1987: 12). Generating new theoretical perspectives from which the dominant can be criticised and new possibilities envisaged is especially important. Radical feminism in particular has contributed much to the development of concepts which include the personal in the political. The original consciousness raising approach to politics was deconstructive, in that the personal / political binary was exposed and attempts made to subvert it. Yet, the nature of the personal and of personal experience is problematised for feminist poststructuralism in ways which undermine the humanist assumptions implicit in liberal and radical feminisms. This valuing of women's difference from men is based on a belief that timeless and true differences exist. While it can be strategically useful to emphasise and celebrate these differences from time to time (Kristeva, 1986), the valuing of such essential difference, if misused or misinterpreted, can be used to support the re-introduction of stereotyping (Middleton, 1993: 129). Negotiating diversity, multiplicity and differences is a different but necessary political project (Hall, 1997).

Much feminist hostility to poststructuralist theories of subjectivity focuses on their anti-humanist tendency. Anti-humanism as a theoretical position is often confused with being anti-women, especially by feminists whose primary concern is to value and celebrate the experience and culture of women

(Weedon, 1987: 74). However, feminist poststructuralism's concern with the ways subjectivity is constructed in discourse is motivated by a primary concern with understanding how individual women in society are both governed by and resist the different forms of power which govern social relations, seeing this as necessary for providing the context for a radical politics (Kerfoot and Knights, 1994). Feminist poststructuralism emphasises the importance of making choices and taking action, however flawed or imperfect they may be. Strategy becomes important, and this may mean using humanist and essentialist concepts from time to time, drawing on them selectively (Spivak, 1990: 100). Feminist poststructuralism also realises that, although some concepts may be rejected as inadequate for a radical politics today, they were politically progressive in their time. It is important to examine them with regard to their historical context (Hollway, 1982: 17).

I want to avoid any kind of teleological implications when I say that feminist poststructuralist theories are the best so far, or the 'one best way' (cf Lather, 1991). Feminist poststructuralism has a principled objection to ideas of progressivism. To accept such a position would imply that the field of critical theory can make repeated incremental advances as a function of specific discoveries, methodological innovations and clarifications of terminology, in a progressive process of construction independent of political motive or aim (Broughton, 1987b: 2). Yet, feminist poststructuralist theories embrace the kinds of knowledge which I have so far found most useful in producing 'successful' (Faith, 1994: 58) feminist ways of being, and in facilitating subjective transformation.

One difficulty of working within a feminist poststructuralist framework has been mentioned: that many people see its anti-humanism as anti-women. Another difficulty is that it is perceived as currently fashionable in academia. Poststructuralism and feminist appropriations of it have been criticised for removing feminism and feminist theory from the lives of most feminists and from 'ordinary' women, into a closed academic realm (see, for example,

discussions in Gill, 1996; MacNeil, 1993; Ramanazoglu, 1993b; Ransom, 1993). In this realm, it is claimed, feminist poststructuralists use feminism as a means to advance their professional careers. They also offer it only as negative critique, with no practical value for political action. While this particular use of feminist poststructuralism may be happening, it does not diminish what I see as its practical value. Authors such as Lather (1991); Kenway, Willis, Blackmore and Rennie (1994); Lewis (1993) and Middleton (1993) have shown in their work how they have used it in practical ways to construct feminist change. It is one of the aims of this thesis to show its practical value.

1.6 Feminist poststructuralism, structures and the gender regime

I think it is important to be able to include a structural analysis in the feminist poststructuralist framework, since there is no doubt that structures have a material existence (Connell 1990, 1995; Hollway 1994). How can a concept like structure be used without succumbing to either dualism or determinism, both of which are inconsistent with a feminist poststructuralist epistemological stance? Connell (1990: 523) defines the term 'gender regime' as 'the historically produced state of play in gender relations within an institution which can be analysed by taking a structural inventory'. He suggests three structures as a preliminary taxonomy of gender relations: a gendered division of labour, a structure of power and a structure of cathexis (Connell, 1987: 96 - 7; 1990: 523 - 6; 1995: 74 - 5).

1.6.1 A gendered division of labour, or production. This includes: organisation of housework and childcare; division between paid and unpaid work; segregation in labour markets (women's and men's jobs); discrimination in training and promotion; unequal wages and unequal exchange.

1.6.2 A structure of power. This includes: hierarchies of state and business; institutional and interpersonal violence; sexual regulation and surveillance;

domestic authority and its contestation.

1.6.3 A structure of cathexis, 'or the construction of emotionally charged social relationships' (Connell, 1987: 112). This includes: the patterning of object choice; desire and desirability; the production of heterosexuality and homosexuality and the relationship between them; the socially structured antagonisms of gender, trust and distrust; jealousy and solidarity in marriages and other relationships; the emotional relationships involved in child-rearing.

According to Connell, the first structure is based on the principle of separation and the second on the principle of unequal integration. He does not suggest a principle for the third structure, but Hollway (1994) does. She suggests that it is emotional investments in gender difference. Her suggestion is based on gender analyses that have confronted the question of how subjectivity is fundamentally gendered and how structures and practices are reproduced or modified through subjectivity. The emotional investment in gendered subjectivity reproduces gender-differentiated power relations and this is important for the analysis of cathexis.

According to Connell, structures constrain practice through providing a given form of social organization (1987: 920). However, practice provides the dynamic of change; 'practice, while presupposing structure ... is always responding to a **situation**. Practice is the transformation of that situation in a particular direction. **To describe structure is to specify what it is in the situation that constrains the play of practice**' (1987: 95). My previous analyses have tended to use a Foucauldian framework of the relations among power, knowledge and practice; an analysis which might be assumed to be inconsistent with a 'structuralist' approach. However, by identifying multiple structures and substructures, rather than one monolithic structure of patriarchal dominance, and by Connell's emphasis on the dynamics of practice in the context of multiplicity and contradiction, the two approaches are consistent'. (Hollway, 1994: 248, first emphasis original, second emphasis added)

In my investigation and analysis of the gender regime and of feminist efforts to subvert it, using the concept of subjectivity, I acknowledge the multiplicity and

potentially contradictory nature of structures. I assert that even small changes in practice at local sites can have structural effects, and these are some of the things I am seeking in people's accounts. This is consistent with a view of what constitutes radical political action in our time (Abrahams, 1992; Giddens, 1994a; Landry and Maclean, 1993).

1.7 Power, resistance and agency

Power, resistance and agency are issues central to this work as a whole. Resistance is the antithesis of the victim identity often associated with the position of women (Faith, 1994: 56). But it needs to be accompanied by 'success' (cf Walzer, 1986, cited in *ibid*: 58). 'Success' is what I conceptualise as agency throughout this work. The concern with agency has been identified as one of the most important areas of work for feminist sociologists (Roseneil, 1995: 200, 201) and, I assert, for psychologists and educators also, in coming years. As yet, it remains undertheorised (*ibid*).

In the traditional or agonistic definition of agency in sociological theory, to act is necessarily to be the agent who carries out various acts (Davies, 1990a). Agency is an individual matter in which any individual conceives of a line of action, knows how to achieve it and has the power, authority and right to execute it. In this model, which coincides with what has largely become the common-sense view of the person in the social world, there is an agonistic relationship between self and other and self and society. The individual, along with other individuals, does not collaboratively construct the social world. Rather, the individual is conceived as being in relation to 'society', which acts forcefully upon the individual and against which any individual can pit themselves.

Davies (*ibid*) develops a model of the person and of agency which stands in

sharp contrast to the agonistic one. Following a poststructural model of language and discourse (which will be elaborated in the following chapters), she asserts that persons are persons, by virtue of the fact that they use the discursive practices of the collectives of which they are members. Such collectives might include children, girls, boys, a group of friends, a study group, a classroom, one's family. Each person can speak only from the positions made available within those collectives. A child, for example, may know how to speak as an adult, but is not allowed to and may not want to. A feminist may choose not to speak as such in certain situations, or if s/he does speak as such, may not be understood. One's desires are formulated in the terms that make sense in each of the discourses, or frames of reference available. Embedded in the discursive practices of one's collective is an understanding that each person is one who has an obligation to take themselves up as a knowable, recognisable identity, part of the collective, but recognisably separate from it. In this separateness from the collective, one can be said to have agency.

There are discursive practices which make it not thinkable or do-able for certain persons or categories of persons to take themselves up as agents, that is, for their actions to influence the way the 'ball-game' (Smith, 1987: 32) develops. This is frequently women's experience. Davies uses as an illustration of this point Busfield's (1989) example of the way problematic female behaviour is often viewed as illness, and male as active wrong-doing. Agency can be denied to women and others, depending on the particular discursive practices in use and the positioning of the person in those practices. It becomes clear, then, that it is not a necessary element of human existence to be agentic, but a contingent element. This is in marked contrast to the agonistic model, where simply acting confers agency.

The discursive approach to agency has important political implications relating to the possibility for change. As Henriques et al (1984: 223, 224) demonstrate, roles and stereotypes are social impositions on a pre-existent subject. One

implication of such a 'role' approach is that change is possible through the production and reinforcement of positive images for women (cf Coward, 1984: introduction). This is one of the things that liberal, radical and socialist feminisms believe is possible, but this liberation tradition prompts an oversimplified and voluntaristic notion of the relation between social 'oppression' and individual 'repression'. The attraction of liberation movements is that they promise a better, freer, unrepressed psyche, loosed from the bonds of capitalism and / or patriarchy. But if, as I argue throughout this work, there is no pre-existing, unitary subject there to be repressed, then a 'repressed psyche' is not a simple product of capitalism or patriarchy. If psychic states are produced in relation to social practices there is no simple source of repression which, through its removal, would reveal the true, liberated individual. Structures of labour, power and cathexis are thus seen to be overlapping and interconnected. All need to be taken into account in the pursuit of agency.

'The system' is revealed to be not one but multiple, overlapping, intersecting systems or relations that are historically constructed and recreated through everyday practices and interactions, and that implicate the individual in contradictory ways. All of that without denying the operations of actual power differences, overdetermined though they may be. Reconceptualizing power without giving up the possibility of conceiving power. (Martin and Mohanty, 1988: 209)

1.8 Personal development education examined in the context of the position of women in Ireland

In the last three decades in Ireland, there have been significant changes in family structures, lifestyles, work and leisure patterns. Legislation has also been introduced such as the removal of the marriage ban in the civil service in 1972, the Equal Employment Act, 1977, the changed definition of dependency in 1986 and the introduction of divorce in 1996. Such changes have affected women's lives. Equality, contraception, divorce / separation and domestic

violence have become issues of public debate. The contemporary Irish feminist movement experienced a resurgence in 1970 and has made an impact in challenging the status of women in Irish society. Nevertheless, economic inequalities persist. Low paid, part-time and temporary jobs and lack of childcare facilities act as barriers to the economic equality of women. The Irish Constitution portrays a narrow role for women, equating them with motherhood and work in the home, perpetuating beliefs that women should be the main carers in society.

In parliamentary political life, since the most recent general election in June 1997, women make up twenty of one hundred and sixty six TDs in Dail Eireann and eight women senators out of sixty. There is no woman secretary of any government department and women in top jobs in the judiciary and other areas are still in a minority. Daly (1989a: 17) asserts that three main factors account for women's lack of formal power within government and state agencies: women's limited role in the economy; attitudes towards women and the roles they should play and access to resources. She argues that 'women must actively develop an understanding of power itself, of the institutions of power and how power is exercised' (ibid). This call is echoed by Mulvey (1995).

During the late 1980s and 1990s the women's movement in Ireland has been most evident in the 'mushrooming' of community based women's groups, the consolidation of Women's Studies in Irish universities and growth in women's publishing (L. Connolly, 1996: 68). In the community women's groups, new forms of structure and organisation are emerging, emphasising non-hierarchical relations, participation and autonomy. Collins (1992) considers that these groups resemble the small-group, consciousness raising radical women's sector of the 1970s, although this view is disputed by O'Donovan and Ward (1996). Some of these groups are autonomous, some are highly interconnected and networked with the generic community groups movement and others are connected to the state through its various funding programmes (L. Connolly,

1996: 68) and through the Home- School- Community Links Scheme. This growth co-exists with the growth in the last decade of widespread interest in personal power, spirituality, counselling, psychotherapy and the life of the emotions, which form part of what Giddens (1991) describes as projects of personal reflexivity.

A strong anti-feminist climate also exists. Inglis (1994) highlights the role of the Roman Catholic church in the backlash, as does Byrne (1995: 13). Wilcox (1991, cited in O'Donovan and Ward, 1996: 16) concludes that Catholicism is a determining factor in people's attitudes to greater gender equality in family roles. O'Donovan and Ward (ibid) point out that Galligan (1993) has developed this by arguing that while there is a great demand for equality in all aspects of what she terms public life in Ireland, social attitudes and values indicate that there is considerable public pressure on women to achieve equality, while retaining their traditional family roles. O'Donovan and Ward (1996: 17) conclude that 'to argue that women's groups *per se* are inherently part of the feminist movement is akin to arguing that woman, by definition, is feminist'. The writings of some male journalists (for example, Myers, 1997; Waters, 1997; see also Spray, 1997) are evidence that an anti-feminist men's movement has also begun to manifest itself recently in Ireland.

For the most part the women's groups have concentrated their activities on personal development courses (Daly, 1989b). The criticism has been made that the energy invested in these courses has not gone on to tackle structural changes (Daly, 1989a; Mulvey, 1991, 1995). Inglis (1994) on the other hand, while acknowledging these criticisms and also having a central concern with power, concludes that the groups' concentration on personal development courses is based on felt needs and interests. The next section (Section 9) examines the content of such courses, but for the moment I wish to concentrate on some of the debates which surround personal development education in Ireland.

In the analyses and commentaries on these issues and on personal development, and in the assertions that women need to 'move beyond' personal development, there is an assumption that structures are the 'root causes' of oppression. This is emphasised especially in Mulvey's (1995) report on women's power, which arises out of a conference of women's networks in Ireland, entitled *Women's Power for a Change*. This document provides an overview of current dominant feminist attitudes to women's power and personal development education in Ireland, as the conference was attended by influential activists, policy makers, academics and community leaders. The report documents frustration at the lack of structural change and lack of participation and representation by women in community, regional and state development. It exhibits a belief that a concentration on personal development is preventing women from engaging in structural analysis. The reluctance of women to accept the label feminist is noted, as is the view that the priorities of funders mean that women's work is acceptable only if it is 'poverty work' (ibid:17). The role of the Roman Catholic church and religious personnel in facilitating personal development courses is also noted and identified with the failure to address feminist issues in personal development.

Clancy (1995) in a large-scale survey, found that the majority of personal development courses in Ireland are run either by religious personnel or by people with a primary interest in counselling and / or psychology. While several writers and commentators have already identified religion with the maintenance of the gender status quo, there is little published work on the Irish context which makes links between the maintenance of the gender status quo and the predominance of a psychological view of women as essentially different from men. Gardiner (1997: 42) points to the existence of a 'dual culture' or a 'female culture' mentality in Irish political life as evidence of the continued existence of patriarchal social relations. Feminist writing from Britain and the USA (which I explore in Chapters Two, Three and Four) has demonstrated the role of psychology (both mainstream and feminist 'difference') and beliefs in a

female nature and culture in maintaining the gender status quo. Psychological approaches to women's personal development and education are usually seen as a secular challenge to religious perspectives on women's nature. This is particularly so in Ireland, where traditional, old-style Roman Catholicism is widely seen as having contributed to women's oppression. Both religion and psychology, however, share a view of 'woman' which does nothing to challenge existing power arrangements. Mednick (1989: 1122) describes the problem as follows:

It is my view that the different voice / maximalist view, even though professed by feminists who are not in agreement with the rightwing agenda, nevertheless attained its popularity because it meshed so easily with the pro-family women's nature ideology that has become the dominant public rhetoric ... arguments for women's intrinsic difference, whether innate or deeply socialised, support conservative policies that, in fact, could do little else but maintain the status quo *vis a vis* gender politics.

Given the dominance of religious and counselling based facilitators, it is my view that there is little feminist personal development being carried out in Ireland. It is a mistake, therefore, for Irish feminists concerned with power to call for women to 'move beyond' personal development, as the conference organisers did (Mulvey, 1995: 19). The personal should not be regarded as constituting merely a 'first step' which is less important than structures. This is dualistic and reductionist thinking which recent feminist theorising has shown to be inadequate for transformative politics. However, there is little evidence of critique, either of dualism and essential differences feminism, or of the psychologisation of feminism in published Irish feminist work.

Personal development courses are answering a felt need for women who are taking first steps outside their homes. The personal is implicated in structures. Personal development education deals with family relationships and cathectic structures which keep the gender regime in place. Such courses, if facilitated by feminists, can take a feminist perspective on change within the family. These facts, as well as the fact that the family and heterosexual couple relationships

are the prime site for the reproduction of gender difference (Hollway, 1982; 1984), mean that feminist personal development courses should not be dismissed. Far from being dismissed, they should be encouraged and developed in tandem with structural endeavours. By themselves, structural and collective change and agitation will not take the place of necessary personal work on emotional investments (which are held by both women and men) in the gender status quo. Structural oppressions are felt at the level of the individual and they construct emotional responses (Lewis, 1993). Work needs to be done at this level always. The greatest danger is that personal change will not be accompanied by political change. But on the other hand, political change in outlook, if not accompanied by emotional politicisation, is of limited effect.

Change is not a simple escape from constraint to liberation. There is no reaching a final realm of freedom, at the end of some linear progression which does not exist (Martin and Mohanty, 1988: 201). There is no final analysis, 'because change has to do with the transgression of boundaries which are carefully and tenaciously drawn around identity. Connections have to be made at levels other than the abstract political one' (ibid). Seeing how the personal is political is crucial but it is not enough. The highly intimate and particular nature of the political has to be acknowledged and explored also. This is where earlier consciousness raising practices often left women without support. Having identified the connections between personal and political, women often felt guilty if they did not immediately throw off the aspects of their lives which they had identified as oppressive. Very often, people's feelings remained in some way unaddressed by becoming critically and politically literate: 'they are the parts which feminism has failed to reach -- yet' (Gill and Walker, 1993: 69). Coward (1993) gives the title 'our treacherous hearts' to the result of feminism's failure to deal with feelings and personal needs.

Feminism has provided discourses and language for recognising women's oppression, and a desire to see feminism in action, but it has not displaced other, more dominant, discourses, within which desires are also constructed,

and which probably go further back in time for most people, feminism being largely an adult politicisation process. This has produced many areas of contradiction for women, including women who do not label themselves feminist but who are all nevertheless affected by feminism's discourses in recent decades. If liberal humanist and religious discourses are not challenged within personal development, these contradictions will be interpreted as evidence that essential femininity and maternity exist after all and that women should give into them (cf *ibid*). Personal development courses are places where people explore feelings and desires. They need to be actively colonised by feminists acting outside of liberal humanist and religious discourses, because otherwise they will have anti-feminist effects.

The report (Mulvey, 1995) which forms the basis for this discussion, does, indeed, draw attention to the strengths which women can bring from personal development into other areas of political activity. But what both the report and the conference fail to do is to distinguish different types of personal development. Courses in personal development in this country are facilitated from a feminist perspective in only a tiny minority of cases. This is borne out by Clancy (1995: 117) who, in a large scale survey, found that counselling is the main training undertaken for facilitators. Clancy argues, correctly in my view, that counselling training is capable of treating the symptoms, but not the causes of women's oppression and diverts attention away from inequalities to focus on individuals. This is not a fault of personal development *per se*. It is a result of the dominance of mainstream psychology practices, an issue to which I return in more detail in Chapters Two and Four.

Mulvey (1995: 19) reports that the conference on power concluded with a number of questions for the participants, one of which was 'What is needed for women to move beyond personal development?' This question would have addressed the issue much better, if it had asked what is needed to politicise personal development education for women and prevent it becoming an

exercise focused **solely** on personal symptoms, spirituality and individual healing? My immediate answer to this question, shared by Clancy (1995) in her research conclusions, is that we need feminist / politicised facilitators who are able to incorporate social analysis, radical politics and feminism into course content **which is also capable of meeting the felt and expressed needs of many women for a focus on their personal lives.**

Martin and Mohanty (1988) ask, 'What has home got to do with it?' The answer must be that patriarchy and patriarchal relations are at their most naturalised and normalised in family life and in heterosexual relations. In the particular point in history where we live now in Ireland, and given the strong climate of anti-feminism which co-exists with religious and liberal humanist ideological views of women, home has an awful lot to do with it. We live in a formally egalitarian liberal democracy, where it is acceptable for women to take on roles outside their homes, in paid work, sport, party politics and many other arenas. But through discourses which position them as essentially domestic and maternal they are still widely considered to be the only sex properly suited to primary childcare. Issues of domesticity and maternity surface time and again in the personal development courses of my experience (cf Clancy, 1995). Dealing with them is a major challenge to contemporary feminism (Coward, 1993; Hochschild, 1990a). 'Moving beyond' personal development is not the solution. Politicising personal development by taking feminist poststructuralism into account is one of the necessary responses to this many-faceted challenge.

1.9 What does a personal development course look like?

There is no set content for personal development courses. However a typical Stage One course runs for eight to ten weeks for two to two and a half hours one morning a week, for the number of weeks decided on by the facilitator.

Topics covered include: reasons for coming to the course and hopes and concerns about it; ground rules; life stories, human rights; feelings; relationships; guided relaxation and visualisation; managing stress; assertiveness; communication skills; setting goals; social analysis; women's health and nutrition; sexuality; education; envisioning 'my ideal world'; affirmation of self and acceptance of praise (Aontas Women's Education Group, 1991; Clancy, 1995; Clarke and Prendiville, 1992; Hayes, 1990).

There is usually a check-in with each woman at the beginning of a session, to see how she has been feeling and what has been going on in her life since the last session. Games, icebreakers and energizers are used. 'Homework' is usually set, in the form of giving oneself a treat during the week between sessions. Self-help is emphasised. The methodology is highly participative and women are encouraged to share only as much information about themselves as they feel comfortable with. A typical group starts off with twelve to fourteen women. Invariably, a few drop out after a week or two. Clancy (1995) also found that some groups are run on an 'open' basis, with different members attending each week. This was found to be a problem for the development of a sense of collectivity in a group (ibid). When I refer to personal development education from here on in this work, especially in Chapter Nine, I assume closed groups, running for eight to ten weeks, with the same facilitator or co-facilitators throughout.

Women come to personal development courses because they feel a need to make some changes in their lives, usually starting with family life and with a desire to 'get out of the house more'. This was Clancy's (ibid) finding and is my experience. Courtney (1992) interprets the act of participation in most adult education courses as evidence of a desire for change and West's (1996: 25, 26) findings bear out this interpretation. Fagan (1991: 67) describes the community women who attended her social analysis classes as 'searching for an unspecified development'. Personal development courses are part of the

distinct process that is adult learning. Adult learning is seen as voluntary, self-directed, practical, participatory, with sharing of experiences and resources, related to individual's self-concept or self-esteem, and possibly anxiety-provoking for the learners. It also attempts to take cognisance of different learning styles (Cranton, 1992: 5 - 7). Of themselves, these qualities do not necessarily make for politicisation of the participants. However, the processes which they involve are widely seen as essential for radical pedagogies which are also providing new or radical content (McDonald, 1989)

1.10 Why I am undertaking this study

This study is situated deep in the tensions, contradictions and flawed resolutions of Irish feminist life and social relations, in my everyday working life and in my home life (cf Middleton, 1993: 65). The conditions of my work as a teacher of young people from 1979 to 1991 were often in conflict with the feminism I had been constructing for myself from the mid 1970s, when I finished second-level schooling. Sexist and other regulatory discourses filter experience in schools and the difficulty of sharing and promoting muted discourses, such as feminism and other discourses of egalitarianism, in a schooling context often led me into conflict with authorities and peers. The power of hegemonic practices frustrated and depressed me. I was also aware of my cultural and economic capital (Bourdieu, 1986) and my privileged status, conferred on me by the institutions of the schools where I worked, and of the power related to that status. As time went on, I also became aware that schooling is not always successful in socialising pupils into hegemonic discourses (see also Connell, 1995: 37). There is room in schooling for contestation and resistance, although the forms of contestation taken appeared to me to almost always reproduce dominant discourses of sexuality and gender relations.

My later work as a home-school-community liaison teacher (1991 - 1995) centred on parents, which, in practice, meant mothers. This sort of work bolstered certain dominant assumptions about families and the functions of mothers, which I considered ideological, and which I wanted to resist. Westwood (1988: 80) comments:

Ultimately, adult education worked with a notion of the incompetent woman in need of upgrading through adult education. For all its contradictions, feminism was in direct opposition to this. The woman of feminist discourse was competent, active and struggling in and against the state, and the discourses that defined her personal and public world. Those struggles are ongoing.

Westwood is writing about the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. But this is how I felt the Home-School-Community (HSL) scheme constructed women, as well as assuming that the function of these 'upgraded' women would be to socialise their children and to produce them as the kind of self-regulating subjects on which the existence of the bourgeois state relies. The tensions with my feminism were great.

Yet, the existence of an ideological scheme such as HSL allowed me to have contact with women which, as a classroom teacher, I would not otherwise have had. In my contacts with the women, I attempted to play a subversive role whenever I saw a space to do this. I participated in and later facilitated personal development courses with many of the women in the area where I worked and saw evidence of consciousness raising and of some radical personal changes. However, my subversive desires were not obvious within the school where I was employed. There, it was generally assumed that I shared dominant assumptions. So whenever I tried to operate in a different discourse and persuade the institution as a whole that it needed to examine assumptions about class, gender and ability, these discourses were alien to many (although by no means all) of my colleagues, and led to my marginalisation.

While I was marginal to mainstream schooling discourses, this was not obvious

to most of the parents I met. (Those who were aware that I felt marginalised were the women with whom I took part in the personal development courses. They know me well and this colours our ongoing relations.) For most of the parents, I embodied the power of the school as institution, as well as the power and privilege of the middle classes. Even though I have engaged in a critique of my class positioning, I am aware that privilege, once bestowed, cannot be undone (Mantel, 1994: 44). Yet the existence of my critique and my awareness of the regulatory nature of many schooling practices marginalised me within the school as institution. So I was positioned within and outside dominant discourses of education. This is not unusual for educators who want to challenge the status quo:

I tried to distance myself from my institution, both ideologically and physically. Nevertheless, I had to acknowledge and live with the authority they bestowed on me and the resources it provided me with. (Johnston, 1993: 81)

In personal and social relations, I am positioned and I position myself as both feminist and feminine, with all the different relations attached to those discourses. In all my relations, I perceive myself as partly on the margins. I do not recognise myself in dominant texts, even within feminism. It is from the margins that political resistances are often formed (Faith, 1994: 39), although we should not romanticise the idea of marginality (cf Fuss, 1991: 5). Moreover, along with my marginality, I possess cultural capital which positions me powerfully (cf Greene, 1993).

Poststructuralist social theories and theories of the person focus on such contradictions, experienced as a result of multiple positionings, claiming that they are productive of emancipatory subjectivity. Hollway claims that women are more likely to incorporate greater multiple positioning than men, because of what 'woman' means in a relation of otherness to humankind (Hollway, 1989: 129). Mama (1995) claims that black people are similarly multiply

positioned and that this enables recognition of certain discourses and enhances the quality of certain types of research. Such experience of contradiction and multiplicity provides a productive starting point for exploring different ways of creating knowledge, because in the contradictions and marginal positionings can be found some of the things that the dominant discourses ignore or suppress. In attending to the gaps in the dominant discourses, their ideological functioning can be laid bare (cf Belsey, 1980).

For a long time, the experience of marginality was a source of disablement for me. However, the productive personal work which I have done on my experience of contradiction and the attendant loss of certainty has had the outcome of enabling me to construct feminist knowledge useful to me. It is the product of interweaving my own life-history with theoretical knowledge and it leads me to the postmodern challenge of revealing the personal history of one's work (Greene, 1993). I have written an unpublished paper (Ryan, 1995) about this self-theorising, which I have used as the basis of discussion with some of the research participants (see Chapter Eight). I discuss some of this story here because it shows my personal affinities in what could seem otherwise to be abstract theory. It is my belief that there are always personal, biographical affinities in theory. Another reason for including aspects of my own story is that a life-history approach offers ways of making knowledge that are grounded in one's native imagery (cf Middleton, 1993: 47). Having done this for myself, the process informs my methodology and my approach to the other women in the research.

Having called myself a feminist, and influenced by socialist feminism and radical feminist theory since I finished school in 1975, I entered 1993 in a state of crisis. I felt irrevocably 'stuck' in my political agency. I had just completed a thesis (A. Ryan, 1992) which mapped the oppression of young women. I had adopted a feminist poststructuralist theoretical framework for the thesis and had spent three years engaging intensely with the theory. The theory refined my feminist identity and ideas and I felt passionate about its value for 'making

hope practical' (Kenway, Willis, Blackmore and Rennie, 1994), but I had not managed to map successful acts of resistance and change in the thesis, nor was I able to use the theory to get myself over the crisis of 'stuckness' I was experiencing. Strong feelings dominated my life: of anger, rage, depression, paralysis and fear. Added to this was a dreadful bitterness that I, who had identified my politics as feminist for so long, was ineffective. Eventually, I was persuaded to seek counselling. This was something I had always scorned, because of my belief that it bolsters the status quo. But I liked the counsellor and decided to give it a try, as we concentrated on the strong feelings I was experiencing. What I had not anticipated was the way that my work on my emotional life would interact with the feminist poststructuralist theory I had been reading and engaging with intellectually, to produce transformation and feminist agency.

It was an enormous challenge for me to work on my feelings and emotional investments. I arrived at a great deal of the 'really useful knowledge' (Thompson, 1996) alone, between sessions with my counsellor. I think that taking the space and time to acknowledge the feelings allowed me to do the other work in between sessions. I came to acknowledge the construction of my subjectivity in discourses which were not feminist and I found this difficult, because being a feminist had been so important to me for so long. But while it was painful, it was also productive of new feminist ways of being for me. It also made it possible for me to undertake this present work in the way I do. In Chapters Six, Seven and Eight, where I analyse case material from other feminist women, I draw attention at several points to my own role in producing their accounts and to where my self-knowledge illuminates similarities and differences between us.

Hollway (1989: 39) points out that psychic defences operate against formulating different accounts of oneself, because of the self-threatening implications. For some women, feminism is a threat. For me, femininity operated in the same way. I felt threatened by the possibility of recognising that

my subjectivity had been produced in discourses of femininity. But by ceasing to suppress their productive forces in creating meaning in my subjectivity and in my heterosexual couple relationship, I came to an understanding of parts of my power in that relationship and in other relationships also. One of the ways structural gender difference is reproduced recursively is in the minutiae of heterosexual couple relationships (Hollway, 1982; 1984a), and in relationships between women and men in work organisations also (Hollway, 1994). This, then, was of major importance in helping me to have agency in creating structural changes, as well as, and distinct from, having the potential to improve interpersonal relations.

I no longer felt fraudulent as an individual in my intimate relationships and this seemed to free me to make progress on work relationships also. That is, I no longer felt that the political convictions which I held and expressed were 'invisible' in my actions. I was able to centralise rather than marginalise feminism in my moment-to-moment actions, with a sense of agency. The structures of many organisations and job settings, while often formally based on equality policies, reproduce sexist and classist discourses similar to those operating in heterosexual relations (Hollway, *ibid*). Strategies developed in my domestic life became inspirations for strategies taken at work. While not always successful in the ways that I envisaged, they disrupted patterns of work relationships with often interesting effects. Working out these and similar issues for myself, using a combination of my intellectual theoretical background and the counselling process, was immensely satisfying. None of the issues I have mentioned here was the subject of counselling sessions, yet the attention to emotionality within those sessions facilitated the broader process which I describe here.

Attention to the emotions carries with it the danger of being dominated by liberal humanist discourses, with their individualising effects. Intellectually, I had been aware of this from my engagement with feminist poststructuralist theory. As Kenway and Willis (1990) remind us, any process which attends to

personal growth is on tricky ideological ground. Avoiding emotional issues is not the way to go about change, but the dominant discourses or intellectual repertoires (whether consciously articulated or not) which provide resources for reflecting on the emotions are dominated by either religion or by human relations psychologies. For reasons which I explore in Chapters Two and Three of this work, these theories of the self are not sufficient to sustain a disruption of the gender status quo. Attending to my emotional life was the crucial missing piece for me in developing a practical theory of myself, within a feminist poststructuralist framework. Most importantly, I had a discourse outside the dominant ones within which to reflect on myself and filter my experiences. This is one of the reasons why I place an emphasis in Chapters Two and Three on reviewing theories of the person which refute liberal humanist accounts. I also assert in those chapters that recent radical feminist theory, while it is critical of liberal humanism, falls into an account of the human subject which is highly deterministic, in such a way that it cannot provide a theory of agency.

Before I developed a theory of myself, I related to feminist poststructuralist theory in an analytic and rationalising manner. This is not to say that I was not passionate about what I believed. But because I perceived myself as ineffective, the passion was not allowed to express itself in productive ways. It showed itself most often in anger, self-pity or frustration. My inability to act was in conflict with my political analysis and a contradiction of feminism's insistence on action. Conventionally, I could have been labelled 'burnt out'. Through the politicised personal development and self-reflection process, I was able to 'reclaim conflict and contradiction as knowledge' (Walicki, cited in Selby, 1984: 348). Thus, I have overcome a paralysis of analysis and found that the most radical thing I can do is act (Martin Luther King, cited in Lather, 1991: 106), even if my actions are flawed.

Following my individual work with the counsellor, I changed my attitude to personal development education, in my work as home-school-community

liaison teacher. I organised and participated in two personal development courses with another facilitator and began to theorise about the possibilities for them to be facilitated from a specifically feminist perspective. Under supervision, I facilitated several courses and I became convinced of their potential for politicisation, if facilitated by a politicised facilitator. The other factor that convinced me I should become involved in personal development course facilitation was that women were and are attending them in very large numbers in Ireland. They provide a forum where feminism can reach women who are looking for names for their experiences of power and resistance. If feminists distance themselves from personal development education, it is open to colonisation by right wing forces, without even a struggle.

My own personal development work has been valuable to me. It has helped me to formulate a personal radical feminist politics, taking into account the poststructuralist knowledge which I like so much. It has also helped me to feel more agentic in this political sense, in the adult education arena, which I see as one forum for feminist activism. What gives this thesis its focus on pedagogy is my desire to share something of feminist poststructuralist discourses and, using them, to engage in the production of knowledge. Feminism is, among other things, a pedagogical project. The concept of pedagogy draws attention to the process through which knowledge is produced. The teacher and the learner together produce knowledge in a cycle of production, exchange and transformation of consciousness. In looking at this cycle, we can open up for questioning 'areas of enquiry generally repressed by conventional practices, about theory production and about the nature of knowledge and learning' (Lusted, 1986: 3). However, I am also acutely aware of the regulatory potential of personal development courses, when the areas of enquiry which are generally repressed are left that way. This leads me to the research questions, which I set out in the next section.

1.11 The research questions

- What forms do feminist subjectivities take? How are they constructed?
- Under what conditions can women do personal development and self-reflection work in ways that construct politicised and agentic feminist subjectivities?

Related to these central questions are the following:

- The personal change which people often experience as a result of personal development work can just as easily ally itself with the status quo as with a desire to challenge the status quo. What makes the difference?
- How, in practical terms, does a feminist politics help women to make powerful changes in their adult social relations, to take up successfully subject positions which are agentic, in the sense that they can create changes which disrupt the gender status quo in favour of justice?

Following Haggis (1990), I consider the questions important for the following reasons:

- Feminist women's subjective experiences in Irish society have not yet been identified, described and included in research.
- The reasons for this omission are probably significant and may have to do with an unfashionable public perception of a feminist orthodoxy and with a confusion of the terms women and feminist, or, in other words, a confusion of women's increased visibility in public life with the achievement of feminist aims (see Landry and McLean, 1993xi).
- The task at hand is not only a matter of their inclusion, but also of the re-appraisal of methodology, as well as the creation of new emancipatory

knowledge / generation of theory.

- While description of women's lives is important, because we cannot understand history, politics and culture until we recognise how influential the structures of gender and sexual difference have been, it is not sufficient for a feminist or emancipatory research project (cf Lather, 1986). Men have been accorded more social power and thus have decided whose realities are represented and taught, and which will not. In doing so, men have relegated women, as women, to the margins of culture. But the story of this alone is not sufficient. We must also act, politically and culturally, to change history.

CHAPTER TWO

FEMINIST POSTSTRUCTURALISM AND THE MODERN SUBJECT

2.0 Introduction

This chapter is a discussion of the general poststructuralist opposition to the modern, unitary human subject and of the 'principles' of a feminist poststructuralist approach. Working with the concepts outlined in Chapter One, it shows how they are central to any assessment of subjectivity and change from a feminist poststructuralist perspective.

'The "subject" of feminism is, ostensibly, women and its aim to improve the lives of women' (Ramanazoglu, 1993b: 24). In debates about human nature, feminism, femininity, masculinity and gendered experience, there are implicit models of the human subject which are not usually addressed. Discussions of what individuals do when they act, however 'natural' it may seem, presuppose a whole theoretical discourse about language and about the relationships between meaning and the world, meaning and people, and about people themselves and their place in the world (Belsey, 1980). Concerns about meaning, about subjectivity and history are characteristic of approaches in the social sciences which have emerged since the 1970s, under varying labels such as feminism, post-Marxism, poststructuralism and postmodernism. The work of Michel Foucault, in particular, has stimulated interest in history. The concern with subjectivity addresses the traditional object of psychology, the individual, from a perspective which stresses power relations, language and meaning and the part played by unconscious forces (Hollway, 1991a: 185). As such, the concept of subjectivity is unremittingly social, in contrast to the theorisation of the self implicit in mainstream psychology, human relations and self-help psychology. In the concept of subjectivity, also, the general sociological acceptance of psychology's theorisation (or lack of it) of the self is addressed

and, to a certain extent, overcome (ibid). Adult education pedagogy tends to share dominant sociological and psychological assumptions about the self and thus shares their inability to analyse and understand forms of subjectivity, their manifestations and their costs, found in what Giddens (1991, 1994 a, b) terms 'high modernity'. They fail to come to terms with the role played in particular by mainstream psychology in the production of the self-regulating bourgeois subject (Blackmann, 1996; Rose, 1990; Rose and Miller, 1992; Walkerdine, 1988).

Theorists concerned with subjectivity seek to subvert the paradigmatic distinction between psychology and sociology, between biology and the social, between agency and structure, individual and society, which is currently dominant (Layder, 1994; Oakley, 1992; Hollway, 1989). This dominance extends to education, including critical pedagogies (Davies, 1990c; Lather, 1991; Cherryholmes, 1988; see also Chapter Four of this work). Such dualisms have led to the dominance of binary thinking (Sherwin, 1989), with one side of the binary being in a hierarchical relationship to the other. Thus, what is seen to be unchanging, for example, the biological or the natural elements of human existence, are considered more real than that which is seen to change, that is, the social and the political. The real, in turn, is seen as superior to the unreal (Hollway, 1989).

One of the assertions of this chapter and the work as a whole is that psychology, sociology and biology tend to rely on such post-Enlightenment dualistic assumptions, including the assumption that the human subject is unitary and rational and that such assumptions are responsible for narrow perceptions of human potential and inadequate for any liberatory attempts. My concern is to work with and add to theories of the human individual in ways that avoid the reductionist and essentialist pitfalls of the biological, the sociological and the psychological disciplines. This concern leads me to review subjectivity in its own right, via poststructural theorists (cf Lengermann and Niebrugge-Brantly, 1992). It also leads away from a search for origins and puts

the focus on gendered subjectivity and gender relations in the present, rather than having a focus on history only, or on a desire to produce universally applicable theory. A focus on the present highlights how one moment can be different from another in people's practices and the meanings they ascribe to their practices.

I am not asking what theory of the person and of meaning is right or correct. I am asking what one is most useful to me, what one helps me around the inadequacies I experience with some theories and the issues they leave unaddressed. If we want a radical politics and a radical education, we need theory in order to get a grip on complexity and access to ways of making changes from within situations (Giddens, 1993; Schratz and Walker, 1995: 107). For example, Foucault's work has demonstrated the complexity of power and at the same time, his theorisation of the complexity of its operations and its connections to knowledge in the modern age has helped radicals come to terms with power and see it as something to be used, not always as a monolithic presence 'out there'.

Theory is implicit in all human action. Everybody is a social theorist 'based on what they have found out so far' (Hollingsworth, 1994: 58) People interested in radical politics and social change need to develop theories of the person and of meaning and behaviour which take into account the complexities of the late modern age in which we live. It is an underscoring belief of critical adult education that change is possible (B. Connolly, 1996). Thus, as adult educators, we need theories that help people to move and act in ways that challenge dominant discourses and construct more liberating ones. This accords with Hollway's (1982) observations on theory, that its concepts are ultimately only heuristic devices for understanding themes in a person's actions, whether that person is oneself or a participant in research.

Many theorists assert that a re-appraisal of subjectivity is one of the necessary conditions for providing the context for a radical politics (Henriques et al,

1984; Broughton, 1987a; Kerfoot and Knights, 1994; Hollway, 1982, 1989, 1994; Mama, 1995). Harris (1988: 206, 207)) has identified subjectivity (and consequently structural issues) as essential to considerations of education which want to escape, on the one hand, reduction to issues of management, or, on the other, the dominance of mainstream psychology.

Why insist on using the terms subject and subjectivity in theoretical discussion, when 'the person', 'the self' and 'the individual' have been in use for many years? These are terms which have been at the centre of much psychological, political and philosophical theoretical discussions. Much of the literature of these disciplines fails to overcome the individual / society dualism which poststructuralism identifies as problematic. As well as this problem, everyday taken-for-granted usage of these terms is difficult to employ without the implication that they consist solely of what we experience directly and that such experiences are dualistically opposed to the social (Hollway, 1989: 25). Why not use the term 'consciousness', especially in view of its positive history in feminist consciousness raising, in Marxist theorising, in radical social theory and in African social philosophy (Mama, 1995: 86)? Mama points out that her colleagues in psychology convinced her that the use of the term consciousness would be taken too much as the opposite to 'unconscious' forces, as used in Freudian theory (ibid).

2.1 The modern subject

Disparate as the 'grand theorists' of poststructuralism are, their 'common theme is that the self-contained, authentic subject conceived by humanism to be discoverable below a veneer of cultural and ideological overlay is in reality a construct of that very humanist discourse' (Alcoff, 1988: 415). I now describe the nature and origin of this modern subject.

The 'subject' is the generic term used in philosophy for what in lay terms would

be called 'the person', 'individual' or 'human being' (Henriques et al, 1984: 2). The modern subject combines two identities. On the one hand, there is the subject of reason, which was born with modern science and the new social order that replaced feudalism (Easlea, 1980). On the other hand, there is the abstract legal subject, the subject of general 'rights of man'. The first is represented in Descartes' dictum, 'I think, therefore I am'. The second refers to a new conception of the individual which in theory equalises the subject with regard to law, to contractual obligations and to property (Venn, 1984). However, for a long time, women, children, non-white people and the propertyless were excluded from this definition on the grounds of lesser rational ability, for the most part. This demonstrates relationship between the two notions of the individual subject (ibid).

Following the Copernican revolution, which decentered the earth in the cosmos, the work of Galileo is a symbolic turning point in the development of western thought, because it makes dependence on rationality a necessity (Clavelin, 1974, cited in Venn, 1984: 134; cf Bhaskar, 1979: 145). Another principle of this rational framework is one of order founded in mathematics (Foucault, 1966, Walkerdine, 1989a). Together, they are in opposition to the previously dominant Aristotelian - Thomist doctrines and to the teachings of the Church (Easlea, 1980). Gradually, rationality and logic came to be regarded as primary, even if ultimately underwritten by a divine creation. This shift in thought ensures the development of a new explanatory structure for the world. It replaces the previous structures based on the idea of a 'signus dei' imprinted on the world, knowledge of which was also knowledge of God (Aquinas). With the beginning of doubt in the ability of God's representatives to reveal the secret order of things, there begins with Decartes in *Meditation* (1641) and *Discourse* (1637) the search for a new certainty and a new reason (Venn, 1984).

Many analyses of ideas about reason and reasoning cannot be understood historically outside considerations of gender (Walkerdine, 1989a: 27). The

modern certainties which emerged about the development of reasoning and reason included 'truths' about girls and women. Fisher and Todd (1988: 227) point out how the construction of subjectivity (that is, the condition of being a subject) in the sexes leads to separate, well defined gender identities. These gender identities are very much taken for granted in western thought. To investigate these 'truths' about women, we need to understand something of the history of modern ideas about the female body and mind, in the context of a 'history of the present'. This is Foucault's term for an examination of taken-for-granted practices which have come to seem obvious and unchallengeable facts (Walkerdine, 1989a: 20).

In the development of modern ideas, reason alone becomes the source of knowledge and of truth, viewed in the western philosophical tradition as what is universal, transcending the idiosyncrasies of partial, individual perspectives (Benhabib and Cornell, 1987: 7). Young (1987) characterises this concept of reason as deontological and locates its pitfalls in the inability to deal with difference and particularity, without reducing them to irrationality. The cognitive and affective domains are split. Knowledge is seen as produced by individuals through the application of thought or reason, and its social and developmental nature is denied (Layder, 1994: 117). Layder cites Elias (1978: 122), who points out that the self-perception of individuals as self-contained entities separate from the rest of society first developed between the 14th and 15th centuries in Europe (that is, from the late Middle Ages to the early Renaissance). Modern sociology and psychology reinforce this idea. For example, role theory simply endorses it, providing a bridge between the individual and society, when the idea of a bridge is false, because no distinction exists between 'inner self' and 'outside world' (Layder, 1994: 115). History and social anthropology have both complemented sociology's perspective and have remained descriptive (ibid).

Venn (1984) points out that the emergence of the dominant concept of reason did not go uncontested. The writings of Porta (1650), Paracelsus (in Koyre,

1933) and others portray a struggle for a different conception of the world, which asserts a fundamental symbiotic relationship between all things, including humans, and which does not split the cognitive and affective domains (cf Capra, 1983). This conception privileges the community and the whole over the individual and does not regard nature as something to be conquered and put to use (Venn, 1984: 136).

2.2 Social change and humanist models of the subject

By the 1960s, the unitary rational model of the human subject which dominated the positivist social sciences was being challenged by human relations or humanistic models, which emphasised feelings as part of an approach to the whole individual (Hollway, 1989: 26). Nevertheless, whether the approach to change is liberal-humanist or Marxist-structuralist, this hopeless dualism between individual and society remains. On the one (liberal-humanist) hand, the individual enters freely into relations with the social world, and can just as easily change these relations, through individual agency. On the other hand, in the structuralist way of seeing things, the individual is determined by social forces, which must change before individual change is possible. Once the individual and the social are assumed to be different things, the central problem becomes the manner in which they are related (the bridge referred to in Elias, 1978, above). Social psychology, for example, has depended on the idea of 'interaction' (Broughton, 1987b; Riley, 1978) and has developed theories of socialisation, social cognition, sex-roles and stereotyping. In each case, the idea of the subject involved is an individual with an asocial core, with the social parts contained in the other half of the dualism (Hollway, 1989).

2.2.1 Roles and a real self

The idea of role as a technical concept for bridging the gap between individual and society in the social sciences and as a serious way of explaining social behaviour generally, dates only from the 1930s, although the metaphor of human life as a drama is an old one (Connell, 1995: 22). It provides a way of linking the idea of a place in social structure with the idea of cultural norms. The most common way of applying the concept of role to gender is that in which being a woman or a man entails enacting a general set of expectations which are attached to one's sex -- the sex role. Masculinity and femininity are interpreted as internalised sex roles, the products of social learning or socialisation. Most often, sex roles are seen as the cultural elaboration of biological sex differences, to the extent that research findings of sex differences (which are usually slight) are simply called 'sex roles' (ibid). The sociologist Talcott Parsons, however, treats the distinction between male and female sex roles as a distinction between 'instrumental' and 'expressive' roles in the family. The family is considered as a small group and thus gender is deduced from a general sociological law of the differentiation of functions in social groups (ibid: 23).

The idea that masculinity or femininity are internalised sex roles allows for social change, and that was seen by earlier feminists and others interested in social change as role theory's advantage over psychoanalysis (for example, Friedan, 1965) Since the role norms are social facts, they can be changed by social processes. This will happen whenever the agencies of socialisation such as family, school, mass media and church transmit new expectations. However, for the most part, the first generation of sex role theorists assumed that the roles were well defined, that socialisation went ahead harmoniously and that sex role learning was a good thing, contributing to social stability, mental health and the performance of necessary social functions.

1970s feminism contested the political complacency of this framework, rather

than the concept of sex roles. Sex role research bloomed with the growth of academic feminism (Connell, 1995). It was generally assumed that the female sex role was oppressive and that role internalisation was a means of fixing girls and women in a subordinate position. Research became a political tool, defining problems and suggesting strategies for reform, which included changing expectations in classrooms and setting up new role models

Stimulated by feminism, by the mid 1970s, many authors were also painting a picture of the traditional male sex role as placing pressures on the self. The American psychologist Joseph Pleck contrasted a traditional with a 'modern' male role. A great deal of writing of the time encouraged men towards the modern version, using therapy, consciousness raising, political discussion, role-sharing in marriage and self help (Connell, 1995: 24). Connell points out that many of the writers remained sympathetic to feminism and tried to include connections with hierarchies of power in their work (for example, Pleck, 1977 and Snodgrass, 1977). Others, however, equated the oppression of men with the oppression of women and denied that there was any hierarchy of oppressions (for example, Goldberg, 1976).

Inherent in sex role theory is the idea that the two roles are complementary and reciprocal, therefore polarisation is a necessary part of the concept (Davies, 1990c). There is nothing that requires an analysis of power, because roles are defined by expectations and norms that are attached to biological status. To the extent that oppression appears in a role system, then, it appears as the constricting pressure placed on the self by the role. This can happen in the male role as readily as in the female. It precludes an analysis of issues of power in social relations. It does not have a way of understanding change as a dialectic within dynamic gender relations (Connell, 1995: 27).

2.2.2 Human relations psychology

The idea of an autonomous, real, asocial self hidden behind social roles or masks has also been facilitated by the growth of counselling and therapy, much of which is inspired by the work of the major theorists of humanistic psychology, Carl Rogers and, especially, Abraham Maslow. Friedan (1965) and Daly (1973) both used Maslow's conception of self-realisation and self-actualisation as the basis of what they wanted to see as a realisable goal for women. A great deal of feminist psychology since then has used their work as inspiration, with consequences which many commentators consider to ultimately defeat feminist aims (see Grimshaw, 1986). The focus shifts away from the social domain and its importance in the construction of the self in a way which complements role theory and which shares its difficulty with a power analysis. It is important to point out that I am distinguishing here between Maslow's and Roger's theories and their therapeutic practices.

While humanistic or human relations psychology has many different manifestations and is far from being a unified body of thought, it does have a consistent theoretical view of the self. This view is drawn largely from the work of Rogers and, especially, Maslow. The major concept in Maslow's theories is that of 'self-actualisation'. He sees human needs as existing in a hierarchy, starting at the bottom with needs for food and shelter and progressing through security and self-esteem. Once these are gratified adequately, the 'higher' needs like self-actualisation can come into play. Two of the central characteristics that he identifies are those of autonomy and of not needing others. Those who have not yet reached the 'highest' level of human motivation still need others. But, 'far from needing other people, growth-motivated people may actually be hampered by them' (Maslow, 1970: 34). They like solitude and privacy and can remain detached from other people. Maslow constantly contrasts such people with 'ordinary' people. Ordinary people need others, self-actualising people do not (ibid: 161).

There are also people who are autonomous or self-determined and those who are not. Self-actualising people are autonomous, and their actions and decisions come from within:

My subjects make up their own minds, come to their own decisions, are responsible for themselves and their own destinies. ... They taught me to see as profoundly sick, abnormal or weak what I had always taken for granted as humanly normal: namely, that many people do not make up their own minds, but have their minds made up for them, by salesmen, advertisers, parents, propagandists, TV, newspapers and so on. They are pawns to be moved by others, rather than self-moving, self-determining individuals. Therefore they are apt to feel helpless, weak and totally determined: they are prey for predators, flabby whiners rather than self-determining persons. (ibid)

Rogers shares some presuppositions with Maslow (Grimshaw, 1986). What Maslow calls self-actualisation, Rogers calls 'becoming a person'. He sees 'being a person' as involving emotional self-sufficiency and the determination to pursue one's own individually defined goals. Like Maslow, he draws a sharp distinction between those people whose focus of evaluation is external and those in whom it is internal, those who are, as he puts it, pawns rather than persons (Rogers, 1978).

The implications of these ideas is that a process of personal change or individual effort will lead by itself to individual liberation and fulfilment, and the ultimate abolition of things like poverty or racial and sexual oppression (Henriques et al, 1984). It is a notion endemic to humanist psychology that the only route to personal and social change is through working on one's feelings, individually or in groups (see Hollway, 1982, 1994). Rogers, for example, posited that the problems of Northern Ireland might be solved if only sufficient trained humanistic counsellors were to go there and hold encounter groups on every street corner (cited in Grimshaw, 1986: 149).

As Grimshaw (ibid) demonstrates, despite the veneer of egalitarianism in Maslow's work, with its emphasis on the self-actualisation of every human being, it is hierarchical, not egalitarian. In his studies of self-actualisation, he

talks of 'higher' levels of motivation and of 'superior' human beings. He believed that an elite of self-actualisers should be legitimate leaders. One of their characteristics is 'their relative independence of the physical and social environment' (1970: 162).

Could these self-actualising people be more human, more revealing of the original nature of the species, closer to the species type in the taxonomical sense? Ought a biological species to be judged by its crippled, warped, only partially developed specimens, or by examples that have been overdomesticated, caged, trained? (ibid: 159)

This is more than simply liberal humanist discourse. Consistently, Maslow identifies self-actualisation with superiority, with dominance, with success, with winning (Grimshaw, 1986: 151). He equates strength with dominance also (1939, 1942, cited in ibid). In addition, he posits that high-dominance women (that is, women with high self-esteem) need even more dominant men, to whom they would enjoy being forced to submit sexually. His elites are socially empowered, but nowhere does he acknowledge this (ibid).

Given the rejection of hierarchy, dominance and elitism that characterises so much feminist thinking and humanist psychology nowadays, it is surprising that Maslow's work should be seen as inspirational. Grimshaw (ibid) argues that accepting a Maslovian theory of self implicitly accepts the anti-egalitarian aspects of his work. This is not to say that the techniques of humanistic psychology should all be disposed of. But it is far from neutral. If used in a supposedly asocial framework, without regard to social conditions and without a philosophy of egalitarianism, the techniques will result in the people with 'learning deficits' being left out of the picture. They will become further marginalised, while those who experience the 'superiority of the higher self' will continue to justify such marginalisation as the consequence of personal deficiencies in the socially excluded.

The individual essence inherent in the notion of a real self inevitably reduces to biology and information-processing mechanisms (Henriques et al, 1984;

Hollway, 1989). The dualism between the individual and society is apparent in approaches to social change adopted by liberal feminist, radical feminist and Marxist feminist theory (discussed in more detail in Chapter Three), where it is referred to as the agency - structure problem. In the realm of critical theory, the work of Habermas on the 'ideal speech situation' shows similar tendencies (Fraser, 1987; Meisenhelder, 1989; Merchant, 1980). All of these perspectives on change retain essentialist models of the human subject. The notion of the autonomy of the self and the autonomy of individual desires is a liberal individualist one. A theory of subjectivity goes a long way to an understanding of the self as dynamically constructed, not merely as a pre-existing and asocial core.

Human relations perspectives replaced the rational subject with the feeling subject as the essence of individuality. However, as Hollway points out, this apparent reversal was not as straightforward a challenge as it seemed.

Human relations appeared a relevant, personal caring psychology which valued change and liberation ... [but] its challenge was never on the content of psychological theory, rather on the dehumanising effects of scientific method. (Hollway, 1989: 95)

There still lingered 'the therapeutic rationale that if feelings were spoken, the non-rational would be exorcised and action would be governed by rationality once again' (ibid). In this case, rationality is not displaced at all.

In the human relations model, the idea remains of a core individual, a 'natural' essence that exists prior to socialisation (Maslow, 1968; Rogers, 1961). Feelings are seen as the indicators of this essence, although the feelings are often hidden under layers of culture and / or socialisation. Gradually, human relations groups interested in change moved towards the idea that radical change comes from within the individual and that social change follows individual change. Such an approach to social and personal change is voluntaristic and is evident in both radical and liberal feminist thought. Both of these strands of feminism depend on the humanist premise that change is

initiated by the individual agent and that it depends on the individual's freely made choice. It is in direct contrast to the position that change (including individual change) is achieved by a change in structures (the orthodox Marxist position). These contrasting perspectives on social change reflect the issues of the humanism debate (Hollway, 1989: 27).

2.3 Feminist poststructuralism

Throughout this work, I assert the value of feminist poststructuralist theoretical developments to examine differences widely seen as true and real, to critically appraise the notion of an asocial, real self, to examine the notion of 'truth' and to produce a politically useful and consciously adopted epistemological stance which operates outside the terms of reference of liberal humanism. Feminist poststructuralism is not a unified, closed body of thought, which claims to have all the answers. There are, however, certain basic assumptions which feminist poststructuralists make and which are evident in their 'contingent and revisable' conclusions (Alcoff, 1988: 431). For that reason, I now outline those assumptions. As the chapter progresses, I examine in more detail how and why these principles have emerged and why I consider them the most useful way of bringing about change, while engaging with mainstream thought, and without resorting to separatism. The possibility and strategic usefulness of alliances between feminist poststructuralism and other progressive politics will also become evident. This is because feminist poststructuralism allows that there are axes of oppression and domination which can exist alongside that of sex. Each person simultaneously occupies a range of positions in discourses of sex, class, race, age, ability and other social variables (Kenway et al, 1994).

2.3.1 Language

Following the work of structuralist linguistics, which built on the semiology of Saussure (1974), language has become a central focus of poststructuralist analysis. Saussure sees language as a system of signs. Each sign is made up of a signifier (the sound-image, or its graphic equivalent) and a signified (a concept of meaning). The relationship between the signified and the signifier is arbitrary -- there is no necessary reason for one concept rather than another to be attached to a given signifier. Therefore, there is no defining property or essence which the concept or essence must retain in order to count as the proper signified of a particular signifier (Culler, 1976: 23). This arbitrary relation between signifier and signified means that there are no fixed universal concepts. Each sign in a system has meaning only by virtue of its difference from others, and in its relations with other signs. Only when articulated with other elements do individual elements acquire a positive or a negative value (Silverman, 1985: 173). It is not assumed to be a representation of ideas or material relations which exist outside language itself and which language merely represents. The analysis of language provides a starting point for understanding how social relations are conceived, how institutions are organised, how relations of production are experienced, and how collective identity is established. (Scott, 1988: 34). In particular, subjectivity can be seen as self-signification, without a fixed meaning or essence.

A further dimension to the issue of meaning is that of its extension in time. Derrida has coined a concept for this aspect of meaning -- *différance* -- which refers to the fact that meaning is always deferred. While structuralist linguistics grasped the capacity of meaning to extend infinitely in space (difference), at one instant, Derrida points to the extension of meaning in time (Hollway, 1989: 40). Poststructuralists insist that words and texts have no fixed or intrinsic meanings and that there is no basic or ultimate correspondence between language and the world, between meaning and the world. Language, for feminist poststructuralists, is a means of finding out how meaning is acquired,

how meanings change, how some meanings become normative and others muted and / or pathologised.

2.3.2 Discourse

The relationship between language and meaning is addressed in the concept of discourse, particularly as it has been developed by Foucault. A discourse is not a language or a text, but a historically, socially and institutionally specific structure of statements, categories and beliefs, habits and practices. Discourse is used to filter and interpret experience (Holland and Eisenhart, 1990: 95). It is responsible for reality, not just a reflection of it. Foucault suggests that the elaboration of meaning involves conflict and power and that the power to control meaning in a particular field resides in claims to (scientific) knowledge. Discourse is thus contained or expressed in organisations and institutions as well as in words. In this sense, for feminist poststructuralist theory, it includes the material nature of Althusser's 'ideology as common sense'. Discourse appeals to 'truth' for authority and legitimation and different discursive fields overlap, influence and compete with each other (Scott, 1988: 35).

The brilliance of so much of Foucault's work has been to illuminate the shared assumptions of what seemed to be sharply different arguments, thus exposing the limits of radical criticism and the extent of the power of dominant ideologies or epistemologies. (ibid)

Blackman (1996: 366) points out that Foucault (1972a, b, 1973a, 1980) maintains a distinction between veridical and vernacular discourses. Veridical discourses are those knowledges such as psychology and psychiatry which 'function in truth'. They are organised around norms of truth and falsehood, maintaining the ability and status to divide the normal from the abnormal. They are embedded in and organise specific discursive practices, for example, schooling (see Walkerdine, 1988, 1990). They provide the techniques and understandings through which behaviours, conduct and thought are classified,

administered and managed.

Vernacular discourse is a conception of the ways that power and the norm-producing effects of the veridical discourses (science, psychology, psychiatry) are implicated in the production of knowledge. Foucault uses the power / knowledge couplet to highlight this distinction (1980). This couplet refuses to reduce knowledge to an effect of power, as analytic concepts of ideology, social control and social interest tend to do. 'These are the concepts utilised by many where history is viewed as a play of dominations and those resistances against them' (Blackmann, 1996: 367). Foucault develops his idea of a 'history of the present' to re-pose questions concerning the relation between truth and power, asking under what conditions certain discourses and practices emerge (1972a). The specific sites which he identifies and terms 'surfaces of emergence' (ibid) were the family, the streets and other institutions, such as the prison and the asylum. These ideas inspire one of the central questions of this work: under what conditions can a politicised and agentic practice of women's personal development education emerge?

Where Derrida shows the structure and stability of knowledge and language to be a fiction, Foucault shows knowledge and discourse to be political, material products that represent a privileged way of seeing things, reflected in power, position and tradition (1972a, 1980). Meaning, situated in the power / knowledge nexus, cannot be separated from time and place, culture and history, politics and society. Foucault argues that underlying power relations shape a discursive practice. Its rules are rarely explicit or subject to criticism, but those who participate must speak in accordance with them. Discursive practice is

a body of anonymous, historical rules, always determined in the time and space that have defined a given period, and for a given social, economic, geographical or linguistic area, the conditions of operation of the enunciative function (Foucault, 1972a: 117)

Discourse is thus institutional. Truth is politically produced. The effects of

power and knowledge are interwoven in communicative interactions. Institutionalisation can occur at the level of a discipline, a politics, a culture, or a small group. Discourses can compete with each other, or they can create distinct and incompatible versions of reality (Davies and Harré, 1990). When we speak, we have less autonomy than we think or claim, because we always use the categories, argumentative strategies, metaphors, modes of composition and rules of evidence which precede us and which, in turn, have no single, identifiable author. Thus, discourse is anonymous (Foucault, 1980: 113 - 138).

Truth is a thing of this world. It is produced only by virtue of multiple forms of constraint. And it induces regular effects of power. Each society has its regime of truth, its 'general politics' of truth: that is, the types of discourse which it accepts and makes function as true; the mechanisms and instances which enable one to distinguish true and false statements, the means by which each is sanctioned; the techniques and procedure accorded value in the acquisition of truth; the status of those who are charged with saying what counts as true. (ibid: 131)

For Foucault, the meaning of what is asserted, evaluated, instructed, noted or appraised cannot be separated from time and place, culture and history, politics and society. The situation of meaning in a power-knowledge nexus arises out of his focus on the political production of truth which is beyond our immediate control. Discourses represent political interests and, in consequence, are constantly vying for status and power. The site of this battle for power is the subjectivity of the individual (Weedon, 1987: 41).

The concept of the power / knowledge nexus allows Foucault to identify 'three modes of objectification which transform human beings into subjects' (Siegel, 1990). First, he identifies modes of enquiry, scientific or quasi-scientific discourses that identify humans as subjects who speak, produce or simply live (Foucault, 1970). Second, he identifies 'dividing practices', which divide the mad from the sane, the ill from the healthy, the lawful from the criminal. In these practices, the subject is seen as either divided inside him- or herself (contrasting with society's idealised view of the individual as whole), or divided from others in society (Foucault, 1972b, 1973a, 1975). Third, he

investigates the way a human being turns him- or herself into a subject in a discourse. This is the question around which Foucault constructs his studies in the history of sexuality (1979). He describes the way in which power can be exercised through a concern with sexuality.

By using the concept of discourse, with regard to the construction of sexuality (as opposed to seeing it as an innate drive), Foucault is able to link into macro-conceptions of society and social change (Walby, 1990: 115 - 116). In his work on the history of sexuality (1979), he argues against the notion that the Victorian period was one in which sexuality was repressed. Rather, he argues that several discourses of sexuality emerged during that period, which constituted and shaped sexuality, even as they were ostensibly concerned with containing it. Sexuality has increasingly been controlled, but not repressed. Speaking about sexuality puts it into discourses: this happens when it is analysed in psychoanalysis, or confessed as in the Roman Catholic practice of confession. The identity of the subject is found within these discourses, which multiply the areas for sexual pleasure, only to control, classify and subject (Coward, 1984: 183; Walkerdine, 1990). J. Kitzinger (1993) has recently applied a similar analysis to some pop-psychology and self-help manuals for survivors of sexual abuse.

The overall theme of Foucault's work on sexuality, as well as being a theme found in most of his other work, is that the growth of expert professionals of social life and their 'scientific' bodies of knowledge leads to greater control over people, not to liberalisation and greater freedom. In speaking of sexuality within these professional discourses, it is controlled as it is produced. Medical, psychiatric, psychotherapeutic and religious professions and discourses are all sites for the operation of regulation and control within the power / knowledge nexus. Foucault implies that the only way to speak of sexuality is within these discourses, so verbal exploration of sexual issues becomes not liberating, but restrictive (cf Ryan, 1997). He also argues that the need for everyone to have a clear-cut and unchangeable identity as a member of one sex is historically

recent (Connell, 1985). However, there is a strong tendency in his work and in the work of Donzelot (1980) to take it for granted that the strategies succeeded in creating norms and in eliding the practices of the powerful. His view of recent historical change is thus one of profound pessimism (Walby, 1990: 116). Nevertheless, many feminist poststructuralist theorists have used Foucault's concept of discourse, without seeing this 'discourse determinism' as the necessary outcome. They have combined insights from various feminisms, from deconstruction and from psychoanalysis, with Foucault's discourse analysis, to produce a network of promising ideas which I go on to discuss.

2.3.3 Power and Gender

Feminist poststructuralism has a central concern for power, which owes a great deal to Foucault's theorisation. In opposition to Marxist theory, Foucault denies that capitalism and class are the means by which power is structured. Power is highly dispersed. Instead of a simple equation of power with blatant oppression and negativity, power is seen as productive, neither inherently positive nor negative. It is both an enabling and a constraining force (Foucault, 1980). It produces certain knowledges, meanings, values and practices, as opposed to others (Hollway, 1984a: 237). Neither is it static: it is a process that is always in play. This differs from the view that power is always oppressive and negative and can be got rid of only by revolution. This is a valuable theorisation of power but there is a problem in Foucault's failure to distinguish between different forms of power. In the words of Fraser (1989: 32), he 'calls too many things power and leaves it at that'. He writes 'as though he were oblivious to the existence of the whole body of Weberian social theory with its careful distinctions between such notions as authority, force, violence, domination, and legitimation. Phenomena that are capable of being distinguished through such concepts are simply lumped together under his

catchall concept of power' (ibid).

Nevertheless, following Foucault's deconstruction of the monolithic, unitary character of power and the social domain which is characteristic of Marxist and radical feminist theory, it is possible to 'make links between a diverse and contradictory social domain and a contradictory subject' (Henriques et al, 1984: 92). As I discuss in Chapter Three (Section 8), such a project is complementary to Lacanian psychoanalysis in a feminist poststructuralist scheme, although Foucault himself is critical of psychoanalysis (Adams, 1990).

Foucault's gender blindness is not to be underestimated, however (Connell, 1985; Walby, 1990; Ramanazoglu, 1993a, b). Despite his concern with power, he fails to consider the implications of gender inequality for sexual discourses. He discusses whether the bourgeoisie is controlled by or controls the new discourses of sexuality, without considering that one gender within the bourgeoisie might be using sexuality to control the other. He analyses only the most powerful discourses (male, bourgeois) and omits discourses of resistance in the cases of both class and gender. (Walby, 1990: 117). The failure to consider discourses of resistance is one of the facets of Foucault which has led to the charge of 'discourse determinism' and a failure to theorise change (CCCS, 1982). But feminist poststructuralism selectively uses his work to advance feminist theory and politics. In Chapter One (Section 7), I have identified resistance as a central concern of this work. Faith (1994: 46, 47), for instance, points out that, while Foucault does not examine specific resistances,

... rather, again and again, stresses in passing the importance of resistance as a conjunct of power. In discussing Foucault's view of resistance, Dreyfus and Rabinow summarize as follows:

'Foucault holds that power needs resistance as one of its fundamental conditions of operation. It is through the articulation of points of resistance that power spreads through the social field. But it is also, of course, through resistance that power is disrupted. Resistance is both an element of the functioning of power and a source of its perpetual disorder (1982: 147)'.

Because so much of Foucault's work is concerned with the conditions that make discourses possible and the conditions of their emergence and disappearance, one can see possibilities for change. For example, an active feminist politics could create conditions where some discourses were no longer possible (or at least not as widely determining of practices) and where other new discourses were possible and / or recognised. This has happened, particularly in the case of liberal feminism, although the phenomenon is not unproblematic, as the discussion of liberal feminist discourse in Chapter Three (Section 1) illustrates. The creation of new feminist discourses and their implication in the construction of subjectivity is one of the central areas for investigation of this thesis and the consideration of Foucault's work and feminist engagements with it are pivotal to that investigation.

2.3.4 Essentialism

Essentialism, as a belief in the real, true essence of things, is rejected by feminist poststructuralism. For example, the idea that men and women are identified as such on the basis of 'transhistorical, eternal, immutable essences' (Fuss, 1990: xi) is rejected, because it cannot account for some people's discomfort with existing arrangements and their desire for change. 'An essentialist formulation of womanhood, even when made by feminists, binds the individual to her identity as a woman and thus cannot represent a solution to sexism' (Alcoff, 1988: 415). This objection to essentialism leads to a rejection of reductionist, monocausal or foundationalist explanations. History and genealogy are seen as crucial in the development of ideas, since 'truth' does not exist outside the social formation. Feminist poststructuralist ideas have allowed feminists to be attentive to every kind of difference, including differences within a person, and to escape the trap of 'theory as the production of a quasi-metanarrative, capable of explaining everything, if the "one key factor" could be found to explain sexism cross-culturally and illuminate all of

social life' (Fraser and Nicholson, 1988: 384).

2.3.5 Difference and deconstruction: Derrida, Cixous and Kristeva

In western philosophical thought, the essentialism rejected by feminist poststructuralism is especially manifest in the notion that timeless and true differences exist, such as man / woman, or culture / nature. Feminist poststructuralist analysis of difference is based on Derrida's reworking of Saussure's linguistic insight that meaning is made through implicit or explicit opposition or contrast, that positive definition rests on the negation or repression of something represented as antithetical to it. Instead of framing analyses and strategies as if such binary pairs were 'real', deconstruction involves examining the ways meanings are based on oppositions which are constructed, not natural. Fixed oppositions conceal the extent to which things presented as oppositional are, in fact, interdependent. Derrida has also shown that the interdependence is hierarchical, with one term dominant, for example, the first term in each of the binaries of light / darkness, presence / absence, reason / feeling. Although the term 'deconstruction' is principally associated with Derrida's treatment of binary oppositions, it has also come to mean more generally any exposure of a concept as ideological, or culturally constructed, rather than a natural or a simple reflection of reality (Alcoff, 1988: 415).

Derrida's deconstruction of binaries, while impossible to freeze conceptually, can be broken down into three steps:

- a) identify the binaries, the oppositions that structure an argument
- b) reverse or displace the dependent term from its negative position to a place that locates it as the very condition of the positive term
- c) create a more fluid and less coercive conceptual organisation of terms which transcends a binary logic by simultaneously being both and neither of the binary terms (Grosz, 1989, cited in Lather, 1991: 5)

This process is used in Chapters Seven and Eight, where I take a deconstructive approach to the opposition of feminism and femininity in participants' accounts.

According to Derrida, philosophy's notion of a mastery of ideas rests on a profound misunderstanding of the linguistic sign. The 'meaning' of a text is not definitively available, there can be no fixed signifieds. Signifiers, that is, sound or written images, have identity only in their difference from each other and are subject to an endless process of deferral. This means that the effect of a 'true' representation is only retrospective and temporary (Weedon, 1987: 25). What a particular signifier means at any given moment depends on the discursive relations within which it is located, and it is open to constant reinterpretation.

Dominant liberal-humanist discourse relies on the philosophical notion of ideas as something outside ourselves, of difference as self-evident and transcendent, to be discovered through experience. Yet, Derrida shows the structure, coherence and stability of meaning and of knowledge to be a fiction, always open to challenge. For liberal humanism, experience is what we think and feel in any particular situation and it is expressed in language. Experience is seen as authentic in this perspective, because it is guaranteed by the full weight of the individual's unitary subjectivity, a real self at the pre-social core of the person. It relies on what Derrida calls a metaphysics of presence, that is, the conviction that words are only signs of a real substance which is elsewhere (ibid: 85).

For Derrida, thought systems which depend on unassailable first principles or foundations are metaphysical and they try to build a hierarchy of meanings on these foundations. The foundational position of paradigms of knowledge can be shown to be beliefs, values or techniques of a given community (Goodsin, 1990). These paradigms provide order, but their structured knowledge can be demonstrated to be less foundational than it appears. We are all contaminated by this impulse to build knowledge on certain unconstestable basic ideas, because it is so deeply embedded in our history. But Derrida places meaning in

a radically different position to this metaphysical illusion of presence. Philosophy must give up the futile attempt to manipulate meaning which exists 'out there' and must return to considering the never-ending play of signs (ibid).

Attempts by social theories outside a poststructuralist framework to deal with the problem of binaries and their associated hierarchies have largely inverted the binaries, rather than subverting them, as deconstruction tries to do. Cultural and separatist feminisms have tended to invert the man / woman hierarchy by extolling all that is female, but without challenging the symbolic order that sets male and female in opposition to each other in the first place (Kristeva, 1986, Davies, 1990b, Moi, 1985). In the case of individual / society, or agency / structure dualisms, structuralists have emphasised the social and the structural in the construction of the human subject, in a scenario where individual agents have little or no ability to bring about social change. Liberal-humanists have emphasised the idea of a core individual, a natural essence that exists prior to socialisation, with change initiated by the individual agent and depending on the individual's freely made choices. Poststructuralists try to create a more fluid and less coercive conceptual organisation of terms which transcends a binary logic by simultaneously being both and neither of the binary terms (Grosz, 1989: xv, cited in Lather, 1991: 5).

The French feminist Cixous has drawn heavily on Derrida's work and developed a discussion of 'death dealing' binary thought. She identifies the following oppositions:

activity / passivity
sun / moon
culture / nature
father / mother
head / emotions
intelligible / sensitive
logos / pathos.

(Cixous and Clement, 1975: 115)

These oppositions correspond in all cases to the underlying man / woman opposition and can be analysed in each case as a hierarchy, where the

'feminine' side is seen as negative and powerless. Thus, nature and passion, associated with women, become opposed to culture, as represented in art, mind, history and action (ibid: 116). Cixous' project then becomes one of proclaiming woman as the source of life, power and energy (Moi, 1985). To enclose maleness and femaleness in opposition to each other is to force them to enter a death-dealing power struggle. For Cixous, like Derrida, meaning is not achieved in the static closure of the binary opposition, but is achieved through the endless possibilities of the signifier. Following this logic, the feminist task becomes the deconstruction of patriarchal metaphysics (that is, the belief in an inherent, present meaning in the sign). If we are all contaminated by metaphysics, as Derrida has argued, then we should not attempt to propose a new definition of female identity, because we would necessarily fall back into the metaphysical trap. Woman's identity should be that which escapes definition.

The linguist and psychoanalyst Kristeva refuses to define 'femininity' at all, preferring to see it as a position constructed by patriarchal thought and marginalised by the patriarchal symbolic order, as defined by Lacan (Moi, 1985). This is a relational approach to the problem of what it is to be 'feminine' and allows Kristeva (1986) to argue that men can also be constructed as marginal to the symbolic order. Her emphasis enables feminists to counter biologicistic definitions of femininity. Cixous shows that femininity is defined as lack, darkness, irrationality and chaos. Kristeva, while recognising the dichotomy between masculine and feminine as metaphysical, approaches the notion of women as positional marginality, rather than as essential definition. Where Cixous tries to develop a new feminine language which will subvert the binary schemes that silence women, Kristeva shows that what is perceived as marginal at any one time depends on the position one occupies. If patriarchy sees women as occupying a marginal position in the symbolic order, then it can construe them as the limit of that order, representing the frontier between man and chaos, but also merging with the chaos outside. Women are neither

completely inside or completely outside the symbolic order -- they can thus be vilified or venerated. Patriarchal thought has vilified women as Lilith, or the Whore of Babylon, as well as elevating them to a position of Virgin and Mother of God, where they protect men from chaos (Moi, 1985).

Kristeva's position is that one must reject the notion of identity. This is different from Cixous' project of developing a positive feminine identity and an *écriture féminine*, emphasising the power and energy of women. Although Cixous emphasises the multiple identities and heterogenous differences among women, in opposition to any scheme of binary thought, her project eventually falls into a form of essentialism, where everything to do with women is glorified (Moi, 1985; Walby, 1990).

2.4 Politics and feminist poststructuralism

Kristeva (1986), in advocating a deconstructive approach to sexual difference, wants to create a new theoretical and scientific space, a signifying space (Davies, 1990b: 502), where the very notion of identity is challenged. Her perception of women's historical and political struggle is as follows:

1. In a liberal feminist framework, women demand equality and equal access to the symbolic order.
2. With radical feminism, women reject the male symbolic order in the name of difference and glorify femininity.
3. Women reject the dichotomy between masculine and feminine.

There is some debate about whether this scheme would represent a feminist version of Hegel's philosophy of history, where position three would be exclusive of positions one and two, or whether they should be simultaneous and non-exclusive positions in contemporary feminism (Jardine, 1985; Moi,

1985, 1990).

As Moi (*ibid*) sees it, the problem in adopting position three exclusively is that, in deconstructing patriarchal metaphysics, we also risk deconstructing the logic that sustains the first two forms of feminism. As long as patriarchy remains dominant, it remains politically essential for feminists to defend women as women, in order to counteract the patriarchal thought that despises them as women. But an unreconstructed form of stage two feminism runs the risk of becoming an inverted form of sexism, unaware as it is of the metaphysical nature of gender identities. It runs this risk by uncritically taking over metaphysical categories created by patriarchy, which have led to women's oppression, in spite of feminists' attempts to attach new worth to the old categories (cf Cocks, 1989).

An exclusive adoption of Kristeva's third space of deconstructed identities, which is what she herself advocates, as does Jardine (1985), leaves everything as it was in one sense, because it rejects the notion of identity, while leaving the feminist political struggle no better off. In another sense, however, the deconstruction of identity radically changes our perception of the political struggle. A feminist appropriation of a deconstruction like Kristeva's, which can show the notion of a feminine identity to be incomplete or contradictory, is useful if it incorporates the first two of her stages also. Situating attempts at deconstruction in specific political contexts is important in avoiding ahistoricism and in recognising the significance of interests and investments in operative factors which structure relations between men and women.

Kristeva's deconstruction, however has shown the contradictory nature of such a project. A commitment to equal rights for women must assert the value of women as they are, before equal rights have been won (that is, in their difference from men, in their femininity as it is currently and varyingly constructed). But a commitment to equal rights for this constructed femininity risks glorifying women in their essential difference, a difference from men

which is metaphysically and patriarchally constructed. Because we actually live in a system of patriarchal relations, however, feminists have to take positions that assert the value of women as women, in order to counter structural devaluation of them. In this context, equality and difference are not easily compatible. In isolation, a feminist theory of women's difference comes disturbingly close to echoing patriarchy's conception of them as different. Yet, the same is true of the isolated articulation of a feminism that values women as a unified category. Given this logic, the feminist influenced by poststructuralism cannot settle for either equality or difference. But even if we are aiming for Kristeva's deconstructed world, it does not exist now, we cannot live in it. Patriarchy exists, its forms are constantly shifting and changing and one of the tasks of any kind of feminism must be to expose these forms (Cullen, 1987; Walby, 1990). Because we live in patriarchal, metaphysical space, we have to try to hold all three of Kristeva's positions simultaneously (cf Moi, 1990). This is a far from easy task and Kristeva herself has retired from political engagement. As Fraser writes,

... you can't get a politics straight out of epistemology, even when the epistemology is a radical antiepistemology, like historicism, pragmatism, or deconstruction. On the contrary, I argue repeatedly that politics requires a genre of critical theorising that blends normative argument and empirical sociocultural analysis in a 'diagnosis of the times'. (Fraser, 1989: 6)

2.4.1 Identity politics

Alcoff (1988) articulates the same dilemma introduced by Moi (1990) in her consideration of Kristeva. Where Moi finishes her article with this articulation, Alcoff uses it as a starting point. Drawing on the work of Lauretis (1984, 1988) and Riley (1983), she develops the idea of an identity politics, combined with the notion of the subject as positionality and construction. Subjectivity and identity must be recognised as always a construction, yet also a necessary point

of departure. The concept of identity politics problematises the relationship between this constructed identity and political theory or analysis. In doing so, it departs from the mainstream methodology of western political theory.

According to the latter, the approach to political theory must be through a 'veil of ignorance' where the theorist's personal interests and needs are hypothetically set aside. The goal is a theory of universal scope to which all ideally rational, disinterested agents would acquiesce if given sufficient information. Stripped of their particularities, these rational agents are considered to be potentially equally persuadable. Identity politics provides a materialist response to this and, in so doing, sides with Marxist class analysis. The best political theory will not be one ascertained through a veil of ignorance, a veil that is impossible to construct. Rather, political theory must base itself on the initial premise that all persons, including the theorist, have a fleshy, material identity that will influence and pass judgement on all political claims. Indeed, the best political theory for the theorist herself will be one that acknowledges this fact. (Alcoff, 1988: 432, 3)

The essentialist definition of woman makes her identity independent of her external situation and denies her ability to construct and take responsibility for our gendered identity, our politics and our choices. The positional definition, on the other hand, makes her identity relative to a constantly shifting context, to a situation that includes a network of elements involving other people and economic, social, cultural and political conditions. If women can be identified by position in this network, then feminist arguments from women can claim the need for radical change, not because some innate essence is being stunted, but because women's position within the network lacks power and mobility. Added to this must be the belief that women's subjectivity is not solely determined by the external elements of this network, but by her engagement with it, her interpretation and reconstruction of her history, as mediated through the cultural discursive context to which she has access (Lauretis, 1988: 8,9). Feminist discourses must be circulated so that women have the opportunity to do this interpretation and reconstruction in ways that are different from the dominant discourses. As Alcoff (1988: 434), points out, when women become feminists, the crucial thing that has occurred is not that they have learned any

new facts about the world but that they come to view those facts from a different position, from their own position as subjects. A political change in perspective means that the framework for assessment has changed, not that the facts have changed, although new facts may come into view.

In this analysis, one can make concrete demands on behalf of women, without entailing a commitment to essentialism. Recognition of the fact that, now, many women need childcare 'in no way commits you to supposing that the care of children is fixed eternally as female' (Riley, 1983: 194). However, as things stand now, invoking the needs of women with children also invokes the accompanying belief in our cultural conception of essentialised motherhood. We need to constantly problematise universalising concepts like 'women's needs', while ensuring that political strategies are developed to ensure that no woman's current needs go unmet. We can do this, for example, by meeting the needs of women with children, while rejecting and challenging 'the idealised institution of motherhood as women's privileged vocation or the embodiment of an authentic or natural female practice' (Alcoff, 1988: 428).

These circumstances mean that we must make political choices. We cannot avoid them, simply because poststructuralist theory has uncovered chinks in the formulation of key concepts of earlier feminist thought. These choices are often difficult and unsatisfactory, since every choice closes off some other possibility. In making a choice and taking up a position, one runs the risk of being wrong, or making oneself vulnerable by revealing one's hand. But we have to engage with the dominant thought structures of our day, while constantly being aware that our choices are limited by our specific material positions in society and history. People change from generation to generation and do not just reproduce oppression -- the factors that make us desire change and the ways that we can produce change must be examined. It is not impossible, though not simple either, to simultaneously challenge and make use of the rules of Enlightenment rationality, which is where we get the notion of emancipation from, after all (Moi, 1990: 375). We must not forget that it is the humanist paradigm which

gives critical force to a commitment to the modern ideals of autonomy, dignity and human rights (cf Fraser, 1989: 57). What we can do is to give up the quest for metaphysical truth, while not overlooking the truth of women's oppression (ibid). As Weedon (1987: 86) says, 'just because we subscribe to a theory of the provisionality of meaning, does not mean that meaning does not have real effects'.

2.5 Conclusion

This chapter has attempted to demonstrate that feminist poststructuralism uses all the theoretical tools of poststructuralism, while remaining resolutely grounded in the politics of everyday life (Lauretis, 1988: 12). It has examined the emergence of the modern subject and approaches to subjectivity, along with feminist poststructuralist objections to humanism, human relations psychology and role theory. It has also examined how feminist poststructuralist theorists have developed ideas about language, discourse, power, deconstruction and politics, in a drive to theorise social change. All of the ideas discussed here are used in the analyses of feminist subjectivity in Chapters Six, Seven and Eight. The next chapter (Chapter Three) includes a discussion of how feminist poststructuralism relates to other approaches to gender equality, such as liberal, radical, psychoanalytic, Marxist and dual-systems feminisms. It also leads into a discussion of the relation of feminist poststructuralism to Lacanian psychoanalysis and developments of psychodynamic theories of the person.

CHAPTER THREE

THE RELATIONSHIP OF FEMINIST POSTSTRUCTURALISM TO OTHER EMANCIPATORY THEORIES

3.0 Introduction

This chapter examines models of the subject which underpin the paradigms of liberal humanism, cultural feminism and structuralism. It also examines feminist poststructuralist uses of psychoanalytic theories and psychodynamic accounts. The objective of the chapter is to make clear what aspects of these paradigms and theories a feminist poststructuralist approach draws on and what aspects it refutes.

3.1 Liberal feminism

Liberal feminists (called 'bourgeois feminists' by Kaplan, 1987) have typically, although not exclusively, adopted socialisation theory in their approach to gendered subjectivity and change (Walby, 1990). Socialisation in one or other set of gender attributes is considered to start from birth, with different messages being given to boys and girls (Belotti, 1975). Toys, games and activities are gendered, as a preparation for adult roles (Weinreich, 1978). Television and other media continue the process of socialisation, through advertising and depiction of roles (Tuchman, Daniels and Benet, 1978). Education too is responsible, in terms of its formal and informal curricula and the dynamics of the organisation of its institutions (Deem, 1978, 1980; McQuillan, 1995; Sharpe, 1976; Stanworth, 1983).

Socialisation theory opposes the notion that gender differences are biological, documenting the process through which gender is acquired. However, few socialisation theorists take into account the variety that exists within the

categories male and female, especially within different social classes, ethnic groups and societies (Connell, 1995; Davies, 1990c). As such, socialisation theory tends towards a universalism. It also tends to assume that people are passive in their acquisition of gender, indeed that women are socialised into a 'false consciousness' (Walby, 1990: 93). It fails to account for people's psychological investments in their roles and for their interests in maintaining structures and power relationships. This failure is illustrated in the liberal accounts of rape and violence towards women, which see them as the actions of disturbed individuals, who have not developed normally (Pizzey, 1974; West, Roy and Nichols, 1978). Rather than focusing on the social contexts and structural arrangements which result in a gendered violence, male violence towards women is explained as an aberration in a few individuals. In fact, many more women are the victims of male violence than is consistent with a theory that the perpetrators are deranged (Walby, 1990).

Neither does socialisation theory problematise the content of gender nor study its construction (Jones, 1993). It studies the process of gender acquisition through a perception of the individual as an 'information processing system' (Walkerdine, 1984), a perception owing much to the developmental psychology of Piaget. In this context, the categories available to the child play an important part in the process (Weinreich, 1978). This approach sees no path of 'normal' development and is thus avowedly anti-biologicistic. But Henriques et al (1984: 21) argue that, ultimately, the opposite is the case, because the capacity of the individual to process information is reduced to the biological capacities of the human system. The socialisation model of interaction between society and the individual means that the focus is on the way that the individual assimilates available information. Overcoming issues like sexism and racism becomes a matter of providing education and information, of making more possibilities available, not a matter of politics and economics, bound up with power, exploitation and psychological investments (ibid). As with the issue of violence and change, the focus is on the individual, not the social context.

Walby (1990) points out that liberal feminist analyses often start by noting the relative absence of women from powerful positions in the state and in other decision-making arenas, like educational institutions, corporate management (Kanter, 1977) and trades unions. They also address sexist language (Lakoff, 1975) and discriminatory practice. In doing so, liberal feminist researchers have made available a large body of empirical evidence for women's subordinate position in society (Walby, 1990). Women's dual roles as paid workers and as mothers have also been described. But the work is usually composed of detailed descriptions of how inequality is played out, not of the causes of inequality on a gendered basis. Nor does it supply accounts of what successful acts of resistance look like, which is one of the things this work is trying to achieve. Often, there is an assumption that if more women were in positions of power, it would be to the advantage of all women. Harding (1986, 1987) calls these 'feminist approaches to equity issues', where the strategy to be employed is 'add women and stir'. Such approaches assume that if women get the same opportunities as men in education, work and in domestic relations, then social change will follow. New norms will emerge and new social roles will be defined, which women and men can take on. As well as being limited by the role theory which underpins it (see Chapter Two Section 2.1), this is an approach which focuses on individual gain and does not call for radical changes in the structures of society (Fisher and Todd, 1988: 4, 5).

Nevertheless, Eisenstein's (1981) view is that, as women move towards equality in education, work and domestic relations, the barriers they encounter will be so firmly entrenched that the women will be radicalised and forced to ask the kinds of questions posed by more radical feminisms, of which feminist poststructuralism is one. It could be argued, however, that incremental change is always in danger of being wiped away. For example, in the Reagan era in the United States of America, there was rapid diminution of social gains and a widespread feminisation of poverty.

A theoretical reliance (whether implicit or explicit) on socialisation has further

pitfalls. When attempts to socialise children in families and in schools, into 'gender equal' ways of behaving fail to have the desired effects, people often have recourse to the notion of an essential human nature, to explain attachments to femininity and masculinity (Connell, 1995; Davies, 1990c). For lasting change to happen, the nature of power and its part in the construction of subjectivity needs to be understood better. If gender is acquired through social relations or interaction, or through family dynamics, if it is relational, rather than determined by nature, then we must try to understand the social relations themselves.

3.2 Radical feminism

In radical feminist analysis of gender inequality, men as a group are seen to dominate women as a group and to benefit from women's subordination. The forms of radical feminism which emerged from the 1960s took feminism as a universal struggle of women against men's power (Walby, 1990). This claim to universality has been widely criticised. The system of domination of women by men is called patriarchy and is independent of other systems of social inequality -- for instance, it is not a by-product of capitalism. Radical feminism has broadened the scope of the social sciences, politics and the consideration of subjectivity by introducing issues not conventionally considered relevant to an analysis of social inequality. Firestone (1974) sees reproduction and hence the household as central to women's oppression. She argues that women's role in reproduction makes them vulnerable to men and that this creates two classes, based on sex. She considers reproduction to be the real material base of human society, more basic than production. Brownmiller (1976) sees the issue of male violence and rape as central and Rich (1980) argues that institutionalised heterosexuality is the basis, with sexual relations organising marital relations. Personal aspects of life are seen to be as important as the public domain. The question of who does the housework, or who interrupts whom in conversation, is seen as part of the system of male domination. Millett's slogan, 'the personal

is political', has become the best-known expression of this approach to social and political analysis. Here, the term 'politics' refers to power-structured relationships, where one group of persons is controlled by another. Hence, the relations between the sexes are political (Millett, 1971: 23).

This theme was a central component of early second-wave feminism, which introduced consciousness-raising groups in which, by sharing and discussing their experiences, women came to see their problems not as private misfortunes, but as public issues. Understanding links between the political and the personal was tremendously exciting for me during my early twenties. I was aware that this was the theoretical underpinning of my feminism and of any activism in which I was involved as a younger woman. In this approach, everything is political (Walby, 1990): sexuality (Millett, 1971), conversation (Spender, 1980), housework (Mainardi, 1970), motherhood (Luker, 1984, Rowland and Thomas, 1996), abortion (Petchevski, 1988). In its strongest form, this argument implies that nothing is not political. Subjective experience is thus socially formed (Richardson, 1996b).

In contrast to liberal feminists, radical feminists usually eschew electoral politics, although engaging with the state on practical issues such as access to contraception and abortion (Walby, 1990). There is also a strong emphasis on exposing and challenging patriarchy in practice, in every area of life. This radical feminist reworking of the term 'politics' is among the most revolutionary and useful ideas for challenging the mainstream of western political theory, and not just in the interests of women (Abrahams, 1992). Mainstream theory sets a political goal where personal interests and needs are hypothetically set aside, where a rational, disinterested agent will make objectively 'correct' decisions, given sufficient information (Alcoff, 1988: 433). The inclusion of the personal in politics provides the basis for the feminist poststructuralist development of identity politics discussed in Chapter Two (Section 4.1).

Millett's development of the workings of patriarchy has been criticised by

Barrett (1980), Giroux (1983) and Moi (1985), among others. Barrett (1980: 110) considers that it is not satisfactory to always see women as innocent passive victims of patriarchal power, which is how Millett theorises the position of women. According to Millett, once women see through male ideology, they can cast it off and be free. She does not take into account the ways that the oppressed can come to identify with the dominant ideology (Giroux, 1983; Moi, 1985). Neither does she accept the difficulties in throwing off oppression, even after becoming conscious of its existence in one's life. In this, Millett demonstrates a voluntaristic view of social change and a reliance on a model of a rational humanist subject, which can bring about radical change within the individual, once presented with sufficient information about its oppression.

Sexuality, and specifically the institution of heterosexual sexuality, is a central pillar of patriarchy for many radical feminists who reverse the traditional practice of setting up lesbianism and male homosexuality as unusual and in need of explanation (Brownmiller, 1976; Kitzinger, 1990; Millett, 1971; Rich, 1980). Intimate relations between women are to be expected, given what women share under male oppression. If sexual partners are chosen on the basis of sharing, liking and loving, as is generally supposed, then the prevalence of heterosexuality (that is, intimate relations with an oppressor) is seen to be in need of explanation. The Leeds Revolutionary Feminist Group (1981) argues that heterosexuality has important political implications in the ways that it divides women from each other, uniting each one with her own special oppressor. To survive the situation, women adopt, at least partially, the viewpoint of men. This suggests that women suffer from a false consciousness in heterosexual relationships. The group suggests that women who are independent from men are more likely to combine politically to resist patriarchy. Lesbianism is an integral aspect of radical feminist practice and the degree to which heterosexually active women can be independent of patriarchy is a source of debate (Ferguson, Zita and Addelson, 1981; Kitzinger and Wilkinson, 1993; Richardson, 1996a). More recently, this has developed into

discussion of the whether heterosex can be conducted in a framework of equality (for example, Hollway, 1995), or whether heterosexual desire is predicated on inequality and domination and the eroticisation of power differentials (see, for example, C. Kitzinger, 1994). This discussion is relevant to the analysis carried out on the heterosexual couple dynamic in Chapters Seven and Eight.

The problematisation of heterosexuality is connected with the perceived need to create a separate culture of women, in order to develop non-patriarchal thinking, as a prelude to rebuilding society (Daly, 1973, 1978, 1984). Daly's work seeks to embrace, as essence, the devalued characteristics associated in western culture with women and to revalue them. In order to effect this revaluation, opposing patriarchal values are devalued. For Daly, feminists must assume and enjoy their essential female nature or continue as men's pawns, victims and dupes of patriarchy (Bailey, 1993: 120). There are elements of deconstruction (see Chapter Two, Section 3.5) in this work, as Grimshaw (1986: 156) points out. In her 1973 work, Daly argues for a breaking down of an initial polarisation of values. Thus, she says 'love cut off from power or justice is inauthentic power of dominance, and justice is a meaningless façade of legalism split off from love and real power of being' (1973: 217, cited in Grimshaw, 1986: 156). However, Daly's vision of a feminist future is devoid of any real discussion of the ways in which women actually spend their lives. She implicitly divides women into two camps: those who are liberated and those who spend their lives in servitude (ibid: 158, 9).

Radical feminists take the view that sexuality is not a private matter to be explained in terms of individual preferences or psychological processes fixed in infancy (in this respect, radical feminism is hostile to psychoanalytic theory). In this perspective, sexuality is socially organised and critically structured by gender inequality. Society is seen as preceding sexuality, giving structure and content to the individual experience of it (Barry, 1995). Walby (1990) draws attention to the fact that, while few radical feminist writers make reference to

Foucault and his discourse analysis, in practice most of them have adopted a method similar to his, producing historically and socially sensitive analyses. Walby (ibid: 122) agrees that there are elements of essentialism in some of the accounts, notably Firestones's account of reproduction, but that these are often overstated as a eulogy to an essential feminine experience. Radical feminists have shown that sexuality is a discourse which is a social phenomenon that exists outside individuals, as well as being constituted by the actions of individuals (Walby, 1990: 122).

Critics (Barrett, 1980; Cocks, 1989; Segal, 1987; Rowbotham, 1981) accuse radical feminism of a tendency to essentialism, to implicit or explicit biological reductionism, which is necessarily universalistic and ahistoric. It is argued that, by setting all men up as exploiters of the female essence that all women possess, radical feminists create an account which, by definition, cannot change. At best, the solution to this problem is to set up feminist free-space and a woman-centred culture. But because differences between men and women are seen as innate, there is no point in feminist activists trying to change mainstream culture. Echols gives the name 'cultural feminism' to a trend for using radical feminist theory to equate 'women's liberation with the development and preservation of a female counter-culture' (Echols, 1983, cited in Alcoff, 1988: 412). Echols infers from the writings of Rich and Daly that their emphasis on separatism is based on the idea that there is an innate female essence.

Hollway (1995) argues that the social constructionist assumptions of later radical feminist work (for example, Kitzinger, 1987, 1994; Barry, 1995) are too deterministic and do not allow for a theory of social change. This view is not necessarily at odds with the view that radical feminist thinking tends to take an essentialist view of women. As I argue in Section 6 of this chapter, the structuralist premises on which social constructionist thinking is based ultimately assumes a unitary, essential human subject. Richardson (1996b:193) notes the variety of radical feminist theorising about sexuality, and its critics'

tendency to focus on a narrow range of earlier works in defence of their claims that it is essentialist.

The political effects of cultural / radical feminism have been positive, in insisting on viewing traditional feminine characteristics from a different, affirmative point of view (Eisenstein, 1984; Alcoff, 1988). But it is difficult to see how it can provide a useful strategy for change in the long term, or a radical theorisation of the subject, or of the complexity of women's and feminists' lives. Moreover, its development has led to a constraining feminist ideology for some (Gallop, 1988), since not all women recognise themselves in the ideal of womanhood which cultural feminism posits. This kind of thinking reproduces dominant cultural assumptions about women, although giving them new, positive value. It fails to represent the variety of differences between women, as well as between women and men.

Some theorists who have developed the kind of 'cultural feminism' associated with radical feminism have used object-relations psychoanalysis and especially the work of Chodorow (1978), to develop a theory of lesbian sexuality (Rich, 1980; Ryan, 1990). Chodorow herself does not address the issue of lesbianism, but her theories have lent themselves to an idea of the 'woman-related woman' (Rich, 1980). Segal (1987) and Wilson (1986) have argued that this development of Chodorovian theory is essentialist and, thus, restrictive. Although Chodorow (1980; 1994) herself cautions against the notion of fixed gender identities, the notion of the woman-related woman has been used to develop what Moi (1985: 191) calls a 'deep-seated essentialism' and what Segal (1987: 142) calls 'psychic essentialism'. This essentialism is evident in the theories of 'difference feminism' of Bordo (1987), Keller (1985) and Gilligan (1982). The unproblematic use in these works of the terms 'male' and 'female' displays a belief in fundamental sexual differences in male and female personality structures.

The drift towards celebrating 'essential' or traditional female qualities has also been characterised as conservative (Stacey, 1983; Hare-Mustin, 1991). 'Caring,

which is represented as a fundamental female quality, can be better understood in relational terms as a way of negotiating from a position of low power' (ibid: 70). Gilligan's most influential work (1982) describes ideology, while purporting to describe something that is essentially and universally female. This could be said of cultural feminism as a whole. The danger in this is that the universal unitary, rational and male subject is simply replaced with the opposite side of the binary, a unitary, universal, feeling female subject, even if it is open to debate whether this subject is pre-given or constructed. Such a theorisation is still incapable of addressing the complexities of subjectivity in what Giddens (1991, 1994a) calls late or high modernity, or the social conditions of the late twentieth century.

3.3 Object-relations theory and Chodorovian psychoanalysis

Within feminism, there are varied attitudes to psychoanalytic theory and practice. Although, as I discuss in Section 8 of this chapter, Freudian, Lacanian and Kleinian thought has given productive ideas to feminist poststructuralism, radical second-wave feminism (for example, Kitzinger, 1987) tends to be hostile towards Freudian psychoanalysis. Freud privileges the role of the father and gives little importance to the role of the mother in the formation of identity. This, and other 'felt difficulties' with the Freudian approach to female sexuality have provoked some feminists to 'detour' Freud (Lovell, 1990: 190). One psychoanalytic approach which has taken this detour and had enormous influence with radical and cultural feminists is the work of Nancy Chodorow.

Chodorow has been the principal theorist in what Balbus (1987: 110) calls the feminist psychoanalytic theory of Dinnerstein, Balbus, Rich and Flax. This branch of feminist psychoanalysis draws on the non-Kleinian object-relations theories of these writers (Balbus, 1982; Dinnerstein, 1976; Flax, 1978) and has been the theoretical basis for the practice of 'feminist therapy' (Eichenbaum and Orbach, 1982, 1984). This work has attempted to situate psychoanalytic

theories of the psychic construction of gender within an historically specific social environment. The approach requires a transformation of key Freudian categories and the anthropological assumptions on which they are based.

Chodorow shifts from Freud to later object-relations theory (Winnicott, 1956) to explain how women's childcaring role is perpetuated through the earliest relationship between a mother and her child. She develops a theory of gendered relations which centres on early childhood experiences (Chodorow, 1978). This leads her to a demand for a fundamental change in how childcare is organised between women and men in our culture. She examines the reproduction of mothering, rather than gender identity per se, arguing that women develop a greater desire to be mothers than men do to be fathers. For her, the cause of differences between the genders is that, while all girl children continue to identify with the mother, boy children have to make a serious break and identify with the more distant father, in order to become masculine. This is a wrench for boys and develops a different type of personality, which is less nurturing. The process is embedded in the unconscious and is not amenable to simple conscious resolution. Consequently, girls grow into nurturing adults, while boys do not (ibid: 43, 44) Relationships and issues of dependency are experienced differently by women and men. Masculinity is defined through separation. Masculinity is threatened by intimacy, while female gender identity is threatened by separation.

Instead of privileging the Oedipus and castration complexes, as Freud does, Chodorow focuses on the psychic effects of the pre-Oedipal mother-daughter relationship, over the mother-son and father-son relationships emphasised by Freud. The girl is seen as struggling with her likeness and unlikeness to the mother, before her entrance into and her inscription within the law of the father (Michie, 1989). The problematic bond between mother and daughter is what produces language, identity and a provisional notion of 'self' in the little girl. Chodorow (1978: 208, 9) stresses 'the fact that women universally are largely responsible for early childcare and for (at least) later female socialisation'.

Working in a North American context, Chodorow uses psychoanalysis to dispute biological and social theories of gender acquisition, which deny the significance of important mental processes. What in Freud and Lacan are abstract positions with which the child identifies, for example the position of the father, become real people in Chodorow's work. This has led Rose (1990) and Kurzweil (1989) to describe Chodorow's work as part of socialisation theory, rather than as a truly psychoanalytic approach. As Hochschild (1990a: 155, 156) points out, 'all women come out pretty much alike' in Chodorow's theory, as do all men. The approach is descriptive, detailing the successful internalisation of patriarchal ideology, and reductionist (Segal, 1987: 140, 141), suggesting that the ideology could be changed by changes in childcare arrangements. It does not address changes from generation to generation, or the contradictory nature of women's experiences and expectations, which have often been the impetus for feminism (Ryan, 1990: 253).

Chodorow's historical and relational positioning of the production of feminine identity initially contrasts favourably with Freud's theorisation of the construction of sexual difference around 'the phallic economy' (Harris, 1989: 131). The identification of the girl is more informed by process and becomes problematic only when she realises that she identifies

with a negatively valued gender category, and an ambivalently experienced maternal figure, ... accessible but devalued. Conflicts here arise from questions of relative power and social and cultural value. (Eisenstein and Jardine, 1985: 14)

Chodorow values mothering highly (Gilligan, 1982) and her analysis is woman-centred (H. Eisenstein, 1984). The problem is that mothering is not highly socially valued, apart from its role in socialisation and regulation, as propounded in the work of Winnicott (1956, 1957). Chodorow's solution is for men to parent, as well as women. Her analysis recognises the strength of the social processes and suggests that the social changes could change the organisation of the psyche and the formation of subjectivity. But she does not analyse the social processes which give low rewards to motherhood and her

solution to gender inequality, for men to parent, ignores wider social issues which devalue women in society (Walby, 1990).

In her attempt to make pre-Oedipal relations social-familial, rather than ahistorically psychosexual, Chodorow acknowledges that women's social role as mother is always historically and culturally specific in its organisation and meanings. She thinks that changes in family structures can affect individual change and thus social change. But, on the other hand, in her privileging of mothering, she theorises it and its psychosexual and social implications as universal (Segal, 1987). In doing this, in common with all psychoanalysis, Chodorow reduces subjectivity to sexual identity and the constitution of this identity to the first five years of childhood (Weedon, 1987: 62). And, at the same time,

she loses sight of Freud's radical deconstruction of the ego, replacing it with a stable gendered subjectivity, founded on gender roles learnt in the context of the unconscious structuring of femininity and masculinity which reinforces them. (ibid)

Chodorow argues that gender is reproduced through mothering and that no change is possible until one is part of a family where men mother. Change is located at a single point, the point of origin of gender. As Hollway (1982: 104, 5) points out, we must use psychoanalytic concepts in a way which does not reduce gender to a single, unchangeable, originary moment. The incorporation of social content through language and the unconscious makes this possible, as does the incorporation of contradiction. Taking as a starting point the formation of a feminist subjectivity in the context of adult social relations, as this thesis does, implies that there are no origins, not even complex ones.

Rather, any starting point is relatively arbitrary and depends on tracing the recursive (Giddens, 1979) relations which have produced the subject at that time. It is through these that it is possible not to lose sight of the effect of social changes on the experience and identity of an individual subject over time. Depending on the opportunities which construct women's opportunities in the social world, the expression of these contradictory sites of identity may be limited. However, the recognition of their theoretical possibility is crucial for a dynamic

theory of identity which takes into account the changing relationships of a person's history and which can thus explain gender in the contemporary western world. (ibid: 105)

3.4 Marxist feminism

If identity and subjectivity cannot be understood without theorising the social domain, what is the relationship between them? It is in the Marxist tradition that sophisticated and sustained attempts were first made to go beyond the idealist humanist / rationalist theory of the person which constitutes traditional philosophical approaches to the subject (Henriques et al, 1984: 93ff). Out of an epistemological and political commitment to materialism, criticisms of the transcendental subject have been derived via Althusser and his use of Lacanian psychoanalytic concepts. Before examining Althusserian approaches to the subject in Section 6, I first look at Marxist feminist and dual-systems theories of women's oppression.

Marxist feminist analysis considers that gender identity and inequality in gender relations derives from capitalism where men's domination of women is a by-product of the domination of capital over labour. Class relations and the economic exploitation of one class by another are the central features of social structure and these determine the nature of gender relations (Benhabib and Cornell, 1987; Hartmann, 1981; Jagger, 1983; Walby, 1990). Marxist-inspired feminist theorists offer an examination of the division of labour, where women's work within the home has been devalued as part of the private, inconsequential sphere of life. Further, when women enter the paid workforce in addition to doing their domestic work, it is often in low-paid, low-status jobs. In this dual capacity of domestic and labour-force worker, women keep capitalism and male dominance in place -- a system in which they are largely subordinate. However, there is no unified Marxist-feminist approach to household production. Approaches range from those which see gender and the family determined primarily at an ideological level, to those which view it

principally at an economic one. Some see the family as neutral in the oppression of women which stems from capitalism and others see the family as the critical site of women's oppression. A common thread, however, is that capitalism needs the conventional family form, so there is little prospect of major alterations in gender relations until there have been major changes in capitalism. The exploitative economic relations between classes are seen to be implicated in the oppression of women, to such an extent that women's liberation from the family would not be achievable outside a socialist society.

The first Marxist theorist to address the question of women's subordination was Engels (1940), whose description of women's oppression contains the elements of a socialist analysis of the pre-conditions for change in women's situation. He asserts women's oppression as a problem of history, rather than biology, and posits therefore that revolutionary politics could solve it. Arguing from a base-superstructure model, he sees the material base as composed of production, including the making of tools, food, clothes and the processes of birth and caring for children, the ill and the elderly. This base determines the political and ideological superstructure. Although Engels' account has been subject to criticism (Delmar, 1976; Stone, 1977), he importantly recognises the material nature of women's work, providing the basis for a materialist analysis of women's subordinate position (Walby, 1990: 71). Walby goes on to criticise Althusser (1971a) for losing this critical insight and for seeing the family purely as an ideological state apparatus, whose function is to socialise children for capitalism.

Taking up the materialist strand in Engels' work, the domestic labour and wages for housework debate of the 1970s systematically examined the relationship between housework, or domestic labour, and capital (Dalla Costa and James, 1973; Hartmann, 1981). If the work of women could be shown to be central to capitalism, then feminism could be shown to be central to revolutionary politics. The argument centred around the concept of 'value', the Marxist unit of economic worth (Hartmann, 1981: 34). Hartmann's critique of

Dalla Costa and James is that they found a place in the revolution for women's struggle by making women producers of surplus value and, as a consequence, part of the working class. They did not, however, examine the importance of housework in maintaining male supremacy, or the importance of men's vested interests in the subordination of women. Women's struggles, in this scenario, are seen as revolutionary, not because they are feminist, but because they are anti-capitalist.

Nicholson (1987: 17) argues that feminist theory has in Marx both a strong ally and a serious opponent. In common with Hartmann (1981: 10), she points out that Marxism enables us to understand many aspect of capitalist societies, such as structures of production, generation of occupational structures and the nature of dominant ideologies, but that its categories, like capital itself, are sex-blind. Nicholson goes on to argue that the concept of production (narrowly understood as the producing and formation of an object), which is central to orthodox Marxist approaches, is also inadequate for comprehending the complex, intersubjective nature of traditional female activities like caring and nurturing and, therefore, inadequate as an analytic tool for feminists (Nicholson, 1987: 17). Walby (1990: 73) considers the strengths and weaknesses of Marxist feminism and radical feminism to mirror each other, in that the former overstates the household labour argument at the expense of gender relations, while radical feminism provides, in isolation from other systems, an important analysis of gender relations. Hartmann (1981: 11) considers Mitchell's (1975) approach to women's oppression via psychoanalysis to be a 'more useful' Marxist feminism, in common with Delphy (1984) and Brown (1981). However, Benhabib and Cornell (1987), Nicholson (1987) and Lovell (1990) believe that a more useful theory could come out of a fuller engagement between the two approaches. This could take place only in the context of a paradigm shift in orthodox Marxist thought, away from the paradigm of production.

3.5 Dual systems theory

Dual-systems theory is an attempt to synthesise radical feminism and Marxist feminism. It was one of the first feminist efforts to avoid 'single variable' models, by theorising the intersection of gender with class (and, in some cases, with race). As such, it foreshadows the feminist poststructuralist project of theorising the intersection of different social variables as the ground for differential treatment. But, as Fraser (1989: 8) comments,

despite this laudable aim, it soon reached an impasse: having begun by supposing the fundamental distinctness of capitalism and patriarchy, class and gender, it was never clear how to put them together again.

Dual-systems theory argues that both capitalism and patriarchy are important systems to consider in the structuring of gender relations. Delphy (1984), for example, retains the material Marxist analysis and the focus on men's oppression of women that comes from radical feminism, arguing that the exploitation of women's labour in the home is the cornerstone of their oppression by men. Unlike the Marxist feminist analysis of housework in the domestic labour debate, she considers this to be patriarchal exploitation, since men, not capital, are seen to benefit. This system of exploitation is regarded as parallel to, but separate from, the exploitation of labour by capital, which takes place simultaneously.

Eisenstein (1979) sees capitalism and patriarchy as fused into one system of capitalist patriarchy. The two are seen as so closely interrelated and symbiotic that they have become one integrated system, with patriarchy providing a system of control and order, and capitalism providing the economic system. Their effect on each other and their need for each other are too great for them to be theorised as separate systems. They are fused at the level of the state, where patriarchal interests are represented via male capitalists (Z. Eisenstein, 1984).

Both Hartmann (1979) and Mitchell (1975) keep the systems analytically

distinct, while differing in their mode of separation of capitalism and patriarchy. Mitchell discusses gender in terms of a separation between the two systems, in which the economic level is ordered by capitalist relations and the level of the unconscious is ordered by the law of patriarchy. She re-evaluates the work of Freud in order to uncover the unconscious and its function in perpetuating patriarchal ideology. Hartmann's (1979) analysis is different, in that she sees patriarchal relations operating at the level of the expropriation of women's labour by men, not at the level of ideology and the unconscious. She argues that both housework and paid work are important sites of women's exploitation by men. Further, both forms of exploitation reinforce each other, since women's disadvantaged position in paid work makes them vulnerable within the family and their position within the family disadvantages them in paid work.

Young (1981) claims that it is impossible to sustain a dual-systems analysis of capitalism and patriarchy. Dual-systems theorists typically try to do this by allocating them to different levels of society but, in doing this, cannot account for patriarchal elements in the level allocated to capitalism, or for capitalist elements in the level allocated to patriarchy (Walby, 1990: 7). Walby considers a further limitation of existing dual-systems theory to be the fact that it does not address the full range of patriarchal structures, giving very little attention to sexuality and violence.

Anthias and Yuval-Davis (1990) disagree with Z. Eisenstein's (1979) attempt to discover a feminist materialism in the social relations of reproduction, saying that it fails because it tries to superimpose a materialist project onto a different object and reproduce its terms of reference. Lovell (1990: 71) argues that in the dual-systems strategy of ceding to Marxism what it can best explain and turning to feminist theory for a complementary understanding of sex-gender systems, there lies the danger that the Marxist analysis of production goes uncriticised by feminist thinking. Although Marxist feminists can sometimes be accused of reducing sex oppression to class subordination, this very tendency towards reductionism necessitates a critical engagement with Marxism. The idea

that modes of production and social classes might be systematically gendered, she says, is in some ways more challenging to Marxism than the notion of two parallel systems in interaction (ibid). Similarly, Benhabib and Cornell, (1987: 1, 2) are of the opinion that the confrontation between twentieth century Marxism and feminist thought requires nothing less than a paradigm shift of the former, which they describe as the 'displacement of the paradigm of production' of orthodox Marxism.

Feminist theory has been influential in challenging the Marxist emphasis on production but it is much less useful for explaining the oppression of women than the oppression of the working class. The concept of ideology offers a way forward through a link with the material position of women (Hollway, 1982: 115). Ideology can 'mediate contradictions' between women's actual productive and reproductive value and their subordination, according to the Marxist social anthropologist O'Laughlin (1974, cited in Hollway, ibid). She assumes that ideology works to reproduce conditions whose origins lie elsewhere. Hollway cites this as a product of O'Laughlin's Marxist problematic of base and superstructure and asserts that Althusser's theory of ideology takes this problematic as far as possible. Hollway (ibid) points out that Althusser (1971a: 153, 155) posits two theses on the nature of ideology:

1. Ideology represents the imaginary relations of individuals to their real conditions of existence.
2. Ideology has a material existence.

In the second thesis, Althusser describes ideology as a structure of social relations which can be further described through the ideological state apparatuses (ISAs) of church, state and school. The ISAs are one 'instance' of the social formation. He goes on to describe its relation to other 'instances', notably the economic, which is determinate of social relations, but not necessarily dominant, because the 'lonely hour' of the last instance never comes (Henriques et al, 1984: 96, 97). In Althusser's stipulation of relations,

he develops the notion of conjuncture to express the idea of the co-existence of necessarily uneven instances at any given moment. Thus, he attempts to break with the determinism of the original base-superstructure model by seeing the 'instances' of the social formation at any given time as having a different capacity to determine other instances. This is what he means by their 'effectivity' (Hollway, 1982: 120). The notion of instances is echoed in the feminist poststructuralist emphasis on relations in the present. This concept is developed further in Chapter Seven, which examines feminist subjectivity as a process of relations in present situations.

3.6 Structuralism's account of the relationship between ideology and the subject

Although the recent history of a specific, stated anti-humanist position is most closely associated with Althusser, it has its point of departure with writers like Merleau Ponty (1969), Sartre (1960), Gramsci (1971) and writers of the Frankfurt school, including Habermas (1971a, b). Nietzsche's 'death of man' and Levi-Strauss' 'death of the subject' had given earlier indications of this departure, as well as Marx' critique of Feuerbach's foundation of the purpose of history in 'man', and Freud's decentering of the rational *cogito* and his emphasis on the importance of the unconscious (Henriques et al, 1984).

Althusser's re-working of Marxist theory has been taken as most representative of the structuralist outlook. In general, structuralism is an attempt to apply the linguistic theory of Saussure to activities other than language (Eagleton, 1983: 106). This approach concentrates on isolating the underlying set of laws (structures), under which signs are combined into 'meanings'. The structuralism of the anthropologist Levi-Strauss, for example, meant that, in studying a body of myth, he was looking less at its narrative content than at the mental operations which structure it. As Eagleton puts it, 'like Freud, he exposes the shocking truth that our most intimate experience is the effect of a

structure' (ibid: 107). The structuralist approach emphasises the constructedness of human meaning.

Structuralism is anti-humanist in that, in establishing cultural elements and their rules of combination, it shows the inseparability of cognitive systems and social structures. The humanist position tends to see the individual as the agent of all social phenomena and productions, including knowledge. The specific notion of the individual contained in this outlook is one of a unitary, essentially not-contradictory and, above all, rational entity. It is the Cartesian subject in modern form. Thus, a society-individual dualism arises, with humanism on the side of the individual and structuralism on the social side. This has also been characterised as an agency-determinism dualism (Hollway, 1989). Althusser's anti-humanism attacks the individual as an agent of social change. His early work sees class struggle, represented by the revolutionary party, as the agent of change. Later, following his development of ideology, he sees change arising out of changes in the ISAs (family, church and school). He privileges the structure of the social formation and any attribution of agency to the individual is labelled bourgeois (Giroux, 1983; Henriques et al, 1984).

However, a problem arises in that, in claiming to isolate laws of the mind, structuralism is 'hair-raisingly unhistorical' (Eagleton, 1983: 109) and is as guilty as humanism of conceptualising the human subject in universal terms. In taking an anti-humanist stance, structuralism privileges a system of rules and a universal mind. But it does not give an account of human subjects and their intentions, probably out of a desire to avoid re-introducing the Cartesian subject 'through the back door' (Henriques et al, 1984: 95). The elimination of the human subject and subjectivity from analysis means that the structures themselves form the framework of a new metanarrative, replacing the 'god' of religion and the 'man' of humanism.

Althusser, like Gramsci, links common sense with ideology. This differs from the widespread classical perception of ideology as a set of doctrines or a coherent system of beliefs deliberately adopted by self-conscious individuals.

Althusser considers that ideology is the very condition of our experience of the world, unconscious precisely in the fact that it is unquestioned and taken-for-granted. As already outlined, in Althusser's use of the term, ideology works in conjunction with political and economic practice, to constitute what he calls the 'social formation'. He sees as ideological things which are widely considered natural or obvious. In this way, he develops the notion of ideology as common sense. Theorists influenced by Althusser and Lacan, on whom he draws, such as Black and Coward (1981), Coward and Ellis (1977) and Belsey (1980), have taken up this idea, to show how common-sense ideology is inscribed in the language we speak, and how language and discourse influence thought and consciousness. Ideology is not seen as a separate package of ideas, or an 'optional extra' (ibid: 5). It is seen as a way of thinking, speaking and experiencing and, as such, it is inscribed in discourses. A discourse is a domain of language use, a particular way of talking, writing and thinking (ibid). Ideology is inscribed in discourse in the sense that it is expressed in it, in writing and in speech. It is a particular form of the use of knowledge (Craib, 1992: 113).

Giddens (1979) also addresses ideology. He rejects the idea that ideology is a particular type of symbolic order (this idea corresponds to Althusser's first thesis, that ideology represents the imaginary relations of individuals to their real conditions of existence). This is the view that usually juxtaposes ideology to science, falsehood to truth, as orthodox Marxist theory does. Borrowing from Habermas, Giddens posits the view that discursive knowledge is partly constitutive of social life, so it cannot systematically be mistaken, as in the Marxist view. He prefers to confine the term ideology to the mobilisation of structures of signification to serve the sectional interests of hegemonic groups. Investigating 'sectional interests' further, he recognises the usefulness of a conception of interests and wants to develop one which does not depend on the actor recognising his or her interests or wants (Craib, 1992: 53).

In Althusser's early work, the agent of change was class struggle, represented

in the revolutionary party. Henriques et al (1984: 96) point out that his later work responds to the events of 1968 in Paris, when the party failed to deliver the revolution, by developing this different understanding of the relation between ideology and the subject which is what forms his second thesis on ideology, namely that it has a material nature. In addition, he was working in a climate in which many activists were questioning the effectiveness of the voluntarism of the liberation movements of the time. Ideology, and the ISAs of church, family and school were seen to produce individuals as subjects, in such a way that they participated in reproducing capitalism (ibid). Althusser concluded that the fundamental task of ideological practice, over and above the reproduction of particular ideologies, is the 'interpellation' of individual human beings as subjects, within the place assigned them in the social order. It is thus that individuals acquire and assent to their social identity.

Althusser draws on the work of Lacan (1977, 1981) for his account of the process of an infant's simultaneous entry into language and social life. This view of subjectivity has been criticised as 'mechanistic' (Giroux, 1983; Silverman, 1985):

Human subjects simply act as role-bearers, constrained by the mediations of structures like schools and responding primarily to an ideology that functions without the benefits of reflexivity or change. (Giroux, 1983: 136)

Ideology is seen to have a material existence in the ISAs and subjectivity becomes just 'a reflex of the needs of capital and its institutions' (ibid).

Both humanism and structuralism share a conception of the human subject that is essentialist: characterised 'as a condition of its creative activity in the one case, and of its subjection to its position in the structure, in the other' (Hindness, 1986: 120). Both perspectives are also reductionist, because they propose to reduce diverse social conditions to other conditions which are considered more basic: either to structures or to the creative actions of individuals (Hirst, 1979). What is needed is a dialectical treatment of

subjectivity and structure, in order to overcome the individual-society dualism (Barrett, 1980; Giroux, 1983; Hollway, 1989).

The strengths of structuralism are many, and they provide resources for the feminist poststructuralist project of theorising a dynamic and multiple subjectivity. A particular strength is the recognition that meaning never resides in a single term, that everything depends on how the constituent elements are articulated. There is an implicit questioning of the possibility of a unique 'correct' set of ideas about the subject, which acquire privileged status. Structuralism has pointed out the value-laden nature of common sense and has shown how whole social ideologies may be present in an apparently 'neutral' approach. This is important for feminists in their task of exposing patriarchy (Cullen, 1987; Walby, 1990; Wilkinson, 1990). It has also partly enabled the critique of liberalism (Grimshaw, 1986; Kitzinger, 1987). To see society as primarily determined by structures is an advance on the perspective that sees society as the expression of the individual mind, even if structuralism does not take human subjects and their intentions into full account. However, structuralist premises emphasise what is static and universal, not accounting for history and change. Poststructuralism is not opposed to structuralism, in the way it is fundamentally opposed to humanism. Feminism poststructuralism attempts the dialectical treatment of structure and subject, by combining the insights of structuralism with psychoanalytic theory about the nature of desire and intention, and with Foucauldian discourse theory.

3.7 Marxism and feminist poststructuralism

Feminist poststructuralism, where it draws on Marxism, draws largely on Althusserian Marxism. The anti-essentialism of feminist poststructuralism does also find a forerunner in the anti-essentialism of existentialist Marxism, particularly that of Beauvoir (Schor, 1989). However, Althusserian Marxism defined itself in opposition to both existentialist and humanist Marxisms and

Beauvoir's importance tends to be overlooked, particularly in Britain, because of the widespread adoption of Althusser's theories there in the 1970s (Lovell, 1990: 187, 188). While Morrow (1994: 130) asserts that Althusser's structuralism has been decisively rejected by critical social theorists, he neglects productive feminist engagements with it.

Althusser stresses the material nature of ideology which, in poststructural terms, is discourse (Weedon, 1987: 97). He also stresses the class structure of society and the integral relationship between theory and practice. However, he assumes that social relations, discourses and the social power legitimised by discourses are reducible to economic, that is, capital-labour relations, in the last instance (Althusser, 1971a). Feminist poststructuralist theorists Urwin (1985) Walkerdine (1985a) and Weedon (1987) have, however, pointed out that in any one historically specific example, relations may ultimately be reducible to the economic, but that this should not be treated as a universal principle. Other forms of power relations, for example those manifest around gender, race, ethnicity, age and ability, must be allowed and must not be subordinated to the economic in considerations of subjectivity and power (Lewis, 1993; Middleton, 1993). The interrelation of different forms of power and different axes of oppression is often crucial to poststructuralist analyses.

Althusserian Marxism also assumes that meaning and consciousness do not exist independently of language, that language and our inscription in discourse through language, are what construct meaning. This is a primary assumption of feminist poststructuralism also, although the notion of language as 'text' extends to habit and practice (Alcoff, 1988: 43). Language, in the form of what Althusser calls 'ideology in general', is the means by which individuals are governed by the ISAs, in the interests of dominant groups (Weedon, 1987: 30). However, poststructuralist linguistic theory does not see signifier and signified as ultimately linked together in the way Saussure theorised them. Foucault is concerned with many of the same problems as Althusser, although he does not begin with the same epistemological perspectives. His historical approach to

discourses emphasises their multiplicity and potential contradictions at any time (Hollway, 1989: 53). Derrida asserts that signifiers achieve meaning in a specific discursive context and the fixing of meaning is achieved only temporarily as a result of this.

Like Althusserian Marxism, feminist poststructuralism makes the primary assumption that it is language which enables us to think, speak and give meaning to the world around us. Meaning and consciousness do not exist outside language. Stated in this way, poststructuralist theory may seem to resemble a range of humanist discourses which take consciousness and language as the fundamental human attributes. Yet in all poststructuralist discourses, subjectivity and rational consciousness are themselves put into question. We are neither the authors of the ways in which we understand our lives, nor are we unified rational beings. For feminist poststructuralism, it is language in the form of conflicting discourses which constitutes us as conscious thinking subjects and enables us to give meaning to the world and to act to transform it. (Weedon, 1987: 32)

Marx was one of the early theorists who broke with the humanist notion of society as formed by individuals, and showed how individual experience was formed by social structures. This is an important link with poststructuralism. However, there is an assumption in Marxism and in Marxist-feminism that, by changing the system and ideology, all women would benefit equally. Women are lumped together as a universal group with a specified nature (Fisher and Todd, 1988: 5). Missing from this critique is an analysis of differential treatment based on other axes of oppression. Althusser, ultimately following orthodox Marxism, reduces difference to economic relations and therefore to class.

Useful as Marxist traditions are to the development of a feminist poststructuralist framework, a problem arises with this economism of Marxist theory, because it allows the use of the terms 'real' and 'false'. Marxism has a concept of historical-materialist 'science', which can offer a true explanation of capitalism, guaranteed by the ultimate determining power of the relations of production (Henriques et al, 1984: 98, 99). As such, it can offer the notions of 'false consciousness' and of alienation from a true, unrepressed self, as

expressed in the Freudo-Marxism of Reich, Marcuse and Fromm (Mitchell, 1975, Part Two). An application of Marxist scientific analysis can lift the 'veil of ideology' which blinds people to the true nature of things (Foster, 1984). While there may have been some ambivalence about the status and meaning of the word 'science' at the time when Marx was writing (in *Grundrisse*, for example, he uses the word to mean both a method and a real consciousness or truth) (Westwood, 1988). Althusser was writing at a different point in history, where the meaning of the word science was unambiguous (ibid).

Thus, Marxism falls back into the individual-society dualism which feminist poststructuralism is concerned to avoid. The Althusserian notion of ideology problematically places the source of 'ideas' in subjects, such as the ruling class, and does not challenge existing ideas of the role of the individual subject as agent. For Foucault, somewhat differently, discourses are already powers and do not need to find their material force elsewhere. He shifts the focus from the ideas of an intellectual elite onto mundane discourses of disciplinary institutions that more directly affect the everyday life of the masses. From this viewpoint, 'ideology can be seen as the prosaic encounter of criminal and criminologist, neurotic and therapist, child and parent, unemployed worker and welfare agency' (Foster, 1984: 87).

In rejecting the claim that scientific theories can give access to 'truth', feminist poststructuralism has also drawn on the work of early radical feminist writers such as Daly (1978) and Rich (1980), who have demonstrated the false claims to objectivity made by the social sciences. Feminist poststructuralism sees ideology as having a material existence, in discourse, not as representative of something else (Lees, 1986). This differs from the Marxist view of ideology as 'false' and Marxist science as 'true', a view demonstrated in Althusser's first thesis on ideology, that it represents the imaginary relations of individuals to their real conditions of existence (Hollway, 1982: 118). So while Althusser's other thesis on ideology, that it has a material existence, is useful for the feminist poststructuralist project, its usefulness is lessened by the existence of

the first thesis, with its implicit reductionism of a search for origins (the 'real' conditions of existence) (ibid). As Norris (1982: 84) puts it, 'Althusserian Marxism is a form of deconstruction but one that seeks to halt the process at a point where science can extract the hidden message of ideology'.

3.8 Psychoanalysis and feminist poststructuralism

The widespread engagement with Althusserian theories of ideology among Marxist feminists in Britain in the 1970s paved the way for a reassessment of Freud and psychoanalysis, through attention to Lacan's reworking of Freudian theory. Classical Marxism could not supply an equivalent to the sociological concept of socialisation, but an Althusserian approach did (Mitchell, 1971). Althusser used the Lacanian concept of 'interpellation' to examine how human subjects submit themselves to the dominant ideologies of their societies. Early applications of psychoanalysis were connected with 'conservative sociology' -- Parsons uses it as the framework for his personality system, which he subordinates to his social system (Kurzweil, 1989: 82). Second-wave radical feminism had traditionally maintained considerable hostility towards Freudian psychoanalysis also.

Psychoanalysis has frequently been dismissed as bourgeois, as highly culturally specific while purporting to be universal, and as anti-feminist. Some of the accusations against it are indisputable. For example, Freud privileges the position of the father in the family and his explanation of characteristics of female psychology rests heavily on the concepts of 'penis envy'. Psychological differences between women and men are thus too easily reduced to biological differences, with the implication that women's subordination is natural and inevitable.

Moreover, the poststructuralists Foucault and Donzelot have cited psychoanalysis in the production of particular sites for intervention and social regulation; for instance, in the prescription of sexual norms (Foucault, 1979) and in the management of child-care and what

constitutes the role and responsibilities of parents within the family (Donzelot, 1980). (Henriques et al, 1984: 206).

However, Adams (1990) critiques Donzelot for assuming that individuals are free to stand outside the norms and to reject them. His stance on this makes nonsense of the claimed effectivity of the normalising apparatuses in the first place. Donzelot's voluntaristic viewpoint is reminiscent of Millett's (1971) and of much of the traditional left's and feminism's liberation politics of the 1960s and 1970s, where consciousness-raising was seen as the key to casting off oppression. However, within feminism, a simple rational embracing of liberation came to be seen as far from straightforward and consciousness-raising was seen to have limitations, particularly where sexuality and desire were concerned (Adams, 1990).

The discursive approach and the accompanying decentering of the individual, as based on the work of Foucault, has many advantages over preceding theories of the subject. It succeeds in conceptualising subjectivity and the human subject as multiple, dynamic and as historically and socially (discursively) produced (cf Mama, 1995: 124). Nevertheless, it leaves certain areas untheorised:

... we are left with a number of unresolved problems. First, in this view the subject is composed of, or exists, as a set of multiple and contradictory positionings or subjectivities. But how are such fragments held together? Are we to assume, as some applications of post-structuralism have implied, that the individual subject is simply the sum total of all positions in discourses since birth? If this is the case, what accounts for the predictability of people's actions, as they repeatedly position themselves within particular discourses? Can people's wishes and desires be encompassed in an account of discursive relations? (Henriques et al, 1984: 204)

Given the theoretical lack in both traditional left liberation theory and in Foucauldian theory, it is productive to make a critical and selective use of psychoanalysis and its account of subjective processes which resist change, as well as accounts of failure of identity, which make change and resistance possible. It is important to take into account that contemporary psychoanalysis,

like contemporary feminism, is not a single entity (Rose, 1990; Ryan, 1990). The aspects of psychoanalysis on which feminist poststructuralism draws in its theorisation of subjectivity are principally the theories of Freud and Lacan and, more recently, Klein (Hollway, 1989; Mama, 1995) and Benjamin (Hollway, 1995).

Furthermore, psychoanalysis is not purely theory -- there exists a large and diverse body of practice, some of which has had normative applications. Walkerdine (1996: 151), for instance, points out how, from the 1930s onwards in Britain, psychoanalytic practices joined forces with, and were shaped by and in turn shaped, concerns about the presence of the mother in the production of the bourgeois democratic citizen. 'Deprivation' came to be something that could result not just from maternal absence, but also from inappropriate and inadequate mothering (Bowlby, 1971). Anti-social behaviour and delinquency were also laid at the door of the mother by Winnicott (1957).

I have referred in Chapter One (Section 10) to my own discomfort at being involved in the HSL scheme which targets mothers, with a view to 'improving' them and ultimately 'improving' their children. I have found a widespread acceptance of the theories of Bowlby and Winnicott among those who work with families. Even if these theories are not always explicit, they have entered into popular thinking as common sense, with all the attendant ideological implications. The normative applications of psychoanalysis, however, should not be allowed to mask the potential radicalism of the concept of the unconscious in Freudian theory (cf Rose, 1990).

Henriques et al describe well the aspects of psychoanalysis which need to be addressed:

First, if the attempt to appropriate psychoanalysis is to have politically progressive implications it must obviously utilise the potentially subversive aspects of the theory. There is a marked tendency for these to be suppressed in favour of therapeutic techniques which in effect focus on fostering the individual's adjustment to his or her environment. ... Second, such an approach must also recognise

explicitly the historical specificity of the psychic phenomena and reading of unconscious life which psychoanalysis produces. This is recognised in most feminist appropriations of psychoanalysis. ... Unless its appropriation enables us to envisage the possibility that things can be otherwise, and to move towards a theorisation of the possibilities of change, psychoanalysis will lock us into a closed circle. (Henriques et al, 1984: 207, 8)

For Freud, normal adults achieve femininity or masculinity through psycho-sexual development. But feminist poststructuralism cannot accept the privileging of sexual relations above other forms of social relations, as constitutive of identity. Sexual relations may well be central in any one historically specific analysis, but there is no reason why this should be universally so. Furthermore,

... feminist poststructuralism suggests that it is not good enough to assume that psychoanalysis accurately describes the structures of femininity and masculinity under patriarchy, since discourse constitutes rather than reflects meaning. (Weedon, 1987: 61, 62)

If we accept a descriptive function for psychoanalysis, we assume that basic patriarchal structures exist prior to their discursive realisation. Effective description of structures that are thought to pre-exist could lead to a view that sees no possibility for change and a subsequent prescriptive role for psychoanalysis in forcing people into conformity. This charge has been made against psychoanalysis by Wilson (1981) and Sayers (1982), legitimately, in so far as the bourgeois practice of psychoanalysis is concerned (Belsey, 1980: 131). However, a feminist poststructuralist outlook emphasises the necessity to provide an historically specific context for the development of psychoanalytic theory and practice and the need to conceptualise psychoanalysis as an integral part of the processes that make up the social domain. This view comes from the proposition that all forms of knowledge are productive, in the specific sense that they have definite effects on the objects they seek to know. There is an important sense in which, far from **discovering** the 'truth' about an object of study, practices often **produce** the truth they believe they are discovering (Henriques et al, 1984: 92; Walkerdine, 1989a). By keeping these points in

mind, feminist poststructuralism can draw on the radical insights and lessons of psychoanalysis, while remaining aware of the discursive practices it produces, as well as those which produce it.

From this perspective, in addressing the criticisms of Wilson and Sayers, one can point to the fact that they see only half the story, in stressing the normative applications of psychoanalysis and ignoring the importance of the unconscious in Freudian theory (Rose, 1990). Similarly, in Marxist approaches to psychoanalysis, attention is focused on the ideological determinants of our social being, to the detriment of the role of the unconscious. This approach is illustrated in the work of Barrett (1980). The radical feminist theory of Millett (1971) takes a similar approach but although Barrett does not acknowledge the importance of the unconscious, she is aware that it is not satisfactory to always see women as innocent passive victims of patriarchal power (1980: 110). On the other hand, throughout Millett's work, 'woman' is the victim of a conscious plot. Millett's denunciation of psychoanalysis does not account for the aspects of psychoanalytic theory which provide the concept of 'investments' (Hollway, 1984a, 1994) or emotional commitments involved in taking up certain positions within discourses, which confirm identity as masculine and feminine and support a sense of identity (cf Gavey, 1993). To accept these theories would be to accept that liberation is far more complicated than a rational casting off of false and oppressive beliefs.

Millett's denunciation of psychoanalysis has retained its popularity with many feminists, especially those of the radical school, for example, Kitzinger (1987), Jeffreys (1990) and Kitzinger and Perkins, (1993), although there are today widely varied feminist psychoanalytic approaches (Brennan, 1989; Segal, 1987). Moi (1985: 29) considers that the continuing effectiveness of Millett's views with some feminists may be linked to the fact that her theory of sexual oppression as a conscious monolithic plot against women leads to a 'seductively optimistic view of the possibilities for full liberation'. Undoubtedly, the practice of psychoanalysis has been oppressive to women and

in particular to lesbians (Hollway, 1995: 95). Feminist poststructuralism, however, cannot accept the reductionism of a complete dismissal of psychoanalytic theory. Nor can it accept patriarchal ideology as a total closure. There are always weak points, ideological and material contradictions. These are often made manifest through things which are unconsciously said or done, that is through things which insist on being heard, as opposed to the things which are considered acceptable to be seen or heard (Moi, 1985: 124; Rose, 1990: 229; Weedon, 1987: 136). Psychoanalysis attends to these through its focus on the unconscious, to symptoms, slips of the tongue and dreams. There is no currently available substitute for psychoanalysis, or more broadly, psychodynamic accounts (Hollway, 1995: 95) of these symptoms which indicate the existence of the unconscious.

The concept of the unconscious can help conceive of ideology as a contradictory construct, full of inconsistencies. It can also, as Moi (1985: 26) points out, explain how, throughout history, some women have resisted patriarchal ideology, because of a failure of the dominant feminine identities (cf Rose, 1990). In this, it is a challenge to the self-evidence and common-sense ideological character of everyday life (cf Anderson 1968). These have also been the targets of different feminist approaches which have challenged the 'natural' and pre-given qualities ascribed to women's social position. Freud's radical deconstruction of the ego has been used to develop the idea of a non-unitary subject, which is at odds with the unitary, norm-related subject of mainstream psychology (Venn, 1984; Hollway, 1989). This unitary subject of psychology is also similar to the subject of liberal humanism and they bolster each other recursively (Hollway, 1991b).

The Freudian subject, then, is non-rational and multiple, subject to forces that are not always under the control of the conscious mind (Mama, 1995: 128). Furthermore, Freud's ideas on the development of human sexuality are subversive, in that his theory takes neither masculinity nor femininity for granted. 'Instead, the Freudian infant starts out as sexually undifferentiated

(polymorphously perverse) with the potential to develop in any number of different directions, and only later develops masculinity or femininity after a complex struggle between contradictory forces' (ibid). Mama points out that psychoanalytic theory is also a truly relational and social account of the history of the individual, because in it, the person is constructed in the course of relationships with other people. In Freud's culture, this is the nuclear family (ibid).

3.8.1 Lacan

Many of the challenges to Freud, from analysts with whom he engaged in debate, ended by producing an account of femininity which had more normative effects than his own (Rose, 1990: 234; Henriques et al, 1984: 212). From the 1930s, Lacan challenged all of these therapeutic practices, particularly that of ego-psychology in the USA. He saw ego-psychology as a misuse of psychoanalysis for purposes of social adaptation and control and singled out for particular criticism its notion of a strong ego as the rational monitor of consciousness. He also argues that the notion of rational self-determination is an illusion produced through the social conditions of bourgeois society. He seizes on the deconstruction of the ego and the unitary subject, developing an account of a subjectivity fundamentally decentered from consciousness. 'The ego is necessarily **not** coherent' (Wilson, 1982, cited in Rose, 1990: 234, original emphasis), but always and persistently divided against itself. An ideological world conceals this division, this splitting of the subject, and the conscious part of the subject is

... supposed to feel whole and certain of a sexual identity. Psychoanalysis should aim at a deconstruction of this concealment and a reconstruction of the subject's construction in all its aspects. (Mitchell and Rose, 1982: 26)

For Lacan, not only is the subject split, but its very production depends on the use of language. The entry into language is the pre-condition for becoming

aware of oneself as a distinct entity (distinct from the mother), within the conditions laid down by already-existing social relations and cultural laws. In addition, the process of entry into language founds the unconscious. This brings us to Lacan's theory of the imaginary and symbolic orders.

The imaginary corresponds to the pre-Oedipal period when the child believes itself to be part of the mother and perceives no separation between itself and the world. At this stage, the child is neither feminine nor masculine and has yet to acquire language (Lacan, 1949). Between the ages of six and eight months, the child enters the 'mirror stage' (still part of the imaginary). This stage allows for dual relationships, where the child identifies with the Other (usually a parental figure) and misrecognises itself as the source of meaning and power over this Other. Lacan uses Buhler's (1930) account of children's behaviour in front of a mirror, where they will perform to their images which capture their every movement, in developing the idea of the mirror stage. This development is inserted by Lacan into Freud's account of narcissism, which asserts that a period of self-love precedes object-love and the resolution of the Oedipus complex (Freud, 1914). Urwin (1982) shows that the mirror stage does not depend on the ability to see, drawing on her work with blind children.

In the Oedipal crisis, the father splits up the dyadic unity of mother and child and forbids the child further access to the mother's body. The phallus, representing the Law of the Father (or the threat of castration), thus comes to signify separation and loss to the child. The loss is that of the maternal body and, from now on, desire for unity with this body must be repressed. With this repression, the child enters what Lacan calls the symbolic order, which is the social and cultural order in which we live our lives as conscious, gendered subjects. To speak as one of these conscious subjects is to represent the existence of repressed desire for the imaginary order, where there is no loss or lack. This is how Lacan can claim that the speaking subject is lack. When the child takes up its place in the symbolic order and learns to say 'I am', to identify 'me', distinguished from other people, this is the equivalent of the

subject saying 'I am s/he who has lost something', the loss being the identification with the mother and the world which existed in the imaginary.

The entry into language and repression of the imaginary simultaneously form the unconscious. Since language is a social system, Lacan is able to assert that the social enters into the formation of the unconscious. The primary repression involved in entering the symbolic is what opens up the unconscious, which is always connected with lack. In the imaginary, there is no unconscious, since there is no lack. The speaking subject comes into being through the repression of desire for the mother, and Lacan asserts that 'the unconscious is structured like a language'.

Contrary to popular appropriations of psychoanalysis, for Freud and Lacan, the unconscious is not the seat of drives or instincts, but of traces of repressed ideas, signs or memories. These can become linked to words and find psychic expression. Thus, language is doubly attached to the expression of the unconscious. Freud (1900) addressed the relation between symbolic processes and the working of the unconscious, in his work on the interpretation of dreams. In this work, he also deals with the difference between needs and desires. The distinction is also important in Lacan.

3.8.2 Desire

For Freud, needs can be fulfilled, since they arise from a state of internal tensions. For example, hunger can be satisfied by food. Wishes and desires, on the other hand, are based on 'needs' that have once known satisfaction. Through memory traces, this satisfaction is remembered and sought again (Freud, 1973). In so far as desires are fulfillable, it is through the reproduction in fantasy of perceptions and / or states which have become **signs** of this satisfaction. In trying to fulfill desire, we try to reproduce states which signify satisfaction for ourselves.

Lacan looks to Saussure's linguistic theory, in his own theorising of the sign. He stresses processes of selection and combination as fundamental to the organisation of meaning in language, but modifies the Saussurean account of the relationship between signifier and signified. Saussure's account privileges denotative meaning (Culler, 1976), that is, something real in the world which is referred to, so the signifier and signified can be 'harmoniously united' (Eagleton, 1983: 166) when real meaning is grasped. In Saussure's account, fixed *a priori* signifiers exist. For Lacan, the speaking subject is produced through the entry into the symbolic, which is itself made up of signifiers. But in Lacan's departure from Saussurean theory, these signifiers are not linked to fixed *a priori* signifieds or concepts. Language is seen as 'a constant stream of signifiers which achieve temporary meaning for a speaking subject retrospectively through their difference from one another' (Weedon, 1987: 52). The unconscious consists of chains of signifiers, or the relationships between them. One term finds its meaning only by excluding the other.

Possession of the object of desire, the Other, means the satisfaction of desire. The child learns that language stands in for objects, becoming a substitute for some direct, wordless possession of the object itself (Eagleton, 1983: 166). But as it is learning these lessons of language, the child is also learning them in the world of sexuality. The father, symbolised by the phallus, breaks up the dyadic unity of mother and child, teaching the child that it takes up a place in the family which is 'defined by sexual difference, by exclusion (it cannot be its parent's lover) and by absence (it must relinquish its earlier bonds to the mother's body) (ibid: 167). In accepting this, the child is negotiating the Oedipus complex, to use Freud's term. In Lacan's terms, it is moving from the unity of the imaginary, where there is no desire because there is no lack, to the symbolic order of pre-given social and sexual roles. The lack, or loss, present in the symbolic order presents itself as 'the unbridgeable gap between signifier and signified' (Cornell and Thurschwell, 1987: 146).

Lacan's theory of language resembles Derrida's critique of rationalist theories

of language and the metaphysics of presence, which presuppose that the meaning of concepts is fixed before their expression through language. Derrida also transforms the relationship between signifier and signified. For both Derrida and Lacan, meaning can occur only in a specific context and in a relation of difference from other contexts. For Derrida, the principle of *différance* (see Chapter Two, Section 4.5) prevents a final fixing of meaning. For Lacan, it is the mechanisms of desire which prevent it.

However, for Lacan, there is one *a priori* signifier. This is the signifier of sexual difference, which he calls the phallus. The control of satisfaction of desire is the primary source of power within psychoanalytic theory and the phallus signifies power, in the symbolic order. Desire, for Lacan, is the motivating principle of human life. The desire for control of objects through possession becomes the primary motivating force of the psyche and control is identified with the position of the father, which is symbolically represented by the phallus. Thus, Lacan's appropriation of the symbolic order is ultimately structural (Walkerdine, 1985a: 227). Although he privileges the **sign** of difference (the phallus) and not biological difference, the phallus still stands for ultimate difference, which fixes meaning in language. Language in turn is regulated through the power systems of society.

In developing the idea of a transcendental signifier, Lacan follows Levi-Strauss' structural analysis of the incest taboo and laws of kinship and exchange which he sees as underlying all societies. The successful resolution of the Oedipus complex means that the child solves problems of desire for the mother or the father, by identifying with the parent whose sex is the same as its own. At this point, the child becomes a subject according to the cultural laws which pre-ordain it. The 'law of the phallic taskmaster' (Wilson, 1981) is universal for Levi-Strauss and Lacan, so gender difference enters into the formation of subjectivity in Lacan's account. This production of subjectivity is dependent on the mastery of the use of language -- the lack of control which the individual experiences as the gap between desire and satisfaction is, as in

Freud, the motive for language. The inevitability of desire in a Freudian or Lacanian framework is a main factor in producing the determinism of these accounts (Hollway, 1982: 500).

3.8.3 Some problems with Lacan's account

A feminist poststructural point of view rejects transcendental, *a priori* explanations. The phallus as the 'signifier of signifiers' is unacceptable, because it produces a simple, deterministic reductionism. The inbuilt phallocentrism and universalism of the signifier is incompatible with theorising the production of subjectivity in a way which accounts not only for how the processes may occur under patriarchy, but also how things could be otherwise (Urwin, 1984: 278). Furthermore, even though control of desire is impossible for Lacan, the fact remains that it is symbolically represented by the phallus and that anatomical difference determines who can aspire to the phallus (Cornell and Thurschwell, 1987: 146). Mitchell and Rose also highlight this problem:

Sexual difference is then assigned according to whether individual subjects do or do not possess the phallus, which means not that anatomical difference is sexual difference (the one as strictly deducible from the other), but that anatomical difference comes to **figure** sexual difference, that is, it becomes the sole representative of what that difference is allowed to be. It thus covers over the complexity of the child's early sexual life with a crude opposition in which that very complexity is refused or repressed. The phallus thus indicates the reduction of difference to an instance of visible perception, a **seeming** value. (Mitchell and Rose, 1982: 42, original emphases)

Men, by virtue of their possession of a penis, can aspire to a position of power and control within the symbolic order, whereas women have no access to it in their own right and cannot be represented in it. 'There is no woman, but excluded from the value of words' (Lacan, cited in Irigaray, 1985a: 87). This aspect of Lacan can be seen to openly disclose the reality of male power instead of hiding it under a guise of 'neutrality' or 'impartiality' (Gallop, 1982: 36 - 38). The theme of women's exclusion from the symbolic order has been

the starting point for the work of the French feminist psychoanalysts and deconstructionists Cixous and Kristeva (see Chapter Two, Section 4.5)

A second problem with Lacan's work is that desire, in his account, is inevitably unfulfillable, to be governed by or subordinated to fantasy (Henriques et al, 1984: 216). For Lacan, desire works in the same way as language, moving from object to object or from signifier to signifier and 'it will never find full and present satisfaction, just as meaning can never be seized as full presence' (Moi, 1985: 101). Urwin (1984) points to Lacan's emphasis of narcissism in his reading of Freud and his insistence on the unfulfillability of desire. (Both Urwin (ibid: 279) and Moi (1985: 98) note the influence of existentialism on Lacan -- existentialism emphasises a fundamental lack of being in the subject.) Urwin (1984: 279) points out that some desires can be fulfilled and this is why people cling to practices which give a feeling of control and consequent fulfilment, however fleeting. She recommends an investigation of **how** desires are fulfilled and how people are capable of satisfaction -- a necessary consideration if we are to accept the possibility of change. Her theorisation of desire echoes Deleuze and Guattari (1982), who see the theorisation of unfulfillable desire as self-fulfilling prophecy.

A third problem in Lacan's account is the precise sense in which the unconscious is structured like a language. This poses two problems for feminist poststructuralism. First, as we have seen, Lacan draws heavily on structural linguistics, with its acceptance of *a priori* signifiers. Second, Thom (1981), Urwin (1984, 1985) and others have questioned the implication that the unconscious is therefore to be comprehended entirely through the rules of language, particularly if these rules are provided by structural linguistics.

As in all structuralist accounts, there is an inbuilt tendency for the specificity of content and process to be subordinated to a universalist mode of explanation, a problem which applies equally to the work of Levi-Strauss. As Hall (1980) has argued, one of the implications of using a structuralist paradigm is that Lacan's theory tends to collapse into an account of a universal, albeit contradictory, subject who is not situated historically, who is tied and bound by pre-existing language,

and is incapable of change because of this. This, of course, is precisely the position which we wish to avoid. (Henriques et al, 1984: 217)

Despite these problems, it is Freudian and Lacanian psychoanalysis which has provided a theory of the dynamic unconscious, radically challenging the unitary rational subject. 'This is one of the sources of the subversive impact of psychoanalysis: it overturns the western view that the distinguishing mark of humanity is reason and rationality' (Frosh, 1987: 25). It is not that rationality does not exist, rather that it is always being contested by forces of the unconscious, where repressed ideas, feelings, desires and fantasies lie. 'The forces governing subjectivity and action are therefore not derived from a single source' (Hollway, 1989: 29).

3.8.4 Using Kleinian concepts

A further problem with psychoanalysis, applicable to any work that examines the production of adult subjectivities, as this work does, is that most psychoanalytic accounts of human psychic development focus on processes occurring in early infancy. Feminist poststructuralist theorists take the view that subjectivity is not only dynamically formed, but also continually changing and being constituted from one instant to another, as well as over long periods of time (Mama, 1995: 129). This means that subjectivity can be studied at any point in the life cycle. This present work studies the subjectivities of adult feminist women. Subjectivity is treated as located in history, with specific content, and not as an abstract idea which can be treated as if it were devoid of that content. Even if similar psychodynamic processes occur in all people, the cultural and discursive content will be group specific and historically located (ibid). Treating entry to the symbolic as a moment in childhood which is the effect of a structure, as Lacan does, means that the theory is static (Hollway, 1989: 84). This static point of entry of the subject into the symbolic order also denies the 'continuous, everyday defensive negotiation of intersubjective

relationships within the field of effects of power / knowledge relations' (ibid).

Hollway's (1982, 1984a, b, 1989, 1994, 1995) work has used psychoanalytic and Foucauldian theory to address a crucial question for feminism: if we accept that subjectivity is constructed, how do we explain why people take up subject positions in one discourse rather than another? If the process is not a mechanical one, why, for example, do some men position themselves as subject in the discourse of aggressive male sexuality (1984a: 231)? What do they gain from it and why don't all men position themselves in this way (cf Wetherell, 1986: 136)?

According to Hollway, we must pay attention to the histories of individuals and also to the question of a subject's investment in a particular position in discourse. By claiming that people have investments in taking up certain positions in discourses, and consequently in relation to each other, she means that there is some satisfaction involved for people through these actions. The feeling of satisfaction may not be conscious or rational and may also be in contradiction with other resultant feelings (1984a: 238). Her concept of investment is a re-theorisation of the concept of desire and is connected to power and the way it is historically inserted into the subjectivity of individuals. Desire comes from a lack of a feeling of control over and oneness with the other, as experienced in Lacan's imaginary. If people's individual histories have taught them that a certain subject position in a particular discourse can, even fleetingly, reproduce a feeling of fulfilment of desire, then they may make an investment in that position.

Power is thus more than material or economic. If discourses alone are examined in relation to power, then the examination is confined to material structures and practices. Material inequalities between men and women need to be addressed, but Hollway's (1989) work also points to the importance of the construction of subjectivity in power relations which are not a direct or immediate effect of material structures. Power is always 'dynamic and two-way and tied to the extra-rational forces' (ibid: 85, 86) of the unconscious, which

she conceptualises through the notion of anxiety and intersubjective defence mechanisms.

Hollway argues (1995: 98) that the interconnection between power and desire is overemphasised in Lacanian accounts, resulting in a psychic determinism which is not useful for theorising change. She emphasises therefore the connections between power and anxiety, based on an understanding of pre-Oedipal relations, derived from Kleinian object-relations psychoanalysis. Although this work was developed on the basis of work with young infants, Kleinian theory has it that primal processes pave the way for processes that continue throughout adult psychic life (ibid; Mama, 1995: 130). Klein privileges the defence mechanisms which work between people rather than within a person, so that intersubjective relations become the location for the negotiation of meaning and its effects, through power, on subjectivity.

These relationships are always the product of two or more people's unique histories, the contradictions between meanings (suppressed and expressed), differentiated positions in available discourses, the flux of their continuously renegotiated power relations and the effect of their defence mechanisms. Thus, they are never simply determined, either by the intentions of those involved, or by language / discourse. (Hollway, 1989: 84, 85)

Although the relationships and their effects on subjectivity are not determined, neither are they arbitrary. Hollway (ibid) posits that the principle motivating the taking-up of positions and the mobilising of defences is the vulnerability of what psychoanalysis calls the ego. According to Klein, vulnerability is an unavoidable effect of human nature; anxiety is the original state of human nature. Hollway accepts the importance of vulnerability, but without resorting to human nature as its cause, through an examination of the ways that the infant is positioned by adults. Adults, as a result of their anxieties, defence mechanisms and power relations, as well as their access to differentiated positions in discourses, create a situation of cultural anxiety for human infants, rather than a naturally occurring state of anxiety. The continuous attempt to manage anxiety and to protect oneself is never finally accomplished, although

in mature adulthood, people can achieve relative stability and a state of apparent peace with anxiety. Anxiety thus provides a continuous, more or less driven motive for the negotiation of power in relations (ibid).

The subject's main defence against anxiety is the process of splitting, a projective process which involves separating an object into good and bad. According to Klein, the primordial experience of good and bad occurs at the breast which is either experienced as benevolent and nurturing, or as rejecting and frustrating. When splitting occurs, the good object is incorporated into the ego -- that is to say, it is introjected. The bad object on the other hand is projected -- directed outward and away from the ego, on to other people or objects (Mama, 1995: 131). For Klein, these projective processes are intimately bound up with idealisation and denial:

Idealisation is bound up with the splitting of the object, for the good aspects of the breast are exaggerated as a safeguard against the fear of the persecuting breast. While the idealisation is thus the corollary of persecutory fear, it also springs from the power of the instinctual desires which aim at unlimited gratification and therefore create the picture of an inexhaustible and always bountiful breast -- an ideal breast. (Klein, 1986: 182, cited in Mama, 1995: 131)

The idealisation of the breast and the corollary fear of it produce ambivalence. The baby in its state of dependency is both gratified and enraged. In its rage, it has fantasies of striking back at the breast and hence at the mother (Coward, 1993: 114). These hostile fantasies are followed by fear of retaliation by the mother. These feelings and destructive thoughts are a source of guilt, which, theoretically at least, is experienced no differently by boy and girl children. Human beings of either sex experience rage and grief against the mother for loss of oneness. Yet, some clinical experience has shown women to be far more susceptible to guilt than men (ibid: 116).

Coward (ibid) posits that the different responses of the sexes have to do with their different abilities to tolerate ambivalence and the expression of destructive, aggressive feelings. In particular, guilt has much to do with the

ability to tolerate ambivalence. In Klein's -- and in most psychoanalytic accounts -- the 'healthy' individual is the individual who can most easily tolerate ambivalence, who can integrate hostility and aggression with love and reparation. Dealing with ambivalence is a possibly universal process which is culturally exacerbated for women by the fact that women have made and continue to make themselves responsible for their families' well-being, at considerable personal cost and sacrifice (ibid). It means that, for women, the unconscious fantasies of having possibly destroyed the mother are overlaid with more immediate and real fears. In a culture where women are always at risk of being devalued or rendered invisible or insignificant, as opposed to the importance of men, a daughter's destructive fantasies can appear to have a basis in fact (ibid).

Mama and Hollway both take up the experience of contradiction as indicative of anxiety and this can be joined to Coward's identification of the importance of feelings of ambivalence and associated guilt, which are experienced by women when they make changes in their lives. Feminists have long identified the experience of contradiction as indicative of the need for change and for the possibility of change, in 'traditional' women. Feminist women too experience contradiction and ambivalence when they make changes in the gender status quo, despite a rational conviction of and commitment to feminist change (cf Davies, 1990b). In seeking to address the anxiety which arises from contradiction and / or ambivalence, feminist poststructuralism uses and needs theories of the unconscious.

For the feminist poststructuralist theorists cited, then, the experiences of contradiction, anxiety, ambivalence and guilt are major forces in the dynamics of subjectivity. Discursive changes which accompany politicisation are, at the same time, psychodynamic movements which involve splitting (cf Mama, 1995: 133). Individual women frequently separate off certain qualities which they find unacceptable in their own sex, such as ambition, ruthlessness and aggression, and project them onto men (Coward, 1993: 132). Essentialist feminist

discourses do this on a collective basis with men as a group, in the process idealising the feminine.

3.9 Conclusion

This chapter has demonstrated that all social movements for change rely on theories of the human subject, whether these are explicit or otherwise. The theories of such movements, such as feminism, need sophisticated theories of the human agent (Giddens, 1993: 5), or the subject. Social constructionism has emphasised, often using discourse theory, how people's social positions construct how they are and has been criticised for being too deterministic (Hollway, 1995: 100; Giddens, 1991). The theorisation of subjectivity arrived at by feminist poststructuralist theorists implies that discursive movements are accompanied by psychodynamic processes within the individual and vice versa: psychodynamic processes have discursive (social, historical and cultural) content.

In other words, there is a constant resonance between psychodynamics and social experience in the construction and reproduction of the individual's subjectivity. This means that both discourses (theorised as conveyors of history, culture and social meaning) and individual subjects are produced in a continuous dialectic, out of reverberations between historical-cultural and psychological conditions. Here we have a theory which transcends dualism because it conceptualises the individual and the social as being produced simultaneously. This is not to say that every individual change generates new discourses but that when individual changes are provoked by conditions that are widely experienced -- such as those of race and gender -- then these are more likely to become widespread, to gain social power and become discourses that convey culture and social meaning, or collective knowledge. (Mama, 1995: 133).

When the possibility of social change arises, therefore, it demands the tackling of feelings and needs and of the contradictions and difficulties of the situations which arise in tandem with discursive movements. At least some answers lie in looking at the social conditions which produce these feelings (cf Coward, 1993: 198). Desire and the concept of the unconscious are given a social basis through theorising their historical development in relation to meaning and

discourse (Hollway, 1995: 94), not simply as something universal and inevitable which will pull us back into essential ways of being. We have to take into account the power relations that construct systems of desire (Frosh, 1987).

In taking an approach like this, we can hold on to the importance of the unconscious, but also see a route past what has been identified as Lacan's failure to deal with the material conditions of people's lives (Henriques et al, 1984). Such reworkings can produce a more historically specific reading of desire and the unconscious which will, by implication, be less universalistic and less pessimistic (with regard to the unfulfillability of desire) than Lacan's. Foucauldian discourse theory is also drawn on in accomplishing this reading, but at the same time, the discourse determinism of Foucault has been addressed, by acknowledging that individual history plays an important part in the reproduction or change of social relations. All of these issues are relevant for the analysis of feminist subjectivities undertaken in Chapters Six, Seven and Eight.

CHAPTER FOUR

PEDAGOGICAL VIEWS OF THE HUMAN SUBJECT AND OF KNOWLEDGE

4.0 Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to trace a path through some of the conditions which have produced some of the orthodoxies of Irish education to-day. This is attempted because of my conviction that knowledge production is a political activity. The chapter attempts to show how both science and structural approaches to knowledge were envisaged as tools for both regulation and liberation and for the wellbeing of nations. A rejection of science brought a turn to psychology, especially human relations psychology. The chapter shows how approaches to pedagogy are social, that is, they are embedded in the dominant discourses and theoretical perspectives of their time.

The chapter takes the form of a genealogy. While it acknowledges a historical perspective, it is not a usual kind of history, which examines the progress of ideas through the influential figures in the subject and the improvements in practice which are the result of application (cf Hollway, 1991a: Introduction). I am not attempting an overarching synthesis (cf Rose, 1979), nor a search for origins of the various orthodoxies, but a review of models of the subject and of knowledge which have shaped different educational practices. The emphasis which I place on production allows me to raise further questions about the conditions of production, about the situations in which problems are defined, by whom, and with whose interests they are incorporated (cf Hollway, 1991a).

In tracing the genealogy, the chapter examines the following:

- the emergence of the subject of pedagogical practices

- the structure-of-the-disciplines movement
- the psychologisation of education
- liberatory education: a unitary, rational and male subject
- women's ways of knowing: a unitary female subject
- challenges for adult education pedagogy posed by feminist poststructuralist theories.

Education is viewed by many as the means by which individuals and societies are shaped and changed. This assertion applies to popular discourse about education and to formal discourse in pedagogical situations. The chapter is also an attempt to examine some of the conditions under which critical adult education has been constructed, specifically its opposition to schooling. I believe that much critical adult education practice in Ireland, while it defines itself in opposition to religion and schooling, is dominated by liberal humanist and by essential difference feminist models of the subject. These models are not sufficient to produce radical pedagogies. In fact, I assert, they have many of the same end results that schooling and religion have, namely, the creation of self-regulating subjects. While I acknowledge that there are always contradictions and cracks in the explanatory adequacy of any model of the subject, I nevertheless assert also that critical adult education needs to be aware of the dominant conditions of its own production, if it is to be a truly critical practice.

How did the aspects of pedagogy which I single out for examination come to be what they are? In posing this question, I start with the premise that all pedagogical and curricular approaches are bodies of knowledge which have been produced, rather than coherent disciplines which have been discovered. For example, critical adult education has been produced partly in opposition to schooling and its overt purpose of producing a workforce and the less overt purpose of regulating people and maintaining the social status quo. It has also

been produced in conditions where a human relations psychological perspective has emerged (since the 1960s) as the dominant discourse through which people in the western world interpret themselves and their behaviour. This human relations discourse is dominant in adult education even though it does not go uncontested. It is also emerging strongly in schooling in the last decade. It is important to bear in mind the historical place of human relations discourse and the progressive political positions it has often been associated with. Nevertheless, I will go on to argue that its theorisations of the person are not adequate for the kinds of feminist change that feminist poststructuralism calls for.

4.1 The emergence of the subject of pedagogy

Walkerdine (1984) asserts that, as a consequence of classification, norms and dominant discourses of knowledge have been produced. Human subjects are produced within these discourses. In the case of schooling, many of its practices have been concerned with the search for a pedagogy which could provide the desired forms of individuality of the authorities of the day (or of the revolutionaries). These could range from the overt desire to produce people capable of working in the factories of the English industrial revolution, to the formation of correct moral attitudes in Sweden (Gee, 1988), to the desire of the Owenite movement to develop a rational means for working-class children to be freed from the pre-conceptions of existing society (Stewart, 1972), to the desire of the British administration to regulate education in Ireland and thus prevent nationalists or insurgents from fomenting revolution (Coolahan, 1981), to the less overt concern with producing the self-regulating individual which is characteristic of the modern bourgeois state (Walkerdine, 1988, 1989a, b; Walkerdine and Lucey, 1989).

Certain tendencies in educational practices have been introduced into public education and administration by individuals and groups from outside public

education (cf Hollway, 1991a). These introductions and ideas were originally linked with a belief in science and the supremacy of the rational which began with the Enlightenment of the eighteenth century. The idea of scientific legitimacy was adopted by forward and progressive thinkers -- it was seen as modernism and is still largely seen as such. In some cases, science was adopted to replace religion (for example, Marxism) and in other cases (for example, public educational systems in Sweden, Ireland and England), scientific rationality was adopted, but continued to be underwritten by the idea of a god.

The claims for a science of the rational were from the start intimately bound up with the possibilities of a scientifically validated and rational pedagogy (Walkerdine, 1984). Foucault (1977: 195 ff) documents the emergence of techniques of administration which were founded in the sciences. He traces how this body of techniques was made possible by conditions such as growing urbanisation, which came about with the rise of capitalist manufacture. Theorists such as Adam Smith were urging that the state should promote literacy and numeracy at elementary level as an essential factor for industrial progress.

At this time and given these conditions, forms of power emerged which allowed certain techniques of producing knowledge and knowing about human beings to be used. These techniques had regulatory effects. But it is not the case that they were produced by a monolithic capitalist class for the domination of the emerging working class. On the contrary, while the effect might well have been to produce what Foucault calls 'docile bodies', it was often liberals and radicals who proposed the new forms of scientific administration and pushed for them as preferable to the forces of religion. This tendency characterised the work of Marx. His belief in the science of history and the scientific basis of historical materialism has to be understood as part of the rise of the scientific and rational movements (Walkerdine, 1984: 165). As Walkerdine (ibid) points out, if so subversive a figure as Marx opted for the legitimation of science this points to how scientific forms of knowledge and

administration were privileged. Foucault's work has gone a long way to show how science, by its naturalisation, became a tool for normalisation and regulation, even when used by those who envisaged it as a tool for liberation.

The late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries saw significant initiatives in state involvement in education in many European countries such as Switzerland, Holland, Prussia, France, Spain, Greece, Italy, Denmark, Sweden and Norway (Coolahan, 1981; Gee, 1988). England was influenced by a prevailing political philosophy of *laissez-faire* and state involvement in education came much later, with an Education Act in 1870 and compulsory education established about 1880. The Act of Union of 1800, which brought Ireland under the direct control of the government and parliament and Westminster, sought to bind Ireland more closely to Britain by a policy of cultural assimilation. But as Coolahan (1981: 3,4) points out, Ireland was frequently used to try out various policy initiatives before introducing them in England, such as an organised police force, improved health services, a Board of Works. Thus, Ireland got a state-supported primary school system, under the control of a state board of commissioners, in 1831.

State legislation on education in Ireland was also in response to various commissions which recommended that school systems be supervised for purposes of politicising and socialising goals, for cultivation of attitudes of political loyalty and cultural assimilation. In addition, after Catholic emancipation in 1829, Catholic demands for fair treatment could not be suppressed any longer and the national school system under state control seemed to the government the best way of directing educational provision (ibid: 4, 5).

These were among the arguments used for the provision of schooling in Ireland at that time. Jones and Williamson (1979, cited in Walkerdine, 1984) point out that all popular texts of the time of the introduction of (at first popular and later compulsory) schooling in England show that the goals of education were to provide a solution to crime and pauperism. The principles and habits of the

population were to be changed through schooling. Popular education thus came to be seen as a possible solution to the nation's ills, by the inculcation of good habits, notably of reading, especially reading the Bible. Gee (1988) points to similar developments in Sweden, where the popular literacy movement was directed towards Bible reading and consequent moral development. Gee (*ibid*: 202), citing Graff (1987a, b), also points out that the Catholic countries of Europe had very low rates of literacy, due to the way the Bible was interpreted by Catholic church authorities, who then tried to standardise interpretation through illustrations. Ireland, though predominantly Catholic, was also a colony and so received the literacy teaching of the coloniser.

Policy on elementary education in Ireland from the 1870s to the end of the century was focused on teaching the '3Rs', in a system whereby teachers were paid by results. The century saw the virtual elimination of illiteracy in the English language (Coolahan, 1981: 7). In addition, up until 1922 and independence, the national Board of Education maintained control over the textbooks used in the schools and retained a right of sanction over books which it did not publish. The books tended to be heavily utilitarian in the sort of information they imparted to pupils. They also endorsed the prevailing political and social orthodoxy and value system and avoided for the most part specific references to Irish contexts, 'thus helping to promote the cultural assimilation process which had been signalled by the Act of Union' (*ibid*).

The emphasis on utilitarianism and literacy and numeracy had their hidden agendas. The cultural context of the National Board textbooks could be said to be more overt in the omission of references to Ireland. The Irish language declined. After 1922, there was a radical change with the introduction of a programme inspired by the ideology of cultural nationalism. Schools were used as agents of change in an attempt at cultural revolution. After independence, the cultural revolution and the attempts to revive the Irish language were overt messages in elementary schooling.

The forms of pedagogy used for the masses in elementary schooling, both

before and (mingled with other forms) after independence here in Ireland, and widely in Europe and in parts of Asia (ibid: 11) was the monitorial school. This was based, like Bentham's dream of a panopticon (described by Foucault, 1977), on a model of constant surveillance. As well as instructing pupils in utilitarian work habits, moral regulation of the habits of the population would be produced by constant monitoring and ceaseless activity. However, in England, at any rate, conditions for a move away from monitorialism came when some teachers were 'unutterably shocked by the cynical readiness of certain children to recite the Lord's Prayer for a half-penny' (Jones and Williamson, 1979: 88, cited in Walkerdine, 1984). Monitorialism as a practical solution to the civilising goals of elementary education was seen not to be working. The coercion and constant monitoring of pupils was not solving the social problems.

'Rational powers of mind' were put forward by some as the solution to the social problem of the 'dangerous classes' in several European countries (Walkerdine, 1984: 166; Gee, 1988: 202). This was the first time (mid- to late nineteenth century) that the term 'class' emerged in the demographic sense, in discourse (Hamilton, 1981, cited in Walkerdine, 1984). Scientific rationalism began to be seen as a way to regulate the individual, not through coercion and monitoring and the inculcation of habits, but through understanding. Through understanding, it was assumed that individuals would come to rationally choose correct and natural ways to behave (ibid: 2).

The form of pedagogy advocated to achieve such understanding was to be carried out through class instruction and a curriculum based on the study of natural phenomena. Such methods had been pioneered as early as 1813 by the Scottish philanthropist Robert Owen, following the philosophy of Rousseau and others (Harrison, 1969). Owen had at first admired monitorialism, but later denounced the system which could render a child 'irrational for life' (Owen, 1813, cited in Walkerdine, 1984: 167).

Owen had introduced his methods with an emancipatory intent. He provided

schools for the children of workers in his mills. His ideas on pedagogy were seen as left-wing and progressive. He was a radical who supported the French Revolution.

No longer were children, in Owen's mind, to be treated as the recipients of those values that the middle and upper classes thought were necessary for them if they were to know their place in society. It was a decisive break with the old philanthropic attitude to the education of the poor, the tradition in which Bell and Lancaster (the monitorialists) were firmly rooted and its importance in the history of British education cannot be overestimated ... Owen's educational principles could almost be summed up as Rousseauism applied to working class children. He was the first to demonstrate that what was later called elementary education could be based upon affection, imagination and the full realisation of the potentialities of the child (Stewart, 1972: 35, cited in Walkerdine, 1984).

Owen too made the assumption that, given the right conditions, achieving understanding would mean that children would make the correct, rational choices which would ensure their liberation. He moved away from the constant surveillance of monitorialism to love as a basis for education. This love, however, was to be rational and hygienic, without passion. Passion was not scientific and therefore not a basis for progress.

Those with an interest in the regulation and containment and civilisation of the working-class child were also basing their pedagogy on the assumption that if people made rational choices based on understanding, they would 'do the right thing'. Walkerdine (1984: 168 ff) points out that it was not a smooth transition from monitorialism to class teaching. Both approaches were defended and contested. Eventually, though, class teaching, based on groups of children of the same age, became widespread. This was the first time it was assumed that children of the same age should be grouped together for instruction. Walkerdine also points out that this understanding of class in a school context came about at the same historical moment that class as a social concept emerged. She places both developments in a context of increasing classification and measurement aimed at the working class. She also asserts that all these practices in education which depended on reason and science were first

developed with working-class children and only later came to be used with all children, as statements of scientific fact (ibid: 198).

The idea that those who possessed understanding would choose to behave correctly and be good citizens was possible because of developments in ideas of normal development which were emerging around the same time. The techniques which Owen developed claimed to be based on an amplification of the natural and, therefore, of the normal (Stewart, 1972: 47). Owen insisted that knowledge of the natural world was a means by which the mind could be freed from the pre-conceptions of society. The utilitarians called for understanding to be taught and encouraged, so that the children of the labouring classes, recognising the 'order of things', would be capable of being gainfully employed (see Hamilton, 1981; Harrison, 1969).

By the beginning of the twentieth century there were two parallel developments going on, both of which related to the scientific classification of children: child study and mental measurement (Walkerdine, 1984: 169). At this time, the work of Darwin and other developments in evolutionary biology were inspiring surveys of populations which included histories of family 'pathologies'. Characteristics, including those of children, were recorded with a view to establishing what environmental conditions might produce physical illness, immoral and criminal behaviour. Children came to be singled out as a class, to be classified in their own right (Rose, 1979). It was seen as important to give heredity the best chance. This is an important shift in emphasis from the degeneracy of the population being a moral problem to one amenable to scientific solutions. Again, it is symptomatic of the shift away from religion towards science.

The individual (and in the case of schooling, the individual child) became a legitimate focus of concern and study, an object of the scientific gaze. As Henriques et al (1984: 119 - 152) point out, certain forms of social problems were located as an object of science. Therefore science could provide techniques of detection by establishing population statistics and providing tools

for establishing the scientific basis of the normal, that is, in respect to a normal curve of characteristics in the population (Hacking, 1981; Gardner, 1983). Normal individuals could be produced and the abnormal cured through some form of institutional provision (Walkerdine, 1984: 170). The new science of child-development psychology was involved in all of these happenings from the start (ibid).

All of these social events provided the conditions for the emergence of a scientific pedagogy based on the model of naturally occurring development which could be observed, measured, normalised and regulated. Thus, degeneracy in the population could be avoided by ensuring that children developed properly and became socially fit adults. The scientific approach to the human subject of education came to be contested strongly in the 1970s. Before examining the ways it was contested, I examine a movement in the 1950s and 1960s, originating in the USA, which examined the structure of knowledge itself and which was influential in Ireland.

4.2 The structure-of-the-disciplines approach to knowledge and the human subject

The structure of the disciplines approach identifies categories and binary distinctions relating to knowledge and to the human subject in education. Cherryholmes (1988: 134) points out the examples of binary distinctions that structure curriculum : achievement / failure, theory / practice, concept / fact, learner-centred / subject centred, accountability / lack of accountability, terminal objective / intermediate objective, literate, / illiterate, cognitive / affective, organisation / disorganisation, synthesis / knowledge of specifics, and sociocentric / egocentric. Several approaches to knowledge and curriculum value the first over the second term in many of the preceding pairs, and which term is valued depends upon which transcendental signified is dominant for a while. Some versions of humanistic education, opposing structural versions,

might be: learner-centred / subject centred, practice / theory, lack of accountability / accountability, and affective / cognitive. 'Approaches to curriculum could be topsy-turvy because these and other distinctions could be reversed and reversed again, depending upon the reigning transcendental signified.' (ibid).

Cherryholmes' argument is that people identify what could be termed transcendental signifieds which, they think, will produce knowledgeable subjects. In Britain at the moment, these transcendental signifieds are 'back to basics' (reading, writing, arithmetic), understanding the difference between right and wrong, and academic excellence, which will save the nation. This happened in the fifties in the United States of America.

This move was superseded at the end of the 1950s by the work of a group of scientists, scholars and educators who met to consider how science education in United States schools could be improved. Their deliberations were reported in the influential book *The Process of Education* (Bruner, 1960). A central theme of that book was that students should be given 'an understanding of the fundamental structure of whatever subjects we choose to teach' (ibid:11). It was hypothesised that four outcomes would follow (Cherryholmes, 1988: 134):

1. Understanding fundamentals makes a subject more comprehensible. (Bruner, 1960: 23)
2. Learning general or fundamental principles ensures that memory loss will not mean total loss, that what remains will permit us to reconstruct the details when needed. (ibid: 25)
3. To understand something as a specific instance of a more general case -- which is what understanding a more fundamental principle or structure means -- is to have learned not only a specific thing but also a model for understanding other things like it that one may encounter. (ibid:25)
4. By constantly reexamining material taught in elementary and secondary schools for its fundamental character, one is able to narrow the gap between 'advanced' knowledge and 'elementary' knowledge. (ibid:26)

As Cherryholmes (1988: 136) asserts, this was a persuasive argument about knowledge and about learning. Teaching the structure of a subject, tapping the centre of disciplinary knowledge, was economical, since it taught core ideas only. It was also long lasting, since there would be increased retention of what was learned and what was learned would become dated more slowly because of its fundamental character (ibid).

The movement inspired by Bruner's work became known as the structure-of-the-disciplines movement. It was supported by the explicit structural influence on education of *Taxonomy of Educational Objectives* (Bloom, 1965). This influential text clearly stated that concepts were superior to facts; comprehension superior to knowledge of specifics; analysis superior to application; synthesis superior to analysis; and evaluation superior to synthesis. Valued and non-valued categories were clearly set out. This structure of educational objectives was to be added to the structure of the disciplines. Conversely, the taxonomy assumed that subject matter and knowledge had an integral structure conducive to such an arrangement (Cherryholmes, 1988: 137).

A third contributing discourse was Tyler's (1949) rationale (ibid). Tyler applied principles of scientific management to education that showed educators how to think systematically: decide upon objectives, list learning experiences, organise learning experiences and evaluate outcomes. Tyler's argument is a classic application of structuralism to education. Learning objectives by themselves mean little; but in a structure of organised learning experiences and evaluation, learning objectives contribute to systematic instruction. Likewise, by itself, a measurement instrument used for evaluation has little significance; but in a structure of objectives and learning experiences, it can be given an interpretation. 'By itself, each stage of the Tyler rationale means little; the meaning of each stage depends upon differences from and relations to other parts of the process' (Cherryholmes, 1988: 137).

At this point, the Foucauldian analyst would point out that it could have hardly

turned out differently (ibid). It was important for the United States to stay ahead of and compete technologically with the Soviet Union during the late 1950s and the 1960s (on October, 4, 1957, the Soviet Union launched the first artificial earth satellite and this was widely seen as a threat to the national security of the United States). To this end, public education had to be upgraded. Politically, it was important to provide education in the certainty that scientific progress would be made and that patriotism would thus be strengthened. Powerful discourses were operating which also reinforced each other. Bruner drew on positivist and logical-empiricist epistemology; Bloom et al drew on educational psychology (also influenced by logical empiricism); and Tyler drew on scientific principles (and therefore efficient management). Teaching the structure of the disciplines had the effect of fixing meanings. Everything could be figured out, from objectives to evaluation. These discourses were in a continual relation with history (the international political scene with the Soviet Union, especially). Dominant discursive practice in politics dictated who could talk with authority about knowledge. As Cherryholmes ((1988: 139) puts it, 'The configuration of power from several discourses, practices and situations conferred upon the arguments of Bruner, Bloom et al and Tyler the effects of truth' (cf Hollway, 1991a: 6, 11).

However, the idea of disciplinary structure was largely based on a positivist view of knowledge which presumed the following:

1. The structure of disciplinary knowledge was logically coherent and complete.
2. Disciplinary knowledge was logically valid and truth preserving, from first principles to testable hypotheses.
3. Disciplinary knowledge was factual and explanatory, not evaluative.
4. Scientific language was value neutral and passive in describing and explaining phenomena (Cherryholmes, 1988: 138).

Points one and two assume a distinction between analytic and synthetic statements. Point three assumes a distinction between facts and values and point four views language as passive and descriptive, not active or evaluative. Points three and four also assume that knowledge and science are somehow separate from the world being described and explained (Cherryholmes, 1988: 139). There is no recognition that knowledge is produced within historical conditions, in this case the conditions facing the United States, as it saw itself competing with the Soviet Union. However, at the same time, developments in modern logic by Quine (1953) and in the philosophy of language by Austin (1968) and Wittgenstein (1953) began to undermine these assumptions (Giddens, 1993). Quine argued that it was not possible to account for truth-preserving natural-language arguments and therefore that it could not be shown that disciplinary knowledge was logically complete or truth-preserving. Austin and Wittgenstein, in different ways, showed that speech is action, not just description, and that value and institutional commitments infiltrate language and what is said. Disciplinary knowledge did not consist of passive, true arguments that were above evaluation. However, their arguments did not affect the structure-of-the-disciplines movement, illustrating the argument that power makes truth possible (Cherryholmes, 1988: 139).

Nevertheless, politics does not create curriculum in a seamless way. Power transforms discourses such that a category such as disciplinary structure is given more currency and importance than others. As Cherryholmes puts it, 'international tensions did not create the notion of structure, but they did, however, assign an educational value it did not have before to disciplinary structure' (1988: 145). Power assigns value and is implicated in what constitutes curriculum that is, what students have an opportunity to learn. Pedagogical theories are theoretically, culturally and historically specific (Kenway and Willis, 1990). Nevertheless, feminist poststructuralists, among others, insist that the curriculum includes what Cocks, (1989: 4), although writing in a different context, calls

evasions of that control that subsist not apart from and against but in

the interstices of the ordinary and everyday, and that are often tacit rather than overt, understated rather than overscored, and subversions that have attained a more definitive counter-existence, but that are still unmarked or are actively secretive.

By the 1970s, domestic politics in the United States was dominated by the civil-rights movement, the war on poverty and rising controversy over United States involvement in Vietnam (Cherryholmes, 1988: 140). These provided a context for the 'progressive' educational movements of the decade, which are connected in turn with the subject of the next section, the psychologisation of pedagogy.

4.3 The psychologisation of pedagogy

Early in the twentieth century, straddling the colonial and independent administrations, and later, in the 1960s and 1970s, Irish elementary education was affected by all of the new practices which were emerging, although Ireland was not industrialised and did not have the kind of working class population with which many of the earlier practices were developed in the first place. In the late 1960s the introduction of what was popularly known as the 'New Curriculum' for primary schools was influenced by the structure of the disciplines approach (An Roinn Oideachas, 1971). Developments in human relations psychologies in the 1970s were also influential in terms of their approach to the individual (for example, Holland, 1979). The most striking changes in the conditions for pedagogy in Ireland in the second half of this century were the growth in social sciences and psychology and the emergence of a social psychology. In the context of this growth, there emerged the development of the school, the family and the individual as a site of intervention, with the aims of changing human behaviour.

4.3.1 The growth of social sciences, psychology and the development of the family and individual as sites for intervention.

Acker (1988: 315) traces the development of three ideologies in this context:

1. ideologies about child-centred learning
2. ideologies about the determining role of factors outside school on educational achievement
3. ideologies about the political neutrality of the school.

It was assumed that if children (or people in general) are truly treated as individuals, it is impossible to discriminate against a social group. This stance, in practice, rules out positive action as well as negative discrimination. To be individual, personal or child-centred can have important feminist effects (ibid; see also Middleton, 1993). However, in practice, such beliefs can also obscure sex-differentiated practice (Clark, 1989). Comments like 'he's naturally boisterous' or 'she's naturally quiet' can support and promote gendered practices in relation to work and behaviour. As Gill (1987: 6) suggests, 'treating them as individuals can lead teachers unconsciously to a perception of individual male and individual female appropriate behaviour and attitudes'. Even a comment like 'it's his family background' about a troublesome and boisterous boy can be seen as appealing to a socially produced effect on behaviour, which conforms to appropriate male behaviour in the face of home difficulties.

Individualistic discourses which situate themselves in an ideology of neutrality preclude the identification of what happens in the social relations of the classroom as gendered or sexist practice. Without access to alternative discourses, teachers cannot see patterns of differential treatment or of sexist abuse and power relations. Once they get access to alternative discourses, they gain the language and ideas to analyse things differently (Clark, 1989).

The focus on the individual led to increased psychometric testing and the development of IQ scales. Where children did not meet the standard set by the psychologists, deficit models were employed and remediation programmes set in motion to remedy the deficits. Mainstream psychology has been severely criticised for this approach (Drudy and Lynch, 1993; Gardner, 1983), both for its inaccuracy and for its inhumanity. Intelligence has been shown by Gardner and others to be multiple and culturally based. The inhumanity of mainstream psychology has been attacked by the human relations school of psychology, especially influenced by Rogers. Human relations approaches have concentrated typically on raising self-esteem and confidence as a pre-requisite for learning. But as Kenway and Willis (1990: 16, 17) point out, seeking to raise self-esteem within the terms of the educational status quo may well have the effect of underscoring the dominant sex, class and ethnic groups in society.

In Irish schooling, then, if there is any debate, it is between the psychometric testing field and the human relations field. But both of these, as Chapters Two and Three of this work show, are set within a framework which assumes the existence of a unitary rational subject. And while the human relations field may feel that humanisation of relations is the road to liberation, Walkerdine's work (1987, 1988, 1989a) and the work inspired by it has deconstructed its content and shown its implication in the construction of self-regulating subjects through rationalisation and rational argument.

Rational argument has operated in ways that set up as its opposite an irrational other, which has been understood historically as the province of women and of exotic others (cf Mama, 1995). In schools where a liberal pedagogy of individualism prevails, rational deliberation, reflection and consideration of all view points has become a vehicle for regulating conflict. The power to speak is used for transforming conflict into rational argument by means of universalised capacities for language and reason. Ellsworth (1989: 302) claims that it is inappropriate to respond to certain kinds of 'irrational' writing or talk by subjecting them to rationalist debates about their validity.

That the effects of power in a social system become less visible, the more integrated the social system is, is a theme central to the work of Foucault. In the context of the liberal practices of pedagogy (and of motherhood) which emphasise individuality, this is particularly evident. There is less an overt controlling, than an underlying conviction that it is possible to educate the individual in a way that makes her / him 'want' to make the 'correct' choices. To preserve the 'wholeness' of the discourse of femininity, it is more important that girls rationalise away conflict, that where they might perceive gaps and inconsistencies, the power of reason can legitimately and recognisably be called on to displace the conflict. In this view, attempts within pedagogy to construct a rationally ordered and controllable child are deeply bound up with the modern form of bourgeois government and the emergence of the modern state (Walkerdine, 1987, 1988; Walkerdine and Lucey, 1989).

Thus pedagogy inspired by human relations is implicated in the production of compliant forms of individuality, by means of natural development rather than compulsion or coercion. These regulatory pedagogies produce and have produced knowledges about human beings which are often presented as 'discoveries' (cf Henriques et al, 1984). Human relations psychology, once envisaged as a tool of liberation, is, by the fact of its naturalisation in schools through self-esteem programmes, becoming the very basis of the production of normalisation. The same danger exists in adult education through personal development, if not firmly enmeshed in a political and structural framework (cf Kenway and Willis, 1990). Even the combination of a human relations perspective with social analysis is not sufficient for a transformation of social relations towards social justice. The reliance on the unitary rational subject persists and the attention to contradiction which feminist poststructuralism considers necessary is absent.

Psychology has constructed for itself a power base in the places where pedagogies are created: in preschools, schools, universities, colleges and communities. While mainstream psychology is being challenged by human

relations perspectives, these both rely on a preconception of the human subject as unitary and rational. The adoption of human relations perspectives has allowed feelings and intuitive knowledge to be accepted as valid ways of knowing, but only insofar as they allow access to the core individual, untrammelled by social forces. A feminist poststructuralist perspective wants to see feelings as social, while allowing for individual agency. Also in human relations approaches, a great deal of emphasis has been laid on democratising the relations and processes of pedagogy. But the poststructuralist insight that all knowledge is a production is rarely addressed.

The appeal of the human relations self-esteem discourse to policy makers and teachers has been theorised by, for example, Renshaw (1990), Kenway, Willis and Nevard (1990) and Gilbert (1989, 1990). They show that the 'self' literature, as it arose out of social psychology, emerged in various guises in many fields in, and associated with, education. It has informed a wide range of 'progressive' attempts to both humanise the curriculum and to engineer some sort of educational change which might militate against educational and social 'disadvantage'. In a sense, the 'progressive' educational movements of the 1970s, in their various manifestations, provided a complementary body of thought which was to help facilitate the acceptance of the schooling and self-esteem literature. Both pinned their hopes for educational and social progress on micro-politics and individual change. In so doing they paint an educational and social reform scenario in which the teacher is central. Enlightened and humane teachers are to be the driving force of a movement in which all individuals develop their full potential together, in an atmosphere of unconditional positive regard. Social change is made possible by change at the 'chalk face'.

This liberal humanist or human relations based approach to education sits comfortably with the individualist approach of meritocracy, which is a defining characteristic of the Irish educational system and a reason for its unequal outcomes (Drudy and Lynch, 1993: 33). The individualising of educational

problems and their solutions is currently a strong influence in Irish education. The techniques associated with it, such as targetting self-esteem, have found their way into many of the approaches to educational disadvantage, including efforts at improving the educational experiences of girls. In foregrounding the individual, both the self-esteem discourse and the education system generally repress matters of culture, ideology and power (Kenway and Willis, 1990).

In its emphasis on working towards empowerment, even emancipation¹, critical adult education practice in Ireland places emphasis on interpersonal skills and personal development. In doing so, it defines itself in opposition to behavioural psychology and psychometric testing and emphasises the need to deal with the whole person. Where it differs from the schooling use of interpersonal skills is that it attempts to help people understand how the transfer of these skills into the social world, for its transformation, is possible. In its focus on the person, with this objective, it draws on liberal-humanist and human relations discourses, which cannot be divorced from the content of their assumptions about the human subject. It attempts to combine these assumptions with social analysis. However, these models do not have the radical content necessary for social change in social relations in general, because of their reliance on a core, rational and unitary subject, nor in gender relations, because of their reliance on the notion of male / female essential differences and dual cultures (cf Gardiner, 1997). Despite their good intentions, they maintain the gender status quo.

4.3.2 Interactionism

An implicit or explicit theory of interactionism underlies much educational practice which takes the individual as its object. Interactionism claims to address dualism with its creed of 'the individual affects the environment and

¹ Inglis (1992, cited in Connolly, 1997: 44) distinguishes between empowerment and emancipation. Empowerment is the enabling of people to work within existing power structures; emancipation is the enabling of people to struggle against the structures.

the environment affects the individual' (Broughton, 1987b: 13). Broughton situates this statement within a liberal ideology which homogenises the social, cultural, historical, political and technological into an external environment. Out of this arises a formula in which 'cybernetics displaces Newtonian causality with circular causality' (ibid).

Despite appearances, however, the traditional psychological dualism of individual and society is hardened. There is here a cunning sleight of hand that actually preserves the traditional positivist vision of development rather than challenging it. The old world view appears to be replaced, but it is actually reduplicated, emphasising again the catchword of orthodox western democracies: reciprocity (cf Gouldner, 1973). In the process, the relation between inside and outside is rendered even more mechanical, as human life and growth are reduced to bidirectional exchanges of subsystems with the superordinate systems that govern them. The abstract geometry of this reversibility, lauded in Piaget's theory of operational intelligence, serves the ideological function of concealing subordination, control and privilege (Harris, 1975). (Broughton, 1987b: 13, 14)

Kenway and Willis consider interactionism to be unlike traditional psychologies, which see society as the aggregate of all its individual members. Interactionism sees

... the individual as the product of the interpersonal, intersubjective negotiation of meaning, and society as the aggregate of these interpersonal relations and meanings, ie, its focus is always on the small scale. This has consequences for analysis and sexual education politics. What it does not permit is sufficient recognition that certain social conditions also pre-exist individuals and their negotiations and, as such, individuals are, to a certain extent but by no means entirely or forever, the social relation into which they are born. Second, to focus on an individual's narrow range of interpersonal situations and to see her / him as a product of these, is to minimise the force of wider social process, such as class. Interpersonal relations are clearly not a 'closed field'. (Kenway and Willis, 1990: 205)

'Invisible' liberalism is the hallmark of much contemporary pedagogy. This is true also of contemporary feminism and of the social sciences generally, including developmental psychology (Walkerdine, 1984, Broughton, 1987b), occupational psychology (Hollway, 1984c, 1991a), cognitive psychology

(Sampson, 1981, cited in Kitzinger, 1987) and the psychological testing of intelligence (Emler and Heather, 1980, cited in Kitzinger, 1987). For those who oppose existing oppressions and who want to work to contribute to their alleviation, the deconstruction of liberal humanism is an urgent and challenging task which sadly is not being undertaken in anything like a mainstream way.

Challenges to all these approaches were made by Freire and by feminist theorists, in many ways. In the next section, I consider Freire's work and his influence, along with that of Habermas, on Mezirow. I also look, in Section 5, at dominant feminist approaches to knowledge and the knowing subject (particularly Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger and Tarule, 1986). In spite of challenges to it, however, the continuing power of psychological discourse in education is profound and critical sociological discourse seems to have little influence on it. The situation is not helped either by continued reliance on the 'forms of knowledge' language in educational theory (Harris, 1988: 207), which reflects the structure-of-the-disciplines approach to curriculum.

4.4 Liberatory pedagogies

Education, knowledge and pedagogy were for a long time typically conceptualised as institutional practices associated with schools. This began to change when new agendas concerned with social justice began with the publication of Freire's work in 1969 (first published in English in 1970). These agendas sought, in the words of Weiler (1988: 50) to discover 'how the human ability to create meaning and resist an imposed ideology can be turned to praxis and social transformation'. Freire sought to do this with his notion of conscientization. He questioned the role and authority of the teacher, recognised personal experience as a source of knowledge and took into account the perspectives of people of different races, classes and cultures. Underlying Freire's theories is a vision of social justice which was influential in the critical and liberatory movements that emerged in the 1960s and 1970s.

However, as Weiler (1991) points out, Freire's claims to universal truths and his assumptions of a collective experience of oppression do not adequately address the specific realities and complexities of students' lives.

Freire's still most widely read and classic text, is his first book to be published in English, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (1970). In this work, Freire organises his approach to liberatory pedagogy in terms of a dualism between the oppressed and the oppressors and between humanisation and dehumanisation. This organisation of thought in terms of opposing forces reflects Freire's own experiences of literacy work with the poor in Brazil, a situation in which the lines between oppressor and oppressed were clear (Weiler, 1991: 452). Freire's thought is, like all other thought, historically and socially situated. For Freire, humanisation is the goal of liberation. Simply reversing the relations between oppressor and oppressed will not create liberation. Liberation and humanisation are possible only if new relationships between human beings are created. This is to be achieved by naming and analysing existing structures of oppression (denunciation) and by the creation of new relationships and ways of being as a result of mutual struggle against oppression (annunciation).

Apart from the use of the male referent throughout *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, a usage universal during the 1960s, when the book was written, the main problem for feminists in Freire's thought is the ideal of humanisation and the assumption that all forms of oppression are uniform (Weiler, 1991: 453). The assumption of the work is that in struggling against oppression, the oppressed will move toward true humanity. But this leaves unaddressed the form of true humanity and implicitly accepts the existence of a real, true self which poststructuralist thought has shown to be both a fiction and a central tenet of liberal humanism.

In his usage of the concept of oppression, what is not addressed is the possibility of simultaneous contradictory positions of oppression and dominance: the man oppressed by his boss could at the same time oppress his wife, for example, or the White woman oppressed by sexism could exploit the Black woman. By framing his discussion in such abstract terms, Freire slides over the contradictions and tensions

within social settings in which overlapping forms of oppression exist.
(ibid)

There is too much universalism in Freirean thought to satisfy feminist poststructuralist needs for situated teaching, learning and generation of knowledge. This is not to say that Freirean pedagogy should be rejected, but it is to say that we need to add to it what we know about subjectivity and the nature of oppression (ibid).

Freire also works with a concept of false consciousness and ties its transformation to the idea of praxis (Freire, 1970: 47). Transformation of perspectives is not a purely intellectual action. It must involve action for change, only then can it be termed praxis. 'Knowledge is praxis, a constant interplay between theory, ideas and the actions that derive from them and in turn influence their development' (Maher, 1987: 94). This idea of praxis has been taken up by many feminist theorists and is crucial to any politicised poststructuralist viewpoint. However, Cocks (1989: 15) shows Freire's magical consciousness to be equated with medieval superstition. This implies a reliance on rationality in Freirean concepts of the knowing subject and conscientization.

The core goal of adult education practice which strives for change in this decade has been to produce critical thinkers. This is how adult education envisages the mobilisation of adult resistance to oppression (Tennant and Pogson, 1995: 199) In this, adult education shares with all other pedagogies the production of particular types of subjects. However, it fails to provide a theory of the person which is capable of underpinning this task. A key thinker in the field of critical thinking is Mezirow (1978, 1981, 1991), whose concept of transformative learning is implicit in the idea of critical thinking. Mezirow has been influenced by the work of Freire and Habermas and has in turn influenced many other thinkers in adult education and critical pedagogy.

Mezirow's (1991, 1996) theory of transformative learning has developed over nearly two decades into a comprehensive and complex description of how

learners construe, validate and reformulate the meaning of their experiences. Mezirow sees Freire's (1970) work as parallel to perspective transformation. Perspective transformation is intended for emancipatory purposes: 'The intent of education for emancipatory action -- or ... perspective transformation -- would be seen by Habermas as the providing of the learner with an accurate in-depth understanding of his or her historical situation' (Mezirow, 1981: 6, cited in Cranton, 1992: 24). The core of transformative learning in Mezirow's (1991) view is the uncovering of distorted assumptions -- errors in learning -- in each of the three domains of meaning perspectives, that is, psychological, sociolinguistic and epistemic perspectives. A learner can be advanced in the development of reflective judgement or the intellect and still hold distorted assumptions. Mezirow (1991) lists things like scope of awareness and learning style as important in shaping the epistemic meaning perspective (1991: 43).

The main problems with Mezirow's work, from a feminist poststructuralist point of view, are first, that of distortion and, second, the assumption that accurate information exists. Distortions are similar to false consciousness, whose problems have been discussed already in relation to Marxism (Chapter Three, Section 7) and to Freirean thought. Distortions, in a feminist poststructuralist framework, are as real as the 'accurate information'. They do not represent a false consciousness, since no such false consciousness exists.

A reliance on this notion of distortion betrays an assumption that accurate information and rational understanding alone can lead to transformation. The assumption that accurate information exists and that consensus can be reached on the basis of access to such information is a legacy from Habermas. The danger with consensus and trying to achieve it through what Habermas calls the 'ideal speech situation' (1983b) is twofold. First, it does not allow for the investments that people make in certain positions or in certain kinds of knowledge, based on how these investments give access to power or positions of power. Second, the idea of consensus is based on rational talk (Young, 1987: 67 - 73) and too often such talk reflects dominant discourses, because of

the power associated with such discourses and the fact that muted discourses have little currency and therefore cannot be made sense of, even by people with the best will in the world. Rational talk and the idea of rationality again betray assumptions that the human subject is unitary and rational, all other things being equal (ibid).

In this approach to critical pedagogy, there is a trend towards ensuring that students are given the chance to arrive logically at a consensus that it is universally valid that all people have a right to freedom from oppression (Alcoff, 1988). Habermas (1983a: 19) insists that impartial reason will emerge from dialogue, as long as the dialogue takes place under conditions of co-operatively seeking the truth, where all motives are neutralised. As long as all perspectives are heard and taken into account, there is a possibility of consensus. Having deconstructed the assumptions of accepted consensus, he reconstructs a presumption of impartiality in his ideal of rational consensus (Young, 1987: 69).

In Mezirow's theory, the concept of perspective transformation has as its foundation this concept of the unified self and a belief in the decisive power of human agency (Mezirow, 1990: 14). The self, for Mezirow, exists apart from structure, it is essentially disengaged, disembodied, dehistoricised. 'Mezirow may in fact have reified the masculinist ideal of the "unencumbered subject"' (Welton, 1990, cited in Clark and Wilson, 1991).

Mezirow's work takes a constructivist stance (Cranton, 1992: 25) and is thus useful to feminist poststructuralists. Mezirow also emphasises the importance of content, process and premise reflection. However, they are used by Mezirow to serve primarily a critical function of revealing theoretical obfuscations and injustice. A feminist poststructuralist perspective adds a crucial investigation of psychodynamic process and investments which exist in a dynamic and recursive relation with social and historical content (discourse), interpersonal relations and premise reflection. The recognition that we are multiple, contradictory, desiring and embodied subjects which cannot be reduced to rationality is

missing from Mezirow's work. This recognition is a theoretical resource which feminist poststructuralism posits as a necessary prerequisite of the search for social change, and especially change in gender relations (Kenway et al, 1994). Emancipatory education needs a theory of the person which does not assume, by default, that the person is what liberal humanist discourses assume.

4.4.1 Social movements and pedagogy

While the goal of schooling pedagogy was and is to provide public, unified subjects of a particular kind, left pedagogy and separatist feminist pedagogies and other liberatory or emancipatory pedagogies also had similar aims, even if these were not always explicit. They wanted to produce politicised subjects of various kinds (Lusted, 1986) Thus, the notion of false consciousness was used by Marxists and by early radical feminists like Millett. The implication was that once the veil of ignorance was lifted from the eyes of the working class, or of women, or whoever was the subject of the pedagogy, then they would change their behaviour. This kind of voluntarism has already been critiqued in Chapters Two and Three.

Liberals tended to see subjects as individuals socialised into their appropriate roles. But poststructuralist insights show that people are not passively shaped by active others, including 'social structures'. Rather, they 'actively take up as their own the discourses through which they are shaped' (Davies and Banks, 1992: 3, cited in Jones, 1993: 159). Thus, girls and women can be read now as positioning themselves. Patriarchy is not 'a monolithic force which imposes socialisation on girls ... it produces positions for subjects to enter' (Walkerline, 1989a: 205). And the discourses which provide the available positions or 'ways to be' (subjectivities) shift in contradictory ways. There is no one way in which women or girls, as a group, or as individuals, can be fixed in our understanding (Jones, 1993: 159).

In spite of these insights, which for many feminists produce useful feminist knowledge, a major influence in feminism is the idea that women have special 'female' ways of knowing which coincide with essentially female ways of being. This is also perhaps the most visible and influential face of feminism in the mainstream of everyday life and the media. I agree with Brookes (1992) that it is important to connect being and knowing through a model of education which draws on the everyday experiences of women, but that it will not challenge the gender status quo if it bases itself on a difference mode. The Harvard Project on Women's Psychology and Girls' Development, from which a great deal of this difference work emanates, is a project which represents one of the most influential strands of feminist social psychology today (Wilkinson, 1996: 13). Such educational work has been influenced by the work of Chodorow (1978), Gilligan (1982), Brown and Gilligan (1992, 1993) and Taylor, Gilligan and Sullivan (1995). Its most popular manifestation with reference to education is in Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger and Tarule's (1986) book, *Women's Ways of Knowing*. In the next section, I address some of the assumptions of this book and its implications for practice (cf Brookes, 1992).

4.5.1 A universal female subject

Drawing on the work of Perry (1970) and positioning themselves against it, Belenky et al use the findings of a study of one hundred and thirty-five women learners to reformulate five stages of women's knowing, from silence, through received knowledge, subjective knowledge, procedural knowledge to, finally, constructed knowledge. Perry's work is a study of developmental theory derived from his analysis of male students attending Harvard University and the ideas in it are still influential. Perry assumes that it is not problematic to use his research to indiscriminately chart the epistemological development of both female and male students, despite the fact that his work originates in male experience. He assumes that students move in a linear way, from a basic dualism where the world is viewed in terms of black / white, right / wrong,

through to increasingly advanced stages. In the last stage, one is presumed to know that all knowledge is relative and socially constructed. Perry assumes that 'dualists are rare at Harvard' (1970: 63, cited in Brookes, 1992: 41).

Belenky et al are critical of Perry's assumptions that people learn in a linear manner. They argue that 'women's thinking did not fit so neatly into his categories' (1986: 14), particularly women's experiences of male authority (ibid: 23, 24). However, they build on Perry's scheme when they argue that women's learning can be grouped into 'five major epistemological categories' (ibid: 150). Also problematic is their assumption that women learn differently from men and therefore require a woman-centred education (ibid: 214 - 229).

As Brookes (1992: 41) points out, any pedagogy which suggests that women should be isolated in a woman-centred environment is problematic. Theoretically, it is unacceptable, because it is based on difference. Strategically, it is unacceptable, because it would isolate women in an academic context which is already highly stratified. Politically, it is unacceptable, because it maintains a sex-differences approach and thus maintains male / female dualism. Women can benefit from a safe and supportive learning environment, but to suggest that they need special, separate environments to meet their essentially different needs does not address the need for safety as a political problem. It implies that the problem is located in naturally occurring differences between women and men (ibid). As Lewis (1989: 122) puts it:

The language in which Belenky and her colleagues locate women's experiences in the academy -- 'newborn', 'child', encouraged to 'think more', turning her into a 'real knower' -- suggests that education for women needs to be focused at some primary level in order to bring us up to par with the already 'grown up' male thinkers who are posed as the norm to which we must aspire. It is easy to see how such an approach might enhance the already prevalent ideology that education for women is a prescription for lowering standards. The terms of the discourse on standards, which the language in *Women's Ways of Knowing* implies, only makes sense within the frames of a phallogentric system where being a man is not only considered to be different from being a woman but also considered to be better.

This categorisation of levels of knowing amounts to a hierarchy of ways of knowing on which the authors ultimately base a model of education that might draw women out of a state of silence. This state of silence is described as a state devoid of 'awareness of mental acts, consciousness, or introspection' (Belenky et al, 1986: 25). The aim is to draw women into a state of constructed knowledge, described as a condition of 'becoming and staying aware of the working of their minds' (ibid: 141). In this state, women can create their 'own' epistemological understandings.

On the face of it, these stages represent an exciting model and the idea of constructed knowledge appears to address the dynamics of the challenge brought to patriarchy by women's education (Lewis, 1989: 120). However, the authors propose to establish the frames of their educational model by connecting teaching with midwifery. They propose, following Ruddick (1980, 1984), to name the discourse through which women's education is to be articulated as '**maternal thinking**' (Belenky et al, 1986: 218, emphasis added). This proposed political strategy will draw a woman's knowledge out into the world.

As a proposed pedagogical strategy, Ruddick's concept of maternal thinking maintains the idea of immutable and natural sex differences and does not address at all the political climate (that is, patriarchal social relations and sexist discourses) in which learners' subjectivities are constructed. This is not to dispute the goodwill of the authors or their genuine concern about 'why so many women students speak so frequently of problems and gaps in their learning and so often doubt their intellectual competence' (ibid: 4). But, because of the lack of a clearly articulated political agenda, the authors inadvertently slip into the language of women's deficiency and thereby fail to address the deeply complex ways in which women's constraints and possibilities are constructed (Lewis, 1989: 121).

Belenky et al fail to analyse the structural inequalities in educational environments, most particularly the sexual harassment, abuse and incest that

form a pervasive background to the lives of the women surveyed for the book. While the authors conclude that sexual abuse and harassment **may** affect women's ways of knowing and learning, they do not analyse **how** this happens. They do not address women's knowledge as socially and politically organised (cf Grimshaw, 1986), but as something intrinsic to women. What they describe is ideology about women, but they take this as evidence of natural differences between women and men. In doing this, they promote a discourse of male / female dualism. As Brookes (1992: 58) points out, they do not address how an explicit theoretical validation of difference -- an assumption implicit in mainstream curriculum and academic programming -- might further disempower women in an educational system which already is failing to meet their needs, insofar as it is organised to reflect male experience and hence to entrench male power and authority.

Belenky et al use a language of difference to discuss women's educational needs and to propose educational strategies for women. Theoretically, this is a model based on gender difference and which draws in turn on recent directions in the works of Chodorow (1978) and Gilligan (1982). Common to these theorists is the idea that women learn and know differently from men. And in this assumption, which implies that women are naturally different, not that women learn differently because of their experiences of male power and abuse of male power, there is an inherent lack of politicisation. It locates women's problems within the individual, without considering the social conditions which gave rise to these ways of knowing in the first place. Such a model tends to minimise the facts and nature of women's oppression itself as a major contributory factor to women's lives and experiences (Grimshaw, 1986; Maher, 1987; Pollitt, 1995). As Maher (1987: 98) points out, while such models can attend to political experience, they overlook the importance of politically conscious resistance experiences and, I would add, the important ways that subjectivities are produced in discourses of resistance.

Although they initially reject Perry, Belenky et al (1986) build on his work later

when they organise women's learning perspectives into the five categories of silence, received knowledge, subjective knowledge, procedural knowledge, and constructed knowledge. While the authors clearly state that these are not universal categories, that they are abstract and hence cannot capture the complexity of individual women's thought, and that men show evidence of similar categories (ibid: 15), implied in their work, nonetheless, is the assumption that one stage builds upon the other in a linear and hierarchical manner. Brookes points out that this is problematic from a methodological perspective because it lends itself, as does Perry's research, to an analysis which depends upon fitting experience into defined categories rather than attempting to make sense of that which does not fit, in this case, how women's learning is affected by male abuse of power. 'Instead, Belenky et al assert the relationship of abuse to women's learning and conclude that a new model of education must be devised **for women**. Lost is an analysis of how men abuse or of how women know this abuse in an educational context' (Brookes, 1992: 56, original emphasis).

Knowledge production is political activity. Although they do not acknowledge this, Belenky et al have produced knowledge about women which proposes a universal, unitary female subject, existing in a dualistic and therefore hierarchical relation to a unitary male subject. They preclude the possibility of moving out of or of deconstructing or subverting dualism, by their reliance on maternal practices as the vehicle for their pedagogy and by their use of restrictive educational categorical ways of knowing, which implicitly deny the possibility of generating new knowledge, given different social circumstances.

The theoretical divisions set up in the work of Belenky et al support a dualistic approach to knowledge and the human subject which, far from challenging the status quo, functions to reinforce it. Instead of looking at supposedly naturally occurring differences, pedagogy, if it is to rise to the challenges posed by poststructural feminist insights, needs to investigate how gender difference is **produced**, how difference can be celebrated without resorting to essentialism

and how human subjects are organised to know. There is no knowledge which is indigenous to women, or to men. The questions which a feminist poststructuralist pedagogy could ask are centered on the key question of what social conditions organise women and men to learn differently.

4.6 The challenges for a feminist poststructuralist emancipatory pedagogy

Like Hollway (1991b: 31), I am constantly struck by how dominant is the idea among feminist educational practitioners and theorists that there exist natural differences between the genders and that there are naturally different women's and men's ways of knowing. In common with both Hollway (*ibid*) and Segal (1987), I am disturbed at these easy polarities and what I see as the negative effects on feminism which follow from them. In published work on pedagogy in Ireland (for example, A. Byrne, 1995; Byrne, Byrne and Lyons, 1996), there is no attention to this idea, although Gardiner, (1997) and Mannix (1996) refer to it in the contexts of politics and psychology in Ireland, respectively.

Hollway's and Segal's work gives a convincing account of the extent to which polarised thinking about femininity and masculinity dominates white Western feminism. This kind of thought depends to a considerable extent on psychological concepts:

The most accessible feminist writing today is one in which we are likely to read of the separate and special knowledge, emotion, sexuality, thought and morality of women, indeed of a type of separate 'female world' which exists in fundamental opposition to 'male culture', 'male authority', 'male-stream thought', in opposition to the world of men (Segal, 1987: ix).

Hollway (1991b) asks why white Western feminist thought in the 1980s and 1990s has been so psychologised, unlike the socialist feminism of the 1970s. The same questions need to be asked about recent trends in school education and particularly about large sectors of critical adult education's approach in Ireland. Although it defines itself in opposition to regulatory schooling, is still

deeply affected by human relations psychology. I believe that what is significant in accounting for the psychologisation of adult education is

the closeness of a psychological vision of the world to the dominant popular assumptions of Western culture, since what the two have in common is an outlook which understands the world in terms of the individual. (Hollway 1991b: 30)

This is especially the case in the way that adult education approaches gender issues. Psychology plays a part in reproducing and legitimating popular assumptions about individuals and their femininity or masculinity. It places a particular model of the individual at the centre of its explanatory world, and while it does so it cannot reconceptualise gender issues in terms of the constraints and forces which shape a person and how these may be changed (ibid). While adult education continues to rely on unitary models of the subject, whether these are unitary and male, or unitary and female, it will not escape the limitations of popular assumptions, legitimated by psychology.

Many practitioners of adult education seek a radical political agenda in all areas, including gender issues. But in gender issues feminism is frequently reduced to psychology. If adult education remains within psychology's terms of reference in the use of the categories 'femininity' and 'masculinity', it cannot avoid reducing them to natural differences or to cultural differences, even while applying a social analysis. Hollway (1989: 98ff) makes the same point about social psychology, which many feminists claim has set out to combine a social analysis with psychological questions. While some of the evidence in Wilkinson's (1996) collection on feminist social psychology shows that some feminists are beginning to overcome these difficulties, it is also clear that this is not a widespread theoretical concern.

The solution for adult education is not necessarily to abandon psychology. One of the reasons that the socialist feminisms of the 1970s became concerned with psychological questions was that feminists operating in consciousness raising groups realised that the personal is political and that change is not simply a

matter of economic resources, equal opportunity, correct political intentions and voluntarism. Adult education has taken these lessons on board also. But as long as the reliance on femininity and masculinity remains, the personal will be reduced to the psychological and the individual, losing in the process a vision of the politicised personal and the personal nature of the political. The only difference between such use of femininity and masculinity and the old patriarchal psychology of sex differences is that adult education, relying on feminist psychology, has re-evaluated femininity as superior. This is not enough to make a political difference in a world of complex social relations characterised by 'shades of grey' rather than clear-cut essential differences (cf Cocks, 1989). As Segal (1987: 5) points out, some renowned misogynists are not averse to claiming that women are superior to men. It excuses all sorts of bad behaviour, legitimates double standards and does not disturb the expectations that women will take primary responsibility for caring, feeling and nurturing.

Adult education needs a theory of how gender differences are produced, reproduced and subverted. The theoretical focus needs to be on new forms of femininity and masculinity, on politicised subjectivities formed in the struggle to challenge the gender status quo. It is not enough to focus on women and men as they are, because gender is produced through difference, in relations. Hollway's work (1982, 1984a, 1989) has shown how gender difference is produced in adult social relations. Her focus on relations makes it possible to define the question in terms of the production of differences between genders, rather than in terms of a psychology of women or of men. Focusing on sex differences in adult education leads to comparison, but does not fundamentally challenge the categories male and female. A production-of-differences approach is not about comparison. 'It is explanatory rather than descriptive, relational rather than comparative, emancipatory rather than normative and dynamic rather than static' (Hollway, 1991b: 32).

Including a psychology of women in adult education has historically been seen

as radical in the face of a mainstream psychology which tended to take the male as the norm against which women were to be measured and most often seen as deficient. This explains the enormous popularity of the work of Gilligan (1982), Brown and Gilligan (1992) and Belenky et al (1986). These ideas need to be seen in the historical context in which they first became popular. But the insights produced by feminist poststructuralism mean that these approaches are no longer satisfactory. These insights have shown that people are not seamlessly socialised into masculinity or femininity. Femininity and masculinity are social constructions to which women and men relate in differing and problematic ways throughout life. A feminist psychology of the **production** of gender difference looks at how women and men relate to these categories and can theorise change and resistance to change in terms of power and in terms of conscious or unconscious investments or interests in gender differentiated positions in discourses (see, for example, Hollway, 1984a, b, 1994; Connell, 1995).

The challenge for a feminist poststructuralist adult educator is to counter the dominance of feminist essential difference psychology in order to create a changed conceptual framework for practices concerning gender. Producing knowledge about women's and men's psychologies is based on many diverse interests. A feminist poststructuralist interest militates against the production of dominant, monopolising knowledge such as has been characteristic, until recently, of psychological knowledge about women or black people or working class children (Mama, 1995; Hollway, 1991b; Walkerdine, 1989a).

I quote Hollway on a final point about an approach in terms of the production of gender differences:

It recognises that there are systematic, though not invariable nor determined, differences between women and men at the psychological level which despite access to material equality are not going to disappear overnight. Ignoring these differences would not be in the interests of feminism any more than it is to reduce them to women's biology. The challenge is to be able to explain them, both in terms of their tenacious hold over a person's psyche and in terms of the

undoubted scope which is available to everyone to exceed and transgress the limits of their psyche and actions imposed by gender difference. (Hollway, 1991b: 33)

4.7 Conclusion

The discussion in this chapter has relevance in terms of this research, because knowledge production is a political activity. I want to research the production of knowledges and subjectivities formed in feminist discourses of resistance, rather than to seek fundamental truths about women. Orthodoxies which have emerged about women's education have their 'regimes of truth', as well as their marginalities and contestations. The marginalities and contestations in turn have their own orthodoxies and regimes of truth. I have chosen to research feminist subjectivities as they have been produced in trying to disrupt the gender status quo and to see what this can add to a truly radical feminist practice of adult education, which escapes the pitfalls of dominant feminist psychologies. I want to see how the knowledge generated out of the exploration and explanations of feminist subjectivities can be used to radicalise the content of women's personal development courses, while still meeting women's felt needs.

If feminist psychology has been influential in adult education in general, it has been particularly influential in personal development education. As such, it has tended to reproduce mainstream western philosophical assumptions about the nature of maleness and femaleness, while asserting the superiority of female ways of being and knowing. Gore (1993) has pointed out that critical and feminist pedagogies need to have their regimes of truth investigated and deconstructed, along with the regimes of truth of more dominant pedagogies. I want to see where the interstices are for challenging these orthodoxies and dominance in ways that still meet women's needs for safety, validation and affirmation of their experiences. Such a challenge would enable people to see where gender difference is produced and thereby give them the resources to

produce new forms of being male or female, which would be emancipatory rather than normative and dynamic rather than static.

I have attempted to show how science was envisaged both as a tool for liberation and for regulation and how, in struggling to be liberatory, many pedagogies have rejected science and scientific measurement and techniques of normalisation and have turned to psychology, especially human relations psychology. Foucault's work has gone a long way to show how science, by its naturalisation, became a tool for normalisation and regulation, even when used by those who envisaged it as a tool for liberation. Feminist poststructuralist work has provided a similar critique of psychology.

The conclusions I have reached in thinking through the genealogy I have attempted, are that practices, discourses and orthodoxies of education emerge out of dynamic relationships between social and historical events and human actors, who have personal affinities and individual biographical details which must be taken into account. My own affinities are for a commitment to knowledge informed by feminist poststructuralist critiques of both mainstream sexist discourses and discourses of difference feminism.

It is important, however, to move beyond critique towards discourses of agency, by suggesting ways of shifting and adjusting the meaning of the human relations, self-esteem and personal development projects within feminist educational politics. Along with accounts of contradictions and the acknowledgement of the complexity of subjectivity, what is further required are accounts of how transformation and movement in subjectivities can come about or can be achieved and lived. These questions are addressed in Chapters Six, Seven and Eight, where I examine feminist subjectivities. In Chapter Nine, I discuss how I draw on them to inform my own practice of personal development education. What especially interests me is how theory and practice become one, how the production of knowledges and their communication as part of everyday life may be experienced as part of a whole,

and how radical critiques can connect with people's lives in practical ways.

CHAPTER FIVE

METHODOLOGY

5.0 Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to show that the methodology of this research is based on the theoretical considerations set out in Chapters One, Two, Three and Four. Placed at the end of Part One of the work, the chapter is a link between those considerations and the ways that I derive and analyse the case material of the research participants, in Part Two. The chapter specifies:

- the information required to answer the questions posed in Chapter One
- how the information was obtained
- problems of experience and description in obtaining and analysing information
- how the information was analysed.

One way to demonstrate the importance and usefulness of theory is by showing its practical applications for social analysis. Much of the discussion in Chapters One to Four has been quite abstract, but I do not want to avoid using the new concepts simply because they are difficult to understand. There is a distinction between what is unnecessarily abstruse and what is essential for thinking about people in new ways. New concepts become more understandable and easier to work with and their usefulness is more easily illustrated through continued use and exemplification (Hollway, 1989: 24) and through their application to the analysis of real-life events. Chapters Six to Eight put the theory to work in order to develop a picture of feminist subjectivities and this present chapter explores the ways that they do so. Chapter Nine then goes on to apply themes

emerging from that picture to my own practice as a facilitator of women's personal development education.

5.1 The research questions revisited and the information required to answer them

The preceding chapters have discussed the feminist poststructuralist concepts on which this research is based. From among these concepts, I have chosen to highlight for investigation the development of politicised subjectivities in a context of feminism. I want to explore the subjective worlds and experiences of feminist women, to see what discourses are recognised in the collectives of which they are part and what discursive positionings and resources are available to them at a particular period. I further want to ask how the themes and insights which this exploration throws up can be used to politicise the practice of women's personal development courses and to construct women as agentic and politicised subjects. These questions determine that I require information about the following:

- how discourses relating to feminism are implicated in the ways that self-defined feminist women experience themselves, other women, men and gender relations
- the role of discourses and discursive practices in producing significations of feminism
- investments made in the positions in discourse which people take up
- how new discursive practices are produced
- how agency is attributed and produced for feminists
- what models of subjectivity and the human subject are evident in

people's accounts

- relations in the present
- the operation of power.

The aim is to produce a 'snapshot in time' (Farran, 1990; Holland and Eisenhart, 1990) which can help theorise about feminism and the production of feminist change, about women and about the production of gender difference, in ways that allow for carefully specified generalisations for the practice of personal development pedagogy, but without slipping into universal claims (cf, Hollway, 1989: 106).

The kind of research I want to do judges its usefulness on the kind of analysis of the present it can come up with. It takes its point of departure from current problems. A current problem for feminism is emotional investment in gender-differentiated positions in discourse and how these can result in a retreat from feminism (cf Coward, 1993). A current problem for adult education is the way that a lot of the practice of personal development courses is depoliticised. In obtaining information about a current discourse or practice, we reconstruct a 'history' which shows the conditions for the emergence of the discourse. In order to identify discourses, we need to use approaches to research that help us see gaps, inconsistencies and contradictions in accounts of experience (Henriques et al, 1984: 104). Since my theoretical perspective is also based on a critique of dualism, I also require information about how we can take apart dualistic relationships commonly viewed as natural and normal, such as the relationship between feminism and femininity, and show them to be social constructions.

I have used a framework that takes as central an assumption that all individuals experience contradictions in motives, aspirations and self-understanding which indicate multiple subjectivities (cf Hollway, 1982, 1989; Mama, 1995). Investigation of these phenomena calls for lengthy interviews or periods of

observation. This framework or perspective on subjectivity also implies that neither psychological nor sociological information alone is sufficient. One of the ways of dealing with individual / society dualism is to focus on present circumstances and signification in the present, thereby opening up a theoretical and methodological space to produce information about individual subjectivities in relation to social context. I consider emotional relations and dynamics which may have happened in the past in the context of present circumstances.

The information obtained has to allow for the theoretical goal of understanding the conditions which produce certain accounts or narratives and how meaning and signification are produced from them (Hollway, 1989: 42, 43). A theory of meaning incorporating personal history, culture, unconscious processes and social differences is required to make sense of people's accounts. Seeking information about psychodynamic processes is therefore relevant. Self-reflection is culturally shaped and delimited (Chodorow, 1996: 39). The kinds of self reflection which I require from the interviews and discussions with the research participants could not have been produced thirty years ago (cf West, 1996: 24). This kind of information is part of an emerging movement. It depends for its effectivity on a discourse which has arisen only recently and on what theories and discourses we are attuned to (cf *ibid*: 41).

5.1.1 Concern with meaning

I see one of the central concerns of this research as trying to understand and portray the meanings of the phenomena which I describe, as well as the means by which these phenomena are produced. I also want to examine how the meanings are achieved within discourses, through language and other discursive practices. In this sense, I am less concerned with portraying the research subjects as 'representative' of certain sectors of society, than with identifying the different discourses which they recognise. This is consistent with

grounded theory's emphasis on identifying concepts (Strauss and Corbin, 1990: 112), as well as the relationships between the discourses. From this point of view, it is immaterial whether or not respondents in an interview are actually 'telling the truth'. Potter and Wetherell (1987: 178) argue:

The researcher should bracket off the whole issue of the quality of accounts as accurate or inaccurate descriptions or mental states ... Our focus is exclusively on discourse itself: how it is constructed, its functions and the consequences which arise from different discursive organisation.

It is information obtained about systems of meaning-making which is important. This emphasis is a legacy of feminist poststructural literary criticism in the development of feminist poststructural theory (Weedon, 1987; Wetherell, 1986; Moi, 1985). My theoretical perspective affects the kind of research I do. For example, I do not believe that the text of an interview or discussion reflects unmediated experience or that the more 'authentic' the material I get, the more valuable the interview. Influenced by literary criticism in this (see Moi 1985:4), I want to explore gaps and silences, how language is used and the subject positions that people take up have taken up in the past.

I am seeking 'insiders' accounts' (Smith, 1989) and think it is important to use them as literal material, as text. In making sense of the text, I move between theory, my own experiences and interpretations and the text or material as data (Glaser and Strauss, 1967; Mama, 1995; Strauss and Corbin, 1990). The concern with meaning rejects the traditional linguistic notion of intention-to-mean as directly homing in on its object, but instead recognises that the pathway of meaning in language is by no means simple and assured (cf McDermott and Tylbor, 1987: 167). As I have already pointed out, the concern with meaning, with signification, with gaps and silences also requires that a methodology based on a search for 'facts' must be rejected.

The resulting interpretation is a pragmatically guided reading of the coherence of the practices of society. It does not claim to correspond either to the everyday meanings shared by the actors or, in any simple sense, to reveal the intrinsic meaning of the practices. (Dreyfus and

Rabinow, 1983, cited in Cherryholmes, 1988: 195)

My approach to the gathering and analysis of information is shaped by my epistemological stance, which has developed, in part, as a result of my own ontological status (cf Stanley and Wise, 1990). It is also shaped by my desire to engage in emancipatory research and use it for developing emancipatory pedagogy. To this end, I develop theory out of my own experience and include this in the thesis, as well as generating theory out of the accounts of the other research participants. For these reasons, a grounded theory methodology is suitable. However, there are reservations about grounded theory's treatment of research subjects and its assertion that it is a scientific method (Glaser and Strauss, 1967; Strauss and Corbin, 1990). As West (1996: 31) points out, there are positivist assumptions in grounded theory: 'that valid, reliable and definitive answers were to be found in specific data, provided one searched exhaustively and diligently enough'. The assertion of feminist poststructuralism that meaning and knowledge are generated in relations in the present means that all answers and conclusions must be regarded as provisional and revisable.

Another place where I and emancipatory research depart from grounded theory is in the relationship with the research participants (cf Lather, 1986: 262). Grounded theory takes a 'scientific' approach to the research 'subjects'. For me, doing research on people involves an important educational commitment. We are looking for a research theory and methodology adequate to the task of changing the world, just as we are looking for a pedagogy adequate to the same task. To this end, 'empirical evidence must be viewed as a mediator in a constant mutual interrogation between self and theory' (ibid).

Empiricism is the belief that knowledge and social analysis generally is based on **direct** observation and experience, whereas I believe that knowledge and social analysis can be based on the **ways** that any one person constructs knowledge and makes sense of her / his social world. Since meaning in the present is so important and since I am not concerned with prediction in the way that a great deal of positivist / empiricist social enquiry is (Bhaskar, 1978, cited

in Hollway, 1989: 13), sample sizes and distributions become less significant than in other types of research. The theoretical sampling used in grounded theory is therefore appropriate.

5.2 Gathering the information

The study employs grounded theory techniques for information gathering. While there are epistemological differences between some of the premises of grounded theory and feminist poststructuralism, the approach serves well as a research method or technique, even though I do not take on board all of its assumptions. I use it more as a technique than as a methodology grounded in a scientific epistemological stance, which is what it claims to be (Glaser and Strauss, 1967; Strauss and Corbin, 1990). The techniques are used with a more diverse epistemological stance as their framework, which takes into account structural aspects of subjectivity. This distinguishes my stance from the symbolic interactionism within which grounded theory is situated (Layder, 1994: 72). The initial interviews and discussions were with people who self-defined as feminist, concentrating on feminist changes and how they were defined and achieved. The sequencing of the analysis in Chapters Six, Seven and Eight reflects the ways that I moved in my interviews with participants from fairly broad discussion, to detailed accounts of private and emotional changes, drawing on only a few cases. This is consistent with grounded theory techniques, including theoretical sampling, the delineation of broad categories and their development through subsequent fieldwork and analysis.

5.2.1 Collecting data: theoretical sampling

The comparative method of obtaining information is based on the comparison of cases, in order to discover their different relationships to a theory whose explanatory limits must be established according to social differences (Hollway,

1982: 199). It is on this principle that theoretical sampling is based. Theoretical sampling is carried out to discover categories and their properties and to suggest how the interrelationships between categories can form a theory. It provides constant direction to the research by comparing differences and similarities between categories, in order to generate properties. It comprises an active theoretical search for categories that work and fit together (Glaser and Strauss, 1967: 47 - 76).

Family life and heterosexual couple relationships under patriarchy are important sites for the construction of femininity and masculinity. This is argued strongly by many of the contributors to Kitzinger and Wilkinson (1993). The face of patriarchy needs to be directly confronted in cathectic structures (emotionally charged relationships) in families and in friendships (cf O'Connor, 1992), as well as in wider political and social arenas. Cathectic structures have also been identified as key sites where feminists retreat psychologically from feminism (Coward, 1993). It was therefore very important for my project of investigating how feminist change works to direct my search for information towards feminists who had, to their own way of thinking, successfully engaged with aspects of feminism such as these, and produced agency in domestic relationships, but who had not at the same time reduced feminism to 'lifestyle' and issues of personal psychology and interpersonal relationships (cf Kitzinger, 1987).

As with the work of Hollway (1982) and Mama (1995) in Britain, the problems raised in this work are a product of theoretical questions being posed and also of the politics of the women's movement in Ireland at this time, where the slogan 'the personal is political' is under scrutiny. The difficulties of making changes and the confusion and pain associated with change are crucial aspects in formulating the research questions and the kind of information required to answer them. Following Hollway (1982), I assert that it is the experience of those contradictions which provides the possibility to understand subjectivity, personal change and identity. Craib (1992: 172) also points out that both a lack

of conceptual clarity and contradictions are necessary and productive.

The theoretical sampling process of this study began when I asked six women who had defined themselves as feminists through public speech, work or writing, to take part in research on feminist identity and how they put their feminism into practice in their everyday lives. Two of these women knew me already. All of the women were aware of the current personal / structural debates (see Chapter One, Section 8). All had significant experience of self-reflection and politicisation. The subjective experiences of this group of women (around my age and older) is a rich source of information about the identity of feminists, in relation to personal change embraced for political reasons. The initial six women all came from a similar age group, class background / present class status, educational and professional positions and cultural history, similar to my own. All six contacted responded positively to my letters and before conducting interviews, I discussed in more detail with them, over the phone or in person, the sort of research I was hoping to do.

I conducted interviews between January and August, 1996. At each interview conducted between January and May, I asked the women for the names of one or two other feminist women who might be interested in participating in the research. This means of contacting participants is referred to as 'snowball sampling' by Greed (1990) and L. Connolly (1996) and is capable of facilitating the theoretical sampling procedures. In January 1996, I began a series of individual interviews with eight women (the original six contacted and two others whose names had been given to me by the first group), conducted over four weeks. Most women did one interview, three did two. I taped and transcribed all interviews. I did some preliminary analysis on these, drawing up categories and concept lists. I then conducted a group interview with four women. Another single interview and a pair interview followed. At this point, I felt that the categories of discourses and relations analysed in Chapters Seven and Eight were saturated, at least insofar as the discursive analysis went.

Many of the interviewees thus far had referred to the importance of 'emotional work' or to doing personal therapeutic work, but the interviews / discussions had not developed in such a way that produced material pertaining to the details of this work. I knew from my theoretical sensitivity (a combination of cultural and personal experience and theoretical reading), that a lot of this kind of work could happen in the context of a crisis or the perception of a 'leap forward', or a major advance in the thinking and practice of feminist women. At this point, I had a collection of sixteen other names given to me by people who had already done interviews. Like Connell, (1995: 90), 'rather than spread the research thin, I decided to concentrate on a few situations where the theoretical yield should be high'. In June 1996, I drafted a letter telling potential new participants about the work so far and describing the kind of intimate discussion I was looking for, focusing particularly on overcoming crises of identity or feelings of being blocked or stuck in feminist effectiveness. I also asked those who expressed interest if would they like to read my paper which I refer to in Chapter One (Section 10), called *A Voyage Round My Feminism* (Ryan, 1995), as well as a summary of the analyses I had made so far. Five people agreed to take part in this exercise. I met them in a pair and a three, during August 1996, spending about six hours with each group.

By the time I conducted these discussions, I had written Chapters Six and Seven in draft form and I had decided that I wanted to focus on producing an account or accounts which would take as their theme psychodynamic processes, as well as relations and discourses. I could also give them sections of transcripts from some of the interviews. I brought along the rest of the transcripts (edited for anonymity). This was in case they wanted to see more of a person's account (as it happened, they didn't).

Theoretical sampling is based on the saturation of categories (Glaser and Strauss, 1967: 62) and while I could have conducted more interviews or discussions on certain categories, I considered it unnecessary from the point of

view of generating theory. Clearly this procedure affects what aspects of the world I claim to illuminate. Following Marshall (1986: 196), I hope to achieve depth, 'rather than make widely applicable but conceptually simplified statements' (cf Connell, 1995: 90). The textual material on which I base my interpretations is part of the written report and this also means that my interpretive processes are laid bare and are open to differing interpretations by the reader. I regard the textual material as a case study in feminism. The case study method does not limit in advance what may be relevant to the investigation.

5.2.2 The research participants: an overview

The data for the study were drawn from the following sources:

1. For the study of feminist subjectivities of self-defined feminist women, twenty women in the age group thirty-five to fifty provided data through interviews, discussions and conversations.
2. For Chapter Nine, eight women from a Dublin community education project took part in a personal development course which I facilitated, having consulted them in advance about using the course as part of my research. Five of the women also participated in group discussion after the course had ended.
3. I am also present in the research, as a feminist woman and a personal development facilitator: 'All social research constitutes an autobiography of the researcher' (Miller, 1993: 88). This acknowledgement lays bare the resources available to me in interpreting experience (cf McCracken, 1988 18, 19). It is from my own story, combined with my reading of theory, that I have derived my theoretical sensitivity, that is, a combination of experience, reading the literature and emerging data (Glaser, 1978; Strauss and Corbin, 1990). I use this theoretical sensitivity to develop concepts for analysing material.

The twenty self-defined feminist women were randomly assigned participant codes P1 to P20. The course participants were assigned codes PD1 to PD8.

5.2.3 Collecting data: feminists' interviews, conversations and discussions

In my research interactions with the twenty self-defined feminist women who provide the data for Chapters Six, Seven and Eight, I was developing rather than testing ideas about subjectivity. It was only when I ran the course on which I draw for some of the material for Chapter Nine that I was 'testing' theory which I had developed. In the developing stage, I needed a method that would generate material and themes, rather than one that would impose a formalised set of questions on the research participants (cf Mama, 1995: 70). The interviews and conversations with which I began the collection of data were, therefore, open ended. I conducted in-depth individual, pair and small group interviews and discussions lasting from between one and three hours. In the final two group discussions, I narrowed the focus to investments in cathectic relationships. These last two discussions lasted about six hours each.

My approach in all of the interviewing and discussion was based on exploring contradictions and keeping the focus on relations, rather than on individuals. To do this, I made use of concepts I had already developed from my theoretical sensitivity. I regarded both participants (myself and the interviewee) as equals, I voiced my own opinions and encouraged the interviewees to ask questions of me, although I was careful not to dominate the discussions or conversations. I was trying to record and document slices of information about ongoing social practices in which all the research participants were involved and to use this as a basis for theorising.

We met at locations like workplaces, our homes, often over tea or a drink. I usually initiated the conversations by explaining some of my interest in doing a study of feminist identity. I checked with the participants if they were willing to

Participant	Age group at date of study
P1	35 - 40
P2	35 - 40
P3	40 - 45
P4	40 - 45
P5	35 - 40
P6	35 - 40
P7	45 - 50
P8	40 - 45
P9	40 - 45
P10	40 - 45
P11	35 - 40
P12	35 - 40

TABLE 1
Overview of participants

Data gathering context	Chapter and section where cited
Discussion with P3	8.4
Two individual interviews	6.4.1; 6.7.2; 7.1
Discussion with P1	8.2; 8.2.1; 8.6
Individual interview	6.3.1; 7.1; 7.2; 7.6
Individual interview	6.5.1
Individual interview	7.6
Group discussion with P9, P10, P12, P14	
Individual interview	
Group discussion with P7, P10, P12, P14	6.7.1
Individual interview	7.1
Individual interview	8.1
Group discussion with P7, P9, P10, P14	6.7.1

Participant	Age group at date of study
P13	40 - 45
P14	40 - 45
P15	35 - 40
P16	35 - 40
P17	35 - 40
P18	40 - 45
P19	35 - 40
P20	40 - 45
PD1	45 - 50
PD2	50 - 55
PD3	40 - 45
PD4	35 - 40
PD5	60 - 65

TABLE 1, continued

Data gathering context	Chapter and section where cited
Two individual interviews	7.1
Group discussion with P7, P9, P10, P12	
Group discussion with P18, P19	
Pair discussion with P17	7.2.1; 7.5; 7.6
Pair discussion with P16	7.2.1
Group discussion with P15 , P19	
Group discussion with P15, P18	
Individual interview	7.1; 7.4
Personal development course	9.4.1
Personal development course	9.5.1
Personal development course	9.5.3
Personal development course	9.5.4
Personal development course	9.5.1

Participant	Age group at date of study
PD6	35 - 40
PD7	30 -35
PD8	35 - 40

TABLE 1, continued

Data gathering context	Chapter and section where cited
Personal development course	
Personal development course	
Personal development course	

have the sessions recorded on tape and all were. Most of the participants had experience of group work or facilitation and were able to be both active listeners as well as able to voice their own thoughts, or to develop thoughts in discussion with others (cf *ibid*). There was never a problem getting discussion started. As soon as possible after each interview, each participant was provided with a transcript of the conversation or discussion in which she had taken part and, where requested, with a copy of the tape recording.

I stopped holding recorded sessions when I had material from twenty women, amounting in all to thirty-seven ninety-minute cassettes, most of which I had transcribed. In the course of analysis, I played back and listened to the tapes, as well as reading and re-reading transcripts. A great deal of the material recorded is not quoted in the thesis, clearly. Nevertheless, every interview gave me something to think about and add to my mindmaps. Transcription was an enormous amount of work, which I did as soon as possible after each interview / conversation or discussion, in order to keep on top of the work. I gave myself a huge amount of work in transcribing and could probably just as well have listened to the tapes for the kinds of analysis I did. However, several women thanked me for supplying a transcript promptly and expressed appreciation at having the opportunity to read their words.

I later supplied each participant whose material I used with drafts of the chapters where their accounts were analysed. Some women contacted me to discuss these. One woman decided at that point that she would prefer to withdraw from the research. She concurred with the analysis, but did not want it produced in print. I had used her material in Chapter Eight, which left me with the accounts of only two participants for that chapter's analysis. Nevertheless, the discussion with the woman who dropped out reaffirmed my conviction that the analysis was valid and worth including. The theoretical sampling principles also convinced me that the analysis could stand using only two participants' accounts.

As well as the formal data gathering sessions, I held many informal

conversations and discussions with friends about the research. Some of these have also shaped my theorising. I think of these participants as secondary participants (cf Mama, 1995: 74). While I have not quoted directly from them, they have also played an important part in the research.

Having reached the level of theorising about subjectivity which is evident from chapters Six, Seven and Eight, I organised and facilitated a Stage One personal development course in a community education setting in a North Dublin suburb, using the structures and topics outlined in Chapter One (Section 9) of this work. I met a group of ten women who had enrolled for a personal development course and spent a session discussing with them whether they would be willing to allow me to write about the course as part of this research. I explained that I would be doing the course as part of research, but that there would be no tape-recording or 'assessment'. A parallel course was running in a nearby venue for those who preferred not to be involved in research. They were asked to think about it for a few days and to let me know.

Eight of the ten women contacted me to say that they would like to go ahead with my course. We started the course on a wet Tuesday morning in October and continued with ten two-and-a-half-hour sessions for nine weeks, until December 1996. I kept a personal diary and fieldnotes of the course which I wrote up after every session and often in between sessions. After the course finished, five of the women returned a few weeks later (January 1997) for a group discussion about the course, which was recorded, but not transcribed. I write about personal development education in Chapter Nine, but I do not confine my analysis to this one course, I draw also on my experiences of other courses, both as facilitator and as participant. Chapter Nine is, then, more research on me and my practices as a feminist poststructuralist personal development facilitator, than it is research on a particular group of women. Any quoted material in that chapter is from the recorded discussion with the research course participants and is quoted with permission.

The ways that I developed my information gathering and my subsequent

analysis of the material gathered came directly out of my own feminist interests and reflect many of my feminist concerns. In this respect, this work has partly been research on myself, as a movement intellectual. I have access to cultural and economic capital (Bourdieu, 1986) through my class, occupation and education, but find myself positioned without power in the social network, by virtue of my sex. Yet, as a woman, I also experience myself as not without power, due to my positioning in discourses of femininity. Thus, I focused on relational and strategic ways of having feminist agency, in the information gathering. In addition, my feminism of recent years has been stuck most often in the arena of the production of gender in my heterosexual couple and work relationships and I consider that radical personal development work has helped me get past this 'crux'. Feminist literature on this topic, which backs up my analysis of my experience, opened the way for me to incorporate it into academic research. Hence my sensitivity to similar experiences in other feminists' accounts and my desire to give them a theoretical treatment.

This approach is consistent with theoretical sampling and with the feminist poststructuralist assertion that any individual's experience is valid and requires understanding theoretically (Hollway, 1995: 101). It is at odds with the more usual radical feminist assertion that only widespread experiences are valid and worth theorising and that individual experiences are 'exceptions' (Thompson, 1994, cited in Hollway, 1995). It is a crucial move if we are to get beyond the restrictions placed on doing emancipatory research by the uncritical adoption of unitary models of the human subject. The next section, in problematising the treatment of experience, reveals how unitary models of the subject underpin some feminist research approaches to both information gathering and analysis.

5.3 Issues of experience and description in feminist research

In a great deal of feminist theory and research, especially in research based on cultural feminist epistemologies, experience has been made the most reliable

guide to reality. Feminist researchers have shown the importance of recognising and describing women's experiences and in thus giving them a valid voice. They have shown how many sociological issues of major interest to women, such as hierarchical power relations within the family, have been either ignored or interpreted as 'natural' by leading sociologists (Delphy and Leonard, 1992, cited in Clancy, Drudy, Lynch and O'Dowd, 1995: 13). In addition, they have demonstrated how women have often not been counted in sociological studies (such as Goldthorpe et al, 1980 and Whelan and Whelan, 1984, both cited in Clancy et al, 1995: 13) and in psychological studies (Gilligan, 1982). In this way, feminist researchers have demonstrated the importance of recognising that the personal aspects of one's life are related to the social and political spheres. This was a major factor in feminist consciousness-raising and continues to be so. But there are all sorts of theoretical questions behind the concept of experience and they have political effects. The models of the subject implicit in many feminist approaches to research have tended to be humanist and / or essentialist, where the very use of the term 'raised' implies that feminists know best (Condor, 1986: 112; Pollitt, 1995). In these approaches, experience, approached through description, tends to be reified as the most valid and most stable ground for knowing and for building an epistemology.

The poststructural objection to this use of experience is not a repudiation of grounds of knowing *per se* (Fuss, 1990: 27), nor of experience as one of those grounds. It is based on a belief that experience is socially constructed and that it is a sign mediated by other signs. As Hollway argues (1989: 42), the use of women's experience as a basis for research is subject to the same kind of theoretical problems which surround models of the human subject. Humanistic psychology and *Verstehen*-based sociology assume that accounts given in answer to sympathetic questioning will be an expression of the 'real' person. Much feminist theory has actually had the effect of reinforcing orthodox social theory, in assuming that the meaning of accounts is unproblematic. Mama (1995: 81) takes up this point, by discussing how open-ended techniques can

evade the epistemological and theoretical dilemmas raised by the critique of science, instead of addressing them. The social conditions which gave rise to this approach by feminists are also alluded to by Mama (*ibid*), who places them in a framework of anti-imperialist critique.

Both Mama (1995: 81) and Hollway (1989: 41) point out, as did Wilkinson (1986: 20) before them, that there were considerable similarities of methodology and method between feminist social psychology and ethogenics and personal construct theory. The common element is to take seriously people's accounts, rather than directly trying to measure performance or attitude. In ethogenics, this is manifest in Harré and Secord's 'open souls doctrine' and in personal construct theory in Kelly's 'first principle' (*ibid*). Both share the idealist assumption, which at a deeper level is shared with orthodox psychology, that an account will produce facts whose truth-value is not problematic for the research. It is believed that an account can reflect directly that individual's experience (Hollway, 1989: 41). But these similarities are based on humanist assumptions about the individual which rely on the metaphysics of presence, that is, on the belief that one can be fully present to oneself and to other people. Poststructuralist developments in theories of subjectivity, on the other hand, can draw on the value of experience and of accounts which were once ignored, but are able to see subjective accounts as produced within discourses, history and relations. This is my starting point for examining and interpreting experience. To strengthen its achievements in asserting the importance of personal experience, feminist method needs to draw on poststructuralist theories and to interpret experience, not just describe it, in the mistaken belief that there is no theory behind 'plain description'. We need to combine the value of experience with Foucault's idea that truth is a historical product and therefore not absolute (Walkerdine, 1989a: 40).

For feminist poststructuralism, each claim to experience must be examined in the context in which it is made, and must be seen as filtered through discourse. 'Sociological description cannot conclude by reproducing participants'

categories' (Silverman, 1985: xi). The common-sense idea of experience as 'truth' and of untheorised description as allowing access to that truth is an ideological position, underwritten by the metaphysics of presence and a belief that one can be fully present to oneself and to other people. This is exemplified in Gilligan (1982), where the different moral nature of women's decision-making is hailed as natural and better, but is actually describing ideology about women.

Many women identify with Gilligan's descriptions and theory because they have only the dominant interpretive resources available to them when thinking about themselves. Believing in truth and recognising themselves in Gilligan's descriptions, they conclude that she is describing women's essence. However, in that 1982 work, Gilligan does not look at the social conditions, such as being oppressed, in which women developed their interconnectedness and decision-making techniques which supposedly come naturally to them (Grimshaw, 1986). Although Gilligan's assumptions about women's nature have altered a little in recent years, to take social conditions into account (for example, Brown and Gilligan, 1992), it is notable that her most quoted work is the 1982 work, where the epistemological base is that which most closely resembles the dominant humanist assumptions about the subject. I believe that the popularity of Gilligan's work as a model for much feminist research is due to the closeness of its vision of women to the dominant popular assumptions of western culture, 'since what the two have in common is an outlook which understands the world in terms of the individual' (Hollway 1991b: 30).

Rather than completely dismiss or accept the special validity of experience, feminist poststructuralism contends that each experience is as valid as the next, but is socially constructed and must not be taken as an indicator of an essence of, or an essential truth about, a person. Rigid categories of 'female experience' or 'male experience' are of limited epistemological usefulness (Connell, 1995: 71; Fuss, 1990). An additional related point is made by Wise (1990: 129), when she says that feminist research should not focus exclusively on women's

lives and experiences. Hollway also deplores the current trend in feminist psychology and social psychology to focus exclusively on women:

I believe that this is unfortunate for two reasons. First, there is a danger of taking women as a category and leaving men outside the account, because gender is produced through difference, in relations, and so if the other side of the relation is out of view, a social psychology of women's experiences cannot produce a theory of how women are produced. Secondly, description without theory is not possible and accounts of women's experience cannot operate in a theoretical vacuum. (Hollway, 1989: 106)

An exclusive feminist concentration on the special validity of women's experiences also suggests that if one has not had a woman's experiences, one cannot be a feminist, one is outside the 'circle' (cf Said, 1986). It puts the responsibility for 'progress' on women alone, since 'men can't understand'. In addition, it reduces women to their experiences as women and does not allow for overlapping experiences of class, race, ability, age, ethnicity and other social variables. As Weedon (1987: 8) puts it:

It is not enough to refer unproblematically to experience ... we need a theory of the relationship between experience, social power and resistance. ... Theory must be able to address women's experience by showing where it comes from and how it relates to material social practices and the power relations which structure them.

In this present study the issue of experience is particularly important. It raises theoretical questions about the concept of women's experiences, of power, resistance and agency. However, I do not treat experience as revelatory of some female or feminist essence. First, I try to uncover the constructed nature of experience. Although I have no male participants, I put a special focus on the construction of feminism and feminist subjectivity in relations, including heterosexual couple and work relations. Second, because of the type of discourse analysis which I attempt, readers may make connections with their own everyday experiences, the ways in which they are constructed in discourse and the different positions available within the discourses. Women's experiences, I argue, need to be included in research and education, but as a

starting point for developing less rigid gender hierarchies, not for showing the true nature of women. Research needs to take approaches which theorise experience and this theory needs to be drawn on in a politicised practice of education, including personal development courses. The use of the category or concept of women's experience needs to be done in a context which does not treat the category as unproblematic, or neutral.

5.3.1 Descriptive research

Many earlier feminist approaches rightly saw that power was being exercised in the process of analysis and theorising about people who participated in research but who did not have a chance to participate in the analysis or, often, did not have a chance to even read the research publications. A common response to this was to democratise the relations of research and also to refrain from theorising and theory building and to view research as a means of giving voice to previously silenced views on the world (ibid). The method most commonly adopted in this response is one in which women are directly asked for accounts of their experience, referred to as descriptive interviewing. Hollway (1989: 40, 41) notes:

The method of descriptive interviewing represents a consistent application of the political principle that women's experience can provide a direct route to women's consciousness or identity. That principle provides the answer for feminist method: ask women directly for an account of their experience. It is also consistent with the humanist criticism of traditional psychology that people's experience was neither sought nor valued. Again, the assumption is the idealist one that the knowledge is there, based on experience, and can be represented in an account.

Hollway (ibid:42) asserts that unless researchers have developed a theory of experience and subjectivity, old assumptions will govern research methods and interpretation. Weedon (1987: 85) also notes that 'it is possible to transform the meaning of experience by bringing a different set of assumptions to bear on

it'. The descriptive interviewing method typically presents extracts from interviews, which 'speak for themselves', to represent the speaker's experience. Methodologically, the meaning of a person's account is assumed to be a transparent reflection of experience (ibid: 95). The researcher does not question the validity of the account and her role is to organise the material so that it conforms to an essentially descriptive theory.

Once an account is given, it assumes the status of the expression of **the** person's experience in relation to a particular topic. What is not considered is the status of the account in relation to the infinite number of things that were not said. From my perspective, what this approach achieves is a reasonably faithful reproduction of whatever assumptions people use to interpret their own experience in the research relationship. Put another way, it reproduces (and legitimates through science) whatever discourses research participants use to position themselves at the time. (Hollway, 1989: 40, original emphasis)

Descriptive research can tell us a lot about women's lives but it cannot theorise about or explain women or men, or gender. It is typical of 'new paradigm' research which is based on humanistic principles (Hollway, 1989, 1991b). I take the view that truth and experience are produced in social relations and that experience is similarly produced. An emphasis on production guards against the assumption of pre-existing entities, whether these are individual human nature, or social institutions like heterosexuality or the family. Descriptive research forgoes that possibility. In its unproblematic reliance on experience, it has retained a focus on the individual, rather than relations, power and difference. The theoretical lack inherent in this approach is undermining the potential of research to be emancipatory. The dualism and the models of the person inherent in work on 'women's needs' and 'women's ways of knowing' operate to leave gender without a social component. I do not believe that this kind of research can be effective when it comes to trying to change the gender status quo.

5.4 How the information was analysed

In approaching analysis, I use a methodology which is loosely called 'interpretive discourse analysis' (Gavey, 1989; Hollway, 1989; Potter and Wetherell, 1987), or 'interpretive analytics' (Cherryholmes, 1988). This has been described as moving on from the more static genealogical / archaeological approach of Foucault (ibid: 195; Gavey, 1993). It is also deconstructive, in so far as it tries to take apart dualistic relationships commonly viewed as natural and normal, such as the relationship between feminism and femininity, and to show them to be social constructions. The ways that I go about the analysis can be discussed under three headings:

- Focusing on accounts rather than individuals
- Identifying and analysing discourses
- Subject positions and positioning within discourse.

5.4.1 Focusing on accounts

Feminists have long noted the problems with researchers trying to represent members of groups to which the researcher does not belong. And because groups are not homogeneous, there is also a difficulty in trying to do 'insiders accounts' of them (see, for example, Kitzinger, Bola, Campos, Carabine, Doherty, Frith, McNulty, Reilly and Winn, 1996). Although I am a feminist researching feminists, I cannot assume that I can accurately 'represent' them, or that feminism will mean the same thing to them and to me.

The problem is partly overcome by focusing in the analysis on accounts of identity and signification, not on individual feminists, nor on searching for a real, true feminist identity, but on the accounts of feminist 'success' and agency provided. 'Feminist identity' is intended to characterise the meanings ascribed by a woman to whatever social, emotional, sexual, political or personal

configuration she intends when she describes herself as a feminist. A feminist identity is a woman's subjective experience or intrasubjective account of her own feminism. The accounts are not assumed to give access to that subjective experience, but must rely on what the participants are able and willing to say about it (cf Kitzinger, 1987: 90).

I treat the accounts as located in sociocultural and political contexts, as well as having features unique to each individual, but no less social for that. In common with Kitzinger (ibid), I try to avoid conceptualising them as derived solely from the psychology of individual women. As Kitzinger points out, for researchers for whom the individual is the primary unit of study, the account is treated as the exclusive property of the individuals who provide it. However, when the account is treated as the primary unit of study, even though account-gathering depends initially upon individual account-providers, the analysis cannot be reduced to these people's individual psychologies. Because the account is not forever tied to the individual who provided it, the researcher can pursue her study of the account *per se*, while still acknowledging features unique to each individual. In this I take a more dynamic approach to the analysis of accounts than Kitzinger's social constructionist perspective. The researcher can look for evidence of the discourses with which the accounts are associated, drawing attention to the political and personal features of feminist accounts of identity.

The critique of naturalism mounted by feminist poststructuralists emphasises the importance of significations and recognises that they are always multiple. Accounts never exhaust significations. 'By starting with significations, it is necessary to recognise that the choice of certain combinations prohibits that of others and this choice is never arbitrary. Thus, one looks not just for presences in a text, but also for absences' (Hollway, 1982: 188; cf Henriques et al, 1984). An analysis in terms of the pre-existence of discourses into which people are inserted means that assumptions are made in accounts, meanings are taken for granted. The analysis of significations therefore must contain interpretation.

Similarly, in accepting the existence of an unconscious in my theoretical framework, I will look for it in the texts of accounts. Thus, Poster describes Lacan's method as follows:

The analyst was to make a 'symptomatic reading' of the words or text of a patient, looking for absences, words not there, and analysing them as repressed metaphors (Poster, 1978: 88, cited in Hollway, 1982: 188).

From Freudian and Kleinian analysis of the unconscious I also use the notion of defense mechanisms which protect a person against the intrusion of repressed material. These mechanisms are relational. That is, they operate not simply by pushing down in the individual, but, for example, by projection. This perspective also emphasises the importance of relations rather than individuals (Hollway, 1982: 189). Nevertheless, even though psychoanalysis has given us valuable insights, my project is not to interpret people's unconscious. I am trying to describe feminist subjectivity at the level of consciousness, because the world of culture and politics is a consciously experienced world (Cocks, 1989: 14). However, this is not the same as reifying experience. It is more like Cain's (1993) reference to deep analysis but on a more social scale. A similar aim is found in the memory work techniques developed by Haug (1987), Schratz and Walker (1995) and Stephenson, Kippax and Crawford (1996).

I see texts and conversations as essentially the same kind of product, that is, as accounts of 'identities' in specific situations, as does Hollway (1982: 252). On this basis, statements of opinion, shaped as they are in language, cannot be regarded as a 'pure' reflection of an underlying belief or reality, but must be considered as aspects of rhetoric which cannot be fully understood apart from the context and the social relations in which they are articulated (cf Condor, 1986; Lees, 1986). Social relations are inserted in discourses through which they have access to significations. The relations of the research activity itself are also social relations which are subject to the same principles of insertion in discourse or discourses. Following Hollway (1982, 1989), I choose signification as an entry point for analysing participants' accounts, because it

does not privilege either side of the individual / society dualism.

5.4.2 Identifying and analysing discourses

In the feminist poststructuralist approach, discourse is responsible for reality and not simply a reflection of the real. Much of my analysis centres on the concept of discourse. In this section I try to make clear how I decided what a discourse was. Foucault makes the following methodological points about discourse:

1. Seek in the discourse not its laws of construction, as do the structural methods, but its conditions of existence.
2. Refer the discourse not to the thought, to the mind or to the subject which might have given rise to it, but to the practical field in which it is deployed. (Foucault, 1973b, cited in Cherryholmes, 1988: 161)

The readings that someone has of herself or of another person are a product of that person's history of significations and their present position in discourses. This product (or point of meeting between discourses and signification) is specified in a particular relation, to which I get access in the text or transcript (cf Hollway, 1982). Deconstruction is a methodological technique to do this. It is different from searching out the 'weaknesses' in an argument. 'Instead, the focus is on how we might be suspicious of the text itself, its own conditions of construction' (Lather, 1991: 5)

I use large chunks of material, because I want to emphasise relations and the production of meaning in accounts. Relations are best illuminated by the way a group or a person explore a particular theme. It would thus be inappropriate to 'chop up' the material, in a manner which would be more characteristic of naturalism (cf West, 1996: 31). During the process of data gathering and analysis, I used a codified system based on mindmaps organised around 'basic organising ideas' (Buzan, 1995). I equated the basic organising ideas with grounded theory's concept of phenomena (Strauss and Corbin, 1990).

However, I do not use them for writing up the analysis, as I think that any codified system would be incapable of demonstrating the complexity of the systems of meaning-making which produce the accounts (cf Hollway, 1982).

Analysing a large piece of material, a text or transcript, and keeping the analysis specific to that text, but nevertheless consistent with a theoretical framework, is a method used with literary texts. Following Hollway's (1982 / 1989) method, under a piece of text, I write my comments; for example, I raise questions and contradictions posed by an account. I use the concept of discourse to do this, specifying the discourses within which an account is produced. I try to show how the account cannot be understood without a theory of multiple significations (cf *ibid*).

The comments are followed by a commentary which locates them in relation to a broader theoretical analysis and makes more complex links. I follow this method with all extracts long enough or dense enough to make several points. If an extract illustrates a simple point, it is contained in the text without a commentary (cf *ibid*). The data is analysed over three chapters (Chapters Six, Seven and Eight) and it is only by the end of these chapters that an overview of feminist subjectivities emerges.

The comments indicate the following kinds of phenomena (cf Hollway, 1982: 290ff):

- implications
- stresses
- equations
- discourses
- discursive shifts

- effects of discourse on practice
- use of different discourses to read other people's actions
- contradictions
- recognition that practices (eg, heterosexual sex) can be about other things (for example, about the operation of power)
- motivations
- implications of operation at an unconscious level
- indicators of multiple significations
- indicators of different positionings
- splits between different situations in being able to act as subject of feminist or other discourses
- recognitions (conscious or unconscious) of power in everyday relations
- projections
- awarenesses
- experiences of agency or lack of it
- knowledge assumed, acquired or produced.

5.4.3 Subject positions and positioning within discourses

I make use of the concept of positioning within discourse as an analytic tool (Davies, 1990a; Davies and Harre, 1990, Hollway, 1984 a and b, 1989, 1994; Mama, 1995; Walkerdine, 1989a). I outline it briefly here and its details

become evident as the analysis proceeds.

The poststructuralist research paradigm recognises the constitutive force of discourse and discursive practices and, at the same time, recognises that people are capable of exercising choice in relation to those practices (Davies and Harré, 1990). The constitutive force of discursive practices lies in their provision of subject positions. A subject position incorporates both a conceptual repertoire and a location for persons within the structure of rights for those that use that repertoire. Once having taken up a particular position as one's own, a person sees the world from the vantage point of that position and uses the images, metaphors and concepts which are made relevant within the particular discursive practice in which they are positioned. At least a possibility of notional choice is involved, since there are many and contradictory discursive practices that each person could engage in (ibid: 46).

Positioning is the discursive process whereby subjects are located in conversations and other discursive practices, as recognisable participants in a narrative or repertoire. Whenever we speak, we are positioning and being positioned, and we move from one discursive practice to another, one audience to another, one conceptual repertoire to another. As a feminist, if I invoke feminist discourse of some kind, I may, depending on who the hearers are, be positioned as one who should be listened to, or one who is marginal (Davies, 1990a). There can be interactive positioning in which one person positions another, and there can be reflexive positioning, where one positions oneself. Positioning is not necessarily intentional, although it can be. Different positions in discourse are available to people on the basis of categories of social discourse, which are historically generated out of collective experience (Mama, 1995: 82). People's accounts reproduce whatever discourses they are using to position themselves or others at a particular time. A central idea in all of this is the differential power associated with different positions (Hollway, 1989).

The concept of positioning allows me as researcher to examine the tensions produced between different subject positions taken up by or imposed upon a

participant and evident in her account. I want to theorise how people's subjectivity is reproduced by positioning in discourses through relations and how this subjectivity can change the positioning. This leads me into a focus on relations and therefore to the use of psychodynamic concepts as a methodology of interpretation. The approach is thus self-consciously disruptive of the coherence produced by speaking in the first person (see Stephenson et al, 1996: 189). As Stephenson et al (ibid) point out, it thus differs from the kind of analysis undertaken by Gilligan (1982, 1986), which stresses the importance of isolating distinct voices by trying to look for coherent first-person voice statements. Although I do not use the memory-work technique based on the work of Haug (1987), for gathering data, which is the technique used by Stephenson and her colleagues, the concept of positioning provides me with a means to discuss the process of subjectivity as it is constructed in relations. I take the view that the number of possible accounts which a person can produce is potentially limitless (cf Hollway, 1989: 41) and that, although research participants often try to produce a coherent account, more can be learned by way of explanation, if the interviewer and the interview process encourage the expression of contradictions and multiplicity which people experience as a result of differential positionings within different discourses.

Many of the women in this study acknowledge their multiplicity. 'The more multiple the acknowledged parts of a person are, the more capable they will be of identifying with many different positions' (Hollway, 1989: 129). Acknowledging one's multiplicity, that is, that one is not always rational and is often contradictory, is more likely to be something that women do, 'because of what woman means in a relation of otherness to human kind ... White middle class men are the ones who, historically, have produced the systems of social difference which have created various Others'... (ibid: 129, 130). Mama (1995) demonstrates that black people living in Britain and in the United States are also likely to acknowledge multiplicity, because of the positions of otherness which they often occupy. I argue that feminist women are also likely to be positioned as Other and that many of us develop the capacity to comfortably

occupy many different social positions which we consider feminist. For a researcher to recognise this, it helps to be multiply positioned oneself, as I claim to be.

If the number of accounts that a person can produce is potentially limitless, then the number of explanations and analyses that the researcher can generate from a single account is also potentially limitless (Hollway, 1989: 129). Although feminist discourses in general have emphasised contradiction as a common experience for both feminist and non feminist women, nevertheless, a principle of unitariness still underpins the way that Gilligan and those influenced by her work approach analysis of women's accounts. Gilligan (in Kitzinger and Gilligan, 1994: 415, cited in Stephenson et al, 1996: 189) stresses the importance of isolating distinct voices by 'pull[ing] those first-person voice statements out of women's interview texts, and really try[ing] to listen for how a woman speaks for herself'.

5.5 Interpretation of data and creation of shared knowledge

An intention of the research methodology of this study was to create dialogue and a shared reflexivity between me and all of the participants (cf Schratz and Walker, 1995: 105; West, 1996: 212). It was intended to encourage interpretation and exploration by the participants, as well as by me. However, I think that in the final resort, the conclusions are more mine than they are shared with the participants, with the exceptions of the accounts analysed in Chapter Eight. I was the one who spent hours pouring over the data and trying to connect themes. I would like to think that this was a truly participative research process but as it is, many research projects cannot be said to be truly participative (Mama, 1995: 79, 80) and in the long run, I reserve the right to make interpretations, although I offered the participants the power of veto and the opportunity to comment on my analyses of their accounts.

5.6 Conclusion

Poststructuralist views of language have implications for methodology because they imply that, since meaning is achieved through relations between units of meaning and since relations are never static or fixed, meaning is never achieved within the boundaries of a word, sentence, or even an extract. Rather it is established in an infinite network of relations (Hollway, 1989: 39). This has methodological implications, because in this infinite network, content and context cannot be distinguished, there is no distinction between text and the rest. In particular, a feminist poststructuralist approach emphasises the production of gender difference, rather than the investigation of gender differences *per se* (cf Hollway, 1991b). It is here that I see, in common with Hollway (1989), the greatest promise or potential of feminist research: that it can theorise about how women and men are produced in social relations and that out of this it can generate theory about how new ways of being female or male can also be produced. As such it is dynamic rather than static, explanatory and exploratory rather than descriptive, relational rather than comparative, emancipatory rather than normative (ibid: 32).

CHAPTER SIX

THE DISCURSIVE CONSTRUCTION OF FEMINIST SUBJECTIVITY

6.0 Introduction

In the first part of the thesis, I have conducted a review from the literature of how interplays of knowledge, power and practice have affected the construction of the human subject in feminist theory and in pedagogy. In that part, the concept of discourse emerged as a method of producing truth and knowledge and as a method of filtering experience, as well as a tool for critiquing what social and pedagogical theory has to say about women. From this point on in the thesis, I continue to use the concept of discourse (including poststructuralist insights on language and meaning), but as a tool to analyse subjectivity itself and as a way of developing an understanding of feminist subjectivity as dynamic and multiple, and as collectively and relationally produced. In doing this, I am influenced by and draw on recent feminist poststructuralist work on subjectivity and discourse, especially as developed by Hollway (1982, 1984a, b, 1989, 1994) and Mama (1995).

In this chapter, I illustrate how three major discourses of feminism manifest themselves in the research participants' accounts. A fourth discourse of 'real feminism' is also evident, which I interpret as anti-feminist. Central to my use of the term discourse is the understanding that there are different meanings about feminism held by the research participants and that people are positioned in relation to these meanings (cf Hollway, 1989: 38; Mama, 1995: 100 - 109). The signifier feminist achieves its meaning for feminist women in this discursive context (Hollway, 1989: 66).

This approach requires that I specify the ways that people make sense of feminism and the effects their interpretation of feminism has on their thoughts and actions. I begin to look at the ways in which the different discourses are

taken up, how they overlap in feminist women's accounts, how people are positioned within discourses and how they position themselves within discourses. In the following chapters of this work (Chapters Seven and Eight), I examine in more detail how discourses are modified and new discourses are created, in the construction of individual subjects (cf Mama, 1995: Chapter Six). In all my discussion of discourses, I keep in mind their conditions of existence and their practical fields of deployment.

6.1 Discourses analysed as the content of subjectivity

Within the framework of analysis for this chapter, discourses carry the content of subjectivity. Mama (1995: 98) points out that subjectivity can be approached only through the particular histories and cultures of those people being studied. There is no universal subject but only particular subjectivities and subject positions that are located in discourses -- and thus in the social sphere of history and culture. Subjectivity is a process of constitution and movement through already constituted positions (ibid).

Discourses here are defined as historically constructed regimes of knowledge. These include the common-sense assumptions and taken-for-granted ideas, belief systems and myths that groups of people share and through which they understand each other. Discourses articulate and convey formal and informal knowledge and ideologies. They are constantly being reproduced and constituted, and can change and evolve in the process of communication. A discourse is a shared grid of knowledge that one or more people can 'enter' and through which explicit and implicit meanings are shared (ibid).

Discourses produce certain assumptions (about, for example, sex, see Hollway, 1982: 283) and they provide subject positions from which people speak. Following Hollway (1984a: 230), I shift the emphasis from Foucault's explicitly historical use of the concept and its part in the evolution of social institutions and the production of regimes of truth (for example, Foucault,

1979), towards an approach which is located around the meaning derived from language (written or spoken). Discourses, as used in this chapter, then, position individuals in relation to one another socially, politically and culturally, as similar to or different from; as 'one of us' or as 'Other' (Mama, 1995: 98). In this way, different positions and powers are made available to people. This approach also involves identifying discursive practices.

6.2 Identifying discourses of feminism

Four main themes emerged from the participants' data, to qualify as discourses in the way I have defined the concept for this chapter and for this section in particular, which looks at the content of subjectivity. They are:

Discourse One: feminism as an expression of a naturally occurring femininity which is oppressed under patriarchy

Discourse Two: feminism as a rejection of women's and men's socialisation into different roles

Discourse Three: feminism as a move away from male / female dualism

Discourse Four: a 'real feminist' discourse

The first three discourses reflect Kristeva's three stages of feminism (see Chapter Two, Section 3.5), although they are not identical to them. Discourses One and Two especially have long histories in feminist theory and practice and have entered popular collective awareness as the face of feminism, although not without modification. Discourse Three is more recent and more complex and fewer people take up positions in it. These discourses do not refer to actual entities. They are heuristic devices, that is, they are devices which help to organise the accounts of participants. 'Discourse is a theoretical concept whose validity consists in its explanatory power, rather than in evidence of its material

existence. It is therefore according to the same criteria that the validity of my delineation of a specific discourse must be evaluated' (Hollway, 1982: 288).

6.3 Discourse One: feminism as an expression of a naturally occurring femininity which is oppressed under patriarchy.

I refer to this discourse from here on as as Discourse One, or the oppressed feminine discourse. At times, it is expressed in accounts as the repression of a universal and essential feminine and at other times as the repression of a female culture, not necessarily based on a pre-existing femininity, but on a way of being derived from women's positions as primary care-givers in social relations.

The central proposition of this discourse is that there is either an essential feminine identity, or a female culture, or both, which have been not been valued under patriarchy. The desire of feminism under this discourse is to see this essential nature, or this culture, reinstated as at least equal to, if not superior to, the masculine. The masculine is also seen in this discourse in terms of essential nature and / or culture.

The discourse relies on binary thinking, as one participant put it, on 'either / or'. It tends to vest all that is good in the female, all that is bad in the male. In general, in this discourse, men are not highly valued unless they acknowledge their own 'femininity', or adopt ways of doing things which draw on female culture.

6.3.1 Female culture

P4. I have much stronger views now on feminism and women's issues than I did twenty years ago. I also think that living with men, which I did for fifteen years, was terribly anti --¹ stuff -- I don't think that men understand these issues, especially men who are radical, socialist, have a liberal agenda. Whatever about the others.

Can you dismiss them?

Well, you can, I suppose. I just feel that even people like that just don't have a sense of what it is like for women to make it in the world. Mind you, I think that women have a different way of operating. You know, the argument can be levelled at you, 'Well, why don't you -- join in?'. But I actually have problems with that, because I think that they join in, or people like me do, but in a different kind of way -- different ways of communicating things, we have different ways of operating [1], which often don't fit very well with -- you know, hierarchical, very male structures and political parties [2]. I think that's a problem.

I sometimes feel that there are two spheres that never meet. There are these non-hierarchical attempts at being egalitarian and then there are male-centred, hierarchical, party-political structures [3], even though there are women involved in that too. And I often feel they don't meet at all. How would you see that?

It's true. Well, I would say there are two different classes. But I think it's difficult. On the one hand, you could say, well, the only way to change things is to get in there and re-organise the structure. But I don't actually agree with that argument any more. I think that what you need to develop is a completely different sort of structure. I think it's the same argument that people use about women priests. They say, oh, the church will change if there are women priests [4]. But it won't. What will happen is you get a lot of women buying into a very male-oriented structure which doesn't allow them any equality in a real sense and where they will probably get treated just as second-hand as people get treated in other spheres. But it won't change the thinking. Whereas if they allowed priests to marry, that might change their thinking, because they would have to think about a few other things,

¹ In this account and all the accounts which follow in the thesis, I use the following devices:

- -- indicates hesitation in speech
- *italic text indicates my speech*
- ... indicates that a section of text has been left out of a particular account by me
- [] is used for explanatory notes or to avoid using names as part of an account
- [] also contains numbers which refer to the comments I make after each account (see Chapter 5, Section 4.1).

apart from themselves [5].

And it's almost like that with political structures as well. For example, our own experience in working with women's groups, you very quickly realise that women operate in a different way. They'll operate in a way where they network, they're concerned with what other people's needs are, and they operate I think in a more caring way. And I think that's a huge disadvantage when you come to joining in the rest of the world [6]. -- things like organisation of structures that are very much the old male-oriented county council, VEC [Vocational Education Committee] structures. Where they put up their hands to speak and stuff like this. And when women come on, I think actually there's an argument for learning to operate like that, because I don't think you can survive without it. But on the other hand, there is an argument for the structure changing to accommodate that. But women need a lot of time and they need a lot of support to do that, because they are not used to operating like that, especially women who are not involved in work outside the home [7]. And even women who are involved in work outside the home, for example, if you are operating at quite a different level. In which case, you will be isolated, you know.

But in a way, this is very funny, because we are all women members of staff, which is sort of weird. But that didn't happen deliberately. It happened because women work for money in an organisation like this that is sort of pathetic. But the advantage of that is that you have a very different sort of team operation or managerial operation than you would if you had a mixed population, I think [8]. I don't know, I mean, I haven't had really time to sit down and look at it in much detail [9].

-- Statistically, that's not happening much outside. But yes, it's a sort of organic growth and then, actually, if that happens and if it's managed carefully [10], then people can develop skills that they wouldn't develop in other kinds of hierarchical structures. For example, here somebody starting off as a clerical assistant would now be working in some kind of other area, where they can -- develop more skills, you just have to allow that to happen. And I think that in a lot of work structures, that doesn't happen. If you look for example at the Civil Service, you find a lot of good women stuck at HEO [Higher Executive Officer] level. You're not out around town with the boys, so it's not possible to make all those promotional moves [11].

Comments

1. Statement that women have ways of doing things: part of Discourse One's central proposition.
2. Distinguishes women's ways from male ways of doing things and characterises these male ways as hierarchical: Establishment of dualism.
3. I am drawn into the discourse. I know how to operate in it, even though I don't completely accept its central proposition, as readers know already. Yet, I am not 'faking', because I can read feminism through this discourse and I can act in this discourse when I need to do so, in order to make contact with another woman about issues of feminism. I also imply by my remark that power continues to reside in the 'male' space, that a power imbalance will continue to be constituted through any discourse which holds intact a male-female dualism.
4. P4 explicitly distinguishes the discourse in which she is operating from a liberal feminist, access discourse.
- 5, 6. Recognition that the existence and separate nature of a women's culture won't change gender relations. The main discourse of essential differences begins to break down here, or at least to reach its explanatory limits. Thus the account is produced not just within the essentialist discourse, but also recognises that gender is relational, which contradicts the main discourse through which the account is constructed.
7. Recognition that women's way of operation is cultural and based on the prevailing conditions of their existence. This is a recognition of the constructedness of experience.
8. A reassertion of the existence of a separate female culture
9. Acceptance of a female culture is a 'gut' reaction. A recognition that looking at it in detail would reveal more of the contradictions and explanatory limits

referred to in comments 5 and 6. Even while drawing on a particular discourse, the account recognises that the discourse might not be capable of explaining things completely.

10. It is a culture that can be fostered and encouraged. This is a further recognition of its constructed nature.

11. A male culture prohibits women's development. Acceptance of the existence of separate cultures of male and female. This interpretation of her experience reinforces P4's belief in the discourse's central proposition, that women operate in a different, specifically female, culture.

Commentary

Discourse One can exist in conditions where women are downgraded, or in contexts where women are considered equal but different, as in Jungian psychology or religion (cf Connell, 1995). On coming into contact with this discourse, which was very often their first contact with feminism, many participants experienced it as both liberating and enabling. They spoke of 'women's power', 'getting in touch with my femininity', 'feeling a female energy'. It enabled them to reject the negative and inferior definitions of women afforded to them by sexist and anti-women discourses. Culture needs major symbols, so if we talk about a women's culture, it is most likely that an essential femininity will become one of the major symbols, because it meshes so easily with patriarchal culture that people can understand it readily.

This discourse (which is admittedly varied in its manifestations) seems to me to be the dominant discourse for thinking about women in most women's groups, including community women's groups. L. Connolly's (1996) research suggests that it is in the community groups that feminism is experiencing a revival in Ireland. I tentatively suggest that in this feminist revival, the themes of a

specific female culture and / or an essential femininity are the main feminist tools. Because of its tendency towards separatism it doesn't reach its explanatory limits as often as Discourse Two does (see Section 4.1).

It is a discourse taken up at both collective and personal levels. At the collective level, it provides an explanatory framework for women's networks, women's art and women's cultural expressions. At a personal level, it provides a regime of truth which offers women a way of seeing themselves as superior to men. It tends to invert hierarchies, rather than subvert them. Yet it is a necessary discourse, given the division of the world into female and male, under patriarchy, with a devaluation of traditionally female ways of doing things.

In comment number 9 above, I interpret P4's acceptance of female culture as a gut reaction, taken as indicative of some essential truth precisely because it is a gut reaction. I nevertheless contend that such reactions, while important and revealing, are not revelatory of essential knowledge, but of constructed knowledge and that in this case, they reflect dominant discourses of essential femininity.

6.4 Discourse Two: feminism as a rejection of women's and men's socialisation into roles

The central proposition of Discourse Two is that gender is purely social. It relies on the concept of the conditioning or socialisation of a neutral person into differentiated sex roles. Justice and equality are ideals which can be achieved through rational action and legislation, although the complexity of this is not underestimated. It reflects the liberal feminist idea that access to areas previously denied them is important for women, in 'desocialising' or 'de-roling' them, and that the same applies to getting access for boys and men to roles traditionally associated with women.

Many of the women in the study found this discourse reflected in the attitudes of their mothers, who encouraged them to gain good education, good employment, financial independence. Some people found it in their schools, although schools were also recognised as prime sites for socialisation into roles. Those who have daughters of their own are passing it on to them.

6.4.1 Socialisation

P2. I think that my interest in the whole role definition [1] and because of my consciousness of it given my subject area [home economics], in some ways, that strengthened -- I became more aware of the anomalies that existed, whereas maybe if I had stuck with hotel management [her original choice of career training], I would probably have become aware of it in terms of hotel work, maids, housekeepers and so on. But I mightn't have been challenged as much -- I wouldn't have come across all the inequalities in the school system, for example [2]. That wouldn't have met me like a slap in the face, in terms of the attitude to certain subjects and I might have been more like the women who say 'well, if you really want to do it, you should do it' [3]. I might actually have gone that way, because there are a lot of women who have made it in management. And they think, 'I've done it, why can't everybody else do it?' and it's more for them that we don't have the neck or we don't have the academic ability or whatever [4], rather than looking at the things that have happened throughout our life or what are the things that have been dished out to us to make us take different paths or that have forced us in some way into different positions [5]. And if I had done the hotel management, I wouldn't have gone to do social studies probably [6], probably wouldn't have got into union activities as much, because in the hotel business at management level, you would have a different approach to all those things. so in one respect, my career choice was probably a very good one for me, in terms of complementing what I had already thought of about equality and in keeping the impetus there for change. But with other people I can understand that the contradictions are too much and they don't become active [7].

...

I think there are probably different social levels regarding what your interests are [8]. I would recognise that we as teachers at one level are paid equally and so on, a lot of teachers wouldn't see the inequalities in promotions etc because a lot of women don't go for promotion. They would more say that women don't want it, where I say that women are

conditioned into things [9]. They say that women are more suited to the classroom or it doesn't suit them now because they have young kids. It could suit their husband, but he might have young kids as well [10]. They wouldn't be as aware of all the inequities that exist in the wider society in terms of women's roles, because they wouldn't be touched by it [11]. I have always had a wider interest in the role of women, beyond my own career. I think that a lot of women I have met who are into equality for themselves are not so much interested in equality for everybody -- they want equality for women, but once they see it in their own set context, they don't think about it beyond -- in all layers of society [12].

Even in terms of class, they wouldn't see that some upper class women are very traditional in terms of their relationship with men. Or in terms of working class women who might be suffering violence, they would say, 'Well, why don't they just leave?' But they don't take time to think about all the other issues that are stopping them from getting out -- like their own conditioning in their families [13], or that women aren't as important in the economy [14]. So a lot of the stuff I would be conscious of wouldn't have come from picking up books on feminism [15], or socialism even [16], it would more come from trying to analyse what was happening around me [17] and listening to discussions and so on. And probably I will do some more reading on research done. But I have actually been pleased over the last while when I have actually done some reading to see that a lot of the research matches what I would have thought anyway [18] and that it is a matter of putting the academic language on it.

Comments

1. Statement of central proposition of the discourse: socialisation into roles.
2. Schooling as a site of socialisation and a place where role differentiation can be clearly seen.
- 3, 4. Rejection of individualism and meritocracy as explanation of inequalities
5. Almost a structural interpretation of the socialisation model is developed in the account, in contrast to a meritocratic model.
6. Recognition that a social studies course has shaped her thinking. (Social

studies theory, or any body of theory, represents certain discourses.)

7. Recognises the effects of power and gender structures in everyday life, in constraining or enabling actions.

8. Recognition that things signify differently for different people.

9. Again, rejects individualistic interpretation and asserts socialisation discourse.

10. Uses role differentiation to explain or interpret different attitudes and behaviours in men and women.

11, 12. Reads other women as positioned in a discourse of individualism, which precludes them caring about equality as a social or collective aspiration.

13. Recognition of the family as another site of socialisation.

14, 16. Recognition of the limits of a socialisation theory (economics is also important).

15. Associates feminist awareness with knowledge of socialisation and role theory.

17. Recognition of the effects of everyday life on the development of a discursive position and on politics.

18. Belief in the central proposition of the socialisation discourse is confirmed.

Commentary

Drawing on Discourse Two is not simple for P2 in this account. Its explanatory limitations are frequently exposed. She expresses awareness of this when she refers to 'all the other issues'. She sees the limitations of the discourse in

schools where equal opportunities initiatives are in place, but where 'de-roling' people has not worked. The discourse fails to problematise the investments that people make in taking up gendered positions, and fails to examine the content of those positions. It therefore is constantly coming up against challenges to its central proposition that roles can be changed.

The comments which I make on the extract above are testimony to the awareness of P2 of the complexities of gender identities. Yet her explanatory framework leads her to constantly refer to feminism as awareness of and challenge to roles and conditioning. The account recognises how things signify differently for different people [8] and how women can be positioned against their will in powerful gender structures [7, 11, 12]. Yet the discourse's regime of truth brings her back all the time to socialisation as her explanatory framework. This discourse has not the explanatory power of Discourse One, which draws on patriarchal and deeply ingrained notions of what men and women are really like, to assert the value of women, as women. Neither does it have the radical and productive uncertainty which is evident in Discourse Three (see Section 5). Yet this is the discourse most frequently encountered in schooling, along with the related theme of access to non-traditional roles for girls and boys, women and men (Ryan, 1997).

As a content of subjectivity, it is not as satisfactory for a feminist as Discourse One. Yet many women in the study who accepted Discourse Two saw Discourse One as regressive, in its acceptance of a special women's way of being. Some people had drawn on Discourse Two earlier in their feminist lives and had been radicalised into Discourse Three, which I discuss below. This is reminiscent of Eisenstein's (1981, 1984) claim that the limitations of liberal feminism will eventually radicalise liberal feminists.

Many women of my acquaintance have given up on the socialisation discourse as a basis for feminism, although retaining a basic assumption of the discourse that the human subject is androgynous. Most frequently, they have taken a path of immersion in humanistic or human relations psychology. They assume the

existence of a core self, untainted by gender or sex roles, as does the socialisation discourse. But they have given up the feminist component and became depoliticised. When I talked to one such woman at a social gathering about the subject of my thesis, she said words to the effect that: 'I know that a lot of those people in [an adult education organisation] consider themselves feminists. I used to be like that, but I've gone beyond all that now'.

Since this is a study of feminist subjectivity and politicisation, I didn't interview any of these women in a formal way for the study, but they formed a topic of conversation between me and many of the research participants, as we pondered what it was that made us hold onto a feminist identity. One conclusion which I have reached in relation to this, and to which I return in Chapter Eight (Section 4), is that, within liberal humanism, politicisation represents immaturity, or a phase that has to be 'gone through' before maturity (cf Kitzinger, 1987).

6.5 Discourse Three: feminism as a move away from dualism

The central proposition of this discourse is that feminism moves us towards a possibility of wholeness, where woman is not constituted in terms of the male / female dualism. Such a move involves confronting one's own identity as it relates to 'masculinity' or 'femininity'. Maleness and femaleness are revealed as multiple and fragmented and any sense of opposition or hierarchy, or essential difference is removed. However, it is not a move towards sameness, but towards multiple ways of being (Kristeva, 1986, Davies, 1990b). Its effects are complex and include an awareness of the other two discourses and acknowledgement of their strategic value and necessity in different contexts. It relies on an awareness of oneself and one's desires and investments (insofar as these can be made present to oneself or others). In some ways, though, this is not a discourse in the sense that Foucault described discourse as appealing to 'truth' for authority and legitimation. It is a more critical discourse, in the sense

that critical means scrutinising what is taken for granted in the account, more so than the other two discourses do.

6.5.1 Rejecting dualism

P5. And it's only now I'm working out the personal side of it. And that can be very confusing then, because there were times when I would ask myself, 'am I still a feminist?'[1] I'm beginning to see things very differently [laughter].

You're talking about the story of my life, nearly -- it sounds so familiar [more laughter].

Yes. Yes, and now coming to the place that: 'yes, I am feminist'. And I don't feel as black and white or as straightforwardly as I used to, you know [2].

Yeah, I used to have this thing that there was a proper, a real feminist way to be. And if you're not that way, you can't call yourself that. And like you say, I used the political to work out the personal side of things. I intellectualised and analysed and rationalised all the time, without realising that things were going at a very personal level too. Things that needed a deeper look, in a therapeutic situation -- even though I was aware that the personal is political.

Yes, that's it.

And I began to realise at one stage, just how personal the political goes -- just how deeply inside us, or inside me at any rate, the social is.

Yes, I think a lot of women of our generation -- feminist women [3] -- are beginning to come to that realisation now, to see things like that, in that way. And also things like Greenham Common, you know, where boys over a certain age wouldn't be allowed [4]. That kind of separatist stuff. And seeing now that that was growing out of pain. But also seeing now that that wouldn't be an answer either. You know, that that would be just another violent and painful answer to what we have now [5]. What we have now is a very violent painful kind of society, the way -- what's done to women and what's done to men. But that that wouldn't be an answer either. You know, there's healing for women and there's healing for men and there's some way for women and men to work together. I really disagree with that, as if just by going off on your own you can solve it. And even the therapeutic group I'm in is a mixed

group and a few years ago, I would have said, 'No, I don't want to be in a group with men'. And I don't see things like that at all now. I believe that I can't look at my issues without men, and they can't without women either [6]. You know -- so that would have really changed for me [7]. And I suppose it's about a more holistic look at society and looking at the whole thing of -- that male is bad [8]. And I don't accept that at all, now, I really don't. And I think we put out all our own badness, all the things we didn't like onto men [9].

Projected it --

Yes. And I just wouldn't, I just couldn't go along with that at all now. I think it does me an injustice as well. That by virtue of being a woman, I'm a saint. And I think that that's what was done to women anyway, you know, the virgin or the whore [10]. And I think in some ways, feminism did that again [11]. You know, the Greenham Common stuff and all that, that women have no violence in them. And that's not true, we have violence in us as well [12]. But how we deal with it is the thing. I think we often do it against ourselves, rather than out there. But that's no better.

Yes, and it doesn't move us on.

Yeah, it isn't progressive or growthful, or [long silence].

Comments

1. Effects of the 'real feminist' discourse lingers in her present life.
2. Acknowledgement of multiplicity.
3. Reflects Kristeva's notion of the 'generations' of feminism, especially of having arrived at a third generation, having gone through the other two stages.
4. Recognises the effects of an essentialist and separatist discourse on practice.
5. Awareness of essentialism, its rejection as inadequate, but also acknowledging its origins and necessity in certain situations.

6. The 'issues' of gender difference are read here as relational.
7. Effects of discourse on practice.
8. Recognises the harm essentialism does to men also.
9. Projection of what is repressed in the 'feminine' onto the male is seen as an effect of essentialist discourses, in this instance.
10. Recognition of dualism in patriarchy.
11. Recognition that essentialist feminist discourses reproduce definitions of women which are the same as those produced under patriarchy.
12. Confronting personal identity as it is constructed for her / us in essentialist discourses.

6.6 Commentary on the three discourses and the regimes of truth they provide about gender difference

Feminism signifies differently in all three discourses. In Discourse One, which relies on a notion of essential femininity or female culture, difference is understood as mutually exclusive opposites. Wholeness, where it is pursued as an aim, involves incorporating male and female into one, but not on deconstructing the dualism inherent in the terms. In Discourse Two, difference is understood as an effect of socialisation on a basically androgynous person. Gender is not seen as based on difference, but on socially imposed roles, which are internalised. Discourse Three facilitates awareness of multiple significations. This is explicit where P5 states: 'I don't feel as black or white or as straightforwardly as I used to'. The rest of that account makes it clear that this is not an expression of confusion, but an awareness of multiplicity.

Discourses One and Two have a certain social and explanatory power, because

they are derived from dominant humanist discourses about the human person. Nevertheless, Discourse Two does not have the certainties of Discourse One, because it is not premised so heavily on the idea of an essential femininity. Nor does Discourse Two have the benefit of the radical doubt which is encouraged by using Discourse Three as an explanatory framework.

In Discourse Two, multiplicity is not something which explicitly structures feminism. Nevertheless, the account which I chose as representative of Discourse Two recognises multiplicity. That is, where Discourse Two reaches an explanatory limit, the account has to reach outside the discourse for an explanation. For example, P2 refers to the 'contradictions' which prevent other people from becoming active in feminist initiatives. Her own explicit account uses Discourse Two (socialisation) to explain difference for herself, but acknowledges that it is not enough to explain investment in gender difference for other people: 'But with other people, I can understand that the contradictions are too much and they don't become active' (P2: Section 3.1 above). The experience of contradiction or conflicting explanations and feelings has been recognised as a signifier of multiplicity (Hollway, 1982, 1989, Mama, 1995).

The account which I have chosen as representative of Discourse One also has to reach outside the discourse's central proposition. It recognises gender difference as relational, that is, constructed in social relations in the present: 'if they allowed priests to marry, that might change their thinking, because they would have to think about a few other things, apart from themselves' (P4: Section 2.1 above). P4 is acknowledging here that subjectivity is produced in relations between people. In the next chapter (Chapter Seven), I explore this relational aspect of subjectivity further by taking a closer look at P4's account of her own feminist subjectivity in a specific relational context. Nevertheless, Discourse One's construction of difference encourages separatism as a feminist strategy and therefore doesn't come up against its explanatory limits as often as Discourse Two does.

In theoretical terms, what I have tried to do here is to demonstrate that the model of the unitary rational subject on which Discourses One and Two rely is inadequate for advancing feminist theory and an understanding of feminist subjectivities. Instead, a model that acknowledges multiplicity, dynamism and contradiction is more useful.

None of the participants operates in just one discourse. Operating in Discourse Three necessitates as a prerequisite awareness of the other two and a willingness to draw on them strategically. Operating in this discourse means frequently incorporating the other two as political strategies, while simultaneously asserting the absence of essential female or male natures. However, Discourse Three is that which emerges least in participants' accounts. Discourse Three is more complex and much more difficult to operate in, since so few people recognise it. It is subaltern both in patriarchy and in the practice of feminism. Those who operate in Discourse Three seem to have a high degree of self-awareness and the ability to examine their own complicity or investment in domination and oppression (see Hardt, 1993 on the necessity of this). In contrast, Discourses One and Two encourage a high degree of focus on factors outside oneself, as oppressive, without acknowledgement of personal investment in oppressive structures. This is not to suggest that those operating in Discourse Three are unaware of structural factors in oppression. What it does suggest is that their models of change are distinct from those of participants operating in Discourses One and Two.

6.7 Discourse Four: the 'real feminist' discourse

As B. Ryan (1992: 156) points out, being a 'real' feminist is equated with being radical, and this is connected to the degree of activism one is seen to be engaged in. A primary concern for some feminists is 'the grading of people's feminist activism along a continuum of conservative to radical, which equated with definitions of good and bad, or, as it turned out, as high or low-caste

feminism' (ibid). Some accounts show that participants position or feel themselves positioned by a standard relating to the amount of change they were creating and by a persistent insecurity about what 'being a feminist' (a politicised identity) actually is. This discourse takes change as visible, public change. It is to some extent in conflict with the discourse of 'the personal is political', central to all feminist thought, because so much personal change is invisible to other people. When the direction of change goes from the personal to the political, the conflict is not very severe. Then, changes in attitude or in behaviour are more obvious. But when the personal is political discourse goes in the direction political to personal, in other words when people are engaged in finding out just how personal the political really is, when they are engaged in some of the process work that arises when it is recognised just how deeply ingrained the political structures around us are in our psyche, then the two discourses are in conflict. As P5 put it (already cited in Section 4.1 above):

And I think, then, that for years I was using the political to work out the personal. And it's only now I'm working out the personal side of it. And that can be very confusing then, because there were times when I would ask myself, 'am I still a feminist?' I'm beginning to see things very differently [laughter].

6.7.1 Achieving feminism

People also positioned themselves in the real feminist discourse through ideas of what were 'correct' feminist ways to be.

P9. We used to have debates in college [in the 1970s] about whether you should shave your legs or wear make-up [1]. I remember despising people who did. I had also spent some time in France and saw that a lot of French women didn't remove body hair. I felt very comfortable with it and just couldn't see why people felt the need to do it. Mind you, I wasn't trying to attract what you -- what I thought of as ordinary men. I hung around with a group of people who mostly felt like I did and I also had a boyfriend among them, who was conventionally very attractive. So I didn't have to worry about my hairy armpits putting men off, because I already had one and he wasn't someone that you could call a reject, he was actually

somebody a lot of other women would have liked to go out with. I still don't do it. But I have talked about this to people and I have realised that I'm lucky -- my hair is very fair, not dark. I get a deep tan and it gets even lighter in the summer. Some people have very dark hair and it just gets to them, the look of it, or the way people comment [2], or look, or whatever. Anyway, that was all twenty years ago, I'm much more tolerant now, it doesn't bother me whether people shave their legs or not. Well, it bothers me if they become obsessed with it [3]. But I can understand why people do it.

P12. I spent most of the time you were at college doing your thing fighting my own battle against poverty [4]. Of course, I see now that many of the issues I was concerned with are women's issues, but the idea that I was a feminist only came to me really in the last ten years or so.

Comments

1. Recognition that practices are about other things, that removing body hair can construct a woman as feminine, so the opposite, not removing it, can position one as feminist.
2. Recognition of how people can be interactively positioned in a discourse of femininity and made feel uncomfortable (that is, positioned by other people, not necessarily all of whom are feminists).
3. Obsession with the practice of removing body hair would mean that a person wasn't a feminist. This is a change in position from the way she felt in the 1970s, when any removal was a sign of not being a real feminist.
4. A suggestion that agonizing over whether one is a real feminist is something of a luxury.

6.7.2 Being positioned by other people

P2 feels herself interactively positioned in a discourse of real feminism. She also draws on this discourse to position women who don't give themselves the label feminist:

P2. What strikes me is that a lot of people who are into equality -- whether it's that you are low paid or you have to do the housework or worry about the baby or whatever -- and that some women, even though they want to have all those things will still say, 'well, I'm not a feminist'. And because in some way we still want to -- I don't feel that we have resolved this idea that I am entitled to look well as a woman and whether I choose to put on mascara and lipstick, it really hasn't a lot got to do with whether you're a feminist or not -- the sense you take of looking your best. A lot of women feel that if they like to dress up and like to be feminine, well then they can't be feminists. [1]

I remember [a colleague] attacking me one day. She said, 'Well, I've often seen you using your femininity to get attention from men. I asked who, and she mentioned some names. Now I know that I would have a habit of touching people -- I don't mean sexually -- or I would go over and smile. And the message I was giving people was that when it suited me to wear the equality hat, I wore it and yet I was contradicting myself because I was pleasant to some men in the way I would ask for something or it was interpreted as sexual, even. I was really floored, couldn't believe it. It made me acutely aware that people often expect feminists to be masculine and tough and not to wear nice clothes, and not to have a sense of -- I like my hair up, or down, or something like that [2]. Or not to have a sense that it is okay to flash a smile, that I might equally flash a smile at a woman. but it wouldn't be construed as sexual if I was talking to a woman. If I was talking to a man it would be flirting. So I felt that those contradictions were there for me [3], that they expect the women who are into feminism to be very cold, and assertive alright, and big into arguments and big into politics and political parties [4]. They don't expect someone who teaches home economics and who dresses really nice sometimes to -- there are contradictions, in that people have come back at me [5]. And that does affect the way you think about yourself then, you start asking 'what am I really like?' [6]. It took me some time to resolve being friendly with those men, especially when she was present. Not that I held it against her, but it floored me. And I appreciate that she would be big into equality too, but she would go the other route, that if women aren't in there, it's their own fault and you get up and you do it.

Comments

1. The idea that equality and feminism don't necessarily go together. Feminism is seen as a way of being, as opposed to simply wanting equality. P2 positions women who don't call themselves feminist by referring to popular perceptions of what real feminists are like.

2, 4. A unitary model of the human subject is apparent in the real feminist discourse. Real feminists are all the same.

3. In experiencing contradictions, P2 recognises her multiple subjectivity and the inadequacy of unitary models of either femininity or feminism. She has investments in both of them.

5. She is aware of being positioned by other people in the real feminist discourse (interactive positioning).

6. The positioning affects the construction of her subjectivity.

Commentary

A discursive analysis of the account in Section 7.1 above points to the way that radical feminisms condemn altering the body in ways that conform to stereotypes of female beauty. A psychodynamic analysis is also required, to complement the discursive one. I introduce this idea here, but do not develop it until the end of Chapter Seven, and in Chapter Eight. The psychodynamic explanation of these expressions (cf Mama, 1995:137) of a real feminist discourse, when it comes from women who wonder whether they are real feminists or not, suggests that many women are not as sure of their feminist identity as they would like to be. Daily life involves a continuous confrontation with the reality of women's oppression and the lack of power of feminist discourses in the face of hegemonic discourses of essential female sexuality,

male sexual drive and other manifestations of patriarchy. As well as that, their own multiplicity means that feminists do not simply take up a once and for all position in feminist discourse and thereby take on a new identity, leaving behind older identities. This is probably true of any identity adopted in adulthood, as Mama, (ibid) points out.

A related point, as P2's account in Section 7.2 above shows, is that subjectivity is not only constructed out of our own self-perception, or our own reflexive positioning of ourselves, but out of how others treat us, the ways that they interactively position us. So if we feel effective as feminists, if we are active and achieving feminist aims, as well as seeing ourselves as feminist, we may also feel that others see us as feminist, making our feminist subjectivity more 'real'. This point is developed in Chapter Seven, which examines how subjectivity is constructed in relations with other people.

The 'real feminist' discourse is analysed in Section 7.3 below as an effect of women's positioning in discourses of femininity. I identify it as a non-feminist discourse, which, as shown above, nevertheless forms some of the content of feminist subjectivity, as do other discourses of femininity. In this form it has passed into much media anti-feminism, where feminism is portrayed as unitary and negative and women are urged not to be associated with it.

6.7.3 Femininity having an effect on feminism

That many women feel constantly observed, or subject to the male gaze, was an observation made by Berger (1972). Foucault (1979) provides a model for understanding how subjects become self-regulating. The Panopticon is an architectural model (designed by Jeremy Bentham) for a prison, which consists of a central watchtower surrounded by a circular building divided into cells. It is designed so that each cell and its occupant is visible from the central tower but the tower is not visible from the cells. This arrangement ensures 'that the

surveillance is permanent in its effects' (ibid: 201), without having to be continuous in its action (that is, the supervisor does not always need to be present in the tower). In this model, power is both visible and unverifiable. The inmates are constantly aware that they could be under observation, but they never know from one minute to the next if they are actually being observed. Thus, the Panopticon induces 'a state of conscious and permanent visibility that assures the automatic functioning of power' (ibid, cited in Gavey, 1993: 96).

Bartky has made the following feminist Foucauldian analysis of femininity and has argued:

The woman who checks her make up half a dozen times a day to see if her foundation has caked or her mascara has run, who worries that the wind or the rain may spoil her hairdo, who looks frequently to see if her stockings have bagged at the ankle or who, feeling fat, monitors everything she eats, has become, just as surely as the inmate of the Panopticon, a self-policing subject, a self committed to a relentless self-surveillance. This self-surveillance is a form of obedience to patriarchy. It is also the reflection in the woman's consciousness of the fact that **she** is under surveillance in ways that **he** is not, that whatever else she may become, she is importantly a body designed to please or excite. There has been induced in many women, then, in Foucault's words, a 'state of conscious and permanent visibility that assures the automatic functioning of power'. (Bartky, 1988: 81, cited in Gavey, 1993: 96, original emphasis)

Bartky analyses how some women exercise vigilance over their feminine appearance and connects it with the suggestion that 'a panoptical male connoisseur resides within the consciousness of most women' (Bartky, 1988: 72, cited in Gavey, 1993: 96). If we take that analysis along with B. Ryan's (1992) exposition of a grading of feminist activism, then the existence of the real feminist discourse for some women suggests the existence of a connoisseurship of feminism, a cohort who know what the right ways to be feminist are. Gallop (1988: 116) suggests that while this is often held up as an example of feminist ideology, it is in fact part of dominant patriarchal ideology. It is not feminist, but a residue of patriarchal ideology which some feminists continue to hold unanalysed. How many politicised males operate in that state

of conscious and permanent visibility?

The 'real feminist' discourse relies on the feeling of being observed. Its central proposition, emanating from both anti-feminism and from some who position themselves as feminist, is that there is one correct way to be feminist, relying in turn on the notion of a unitary rational individual who adopts a political identity, from which all other aspects of living take their direction, without contradiction. This could well be connected with the dominant view that there exists a political correctness among feminists. It refuses to acknowledge that feminism is multiple and diverse.

How does this discourse function? Whose interests are served? What are its effects? In some cases, it paralyses people and makes them avoid collectives of feminists. In other cases, it skews recognition of what counts as feminist activity and feminist change. In some cases, people take up positions, or are positioned in discourses of real feminism at the same time as they recognise that the personal is political. This causes feelings of contradiction. The interests served are not those of feminism, or of disrupting gender relations, or of creating better awareness of gender issues.

Movement out of this real feminist discourse, or to a different position within it, seems to follow changes in awareness, combined with changing attitudes to oneself, such as developing self-esteem, a strong sense of self-worth and developing awareness of emotions in self and others. These could be referred to as therapeutic processes (cf Cain, 1993; Connell, 1995), but not just with individual effects. They are connected with political effectiveness and feminist agency. Following Mama (1995), I use the term psychodynamic processes to describe them. They are dealt with in greater detail towards the end of Chapter Seven and in Chapter Eight.

6.8 Conclusion

In this chapter, I have illustrated how three discourses of feminism and one non-feminist discourse carry some of the content of feminist subjectivity. The chapter is by no means a comprehensive list of discourses of feminism. I have tried to show how discourse is multiple and open to modification and how different discourses can compete and overlap in the same account. I have also indicated that a discursive analysis alone is inadequate; relational and psychodynamic analyses are also required.

As well as carrying the content of subjectivity, discourses transmit power relations. They exist within and transmit networks of power, with dominant discourses exercising their hegemony by resonating with and echoing the institutionalised and formal knowledges, assumptions and ideologies of a given social and political order. Feminist discourses are implicated in power-knowledge relations the same as other discourses. But the power of feminist discourse to define practice is limited to a small domain (Hollway, 1989: 54), with the power decreasing from Discourse One through to Three.

Within feminism as portrayed in this chapter, Discourse One, the discourse of an oppressed feminine, appears to dominate and to have the greatest explanatory power, because of its resonance with patriarchal forms of knowledge about women. Discourse Two has less explanatory power and breaks down more often, due to its dependence on socialisation theory, which is unable to account for the complex and contradictory ways that people constitute and reconstitute themselves in the social worlds in which they participate. Yet it continues to have appeal, because of its relation to the dominant humanist model of the subject which has a core identity which is unchanging, but overlaid with social layers.

On the other hand, subaltern discourses also exist in contradiction to hegemonic ones, which subvert the dominant symbolic order and empower oppressed groups through their resonance with alternative ideologies and

cultural practices (ibid). Discourse One operates in this way also. This illustrates the multiplicity of discourses. What is the dominant discourse within feminism is a subaltern discourse in patriarchal relations. The subaltern discourse within feminism is that of feminism as a rejection of male / female dualism (Discourse Three). It finds itself in contradiction to both patriarchal and other feminist discourses. Yet for those who draw on it and operate in it, it has emancipating effects. In addition, its awareness of the existence and value of first two discourses, in specific contexts, gives it, in my view, a greater political refinement and sustainable potential. This is a point which I develop in subsequent chapters.

Discourse analysis as I have used it in this chapter is an interpretative technique. It identifies subject positions which people take up and identifies also the collective assumptions and shared meanings and values that have been cumulatively built up through the collective experience of a group (cf Mama, 1995). Individual subject positions are thus simultaneously social moments, in which the individual takes up particular social positions (Hollway, 1989: 54). Individuals have many discourses and discursive positions available to them, and the positions they take up are momentary, changing with the different social contexts and relations they find themselves in (cf Davies 1989; 1990a, 1990c). Not only do people reflexively take up positions, but they are also interactively positioned by other people, in discourses they do not like, 'against their will', so to speak.

Using the concept of positionality to analyse subjectivity allows for the person to be conceptualised as a historical subject, changing over time and in different contexts. It also facilitates the development of the idea that people have multiple subjectivities. Since various subject positions are available to a given individual at any given moment, she or he may adopt different positions simultaneously, and display contradictions as a result of this. Or she or he may be positioned by somebody else against their will, in a discourse which they resist, and this may also cause contradiction and conflict. 'Subjectivity is

therefore taken to be a process of movement through various discursive positions, as something which is constantly being produced out of social and historical knowledge and experience' (Mama, 1995: 99). This idea of movement in subjectivity is taken up in the next chapter (Chapter Seven), in the discussion of how subjectivity is produced in relations in the present.

CHAPTER SEVEN

SUBJECTIVITY AS A PROCESS OF RELATIONS

7.0 Introduction

Discourses are always being reproduced and modified, therefore no list of them is complete. The discourses discussed in the last chapter do not form a comprehensive description of feminism. They clarify some of the content of feminist subjectivities. The concept of discourse is based on the assumption that a unitary feminism does not exist. Each discourse is brought to life through action (speech or other practices) and the ways that this happens in different situations reflect the positioning (either reflexive or interactive) of the people involved.

Certain discourses have more explanatory power than others and they affect the actions and assumptions of a majority of people. Foucault's work takes this into consideration in his emphasis on the link between knowledge and power. For example, feminist discourses in general have minimal power to challenge gendered power relations in mainstream politics. Within feminism, however, certain discourses, such as the oppressed feminine and the socialisation discourses (Discourses One and Two), have more power than others to filter and explain people's experiences for them. These are the discourses which most closely resemble humanist discourses and which take a unitary subject for granted. It is clear then that the knowledges and discourses constructed by feminists have their own power relations also.

Following Hollway (1982: 290), Faith (1994: 56) and Kenway et al (1994: 190), when I refer to this phenomenon whereby some discourses have more explanatory power than others, I use the terms dominance or hegemony for the more powerful discourses and subaltern or muted for the less powerful ones. The term hegemony also carries the theoretical implications of Gramsci's

(1971) analysis of the power of dominant ideology (Kenway et al 1994: 190). It is consistent with the assertion made throughout this thesis that knowledge production is political and that, therefore, the sites of knowledge production need to be scrutinised.

Just as no list of discourses is ever complete, discourses do not determine the types of subjects produced. They 'texture subjectivity' (Mama, 1995: 111), along with other hegemonic and subaltern discourses, which include discourses of femininity, class, race, ethnicity, age, ability and sexual orientation. Feminism is only one of the many dimensions of subjectivity. Each discourse is responded to in ways that are unique to each individual (Hollway, 1989, 1995). This means that discourses are not constant, monolithic forces acting on passive victims. Instead, they are responded to collectively by the creation of new discourses and by individual movement between discourses (ibid).

7.1 Feminism as a stimulus for individual development

Mama (1995) examines how black women in racist Britain respond to their situations. Drawing on Mama's work, I examine the feminist responses of women living in sexist Ireland to their situations. For those who take up positions in feminist discourses and reject the sexist discourses of the mainstream, the experience of rejecting the dominant can provoke an examination of their identities.

P2. I remember as far back as when I was about twelve, having vicious rows at home, that the boys shouldn't be having their shirts ironed and the girls -- but in reality it would have been in my early twenties, in college, before I would have made the connection that there was some link there between being a feminist and that kind of thinking. So the issue would have hit me much earlier than I equated it with feminism. So until I was in second or third year in college, I wouldn't even have thought of calling what I was thinking equality issues or that being related to feminism. I would have thought more in terms of the unfairness of it, but wouldn't have been able to transfer that into any other kind of language for looking at that type of thing. I remember

having ferocious rows at home about who cooked the dinner and who didn't cook it and I loved cooking, so there were contradictions there for me because I actually loved the work that was supposed to be women's work and yet I had these issues going on as a teenager. Why were the boys prioritised for the dinner, because they were out in the fields? And why was it that when they came in, they could turn on the football match and I had to turn off the radio.

Here, P2 poses an explicit challenge to the discourses that position her as essentially domestic. These are social discourses which she experiences in the relatively private sphere of the family. But she has also a multiple and contradictory identity, because she loves the work that is traditionally associated with women. Building her feminist identity is given impetus by being positioned by other people in sexist discourses. Throughout her entire interview, she emphasises the problems that her talent at traditional women's work has posed for her in terms of the interactive positioning of her as feminist by other feminists and by non-feminists. She contests the dualistic world order which make being feminist and being interested in the domestic sphere mutually exclusive.

P4's feminism was given impetus by more public sexism.

P4. I was really glad to come to Dublin [from Northern Ireland] because it was sort of peaceful -- and then I realised, oh, oh, this is a funny kind of a place. First of all, I discovered, I just missed the marriage bar by a year. I was horrified to discover that people had to resign on marriage, from their jobs, you know, when they were just twenty two or twenty three -- the other thing is of course that contraception was illegal. So you had to bring bags of pills and potions from the north. The other thing was that there were other things happening here, you know, the beginnings of the women's movement and stuff. I was interested in all that, although I wasn't involved in it actively -- I had my daughter and then I tried to go and do a Master's degree. I didn't realise that you couldn't do these things and raise babies at the same time. Well, there was no such thing as a creche.

P4 emphasises here her response to public forms of knowledge about women, in the context of a civil rights awareness, which she mentioned earlier in the interview and also in the context of the women's movement as a social

movement, which she refers to in the extract above.

P20 had considered herself a feminist for many years before the birth of her children, and describes as important in the construction of her feminist identity the marriage bar, the lack of contraception and the sexual double standard. She also emphasises her responses to childcare and other labour expectations in the less public sphere of the home as a crucial part of a process of constructing a feminist subjectivity. With the birth of her children, she had what she considers further radical insights into feminist discourses and the need for feminism and she was impelled to become publicly active as a feminist, in addition to making feminist changes in her home life.

P20. But I think when I had the kids, well, before I had them, there was a bit of a gendered division of labour at home. But after I had them, I was so angry and cross and everything like that at the amount of work that I had to do in order to keep going. It's impossible to strike, to hold out and not do it, because things would be so bad if it wasn't done, with the children. So I felt -- I became very depressed at that time.

How did you cope with that, I don't mean with the depression so much as with the labour?

I felt really and truly helpless and I suppose that was when I took a strong position as regards feminism. I felt that this is really what feminists are talking about. Any experience I had until then, like the threat of sexual violence, being undermined at work or getting shitty jobs, that **nothing** I experienced up until then was what feminism was really and truly about.

Labour in the home.

Yes, it was incredibly strong. You know, I can still feel how frustrated and angry I felt.

(This account is quoted more fully later in the chapter and given a more detailed analysis.)

P10 talks about her first encounter with a discourse of human rights, in a personal development course, as the first impetus in the process of developing

her feminist subjectivity.

P10. I remember the day we did the human rights. I could hardly take it all in. [The facilitator] gave us a lot of time to read and think about each one. We had to pick out one that was special. I found that hard, because they were all so new and so important. Anyway, I picked the first one: 'I have the right to be treated with respect as an intelligent, capable human being'. My hand was shaking. I had never thought of anything like that before [1]. I could feel my hand shaking and my voice trembling when I read it out as my special one. I thought I was going to start crying [2]. Before we went home, [the facilitator] asked each person what the morning was like for them, and I remember saying it was so little to ask-- [long pause]

To ask?

To ask -- to be treated with respect as an intelligent, capable human being.

Before that day, before you read the human rights, how did you think about yourself?

I don't really know, I didn't really think about myself at all. That day was a beginning [3]. I'm not saying that made everything easy from there on, but that was the start of a change [4].

Comments

1. Introduction to a new discourse (of equality and rights).
2. Illustrates the power and emotional resonance of a discourse of equality which was heretofore unknown to her. Knowledge has an emotional component.
3. P10 begins an awareness of her own subjectivity, through exposure to a new discourse.
4. Awareness of movement, in this case taking up a position in a particular discourse for the first time.

For P13, falling in love with a woman provided the stimulus to call herself

feminist.

P13. When I fell in love with [her partner], I knew I wanted this to continue. Admitting to myself that I was a lesbian was hard in a lot of ways, but in other ways, it felt very right to be in this relationship. I knew it was the right thing, I felt that I had finally discovered my true self, my real identity. But I needed help -- more help than friends could give, even feminist friends -- I needed to work through the emotional upheaval that was going on inside me. It took me a while to find a therapist I was happy with. But I knew I really wanted the relationship to work, so I persevered, I knew there was a lot of personal stuff to be dealt with in order to be able to give and take with [her partner].

What sort of therapist were you looking for?

Someone with a feminist consciousness. Up to then, I never called myself a feminist or got involved with groups or stuff like that. I always thought I was one, but that other feminists wouldn't think I was. But I felt I was really up against it now, that this issue of being lesbian was a feminist issue as much as anything else and that I needed a feminist therapist, or at least one with feminist sympathies, feminist awareness. It's funny, like, I never considered it important before to do anything public, or identifiably feminist. Now, it seemed important -- not just important, relevant, I suppose you could say.

Did the therapy relate -- I mean, was it relevant -- to your feminism?

Oh God, yes, absolutely, it was -- all sorts of things happened for me. It was only after that that I got the self-confidence to call myself a feminist. That was the first time I ever used that label for myself. A lot of things were involved, but mainly I think it was the self-confidence to name what -- what I had always believed, and also the way I had always lived, as feminist. You know, I had always lived as a strong independent woman who cared about other women's lives. And I suppose I just didn't name it publicly as feminist.

Commentary

In the accounts cited above, feminist identity is stimulated and constructed, at least partly, by becoming aware of oppression in the family arena, by being introduced to the concept of human rights, by a general awareness of living in a sexist society, by a consideration of sexuality and relationships. For the women whose accounts are cited, feminist discourses were available to mediate their

experiences of discrimination and oppression. Discursive movement and changes in position were experienced as empowering by them. In theoretical terms, the relationship between their particular situations and the available discourses helped them to construct feminist identities for themselves. Feminist subjectivities were constructed in processes over time. The subjectivities are not fixed. They are not the same now as they were at the time of the interviews.

Hollway (1982: 385) points out that the particular positions in specific discourses which a person takes up and how they signify to themselves (that is, how their subjectivity is constituted) as feminist at any particular moment, depends on the point at which the diachronic and synchronic axes of meaning intersect. Feminist identity, then, can be seen as the point where a person's position and history in feminist discourse (the diachronic axis) intersects with relations in the present (the synchronic axis). 'The diachronic axis provides the history of recursive positioning in discourses. The synchronic axis provides the specific relation in which significations are negotiated, as a function of positions in discourse' (ibid). The signifier feminist thus achieves its meaning in a relational context, at the particular points where the axes intersect. These points are different for every person and they also vary within the same person (ibid).

7.2 The relational production of subjectivity

The fact that subjectivity is relational is due to power differentials (Hollway, 1989: 60). People take up positions which will give them enough power to protect their vulnerable selves in difficult situations. In the next extract, P4 describes a situation where her positioning in Discourse One left her vulnerable and she had to position herself in a different discourse to gain power. In doing this, not only did she want to protect herself, but she also wanted to protect a women's network and the principle of women's culture. Earlier in the

interview from which the account is taken, it became clear that the dominant discourse within which P4 situates her feminism is the discourse of an oppressed female culture (Discourse One). However, in the meetings which she describes below, if she had continued to allow that discourse to dictate her positioning, she would have been marginalised and powerless. She says, 'It was a sort of a battle of strengths, in a sense. I knew that if there was any chink in the armour at all, that the whole thing was gone' (full quote below).

P4. Actually, it was interesting, there was a huge kind of backlash thing against the local groups and we went through a very difficult period where I had to organise and chair meetings. And there were guys in there who -- you know, I'm talking about politicians, local councillors -- who use all this legal stuff to try and really shaft you and I thought, 'No, I am not going to allow them to do this'. But what I had to do was I had to use tactics that they employed, which didn't, which I don't care to use myself. But I thought, 'No, in this situation, you're going to have to.' [1].

What did you have to do?

Shaft the bastards [laughter]. I won't really tell you all the things I had to do. There were a couple of guys there who decided, who tried to take out the local groups. They tried everything. Legally, they tried to talk you down in the chair, they tried everything you could think of. And I just thought, 'I'm not going to allow this to happen, I am not going to allow it to happen'. And I didn't. I had a support group around me, but at the end of the day, it was a sort of battle of strengths, in a sense [2]. I knew that if there was any chink in the armour at all, the whole thing was gone down the tubes. I really knew that. It took an awful lot of energy, it was very stressful, but, in time, it worked. Now it's funny really, because as I say, I didn't feel comfortable using those tactics, they're sort of bullying tactics, if that's what you'd like to call them, or they're very aggressive ones. But sometimes that's the way you have to operate, you know, to survive [3]. So that, actually, I decided to do that, to be very pragmatic about it. I haven't had to do it again, but I would do it again if I had to. I would have no difficulty doing it again if I had to. I think that wouldn't happen to a guy in the chair, you know.

You think they saw you as a soft target?

Initially, yes. But they very quickly realised that that wasn't the case, yes. It took about two meetings, that's all. And in fact, that challenge came at almost the first meeting I conducted. It's interesting now that I

think back on it. I think they thought it would be easy [4].

It wasn't just a challenge to you, it was a challenge to the way the local groups were organised. In other words, it was a whole culture they were fighting.

Oh, absolutely, that's right. And I think when you're working in a group like that, you personify it in some way, or you're seen to be leading it [5]. So I think those were the sorts of things that, in the educational sphere, the reason I wanted to hang on in there and still would, is that I have a basic belief in adult education anyway, I believe in the development of the women's sector. I really do. I think it's just a lot of untapped potential. But I think it's very difficult to organise and when we encourage women to come up from the ground, it takes a long time to get into positions where you can really use your power [6]. It really does, it's very difficult.

Comments

1. Recognition that the discourse of feminism as an expression of women's culture is subaltern in comparison with dominant discourses in mainstream culture. It has outsider status in this situation and cannot influence the 'ball game' in insider culture. Continuing to operate within it in these circumstances will marginalise it even further. There is also recognition of the importance of circumstances in the present moment, in deciding how to act.
2. Enactment of personal authority in her conduct of the meetings, by drawing on a different discourse and positioning herself in it, in order to be agentic and affect the 'ball game'.
3. Recognition of the power relations involved. Recognition of the necessity of taking up a position which will give her enough power to protect the women's networks, even if this is at odds with the culture of the networks themselves.
4. Recognition that her opponents at the meetings also make a similar reading of the power differentials between the two discourses. They thought it would be easy to defeat her, because they assumed that P4 would continue to operate

within the subaltern discourse.

5. Drawing on the dominant discourse gives a more powerful status to the women's networks, and possibly to the subaltern discourse of feminism (in relation to the mainstream), on which they draw for explanations.

6. Recognition of the power differentials between the discourses again, along with recognition of the slowness and difficulties of change.

Commentary

By positioning herself in a dominant discourse, outside feminist discourse altogether, P4 is able to play her opponents at their own game and win. Capable of acting in many discourses in their various manifestations, what decides the particular discourse she draws on from moment to moment at the meetings she talks about, is present circumstances, specific relations in which significations and agency are negotiated. Nevertheless, although she takes up a position in a dominant discourse for the strategic purpose of gaining power, that dominant discourse is modified by her reflexive positioning in feminist Discourse One. Once she has got what she wants, she does not continue to position herself in the dominant discourse.

7.2.1 A collective strategy

P16. We were involved in this project [a specially funded project for children at risk of early school leaving] in school and because of the special funding that this project had, we were able to have regular meetings of the staff involved, with an outside facilitator, and one of the issues that began to come up was the gender balance in the class involved in the project and then, later, in all the classes in the school. There was a lot of sexually abusive language going on between the two girls and the twelve boys in the group concerned. In the beginning, they were seen as just horrible people [1]. P17 and I talked a lot about it to each other and we thought very similarly on it, that it was a gender

issue [2] and that something needed to be done about the gender balance in groups in the future. Eventually, the other staff on the project began to see it from that point of view and as a group we made a recommendation to the management that there should be something about gender balance. P17, do you want to talk about it?

P17. Um, yeah. It seemed to me that we had to be really careful about it [3]. We knew from experience that going in with all guns blazing on a gender issue didn't work [4]. But we didn't want to go along -- but if we started talking about it in those technical terms, and about the need to examine school structures, if we started that straight away, we would have alienated the rest of them from the start [5].

P16. I mean, some of the time, I thought I would go crazy, bringing it up at every meeting and being restrained about my own opinions, just stating the problem over and over and saying, 'This is a problem for everyone in the class, what can we do?', or words to that effect [6]. Mind you, we had a great facilitator for the meetings. I know he's aware of gender issues, because of things he has written and said in other arenas. I think he knew what was going on. How many meetings did we have before it got taken seriously? Eight, ten?

P17. About that, yeah. We were able to let off steam to each other though. That was important. I'm not sure if I could have done it on my own [7].

P16. Me neither. Through talking to you about it, I began to see how some of the men were threatened by us, by our ideas-- and by our anger, I suppose, when we let them see it [8]. There was one time near the start of the project that I had a huge row with one of them, over the same kind of thing, though not specifically about gender, but about working out of a deficit model of the kids. Of course, that wasn't the language I used. I really lost my cool over it and so did he, in front of the group. After that, P17 and I talked a lot about it and we really decided to keep it cool and play a game to get what we wanted. And it wasn't just to get what we wanted, but what we believed in [9].

What happened in the long run?

P17. We began to develop a good relationship with one of the older men , an A post holder, very influential, but involved in the project just as an ordinary subject teacher. We sort of cultivated his good will towards us and towards our ideas [10]. I mean, after meetings, we used to say to each other 'he's beginning to move, he's coming over to our side'. That's how it felt, I think you'd agree, would you, P16?

P16. Oh yeah, that's exactly how we used to talk about it. When he began to see it in terms of gender, he carried the others with him. They were all men, some of them teaching here thirty years, really set in their

opinions, probably couldn't care less what happened to the girls. [The A post holder] suggested making some kind of recommendation about gender balance in classes to the management, from the group as a whole. That was a great day [11]. They listened to him. We were so pleased. It wasn't just a recommendation coming from us, the well known feminists on the staff, who were dismissed as extreme [12] most of the time, but it was coming from all these men who normally didn't get involved in issues like that. And it was supported strongly by this influential person in the group.

Yes --

P17. We managed to make a mainstream challenge out of something that was earlier just a marginal challenge [13] from two women teachers who were seen as a bit awkward, feminist, and, like P17 says, extreme. And that was a feminist success for me [14]. We plugged away at for maybe six weeks and it was really difficult not to be angry and screaming at them to do something. Looking back on that, I see it as a success, in that we got a group of men teachers who had been there thirty years and were mostly very complacent about issues like that to actually go to the management and ask for a change [15].

P16. I think it also shows you how we felt as feminists within the school, that we felt it would be better, have a better chance of succeeding coming from them than from just the two of us [16]. But we did manage to make them think about it. I look on that as an educational success, the fact that they thought about the issue and moved on it, not just passively followed whatever was happening. Them thinking about it was just as important for me as any direct consequences for the girls in the group [17]. I think they learned something. I look on that as more of a success than a lot of other things I've done in my time. But we almost had to do it by stealth.

P17. We knew from experience that we couldn't be open about it and get anywhere [18]. We had to be devious about it.

You weren't really being devious about it, you could call it being strategic, along with being assertive in not letting it drop.

P17. Yes, strategic, I suppose, but that meant we had to really hold back. We couldn't show our emotions about it. We did have to work at it strategically, you're right, we had to say, 'When is the right time to bring this up, when is the right time to push, when is the right time to lay off?' It was really difficult [19].

P16. It relates back to what we were talking about earlier, about how, when you push, a person becomes defensive. So it's like a long-term strategy -- that you hold off at the time. And I don't think we were --

that they didn't consent to it all [20].

P17. By the end, I suppose, they kind of owned it. And in fact, I would never have been able to do that, in that situation at school, if I hadn't worked out how to make changes at home. I really would never have been able to make those connections. I suppose it's very much like learning how to take people where they are at, you know [21].

Comments

1. The dominant model of the girls in the school is a deficit one: they are deficient in relation to the school norms.
2. A gender perspective constitutes an explicit challenge to the dominant model.
- 3, 5. Playing down the political viewpoint is necessary for strategic reasons.
4. Recognition of the vulnerability of a feminist perspective.
6. Drawing on a child-centered discourse, which does not pose such a threat to the dominant model, as a feminist or gender analysis.
- 7, 9. Emphasis on the importance of a collective approach from the feminists in the group.
8. The two women recognise other people's emotional investments in the positions they occupy. This includes their own investment in a feminist position.
10. They try to find common ground, as a strategic measure.
11. It is important that they do more than analyse the situation from a feminist perspective, they want to be able to effect change also, that is, to be agentic.
12. Feminism is mostly seen as extreme, but now a feminist initiative is coming

from within the mainstream, even if it is not explicitly named as feminist.

13, 14. Again, it is important for the women to be agentic.

15, 17. The effects on non-feminists, that is, the girls and the other staff, are important and are part of the process of being agentic. There is also a pedagogical dimension to the way they want to relate to the other staff.

16, 18. Recognition of feminism's vulnerability and susceptibility to marginalisation.

19, 20, 21. Explicit recognition of the use of strategy to achieve feminist agency and to produce certain ways of thinking (knowledge) in their colleagues.

Commentary

There is a pedagogical focus in this case, in that the women wanted their colleagues to learn something and to own that learning. Again, this case illustrates that subjectivity in its relational aspects is connected to power. In this case, the power relation is twofold. The women want to protect themselves from vulnerable and being 'defeated' in their efforts to get gender balance seriously considered at the meeting. They also want to see the other staff members change their position to something nearer a feminist position, even if the others do not name it as such. Hence, they take up a position in a child-centered, humanist discourse vis a vis the other staff members, recognising their colleagues' emotional involvement in the anti-feminist discourses and the threat to them if they shift positions. They also take up a tactical position of not pressurising them. In a strategic move, they avoid acting recognisably in a feminist discourse, which would allow their colleagues to position them as extremists and thereby dismiss them. Importantly, in this case, the two women mount their challenge in a collectively worked strategy.

They convince each other that what they are doing is worthwhile, and they support each other in their frustration and anger, because the end result will have feminist effects for the girls in the class and on their colleagues.

7.3 The difficulties of acting strategically, in order to produce feminist agency

In the sections above, I have conceptualised both pedagogy and subjectivity in terms of recursive relationships between discourse and situation in the present moment. This conceptualisation has meant analysing the effects and limitations of various feminist discourses in the everyday world. Where feminist discourse of whatever hue has minimal capacity to challenge the mainstream dominant discourses, feminists can resort to strategically drawing on the dominant discourses in order to ultimately gain power for the feminist discourses. As Harré (1979: 405) puts it: 'The task of the reconstruction of society can be taken up by anyone at any time in any face-to-face encounter'. But the trick is to have others recognise and accept the discourse through which the reconstruction is taking place (Davies, 1990c: 137).

The combination of discourse and situation draws attention to the contradictions that exist for feminist women when acting in the interests of feminism in situations where not all of the actors are feminists: they have to operate outside of their preferred explanatory framework. This draws attention to the collective nature of feminism and feminist agency, as it is not enough for a feminist woman herself to identify as feminist. She wants to have feminist effects on other people, for her politics to have a collective or a social effect.

B. Ryan (1992) points out that achieving social change is different from being successful in winning specific goals. The question of what constitutes success has to be considered in the present social movement environment of media manipulation and professionalism of movement organisers. Drawing in money

and numbers of demonstrators may well be more related to professional organisers' responses than to citizens' responses (ibid: 175). One of the unifying features of feminism is that it aims to affect the lives of all women, not just those who sign up as feminists, or accept the label. It is not just about saying, 'Yes, I support the ideal'. It is about having practical effects on daily life. To this end, all women and men, feminist and non-feminist, are an important component in the achievement of feminist goals. The nature of the target group is thus so diverse that the meaning of the term radical varies greatly, and important changes which people make may not always be easily visible to observers. As Irigaray puts it:

I think the most important thing to do is to expose the exploitation common to all women and to find the struggles that are appropriate for each woman, right where she is, depending upon her nationality, her job, her social class, her sexual experience, that is upon the form of oppression that is for her the most immediately unbearable (cited in Bono and Kemp, 1991: 13).

For P16 and P17, being recognised as feminist in the situation they describe in Section 7.2.1 is less important than achieving change within the social world of their school. The men in the staff group are as important in the achievement of their goals as the young women who were the subject of their concern to start off with. Building a feminist identity in this case is given impetus by the desire to achieve feminist change, even if this means not asserting themselves openly as feminists at the meetings. Their identity is consolidated for them in the success of their strategy. Every day that goes by 'successfully' for a feminist woman adds to the production and reproduction of her feminist identity (Hollway, 1982: 425).

In identifying the intersection of discourses and situation as important, I am continuing with the project of trying to find out what organises somebody's words and practices, that is, of how meaning is created. A person's words and practices are only half the person's. They are brought to completion by the group (cf McDermott and Tylbor, 1987: 160). The analysis of the language and practices used in a group or by a group can lead us back to social structure

and the institutionalisation of certain practices. It can be seen as necessary to collude with these practices, in order to modify them and cause them to signify differently from the dominant significations. Collusion literally means a playing together (from the Latin *col-ludere*). Less literally, it refers to how members of any social order must constantly interact with each other to posit a particular state of affairs (ibid: 154). In examining the ways that P4, P16 and P17 collude with the dominant structures of the groups they find themselves part of, then we get an idea of the institutional constraints on feminist discourses. The feminists in question have to align themselves to a certain extent with the dominant discourses, in order to make links with feminist discourses and to achieve change. The boundaries between discourses are seen to be fluid.

This kind of analysis not only gives us an account of social structure, but an account of the tools that people use to build social structure (ibid: 164) or change existing structures. Along with language, issues like choice, collusion and strategy become significant. Although they do not always show up in a conversational transcript of the situations where they took place, we can point them out in an analysis which draws on our real-world knowledge about settings and possible responses afforded us through participants' accounts. The participants cited here had analysed their own actions to the extent that they were clear that they were acting strategically and engaging with dominant discourses.

The situations described provide practical fields of deployment for the different discourses, constituting the relations-in-the-present, or the situational dimension of subjectivity. This dimension of subjectivity is at least half constituted by positioning in discourse and half constituted by the attributions of others (ibid). The collusion and choice referred to arise out of feminists' concerns with feminist effectiveness and agency. A sense of agency is important for a feminist subjectivity to sustain itself and to continue to construct itself as feminist.

Reviewing situation and discourse to see how they intersect to produce

feminist significations can give insight into the ways that they contribute to the construction of ideology, identity and subjectivity. Social categories such as feminist are constituted in discourses and these can vary in relation to the ideological purpose for which the discourse is employed and the strategic choices which are made. The concepts of movement, positionality, agency, choice, strategy and collusion can illustrate the variable, inconsistent and highly negotiable content of social identity. The next section (Section 4) examines these issues in the domain of heterosexual couple relations, as distinct from the work relations analysed in Section 2.

7.4 Feminist agency in the heterosexual dynamic

P20. But I think when I had the kids, well, before I had them, there was a bit of a gendered division of labour at home. But after I had them, I was so angry and cross [1] and everything like that at the amount of work that I had to do in order to keep going. It's impossible to strike, to hold out and not do it, because things would be so bad if it wasn't done, with the children [2]. So I felt -- I became very depressed at that time.

How did you cope with that, I don't mean with the depression so much as with the labour?

I felt really and truly helpless [3] and I suppose that was when I took a strong position as regards feminism. I felt that this is really what feminists are talking about. Any experience I had until then, like the threat of sexual violence, being undermined at work or getting shitty jobs, that **nothing** I experienced up until then was what feminism was really and truly about [4].

Labour in the home.

Yes, it was incredibly strong. You know, I can still feel how frustrated and angry I felt. Really fucking raging I was about it. Really so helpless [5]. I remember, one time, there was a row about who cleaned the toilet in your house. Can you remember that?

I'm sure there was, cos there have been so many rows about it.

Yes. And it just hit home to me so much, how universal it all was. How much men look as if they're doing their bit and you still have women

cleaning the toilets. So it was really around that time that my thinking just crystallised and I was really thinking, I was reading, my mind was going all the time.

But how did you work it out at home?

Well, it was eight years later really that it started getting worked out. And it's the problem that Simone de Beauvoir mentioned, that the problem is that the enemy is someone that you're living with. Someone that you probably love [6]. And how can you bring around some kind of way of working things out if one person is so stubborn.

If the other person has no motivation to change, how do you make them change, or how do you change what is going on?

That's right. And when you think of some of the psychology that says that the only person you can change is yourself, that's a really dangerous thing. Well, obviously, in your day-to-day life, the only person you can change is yourself. But it cannot stop you from generating awareness of what actually is going on. The other person might refuse to change, but it's not because you're not showing that this is grossly unjust [7]. And it really comes down to that: injustice. Would you have felt the gendered division of labour in the house?

Oh god, yes. But I also felt a bit that I took it all on, because I wanted to be -- perfect. In a way, there was a bit of the victim mentality about me. And it's only in the last couple of years I've learned to do something about it [8], the kind of power that came to me with the victim status [9]. I think I've learned, at least I've learned to recognise it and in a lot of cases, let it go. I mean, I used to do things like doing [my husband's] laundry. I don't know why, well, I do know why. I thought I had left behind the things I had been brought up with [10], but I still used to think, well, I'm putting my clothes in the wash, so I'll put his in as well. But he never reciprocated. Now I just don't do it. I don't care if he hasn't got -- I used to feel sorry for him if he didn't have clothes [11]. So it was only when I learned to let go of that stuff in myself that I was able to make changes. So in a way I kind of agree that you can only change yourself, but that can certainly change the pattern. That's why I liked the Dance of Anger. That really helped me to look at things, the patterns [12], and to work out strategies. But that was one of the reasons I thought I could never have a child, that that pattern, the division of labour would be crystallised. And there was no way I was going to get stuck in that. I thought, maybe some day I will learn to change it, but if I have a child, I won't, it will be too late. That's why I really admire someone who manages to make changes after they have children, because I think it must be extremely difficult, because of the emotional tie with your children. You're not

going to neglect your children or see them neglected [13].

What I think happened was something like you were saying about doing the laundry, that is that I never resented in any way doing things for the kids. But I resented having to clear our mutual space. Some of the mess was made by [her husband].

You don't mind clearing up after yourself.

Or your children, but after another adult I really hate. And what was really clear to me was that I fell into a pattern of looking after [her husband]. And when we had the children, it was established [14]. And it was really so sick. And the solution, like **not** doing something -- I mean, now I have absolutely no problem about not doing his side of the room or anything like that, but when I started that, I saw myself as this petty [15] person, who had drawn a line down at the end of the bed, and over that line wasn't mine, whereas [her husband], he was too broadminded. It was petty of me, whereas he, he would never be caught up in these petty things. And if he was doing it, then he would do the whole lot. But of course, he never did it. So I was sort of seduced by this idea that what I was doing was being petty [16], he had of right, this sort of broad vision of us all being in this together. And yet I ended up doing the housework.

And did you try talking about this to him?

I'd say that I tried everything. I tried talking, I tried sulking [17], I became really depressed. I used to fantasise about writing to his mother, saying 'why didn't you do this, why didn't you do that?' [laughter], making it out to be another woman's fault.

And what marked the turning point, the turnaround?

No strategy that I came up with worked, that is, talking, sulking, fighting, crying, depression [18]. I heard on a TV programme once that you have to fight for what you want, so I started fighting. But all it showed was how I powerless I was, it was just useless. So really what changed everything was my withdrawal from the family [19]. It was, it was just so painful [20]. And with that came a change. I was still doing work, but I was emotionally separated. And then I began to be physically more away from the house. With that, then, [her husband] made changes, cooking, he took more responsibility for housework. He started reflecting on his behaviour and things like that. That's what changed it really [21].

He had no choice, if he wanted things done, he had to do them himself.

He had no choice with regards to the work. If he wanted a dinner, he

had to cook it. But the reflection part was of crucial importance [22]. He really has changed. So while he was adamant about not changing, or about not seeing any flaws in himself, it was unbearably painful for me. But once he started changing, things became much easier [23]. What was interesting about the dynamic that was keeping him unchanged, and that was my pressure. Do you know what I mean, that made him take up a defensive position [24]. And I won't draw any broader applications from that at all, but it certainly showed that I had to stop applying pressure, for him to change.

Well, I have found something similar. That if I apply pressure to [my husband], okay, he might do something different for a short period. But it's not a long-term change. But if I withdraw a certain service, like the laundry service or something, not only does it make him wash his own clothes, but it does make him reflect a bit about, you know -- I think it makes him realise how much time goes into it. The very acts of picking stuff off the floor and putting them in the machine and taking them out and hanging them up [25]

That's right, because it looks like a trivial job, doesn't it really?

Yeah. Shaking, folding, putting them into drawers when they're dry. When you could be sitting reading the paper or doing the crossword.

Yes. And then the mental space it takes up is crucial. I mean, that is the biggest difference I would see in [her husband] is that he never thought about what was going to be for dinner. Never, never. Now he has to say in the morning, what will we have for dinner this evening. And go to the shop, or whatever.

Comments

1, 3, 5. Strong feelings indicate contradictory positioning in feminist and feminine discourses. P20 positions herself as feminist, yet this is having no effect on relations. She is denied feminist agency and is positioned by her husband in a sexist discourse, as well as positioning herself in a sexist discourse with practical consequences, because she continues to do the housework.

2. The discourse of motherhood is inseparable from discourses of 'woman' and she is positioned in this motherhood discourse also. These provide the positions which are most available, or 'easiest' to take up, in spite of her

simultaneous self-positioning as feminist, which she has done for many years.

4. A new situation helps her to see more about feminism. Yet, acting on the terms of her new vision is not easy (cf Lewis, 1993: 183).

6. Statement of a central problem for heterosexual feminists.

7. Indicates the limitations of reasoning, argument, persuasion when striving for feminist agency.

8. Learning to act is equated with repositioning oneself with agency

9. I had already carried out some self-analysis in this regard.

10. Assumption that becoming a feminist meant that I had jettisoned sexist and 'feminine' discourses.

11. But feeling sorry for my husband is in contradiction to the feminist discourses I had adopted.

12. Identification of what was previously repressed, or denied.

13. Recognition that discourses of motherhood are powerful and inseparable from discourses of woman.

14. The dominant discourses of woman were what decided the pattern of her domestic work, although she had identified herself as feminist for many years.

15. Contradictions are experienced again. In feminist terms, not tidying after her husband is a success, but her use of the word 'petty' to describe herself indicates ambivalence, guilt, about not doing something which she decided on as a result of her feminism.

16. In reading herself as 'petty', she is reading herself through sexist discourses. These are the dominant discourses and they are part of the relations of power which affect the production of meaning or signification. The reading

of herself which she makes through the more powerful or hegemonic discourse defines the situation and positions other subjects in relation to it. In this case, the positioning is in a discourse where mothers and wives are mature, broadminded, forgiving, generous and certainly not petty. This goes some way to explaining how Foucault's power / knowledge couplet works.

17, 18. Again, the futility of reason and this time also, emotion, in effecting change.

19. The beginnings of changing a dynamic.

20. The emotional consequences of change. Her presentation of herself as somebody withdrawing is situated in contrast to her love for family. Discourses about women and / or feminists are never wholly free from the ideology of woman-as-mother, wives as generous and forgiving (see also note 16). To act this way, by withdrawing, takes continuous struggle against dominant assumptions about who is responsible for the housework and family. And it still carries connotations of being unnatural.

21, 22. Although it is painful, there are gains: his work and his reflection.

23. A dynamic is changed, and it becomes possible to make different readings of the situation.

24. P20 has to change her discursive positioning through **action**, or, more accurately, through not acting. Neither reasoning, nor emotion (see comment 17, 18) achieves this. By effecting change in her positioning in an agentic way, she interrupts her husband's positioning in sexist discourses.

25. It must be clear by now to the reader that a lot of feminist signification within heterosexual relations for me is produced in the context of domestic laundry (my synchronic axis intersects here with feminist meaning along the diachronic axis).

Commentary

Throughout the extract, P20 recognises the different forms that knowledge takes. Anger and frustration are forms of emotional knowledge which combine with feminist discourses. She recognises also that practices, in this case, heterosexual couple relationships, can be about other things, in this case, the maintenance of a patriarchal order.

P20's new positioning, achieved through acting (in the form of stopping doing something, and withdrawal) is threatening an identity investment in the discourse of femininity and motherhood. Much dominant discourse says that women have to be either / or. If a woman is doing something feminist, then she cannot be 'feminine'. Pain and feelings of contradiction, guilt or ambivalence arise because every woman's discursive history (albeit in unique ways) has shown her that she can gain some power through being 'feminine'. With power comes emotional investment. Therefore, consciously positioning oneself as feminist and therefore as 'not feminine' means leaving some of that power and divesting oneself of the related emotional investment. The dualism feminist / feminine does not exist solely 'out there' in discourses, but in women's personal sense of themselves. People are never positioned in only a single discourse.

Being radical in a feminist context has long been connected to the degrees of activism one is seen to be engaged in (B. Ryan, 1992: 156 - 7). Activism or agency could be seen as doing things which achieve social relations that are radically different from in the past. It took P20 a long time, as she puts it. And this process of working on her individual development within this context has constructed her subjectivity in ways unique to her, out of an interactive relationship between her situation and feminist discourses. In addition, she recognises that politicised knowledge can be constructed in pedagogical relationships. They are sites for feminist activism.

P20. When [her first child] was about six months old, I wrote to [her local adult education organiser] and asked if I could do women's studies. I

wasn't really clear about what women's studies were, but I knew I could do it. And I knew that it came from that experience [of division of labour in the home]. And I suppose that was really my first translation into action.

That's a direct connection between your situation in your home and wanting to be in education.

That's right. Yes. And it was as clear as that. No doubt at all that one led to the other. And I felt really -- that I was doing something as well. And the fact that I could get paid for it as well was just wonderful. But I would actually have done it for nothing, I felt so strongly. It was a fantastic experience for me. I still couldn't resolve lobbying, or -- well, I could lobby on a small scale and I could speak at meetings on a small scale. But this is really the way I am an activist.

7.5 Finely balanced strategies which depend on situations in the present moment

Even in the previous chapter (Chapter Six), where I discussed three feminist discourses separately, it was apparent in some of the analyses that the discourses broke down occasionally and did not have unitary explanatory power. This was due to the unique nature of each situation a feminist describes or finds herself in. In this chapter, I have used the concepts of movement, positionality, agency, choice, collusion and strategy, in order to discuss the weakening of the boundaries and the fluidity of discourses in relational situations in the present. Through these concepts, meaning and signification are shown to be fluid also. How something signifies as feminist depends on both the discourse and the situation and the unique ways that these combine for feminists.

Achieving change in the arena of gender, in both personal and / or in social relations, is central to whether something signifies as feminist and to the construction and consolidation of the subjective sense of oneself as feminist. Being proactive about feminism in certain situations can paradoxically mean

the strategic playing down of feminist discourse. Behaviour or strategy like this could be described purely as contradictory. However, within the theoretical framework which I have adopted, acting thus is not just contradictory, but is evidence of the relational, dynamic and multi-layered nature of subjectivity. Nevertheless, the strategies are finely balanced. In playing down feminist discourses for strategic reasons, it is easy to become completely taken in by the dominant sexist discourses (cf Thompson, 1996: 12): We need to be vigilant, imaginative and courageous in order to make sure this does not happen (ibid).

P16. You have to be so careful. You want them to think you're a decent human being, so that they will listen to you and your ideas and maybe change the ways they act. But if you're too willing to listen, they assume you're agreeing with them, and next thing, you're being treated like one of them and it's too late to pull back.

7.6 Multiple feminist subjectivities

I have demonstrated how different individuals draw on different resources in the course of their personal development as feminists. The process of construction of subjectivity is not a simple, linear process of evolution with a 'proper' feminism as the teleological end of moving steadily and unidirectionally through successive positions. It is often debated whether Kristeva's stages are to be seen as one better than the other, or as existing all at once (see Chapter Two, Section 3.5). The analyses which I have made in this work suggest that the stages are like various different options which are more or less continuously available to individual women and on which they draw in unique combinations, depending on relations in the present and their own personal histories. Like Mama (1995: 117) in her study of black radical women, 'What I wish to draw attention to here is the coexistence of subject positions and the movement of the individual between them in the present -- in other words, the multiplicity of subjectivity'. In this section, I approach the point of entry to the multiplicity of subjectivity as the multiplicity of ways that acting in different relations in the present can signify as feminist.

P4 shows awareness of multiple significations in the next extract. She contrasts a situation where she is with other feminists and where she does not feel vulnerable, to one where she has to interact with 'men in suits'. Her feminist subjectivity takes a certain shape depending on the situation.

P4. I wouldn't make any apologies for it, but I think it's true, that you're probably more comfortable with some groups than with others, especially if you are with groups of people that you know have similar ways of thinking. Some of my women friends who are involved at different levels within this organisation and in others would have -- you feel more comfortable and you feel easier and in fact, it's funny, because we can also slag it off, which I would never dream of doing in another situation, make fun of ourselves. It's very interesting. Also I feel much more comfortable when I'm doing work with the local voluntary groups and stuff like this, who are women, than I would, say, with statutory organisations, who are full of men in suits. I know I would not be less assertive, but I certainly would behave differently, because they would feel threatened by that. And I suppose you pick your circle of friends because they are kind of like you.

This extract illustrates P4's recognition that feminist subjectivity is brought to completion by the group and is at least half constituted by the attributions of others. In her circle of women friends who are feminists, it is ordinary to be feminist. She has insider status. Having insider status creates a different dynamic from being on the outside. They can make fun of themselves, the situation is more relaxed. In situations like this, different kinds of feminist significations will emerge from those which will emerge where there is a dominant - subaltern dynamic. P4 would behave differently in such a situation, but would not consider herself less feminist.

Nevertheless, feminists in groups with other feminists create situations with their own power dynamics. If formal power relations are not present, then informal ones will operate. While a whole discourse and related practice has emerged in women's groups, a discourse of inclusion and flattening out of hierarchy, this discourse is not unitary in its effects either. P6 speaks in the next extract about the difficulties that women as leaders can experience.

P6. What I'm saying is that it gave a chance to look at what does -- or can -- happen to women in leadership. All the feminist principles that we are all supposed to adhere to, go out the window. It can be very male, very hierarchical, let's get the things done, and if you can't take it, drop out.

There is no pure area where feminism could just get on with developing a feminist world without constraints from other discourses. In the social world, multiple discourses, including sexist ones, are competing, overlapping and co-existing. There is no clear-cut distinction between feminists and non-feminists. Feminism, whether among feminists or with non-feminists involved, has to interact with real-world sexist discourses and strive to be agentic, to have real-world consequences. P16 voiced this:

P16. Yes, of course it would be brilliant if you just had to work with other feminists all the time. I don't just mean other women, because not all women are feminists, but with people who had a central concern with gender equality. I mean, I know that's not enough on its own, but it means a lot, if people are feminist. And I'm not being naive either, I know that feminists disagree. I disagree with a lot of what people claim is feminist. I know that just us all being feminist wouldn't be the answer to some of the things we face. But it would be just so nice to try it. I was listening to Hilary Mantel on the radio recently and she said, 'Feminism hasn't failed, it hasn't been tried'. I often think that it would be really nice to work with an organisation that had feminism built into its aims. And then I also think that, well, if I did that, there would be one fewer person rooting for feminist ideas and practices in schooling, schools would be more insulated from feminist and other egalitarian ideas if I wasn't there. I just get on with it, really. My feminism takes on different shades depending on where I am and who I'm with and what I'm trying to achieve. But it's very important to get support from other feminists. And it's important to me that other women would realise that it's not always easy to be a right-on feminist in some of the situations we find ourselves in in schools. Now that P17 and [another colleague] are here, things are so much better. There's support and solidarity, even though we don't always see things exactly the same.

Feminists juggle identities. None of the identities taken up is 'false'. All are derived from the person's experiences and knowledge of the various discourses and ways of being in the world (cf Mama, 1995: 121). Being multiple in this way would be characterised in traditional left political discourse as deserting principles. It would be pathologised in psychological discourse as not being

authentic. But it can be retheorised as 'normal' or as politically acceptable once we view subjectivity as multiple and dynamic. The women cited in this chapter are describing their own movement between various subjectivities, displaying a skill that is developed and refined as they interact with all kinds of people, groups and situations. This kind of multiplicity is a feature of the complexity of contemporary political life. It is evidence of the subjectivity theorised by poststructuralism '... which is precarious, contradictory and in process, constantly being reconstituted in discourse each time we speak' (Weedon, 1987: 33).

From a traditional left political point of view, this multiplicity would be seen as selling out or being incorporated into the dominant structures. Incorporation into the dominant structures is certainly recognised as a danger and I suggest that the keen political sense and commitment to feminism of the women cited is a factor which makes them aware of these dangers and helps them avoid such incorporation. The argument I wish to emphasise here, though, is that the dominant power structures are not monolithic and that feminist interactions with them can modify them and advance feminist discourses.

Social movements, including feminism, typically are treated in the media and in popular discourse as if their content is monolithic and non-contradictory (cf Holford, 1995: 103). Yet, in a relational, real-world context, these contents and discursive oppositions are less rigid, the dualism less apparent. The relational process can thus be seen as deconstructive in its practice. It deconstructs structures of power (in institutions, families, schools and businesses, for example). These constrain practice through providing a given form of social interaction (Connell, 1987: 92) However, as Hollway (1994: 248) points out, 'practice provides the dynamic of change'. 'Practice, while presupposing structure ... is always responding to a **situation**. Practice is the transformation of that situation in a particular direction' (Connell, 1987: 95, cited in Hollway, 1994: 248, original emphasis, already cited in Chapter One, Section 6). It is in the arena of practice that new discourses may originate.

The notion of collusion which I have used is consistent with the concept of multiplicity, in that it suggests we give up an emphasis on who has particular powers and instead move to questions of how specific situations or institutions offer access to various kinds of power (cf McDermott and Tylborg, 1987: 167). Various situations in the present supply instructions to feminist participants about how to act effectively or with feminist consequences. 'A topic does not become a topic just because somebody raises it; someone else must pick it up (Tannen, 1987: 8). Feminists raising feminist topics, that is, voicing feminist concerns and resistances, in a particular situation, need to get the other parties in the situation to collude with them. They need to get other people to interact with them on feminist terms. As Faith (1994: 39) puts it:

Resistance may take the explicit form of a counter-force doing political battle, a strategic play of forces ... Resistance may also be a choreographed demonstration of cooperation. The 'willing victim' may be operating from the vantage of strategic resistance, watching for openings and coalescing the fragmentary forms of resistance which, in combination, articulate a potential challenge to the status quo. The subject may know the experience of being in charge even as she is liable to the disciplines which claim her subjection. Foucault likens this process to the martial art of judo, proposing that sometimes 'the best answer to an adversary maneuver is not to retreat, but to go along with it, turning it to one's own advantage, as a resting point for the next phase' (Baudrillard, 1987: 65).

In resisting, feminists draw on their knowledge of the multiple sources of feminism and where those sources overlap with the sources drawn on by the other members of the group. Boundaries can thus be seen as meeting points, rather than as battle lines (cf Kowalski, 1993: 180). The importance of the other has to be taken into account in any and every signification (Hollway, 1982: 155). To communicate requires recognition of the other as both similar and different. Different situations provide opportunities for different subject positions. This facilitates both the social construction of the self, identity or subjectivity and also the reproduction and transformation of society (cf Stephenson et al, 1996: 184).

P16 and P17 draw on multiple sources of feminism when they draw on

child-centered and human relations discourse (see Section 2.1). In the following extract, P6 acknowledges human relations in her approach to other people, but does not lose the challenge of feminist discourse.

P6. ... it doesn't mean that you don't challenge people. You might have to stop, and you have to respect where they are. I have learned to have much more respect for where people are at. And maybe when we stop at a certain place, they have things to say to me that I have forgotten about [1]. They can bring me back to that. So it's very much that I have to learn myself all of the time [2]. And both of us can do that. And of course, I'm still where I'm at too [3].

Comments

1. Recognition that subjectivity is multi-layered. She may have forgotten about aspects of her own learning about feminism, but they are still there.
2. Learning from 'where other people are at' is recognised as distinctly relational.
3. Where she is 'at' represents the discursive explanations and positions that she takes up and it exists in the same moment as her relations with other people who are differently positioned.

Commentary

For the feminists cited in this section, the relational aspect of feminist subjectivity exists simultaneously with their preferred discursive explanations and interpretations of feminism and feminist action. In taking up a relational position, one does not abandon the discursive positioning (Mama, 1995). They occur simultaneously, with movement between positions allowing one or the other to dominate at any particular moment. This is how I conceptualise multiplicity. It is based on contradictions, tensions and ambivalence. Some

feminist women live more easily with multiplicity than others. Some feminists opt for more unitary views of women, of politics and of gender difference. As in Mama's (ibid) study of radical black women's identity, those who live most comfortably with ambiguity and multiplicity move in and out of various subject positions in the course of their social relationships and interactions with a diverse array of groups in their personal, political and working lives. They adopt a more or less conscious stance which arises out of a process of social and personal reflection. I posit, following Mama (ibid) and Hollway (1982; 1989), that the self-reflection points to the simultaneous existence of psychodynamic processes within the individual.

7.7 Conclusion

The analysis in this chapter has been suggested by a combination of my personal knowledge, my reading of theory and my readings of the data provided by the participants. In the next chapter, I combine this analysis with readings of psychodynamic processes, to give a further account of the construction of feminist subjectivities in the striving for feminist agency to disrupt the gender status quo. My theorisation of subjectivity implies that the discursive movements and relational processes observed in this present chapter are accompanied by psychodynamic processes within the individual and *vice versa*: psychodynamic processes have discursive (social and historical) relations-in-the-present contents. In other words, 'there is a constant resonance between psychodynamics and social experience in the construction and reproduction of the individual's subjectivity' (Mama, 1995: 133). I go into detail about some aspects of these processes in the next chapter, but want to point out their importance here. They are not separate from discursive movements, but for purposes of analysis, I have chosen to treat them in separate chapters.

The key points established so far are:

- The signifier feminism achieves its meaning at points of intersection between discourses and relations in the present moment.
- The discourses occur along the diachronic (social and historical) axis of signification. The specific relation or situation in which significations are negotiated is referred to as practice. Practice occurs along the synchronic axis of signification (that is, the unique history of each person in discourse). This point is consistent with Hollway's (1982) finding.
- The importance of the other (person or group) in the relation has to be taken into account in every situation where one wants to act in ways that signify as feminist.
- The multiplicity of discourses and situations and practices produces a multiplicity of feminist meanings and subjectivities.
- There are power differentials between discourses, both within feminism and between feminist and sexist discourses. These power differentials are reflected in situations in the present and they influence the choices, strategies and collusions which feminist women make, in pursuit of feminist agency and the transformation of practice.
- Different feminist discourses are drawn on, produced, or modified, depending on how they facilitate feminist women to be agentic in the pursuit of feminist ends.
- Movement between or within discourses can take place as a result of a thought-out strategy, as a result of a formal pedagogical situation or as a less deliberate result of finding oneself positioned in a sexist discourse or in any kind of oppressive situation.
- Heterosexual couple relations are an important site for the transformation

of the gender status quo. The disruption of structures of labour in the home is shown to be both relational and discursive, with accompanying psychodynamic processes.

- Choice, collusion, strategy, movement and positioning for feminist resistance and agency are important elements in the construction of feminist subjectivities.
- Any consideration of feminist subjectivities is incomplete without a consideration of collectivity.

CHAPTER EIGHT

PSYCHODYNAMIC PROCESSES AND RADICAL SELF-REFLECTION

8.0 Introduction

Chapters Six and Seven have demonstrated that feminist subjectivity is both discursive and relational. This chapter examines how these dimensions of subjectivity exist in articulation with important psychodynamic components. In this way, the chapter examines how psychodynamic concepts can be used for the development of feminist poststructuralist discourses and the construction of feminist agency. This task is approached by analysing processes of self-reflection described by women positioned primarily in feminist Discourse Three, a discourse of multiplicity whose central tenet is the rejection of male / female dualism (See Chapter Six, Sections 5 and 6). The concept of psychodynamic processes provides an account of how an individual comes to be the particular person s/he is. It examines why a person habitually takes up some positions and not others and how and why a person comes to exhibit the characteristic reactions and behaviours that enable her to be known as an individual (see Mama, 1995: 130).

The chapter examines accounts of private and emotional change and the ways that such change is affected by the discursive and relational contexts in which it takes place. The women cited use a process of radical self-reflection which further develops the explanatory power of a discourse of a multiple subject and undermines male / female dualism. The analysis of the self-reflection also shows how psychic life is relational and social, as opposed to being a purely intrapsychic and individual phenomenon. The psychodynamic dimension to meaning is seen to have effect at the two axes of subjectivity -- synchronic and

diachronic -- which have already been discussed in Chapter Seven (Section 1) as the intersection of situation and discourse. In that way, the analysis draws on and develops the analyses of discourse and relations in the present, already begun in chapters Six and Seven. The chapter continues to use the concepts of positioning, movement and agency as analytical tools.

The self-reflection portrays 'difficult emotional work' (Lewis, 1993: 155) which is analysed by drawing on psychodynamic concepts of repression, splitting and projection. A recursive relationship between discourses and psychodynamic processes is illustrated and the signification in the psyche of a feminist discourse of multiplicity is theorised, adding to the theorisation of the signification of multiplicity in relations put forward in the previous chapter. Material which is repressed in the psyche is seen to be reproduced in discourse. For example, femininity which is repressed in feminist discursive positionings is seen to be reproduced in feminist practices. The chapter applies a deconstructive approach to the analysis (See Chapter Two, Section 3.5) in examining how femininity and feminism are not dualistically opposed.

A feminist discourse of multiplicity emerges as complex and sometimes apparently contradictory. It is subaltern in both patriarchy and dominant feminist discourses. It requires and entails, in addition to awareness of different feminist discourses, awareness of the social and constructed nature of feelings and desires in oneself and others. This runs contrary to the dominant model of feelings in liberal humanist discourse, which sees feelings as an expression of an unsocialised part of the self. It also runs contrary to the essentialist discourses of woman which are the dominant discourses within feminism.

The women whose accounts are analysed in detail in this chapter identify most strongly with Discourse Three, characterised in Chapter Six as being constructed on an awareness of multiplicity and an opposition to male-female dualism. They had both read drafts of Chapters Six and Seven, and my paper *A Voyage Round My Feminism* (Ryan, 1995), before taking part in the discussions for this research. The textual reading of their accounts is more

personal than the readings in the previous chapters and is part of an emerging tradition in feminist poststructuralist theorising. It looks at the intimate and immediate operations of power, but without divorcing it from its social context.

The accounts which are analysed in this chapter illustrate multiplicity being achieved through the participants' recognition of their own simultaneous positioning in both feminine and feminist discourses. They illustrate the effects which these had on the practice of feminism within heterosexual couple relations, as well as on the practice of feminism with regard to other women and the effects on their own feminist identities. In both cases, investment in femininity was repressed initially, as a result of taking up positions in discourses of feminism. The expression and acknowledgement of their simultaneous positionings in discourses of femininity are interpreted by the women as revealing the multiplicity of their subjectivities and identities. This is seen to help them to produce knowledge about themselves and their relationships with other people which is mediated by feminist poststructuralist discourse. That is, they pushed forward the development of feminist Discourse Three (anti-dualism).

8.1 The need for an emotional dimension to feminism and change

P11. I mean, you can change all the structures in society, but if you haven't got people changed, to be able to cope with the changed structures and to be able to live with them, then they're going to go nowhere. [1] So it's like the women I was talking about earlier, -- like, if they didn't learn the capacity to live with the changes in their structure [2], then they could have done the course and they could have gone home. But because they were able to learn how to deal with their feelings [3] and the changes, and to go home [4] and deal with the impact, they have stayed changed. But I just think that's really important. It's like --- we can't go leaping over there. You have to have it in here, that people have the capacity to change [pointing to two angles of a triangle, the third of which is herself] and then go over there. It's like, I think that there's a step over there that needs to get done, in order to get straightforward. And personal development isn't just about going

straight on there like that [5]. I think, you know, career and economics and housing structure and family is -- a really important part of -- you know, community change. But the internal organisation has to change as well. So I do think that we all need a time over here [pointing to the angle which is over to one side, indicating the internal content of change] -- in really learning about ourselves and what our values are, what our beliefs are, and so on. So that then we can go back in there and be more effective [6]. And that's why I get really critical of people who run down personal development or therapy or, -- you know, growth work, as if that's taking away from the revolution. I think so much of the revolution is just going to be reinventing the wheel, if we don't do some of that.

If you don't do that personal work, you --

You can't sustain it. You just can't sustain it. And I think, I mean, I did three years of psychoanalysis and I think that's why I would be sort of -- calmer -- do you know what I mean?. Like earlier you were asking me -- and I don't waste my time knocking my head off a brick wall. And I think that's because I did that. I mean, I would have been always doing it, but you know the way you just do it with friends or colleagues or reading psychology books or what ever. But then I said no, no, I have to go away and do something here. There's a whole load of things that need to get unbound [8].

Comments

1. Implies that not doing personal work has consequences for political change.
2. These women she is referring to have already made changes in their lives relating to working outside the home, childcare, labour in the home. P4 now draws attention to the need for parallel changes in the emotional construction of their home relationships.
3. Recognition of how emotional life is connected to change, that is, recognition of the intersection of discursive and psychodynamic processes. Also a recognition of how structures of labour and of cathexis (see Chapter One, Section 6) are connected in recursive ways.
4. Recognition of the impact of the taking up of positions in new discourses on

home life in particular.

5. Recognition of the multiple nature of subjectivity and of its social and individual aspects.

6. Equates recognition of personal emotional investments with increased effectiveness, or, to use the theoretical term of this work, agency.

7. Implications of not doing personal work.

8. Implication that unbinding one's emotional entanglements, or investments, allows for greater political agency. It is also implied that **not** doing it can result in withdrawal from the political arena.

8.2 Feminist emotional work within the heterosexual dynamic

This section takes up in more detail the dynamic within heterosexual couple relations, already referred to in the analysis of P20's account in Chapter Seven (Section 4).

Before the following extract from her account, the research participant, P3, has been talking about her relationship with her husband. They are both formally well educated and have jobs in third-level education. They share a political outlook which is egalitarian and have both been involved in left-wing politics. P3 is particularly interested in the work of Julia Kristeva and we have discussed the three tiers of feminism (see Chapter Two, Section 4.5), earlier in our meeting. As part of her account, P3 discusses what she sees as her earlier failure to create the degree of egalitarianism she would have liked within her relationship with her husband, even though they were both committed to feminism and were economic equals. She describes the process by which she learned to make what she considers feminist changes in the relationship.

P3. I was just so depressed; I thought that I was the cause of all my own

problems. In spite of all my feminist knowledge about the messages given to women and girls, and so on, I failed to see that I was buying into all of that [1]. I was accepting my failure as a feminist as a personal failure, a personality deficiency, if you like, that the relationship could not be made more equal. That deep socialisation was there and I didn't recognise it for ages. Actually, on the surface, when I spoke to him, I was blaming him for all the problems in the relationship, but now when I look at it, I think that deep down I was really angry with myself, that I really blamed myself for not being able to cope with it [2]. Here was this feminist [3], supposedly knowing about equality and all that, who still couldn't make her own relationship work. I mean, he would say to me: 'what do you want me to do? You're the one who wants changes, tell me what I should do?' And I did take on all the old shit about being responsible for the relationship, managing, caring, all that, I took it on deeply [4]. Any good feminist would have left, I thought, but I didn't want to [5].

So what happened?

Well, things were so bad in the end that we did separate. I wanted him to come to counselling with me, but he wouldn't, so I went by myself. I felt like a complete mess.

What were the outcomes?

I learned a lot about myself [laughs] -- God, I learned so much [6]. I can't go into the whole thing, but one of the things I learned was about my own manipulation of [her husband]. I always felt that he manipulated me, that he pushed my buttons, to use that phrase. I felt that he had all the power emotionally in our relationship, because he was able to walk away, while I ranted and raved and got all upset over his lack of participation in the housework and the emotional and caring work. Slowly it dawned on me that I was also manipulating him. I was getting what I wanted out of those situations too, because after every row, we eventually made up, and he apologised for walking out, and told me he loved me [7]. The counselling helped me see [8] all the patterns that I was trapped in. For a good while, I blamed myself totally, which was wrong too, but then I learned to tell the difference between taking responsibility for my part in the destructive patterns and blaming myself [9]. The next step I suppose was to see how to change the patterns. I realised that I was getting a lot of power out of those patterns, that it is very hard to disagree, for an educated man like him to disagree with the idea that he should share the housework [10]. So that gave me power, I mean, he agreed with feminism, that was one of the reasons he got to know me in the first place, was because I was -- we were politically very much in tune about a lot of things [11].

Of course, I knew that women tended to do the emotional work in

relationships and that I tended to do it in our relationship, but I didn't see for ages that I was getting something out of it, a payoff, if you like, from continuing to do this, this emotional work. I could claim victim [12] status, I could say to him, 'I have to do it, because emotional work needs to be done, it's really important, and you won't do it'. I was able to make him feel both inadequate and a lazy sod at the same time, because we both knew that it was good to be able to do emotional work, to be able to express feelings and that sort of thing [13]. So -- so that meant he was inadequate and by his laziness in not even trying, he was dumping more work onto me, so he was also being oppressive. Because of his own politics, he knew that I had a point, so he felt guilty [14]. But he didn't make any changes, I mean, that's what really got me. Talking to him about this, at the times when we tried to talk rationally and calmly about it, he said that he felt I had all the power [15]. And I felt that he had all the power. It was a complete mess, as far as I could see. Of course, talking about it didn't solve it, I needed to **do** [16] something. He didn't make changes because he wasn't really motivated to make them, and I continued to act the same old ways, which meant he was allowed to act the same old ways as well. In fact, it wasn't really that I needed to do something, as much as that what I needed to do was to **stop** [17] doing something, doing certain things. I would agree with your analysis of yourself that you had double power in a way, in your relationship, because you were both the feminist and the caring, feminine one. In a relationship with a man interested in equality -- that seemed very familiar to me [18].

How did you make the changes you talked about, when you said you had to stop doing things?

The counsellor asked me to look at **how** [19] we had reached this division of labour, not what the division of labour was, because I knew that already, God, did I know it, I knew exactly how much I did and he didn't do. But what she got me to do was to look at the **ways** that this had happened, been allowed to become the pattern [20]. It was very painful, very, very difficult for me, because I realised just how much a part I played in it [21]. She helped me to see what I had been getting out of the situation, the payoffs [22], as we learned to call them. I blamed myself totally for a while, saw myself as a complete failure as a feminist [23]. But then, I learned to make small changes, I read *Dance of Anger* [Lerner, 1985], it was very helpful.

I found it much easier to give out to him for not doing his share, but to continue doing his share myself, than I found -- well, it was much easier and familiar for me to do that [24], than to actually stop doing his share, or doing things for him [25]. I kept complaining to the counsellor about how he wouldn't do things in the house. She would say to me things like, 'why are you doing them for him?' and I would reply that somebody had to do it. But of course, then I could take the

moral high ground. I mean, I knew that he, as somebody who professed a commitment to equality, would feel guilty at not doing his share. So I was always in the right [26]. In the end, I realised that this was giving me power, but it wasn't the sort of power that was helping me get the changes I wanted [27]. I had a very strong sense of myself as a political person, in the outside world, but in my home life, I felt that there were no boundaries [28]. I couldn't get any of the things I wanted, like -- like the sort of equality I wanted in this relationship, but I knew that a lot of people -- that the relationship looked good from the outside [29]. I didn't know what emotions I was experiencing most of the time. Rage, anger, they were the dominant ones. But I didn't know what to do with them. When I got angry, he said things like, 'you're perfectly right', but he wouldn't talk about it, he just withdrew, either by walking out, or by refusing to talk about it [30]. Jesus, I've talked so much, it's supposed to be the three of us --

P1. No, go on , it's okay.

Mmn ...

I didn't know how to recognise, let alone manage, all the raging emotions I was feeling [31]. Sometimes, he accused me of being completely over the top, impossible to reason with [32]. But on the other hand, my emotionality and my feeling side were things he said he liked in me: I mean, this was when we talked rationally about things, the ways that I cared for people and had so many friends -- all that [33].

What I realise now is that I had a lot of power through being the feeling one, that's like you, Anne, talked about in your paper [34]. But also my feminist analyses gave me a lot of power. I was able to analyse our relationship from a feminist perspective. That gave me power. But I wasn't able, hadn't a clue how to **work** [35] on a relationship from a feminist point of view. Really, I suppose, that's what I got out of the counselling -- the work I did with the counsellor -- I learned how to actually get what I wanted, make changes, not just to analyse and blame all the time [36]. And blaming could be sometimes myself, sometimes other people, especially [her husband].

Comments

1. 'Buying into' the 'messages' can be analysed as accepting the positions made available through a discourse of femininity, which is the classic story for

women.

2. Acceptance at the time of giving her account that she once positioned herself in a discourse of femininity, but repressed this for a time.

3. Reflexive and interactive positioning in a feminist discourse by herself and others. In such positioning, feminists know the answers, they know what is wrong, so they should know how to 'fix' the situation. A discourse of the rational unitary subject facilitates this perception.

4. Simultaneously (that is, at the same time as the positioning in discourses of feminism), she is positioned in a discourse of femininity. In such a discourse, the woman is supposed to take care of relationships and emotions and to be good at it 'naturally'. This is supposed to be a trait of the unitary female subject. Nevertheless, P3's experience is contradictory.

5. Evidence of her reflexive positioning in a discourse of 'real feminism'. It is also evidence of her refusal of the unitary subject of this discourse. In spite of the contradictions she is experiencing, she wants to continue in the relationship, rather than withdraw. By continuing in the relationship, she is going against a certain feminist orthodoxy, but is increasing her chances of constructing something outside this orthodoxy.

6. The process is recognised as pedagogical in nature.

7. Projection of the undesirable act of manipulation onto the other (in this case, the male) and simultaneous repression of manipulation in oneself.

8. Recognition of own previous projections and repressions.

9. Failure to recognise repressed material resulted in blame being placed on her from two discursive sources: feminist and feminine.

10, 11. He positions himself and is positioned by her in feminist discourse, which says that men should do housework. This gives her a feminist power to

make him feel guilty, because he accepts the feminist arguments, but does not act on them.

12. Separatist feminist discourse can be interpreted as positioning women as victims, which could facilitate this view of the woman in a heterosexual couple relationship. Again, the notion of woman as victim is based on a unitary view of the subject.

13. They are both positioned also in a human relations discourse which emphasises the importance of emotional literacy. He is guilty of failing to become literate, within the terms of this influential discourse.

14. In the terms of the feminist discourse which constructs their relationship, he is also guilty .

15. Both make completely different readings of the situation. He recognises the power conferred on her by her positioning in and taking up of positions in a socially dominant discourse of femininity. He does not say this outright, at least according to this account, possibly because he knows that in the feminist discourse that they share, this is not acceptable. Yet he recognises her power. Because something is not articulated or recognised, this does not mean that it has no effects. At the point that she is describing here, she has not recognised this positioning in femininity and the power it can confer on her in heterosexual relations. At this point, none of the discourses that either of them is positioned in is capable of moving forward the situation.

16. Recognition of the situational and relational nature of the situation and the need to act.

17. Recognition that she is maintaining the situation unchanged.

18. Recognition that I have helped to construct this account, through my relationship with the research participant.

19, 20. Points to the need to deconstruct the situation, to examine the processes that brought her here.

21. Evidence of her investment in the outcomes of the processes. They are very much part of her subjectivity, even though she has repressed them, because of her desire to be feminist.

22. Recognition of her power through her positioning in feminine discourse.

23. Effects of positioning in real feminist discourse again.

24. Positioning as feminine is socially approved, it is easy, it is like 'second nature' for many women.

25. Feminist positioning exists simultaneously with feminine positioning.

26. Feminist discourse positioning her powerfully.

27. Explicit recognition of the power she achieved through taking up feminine positions. But also a recognition that for a feminist, there is little movement available through take-up of such positions.

28. Constant and rapid shifting of discursive positions, without recognising what is going on. That is, while still denying or repressing the existence of one of the discourses and one's take-up of positions in it, such shifting leads here to a feeling of oneself as a decentered subject. Because of the dominance of the unitary rational model of the subject, this is how people most often interpret experiences of contradiction.

29. Recognition that power is more than economic and material issues.

30. Connection with having your topic picked up, as discussed in Chapter Seven (Section 6). Movement and creation of new positions are relational processes. As well as having a new idea or concept existing at an intellectual

level, they need interaction with others in order to have practical effects.

31. Pointing to the necessity of dealing with the emotions as social phenomena.

32. Effect of positioning in a dominant liberal humanist discourse, which includes liberal feminism. Such positioning can facilitate a reading of excess emotionality as irrational and therefore as weak.

33. Simultaneously with her positioning as weak [32 above], she is positioned as strong. This is an effect of both discourses of femininity and of difference feminism, which read emotionality as women's special domain and strength.

34. Reading her own situation retrospectively, giving it meaning in time: a meaning different from what it had at the time it was happening.

35, 36. Distinction between rational analysis of an emotional situation and actually doing emotional work in a given situation. Indication of a need to move towards praxis.

Commentary

At first I do not win these fights, because of love. Or so I say to myself. If I were to win them, the order of the world would be changed, and I am not ready for that. So instead I lose the fights, and master different arts. I shrug, tighten my mouth in silent rebuke, turn my back in bed, leave questions unanswered. I say, 'Do it however you like', provoking sullen fury from Jon. (Atwood, 1988, cited in Goodrich, 1991b: 9)

Even within an egalitarian relationship (cf Hochschild, 1990a), femininity can confer power on women. Feminist women are still positioned interactively in discourses of femininity, which gives them a certain power which they may be reluctant to recognise. But even if not recognised, the positioning continues to have effects on relations and on subjectivity. Repressing the knowledge of this and the of take-up of positions within femininity serves to reproduce the discourse unchanged (Hollway, 1982). Recognising it, on the other hand, can

have major effects in terms of movement, a sense of agency and discursive interventions. The discourse of femininity is not abandoned, but can be reproduced in different ways, mediated or filtered through a feminist awareness of the multiplicity of the subject. Identifying a repressed attachment to or investment in femininity can lead to the pushing forward of psychic development and the parallel construction of a discourse of multiplicity, in which one's construction as both feminine and feminist can be made use of. Analysing events through feminist discourses which rely on a model of the subject as unitary (whether unitary female or unitary male) cannot explain feelings of deep attachment to certain positions in feminine discourses.

P3's account shows her identifying repressed elements of a situation that arose as a result of her own politics. So the emotional work and the identification of emotional investments which she did as a result of her work in counselling is not just therapeutic at an individual level. It is therapeutic at a political level and is a politicised practice of therapy and emotional work. She also identifies the process as pedagogical. The comments highlight an earlier confused switching of positioning and take-up of positions between several discourses of feminism and a discourse of femininity and, before the counselling work, a denial or repression of positioning in feminine discourses, with attendant feelings of contradiction and confusion. Her recognition of the tensions between the different positionings has allowed movement to take place. Her refusal to adhere to one single explanation based on one discourse has had the effect of disrupting the model of the unitary subject.

P3 has read her situation retrospectively, giving it meaning in time which is different from what it had been at the time the of events she describes. A radical and politicised reflection on the situation, facilitated by the counselling process, has allowed her to construct a different meaning, and to construct herself as an agent capable of making a discursive intervention. This discursive intervention moves both her and her husband beyond all the discourses they have been seen to be positioned in throughout the account. These are not

jettisoned, they remain part of their identities, but, through the identification of the repressed, the reproduction of femininity and emotionality in the same old traditional ways is stopped. In the space that is thus cleared, new discourses can emerge. These may exist at a practice level at first, as Hollway (1995) suggests.

Practice is not the same as full discourse, in that it does not provide recognisable discursive positions which people can take up. But it is a forerunner of discourse in that it is produced in language. Practice which does not reflect either dominant culture or dominant feminist discourses will be hard to maintain. This is acknowledged by P3 in her comments on my analysis, in Section 2.1 below, The social is seen to be implicated in reflection on experience (Stephenson et al, 1996: 184) and the new is always constrained by pre-existing discourses, structures and practices.

8.2.1 P3's comments on the analysis of her account

After making the analysis above of her account, I sent it to P3 and asked if she would like to comment.

P3. Like P1 said during our discussions, I can admit this only to other feminist women, and not just to any feminists, but to people who have made some of the same realisations as I have. Before we talked, we had both read your paper and I had seen in you some of the things that I have found important for myself.

I was able to say 'no' in lots of areas, but not at home. A very important lesson for me was to learn not to do things, not to say something, not to fix things up, which would maintain the situation, as you put it, and to let him deal with the consequences. Having separated was good, because when we came back together, I had different habits, we both expected things to be different.

Earlier, I agree, I had double power: I was feminist and feminine. Being feminine made me powerful to him (even though it also made me powerless at the same time, because it proved to both him and to me that feminism was not successful, that I was either a failure or a

hypocrite.). He experienced me as always having power, if I wasn't being assertive and feminist, then I was being feminine, baking, fixing, maintaining friendships, expecting him to be grateful to me. He always said, when I complained, 'I never asked you to do it'. That was certainly true and I disempowered him by doing everything for him in that line. Learning **not** to do that sort of thing was very hard. But it was really worthwhile.

I was manipulative. If you're repressing femininity, you are denying your manipulateness, you're claiming that you've left femininity behind, with all that that implies, but maybe you haven't. I know I hadn't. I probably still haven't left it behind. I have to acknowledge that it is always going to be a part of me and I have to learn to accept that and not hate myself for it, and accept the contradiction and confusion that that can bring to me as a feminist. It is deeply ingrained, and it was deeply ingrained in me, this way of getting my partner to like me, to do something like bake or make the house nice, or do the emotional work. And although I denied it, it was there. When I recognised it, I could deal with it as a feminist. But before I recognised it, I simply did not know how to deal with it.

The Dance of Anger has a lot of stuff about 'change back' messages that you get from the people around you when you make changes. But I didn't experience this. I really think that's because [her husband] had a commitment to equality. He didn't really know how to change, and I suppose he didn't feel uncomfortable enough to try to find ways to change, but once I made the changes in my patterns, he changed in response.

8.2.2 Emotionally charged relations and cathetic structures

Heterosexual relations provide a fertile site for the production of new feminist discourses of emotionality concerning gender identity. In addition, heterosexual couple relations provide the sites where feminism is hardest pressed. I contend that this is due to the social construction of cathexis, underpinned as it is by emotional investments (Hollway 1994), and its implications in power relations. This leads me to an attempt to deconstruct the power / emotion binary, where power is seen as social and cultural and emotions and feelings are seen as unmediated expressions of a core individual. This attempt reflects the poststructuralist concern with deconstructing the individual / society dualism.

Strong emotions have already been used in this work (Chapter Seven, Section 4) as evidence of contradictory positioning in different discourses.

Most feminist discourses recognise heterosexual relations as a key site for both the maintenance and the disruption of patriarchal relations. But the responses of difference feminisms tend to be either separatism or an inversion of the old binary whereby the feminine is extolled. The accounts analysed here show engagements where power is shifted radically, rather than inverted. Separatism and inversion can exist together where women try to have nothing to do with 'maleness', and avoid heterosexual relations and extol female virtues. Or feminists can try to bring the inversion into heterosexual relations, and extol the superiority of femaleness there. Neither of these responses is capable of subverting power and of challenging the gender status quo in ways that are truly radical.

Anxiety and discomfort with traditional feminine roles in domestic and personal heterosexual relations can lead women to take up positions in feminist discourses, but because of the multi-layered nature of subjectivity, traditional feminine identity is not discarded, but continues to be present and to produce significations for each individual. In examining the emotional dimension of subjectivity, then, I am examining in detail the emotional consequences of positioning oneself in feminist discourses, especially in the discourse which embraces multiplicity (Discourse Three), with accompanying anxieties and contradictions. These anxieties and contradictions are pronounced in heterosexual couple relationships. Particularly in egalitarian couple relationships, power is seen to be more than an effect of material or economic issues. At the same time, I take into account the emotional consequences of being positioned in sexist discourses, which is an experience common to all women, including feminist women.

Analysing heterosexual couple relationships carries with it the danger of a focus on individuals which ignores power relations. This is the major critique of therapy and counselling interventions which exist within liberal humanist

metadiscourses (see Kitzinger, 1987: 197, 8; Goodrich, 1991a). In this chapter, I am looking at relationships and the emotions involved in them, but within a specific power analysis. I am doing this with a view to investigating how the focus on relationships within women's personal development courses can also be done with a social power analysis, while still meeting women's stated needs for attention to the personal.

The next section (Section 3) summarises the feminist moves made possible by politicised self-reflection, such as that analysed so far in this chapter. The following section (Section 4) demonstrates that such analysis is not confined to heterosexual relations, but can also be applied to feminist women's relations with other women.

8.3 New positions: moves suggested by a psychodynamic analysis

Following Mama (1995), I use the term 'moves' to suggest how psychodynamic analysis can enable one to take up new positions. These moves are:

- the identification of repressed material through radical reflection outside dominant humanist discourse, on feelings of contradiction or conflict, symptomatised by being 'stuck' in one's feminism and often accompanied by depression and extreme expressions of anger
- the identification of investments in femininity and thus of sources of power which may have been unacknowledged, which were keeping a dynamic unchanged
- consciously divesting oneself of the types of power conferred on women through sexist discourses (this power exists, even if it is repressed in sexist discourses), in order to further feminist agency and with the effect of

pushing forward feminist anti-dualist discourses.

These processes seem to be ongoing (cf Mama 1995: 134). P3 discusses her experiences of them in the context of a heterosexual dynamic. In the section that follows, I use material gathered from P1 in the same discussion, about her relationships with and attitudes to other women, particularly non-feminist women. I use the account to further demonstrate the existence of repressed material about femininity and investments in feminine positions and the way that acknowledgement of these phenomena may result in transformatory experiences.

The analysis develops the two points which I have begun to explore: first, that every situation has psychodynamic aspects which are related to the discursive and relational aspects. Second, that no discourse, including feminist discourses, is without power relations, but that the self-conscious divestment of the power which can be an (albeit unconscious) outcome of the take-up of feminine positionings, can result in an increased 'power to', or agency. That involves a recognition that the knowledge and discourses constructed by feminists are not devoid of their own power relations any more than mainstream discourses (cf Hollway, 1982: 290). But awareness of psychodynamic processes within a discursive context which recognises multiplicity can assist a critical relationship with these power relations.

8.4 P1's account: femininity and feminism

P1. You asked us in your letter to think about where we had been stuck and where things had been -- become unbound. I suppose I thought -- used to think -- that what should happen was that I should challenge other women, challenge their internalised oppression, the awful things they believed about themselves, get them to be more assertive, get away from that awful passive, door-mat stuff that women did. I thought they should just say no, as it were. I suppose, really, I thought I could get them to be more like me. I pitied them for being blind to their own oppression. I thought -- if they would only look at themselves in a politicised way. I thought that would be very radical and that that was

how my activism should take shape. But that's where I got stuck, that wasn't happening, and I was getting more and more frustrated. But you know something? What I needed to do -- and this was the most radical thing I could have done in the circumstances [1] -- was to, I needed to look at my own internalised oppressions and work out how they were leading me to be stuck.

The most important thing I learned was that I am not so different from them, you know, I'm not so different [2] from those poor, weak women that I pitied and despised at the same time. Exploring the ways that I was like them was exceptionally liberating [3]. I realised that I was very like a lot of so-called traditional women [4]. I hadn't managed to get rid of all that stuff that I saw other women doing -- the caring, the working too hard, taking on too much responsibility, always being available to help out, or to get someone out of trouble [5]. I saw other women doing it in relation to their families. I saw girls and young women doing it -- trying to please. But I didn't see it in myself for a long time [6], because, well, I had, you know, a different lifestyle. I wasn't in a relationship with a man, I was single, financially independent, all that. But I was doing those things in my own circle of friends and colleagues anyway. I always had to be giving, caring, sorting things out, available for people, lending them money. I wasn't much of a listener, though, I can see that now, looking back. I actually realised that my self-esteem was very low. In some ways, I cringe when I say it, because I know how some people slag all that as trendy liberal jargon [7] -- but it was -- that's how it was for me. I read the Gloria Steinem book [Steinem, 1993] and, I suppose I just recognised a lot of myself in it. I was really all caught up in meeting my 'obligations' -- you know, what I felt were obligations [8].

How did it change?

At my lowest, when I was really depressed and fed up, I was invited to lunch with some friends and I met a woman I liked a lot. She talked very openly about herself. She was clearly feminist and very politicised and of course that made me pay attention to her from the start. She also talked a lot about her emotions in relation to a project she was involved in, but it was very different from the kind of talk about emotions I was used to. It wasn't the sort of analysis I was used to, but it wasn't counselling jargon or pop psychology individualist shit either [9]. She just talked about what she had experienced in a work situation and how she had dealt with it. I was really struck by her capacity to -- to understand why she acted in certain ways and, also, not just to understand, but to **do** something about it, something that made her change the situation, or, you know, to get things moving. Later, I said to her that I'd love to be able to understand myself so well. She recommended the Steinem book and *The Dance of Anger* [Lerner, 1985]. I'd heard of the Steinem book, but of course, not being tuned

into that kind of thing, I hadn't really paid any attention to it.

Reading Steinem, and doing some of the relaxation and visualisation and reflection that she talks about, I developed a self-awareness that has made me feel much more whole as a feminist. I used to get angry about being taken-for-granted. I did the 'poor me' thing a lot. I blamed other people for asking too much of me. And at the same time, you know, like I said, I was really pitying traditional women for doing the same things in their family and with their partners [10.] I really couldn't let go of the idea that I had to be the great -- the great -- I don't know -- the fixer, the earth mother, the all knowing, all -- [11]. You know, I'd have done anything for people, I'd take classes for colleagues, help them out, give people money. I never said no. And I was doing all this in the name of feminism. I mean, that's not something I shouted about, but to myself, that's what I thought. I suppose I was a bit smug, really. I saw myself as superior [12]. I simply couldn't say no to people who asked me to do things or get involved in something. And not only that, but, you know, I volunteered to do things, I constantly took on too many responsibilities, and then I would end up exhausted and resentful. And eventually, I began to feel that this was an oppressive situation [13]. Eventually, I had to look at my own impulses towards this way of being -- this way of being all things to everybody and at the same time being, well, feeling so superior and so elite, but at the same time so put-upon. You know, I considered myself to be more aware than other people, I thought that non-feminist women suffered from false consciousness. I was really quite socialist in my feminism, I didn't like the Mary Daly stuff and I didn't like the Carol Gilligan stuff either. To me, that was just too much like the stuff I was trying to leave behind [14]. And in spite of all that, here I was, doing all the really feminine things, just like they were [15].

But I suppose what was the hardest thing for me to come to terms with was that I had created the situation for myself [16] -- no, actually, I think the worst thing was that I began to understand that I hadn't really always liked other women, especially so-called traditional women. They were too weak [17], they needed me to sort them out, to tell them how oppressed they were, but even when I did, they couldn't see what I was talking about [18]. And I made a point of not needing anyone. I was able to fix my own car, do my own household repairs, I was fit and strong, it was very important to me to be different from other women in that way, to be able to do anything that other women relied on a man to do [19].

But of course, I can see now, that wasn't enough -- really, I was a bit of a mess, too, by the time I began to learn something about my emotions. Funny, isn't it, how you are interviewing us with so much in common.?

Well, you know, what I'm most interested in is women who have felt stuck, or in a mess, and how they managed to get past that feeling of being stuck and still remained -- retained-- a political sense and a -- a commitment.

I know, I just think it's interesting. Well, anyway, -- Jesus, up to that, I hadn't a clue about my emotions -- no understanding of them at all. And I would **do** anything for other people, but I wouldn't listen to them, and if I was talking to them, it was always in a very analytic way, very rational, rationalising everything. I thought I was really good at talking about feelings, but I was just good at analysing them, not at **doing** anything about them. I'd never really worked on my emotions, I had never been in a situation where I opened up about anything apart from my anger. I didn't really trust other women, or anyone, enough to do that. I didn't want to identify with other women, because -- why? I'm not sure, well, I have a good idea -- really, I know this sounds a bit confused, but I didn't want to identify with feminine things, with femininity [20]. Yet, I was doing feminine things, in the ways I was acting. And I suppose those ways were giving me a power [21] because I was always the caring, good one. I didn't accept the label feminine about myself, but I did things traditionally associated with femininity, all the same [22]. And when I realised a lot of this stuff, I went through a time when I really hated myself even more, I was very low, I blamed myself for being so stupid. I questioned whether feminism was possible at all [23].

I had to learn to be nice to myself, good to myself, stop driving myself so hard. I had to stop blaming myself. When I read your paper, I felt that I could talk meaningfully to you about all of this [24]. I learned to accept parts of myself. In a way, that seems like the exact opposite of what I -- what a feminist needs to do. But it wasn't a matter of accepting them and things staying the same. Through some kind of acceptance of myself, of the feminine parts of my being, through me no longer fighting them, things began to change. I accepted that, yes, I was like many other women, in a lot of respects. I feel sometimes like I became a nicer person and that by becoming nicer, that created some sort of space for change to happen [25].

How do you mean -- what sort of change?

I felt so blocked, I felt that my feminist aspirations were getting nowhere [26]. I just got angry all the time about injustice and about the lack of progress on feminist issues. And my anger was futile, it got me no results. I was very depressed at that time, because I could see no way out. I felt completely and totally hopeless. Just -- focusing on myself, becoming nicer to myself and becoming a nicer person,

accepting myself more, I became more accepting of other people. Warmer, better able to relate. I think I understood more about my own emotions, so I could understand other people's emotions too -- not understand them, exactly, but understand the strength of them, how they can hold you back, or keep you in a certain place [27]. I seemed to mellow -- and I don't want this to be taken as becoming more tolerant -- but I just -- in mellowing, I got a much better view of other people, and that included that there didn't have to be just one right way for feminist change to happen [28]. I didn't feel the need to be in control of situations all the time. I learned to relax and to listen to other people and being much more sure of my own feelings and emotions, I became much more assertive, instead of being aggressive. I mean, I -- there was a real feeling of before and after. I'm just sorry sometimes that I didn't learn all this sooner, but, anyway, I didn't. So -- I suppose, though, if I had got into the personal stuff earlier, I mightn't have had the political resources to help me have this kind of outcome, I might have got much more into myself and left politics behind [29].

I did get very into myself for a while. I suppose I was making up for lost time. I learned to relax and to feel more creative. I did some courses in group personal development and in -- that's what got me started in personal development work, facilitation. I learned to be more open about my emotions in groups. I loved *The Dance of Anger*. I loved that because it stayed political and gave hope for the future -- the other books in the series as well, *The Dance of Intimacy* and *The Dance of Deception*. I knew I didn't want to be side-tracked into navel gazing or all that personal growth stuff, without a feminist and political perspective [30]. But I really needed this, I devoured it, it was really -- I felt like I had finally acquired the last piece in the jigsaw of myself. And what was really exciting was that I could do that stuff, the personal stuff, without having to leave my politics behind, just like you were saying earlier. I mean, the way that Lerner talks about the patterns -- it was just like a revelation to me.

And I didn't lose my anger -- you have to hang onto anger, but now I had a different way of hanging onto it and dealing with it. Because I couldn't cope with my anger before, I often felt I was like a child, not fully mature, or it was easy to dismiss me because I was immature or over the top, an irrational female [31]. I'd try to control it, keep it in [32], but then it would get too much for me and I'd explode or get depressed [33]. But -- yes, that was it, really -- starting with *The Dance of Anger*, I learned how to use my anger, how to state my case and **then** how to do something constructive [34], I can deal with it now in -- in ways that aren't just aggressive, or passive, losing the head or getting withdrawn and depressed and blaming other people. I've done some work in family therapy with a woman therapist that I like. But I'm sure that if I hadn't been a feminist to start off with, my personal work would not have been like this, I mean, it wouldn't have had these

results [35]. I've come such a long way -- my feminism is more productive now [36]. I can connect with other people, instead of doing things for them all the time. I'm not saying it's perfect, but I don't expect that any more [37].

Comments

1. Equation of being radical with being agentic and able to make changes.
2. Recognition of the source of the aspiration towards feminism as arising from solidarity with other women.
3. Deconstruction of the feminism / femininity dualism experienced as liberating.
4. Possibility of a new reading of herself through doing emotional work.
5. Recognition of the take-up of positions in discourses of femininity by others, but not by herself (projection).
6. Projection of femininity onto other women.
7. Awareness of the ideology of liberal humanism and also the general disdain of politicised people for individualistic interpretations of social conditions.
8. Realisation that she has investments in the pattern she thought was imposed.
9. Juxtaposition of political analysis of emotional issues with liberal individual analysis and indication that there is a different, more politically productive way than either of them.
10. Positioning of other women through discourses of femininity or sexist discourses. Using those discourses to read other women.
11. Recognition of the power attached to these positions and drawing on them, while rationally denying their power, or denying that she might be taking up

positions in sexist discourses herself.

12. Opposition of feminism (herself) to femininity (other women), but also a demonstration that she has reached awareness of how such dualism is implicated in power relations and hierarchy.

13. She both positions herself (reflexive positioning) and is positioned by other people (interactive positioning) as responsible. Because of the lack of variety in her positioning, becomes oppressive.

14. Explicit rejection of essentialist feminism at an intellectual level.

15. Recognition of contradictions again. In spite of rejecting the unitary female model of women posed by essentialist feminism, she is still positioned in a unitary discourse of the human subject.

16. Further recognition that the pattern she thought was imposed is one in which she had emotional investments.

17. Projection of the aspects of herself which she repressed psychodynamically and also the aspects of women which she rejected intellectually, onto other women

18. Recognition that her route into feminism owed more to feelings of alienation from other women, rather than solidarity with them.

19. Feminism taking the shape of 'being like men', or being as good as men.

20. Feminism equated with being different from women. It is opposed to the sort of feminism she has explicitly rejected, which extols an essential femininity. Yet, her feminism based on identification with men is at the same time reaching its explanatory limits and her own unique combination of politics and experience is on the verge of pointing her into a third, deconstructive way of approaching feminism.

21. A power associated with women, even if suppressed in sexist discourses.
22. Contradictions again.
23. Experience of lack of agency or ability to influence events.
24. Recognition that we (she and I) share a particular feminist discourse.
25. Production of knowledge about herself: that which is repressed is reproduced unchanged, what is acknowledged can be produced in different ways (cf Hollway, 1982).
26. Experience of a lack of agency again.
27. Stress on her experience that a lack of attention to emotional processes has an impact on agency.
28. Leaving behind the filtering of experience through a discourse of prediction and control and moving into a more poststructuralist discursive mode of understanding human action.
29. Recognition of the constructed nature of experience and the self and an implicit recognition and simultaneous rejection of the liberal humanist belief that the politicised individual represents the penultimate step on the way to maturity (cf Kitzinger, 1987).
30. Implicit recognition of the self as a production, not as a discovery.
31. Within liberal humanism, anger represents immaturity, a 'phase' which has to be gone through on the way to the well-adjusted mature personality (see comment 29 above).
32. Perception of a 'choice' between rationality or emotionality.
33. Contradictions between the expression of anger and the 'manly' feminist

she tried to be.

34. Capacity to act has grown out of a deconstructive approach to the choices between rationality and emotionality.

35. Recognition of the constructed nature of experience and the self. The self is a production, not a discovery (cf comment 30 above).

36. Experience of agency.

37. Awareness of the need to keep a political perspective alive, even if a feminist 'end point' is not reached.

Commentary

P1 has come to see herself as a construction. Her feminist desire to be agentic is at least partly responsible for this reading of herself. Earlier in her feminism, she learned to read femininity as negative and this resulted in her wanting to be like men. Her unease with femininity and her negative evaluation of other women were produced through sexist discourses. This characterises early second-wave feminism, where not just men, but some feminist women also, read women through sexist discourses. P1 managed that contradiction by distancing herself and marking the difference between herself and other women. In effect, of course, as Hollway (1982) points out in relation to a similar case, this was impossible, because she was positioned by others as a woman. Nevertheless, in this way, she was able to draw on the 'double power' of being like men, but of also having the power of the feminine, caring, maternal woman. But this became oppressive eventually, because if people are always positioned as responsible, strong, having obligations, the lack of variety in the positioning becomes oppressive. The unitary rational subject which many aspire to is itself oppressive.

Ultimately, this version of her feminism was unsustainable for P1. She wanted

very much to change her positioning. This is the point at which a person positioned in dominant discourses of the human person might succumb to the notion of a core femininity and conclude that feminism can never work. But P1 has already strongly rejected essentialism at an intellectual level. She has an identity investment in being feminist, but outside essentialist discourses. This, I believe, is one important reason why she was able to see herself as a construction. Feminist desire for change is the 'raw material' (Hollway, 1982: 469) through which significations of the self are filtered for the feminist women, in many situations. Thus, the particular discourses which make up the content of a person's feminism will have an effect on the way the feeling self, contradictions and emotions are interpreted. I believe that the availability of positions in Discourse Three (anti-dualism) is most likely to produce interpretation of feelings and emotions as socially constructed and therefore to facilitate change in cathectic structures.

8.5 Doing politicised self-reflection: a commentary on the accounts of P1 and P3

Practices of therapy and self-reflection are frequently and accurately seen by people on the left as reclaiming people for liberalism and individualism. But P3 describes entering a counselling situation already positioned in political and feminist discourses, including poststructuralism. Similarly, P1 came to self-reflection already positioned in radical and socialist feminist discourses, as well as liberal feminist ones. Thus, when they came to attend to their psychodynamic processes, the grid of intersections between discourses, situations and psychodynamics was very different from the grid of intersections of a person positioned mostly in dominant liberal-humanist discourses. Most people are positioned in the dominant discourses of the human subject and access to ways of theorising the self outside of these discourses is rare. Yet, everybody is a social theorist, and a theorist of her / himself whether implicitly or explicitly. The ways that people theorise about themselves is affected by the

discourses and knowledge available to them. The outcomes of many counselling situations are similar, in that people interpret their experiences as the discovery of a 'real' self, because most people are drawing on the same, limited theoretical discourses about the world to interpret their experiences.

P3, however, is interested in Kristeva, especially the idea of the three tiers of feminism. She has an intellectual awareness of the need to deconstruct male / female dualism. P1 is opposed to the idea of an essential human nature. Their difficulty for some time was that their intellectual stances did not translate directly into political practice and the feminist agency they had experienced as younger women was no longer forthcoming. The spark for renewed agency was attention to psychodynamic processes. The new element for both of them was the self-reflection they engaged in. They achieved profoundly radical effects when they filtered their reflection on their psychodynamic processes through the feminist discourses in which they had positioned themselves. These discourses included Discourse Three, with its rejection of male / female dualism and essentialist definitions of women and men. It is to be expected that available discourses will affect the ways that any situation is interpreted.

Because of their theoretical and political convictions and refutation of essentialism and an essential feminine nature, neither woman interpreted her identification of reflexive positioning in a discourse of femininity as evidence of getting in touch with a 'real' feminine self. They recognised it as the taking up of positions in socially approved discourses which almost every woman experiences. Each woman discovered a sense of herself beyond her own previous image of herself, but did not interpret the repressed part as in any way less social. P3's description of herself in her time of confusion, as lacking boundaries, is reminiscent of what Gramsci calls a disjointed and episodic conception of the world (cited in Grimshaw, 1986: 137). The more coherent (but not unitary) and critical conception (ibid) which she reached allows her to acknowledge her multisubjectivity, and to incorporate contradiction and confusion in politically productive ways.

The awareness which the women constructed of their psychodynamic processes helped them to become more critically aware of things which had deposited in them the 'traces' of which Gramsci wrote. These traces include an attachment to a traditionally defined femininity and, in P3's case, 'feminine' forms of emotionality, which gave rise to some of the contradictions they had been feeling. This femininity was a part of their identity which, in their desire to be feminist, they had been repressing. (As already noted, there is a dualism implicit in the opposition of feminist and feminine.) Dominant liberal humanist discourse characterises such identifications as the discovery of a real self, but it is better 'represented as an achievement rather than a discovery of something that was already there. It can be represented as the possibility of transcending, in certain circumstances, what had been "second nature"' (ibid).

These assertions go some way to answering a Foucault-inspired question like 'what circumstances allowed or facilitated the development of this discourse or way of filtering experience?', or 'what conditions facilitate the acceptance and negotiation of multisubjectivity, rather than the dominance of the unitary rational subject?' One of the conditions which I have identified from the case material is the viewing of feelings, emotions and contradictions as social products, albeit in ways that are unique to each individual, rather than as indicators of a pre-social or real self.

8.6 Conclusion

In Chapter Seven, we saw feminist women reflecting on how they consciously draw on different options (discourses), either feminist or humanist, depending on the situation, to achieve agency. In this chapter, we have seen women reflecting on the differences within themselves and using this knowledge of their own internal differences to achieve agency and move forward their feminist effectiveness. The intersections of situations and relations in the present moment with discourses were again seen to be important. In Chapter

Seven, the point of entry to the multiplicity of subjectivity is seen to be the multiplicity of ways that acting in different relations in the present can signify as feminist. In this chapter, the acknowledgement of investments in femininity emerges as another point of entry to the multiplicity of feminist subjectivities.

Feelings and the contradictions they represent during the process of change are treated here as social products. The acknowledgement of contradictions allows space for consideration of multiplicity and has the effect of lessening the explanatory power of discourses of a unitary gendered subject. This, I believe, is what makes contradictions a suitable pedagogical tool for politicised personal development education. Through coming to terms with emotional investments, within a political framework, it is possible to disrupt structures of cathexis.

P3. When I'm angry, I mean, the way that I've moved is, that when I'm angry, I'm able to tell myself -- I'm angry because there's something political going on and I ask myself what I'm going to make of this? I think they say, 'how can I get past this to my real self?'. And that's what keeps me radical. On the surface, I might look very conventional, a husband, two children -- outwardly maintaining the status quo and the nuclear family.

Acknowledging contradictions and repressed material in the psyche is a way for feminists to develop a sense of self as active subject, rather than as object of a male gaze or as the object of a discourse of 'real feminism' or as a victim. This is therapeutic activity with more than just individual effects, in that it demonstrates where investments in femininity have material force in the ways they maintain a femininity / feminism dualism and thus also maintain male / female dualism. Such investments reduce the actual diversity of behaviour to a dualistic model and uphold the gender status quo.

Multiplicity in the psyche can be acknowledged, although not without difficulty, due to the dominance of the unitary rational subject as a discursive position. Such acknowledgement in turn helps to push forward the subversion of male-female dualism and the production of a discourse of a multiple human

subject. Davies (1990c: 136) asks:

How are we to move beyond male-female dualism? The simple answer is that all we have to do is to **stop doing the work that maintains the difference**. That, of course, is more easily said than done (emphasis added).

I assert that one of the types of work that maintains the differences is the use of power conferred on women by sexist discourses and which is often not acknowledged by feminist women who have attained power in the social spheres of work or egalitarian relationships. Yet, even quite powerful women such as these can find themselves hesitating in their assertion of power, turning it into domestic, 'female' or feminine ways of action. Even where feminists rationally and intellectually resist typically feminine positionings, they nonetheless have also learned the patterns of power and feelings through which male-female social relations are organised (Braidotti, 1989: 86). All women are positioned in discourses of femininity, which read women as powerful mothers and carers (even if this power is repressed). Thus, recursive positioning (interactive and reflexive) in any discourse through which a woman can be read as powerful will produce an identity investment which can co-exist with the politicised identity investments (as feminists, in this case) adopted in adulthood. Women often misrecognise this power of femininity, in the absence of a discourse which makes it explicit in feminist ways. They misrecognise it as the power of their sexuality, reading it through sexist discourse (Hollway, 1982): Almost any Hollywood film reads it thus (ibid), as does most advertising aimed at young women..

However, feminist women who also have access to resources such as income and education, as the participants in this research have, are unlikely to misread it as the power of their sexuality. They are likely to be positioned in discourses where they compete with men, or try to be as good as men. They are more likely to suppress the power of their femininity altogether. Acknowledging their construction in discourses of femininity and the ways they take up feminine positions was transformational for P2 and P3, in terms of producing feminist

agency. Their experience of this and my analysis of the phenomenon goes some way towards developing a discourse of feminist multiplicity, where femininity is not jettisoned, but is acknowledged and re-produced¹ in ways which have potential for a poststructuralist feminist praxis. There is a need to express, in feminist poststructuralist terms, the power of femininity, not to suppress it, as happens in sexist discourses and in the earlier feminist positions that these two women took up. This is not, however, the same as lauding an essential feminine as better than an essential masculine, as 'difference' feminisms do. It is a deconstructive move which promotes a discourse of multiplicity, in which women do not have to be 'either / or', but can experiment with different ways to be both feminist and feminine.

Accepting oneself as partially constructed in femininity can help feminists to accept the diversity of other women's experiences and resistance and to understand other women's actions. It also helps feminist women to find more points of intersection with women who do not accept the label feminist. Instead of differences between feminism and femininity being seen as uncrossable boundaries or as battle lines, they can be seen as meeting points. Understanding the ways that one's own subjectivity is gendered and the social nature of one's own and others' feelings can allow feminist activists to connect more empathically with other women and to interact with them (collude with them, in the terms of Chapter Seven) in ways that may alter gendered practice. An exploration of one's own psychodynamic processes, outside dominant liberal humanist models of the human subject, seems crucial to such projects. Neither a discourse of the rational unitary subject or of a unitary female feeling subject provides the conditions for these moves.

A liberal humanist analysis might have led P1 and P3 to conclude that they

¹ Following Hollway (1984a: 227), my use of the hyphen is intended to signify that every practice is a production. 'Hence, recurrent everyday practices and the meanings through which they acquire their effectivity may contribute to the maintenance of gender difference (reproduction without the hyphen) or to its modification (the production of modified meanings of gender leading to changed practices)'.

were after all determined by an essential and pre-given femininity and that they might as well give up their feminist aspirations (cf Coward, 1993). Instead, because both of them were aware of discourses other than essentialist ones, they interpreted their emotional experiences in ways which facilitated feminist agency and a recognition of their own multiplicity. That is, they were able to recognise femininity as part of their subjectivities, but not as an essence.

It is clear that their rational intellectual take-up of positions in Discourse Three (anti-essentialist and anti-dualist) is implicated in the very construction of their psychodynamic processes and in the radical outcomes of their reflection on those processes. Thus, the personal is seen to be not only political, but also theoretical (cf Braidotti, 1989: 95), insofar as an exposure to the broad range of feminist theories provided anti-essentialist discursive positions through which the women could filter their experiences. The chapter has illustrated the 'extreme proximity of the thinking process to existential reality and lived experience' (ibid: 94), which characterises feminist theory in general. It has also provided some answers to Braidotti's questions: 'how does the "woman-in-me" relate to the "feminist-in-me"? What are the links and the possible tensions between my "being-a-feminist" and "being-a-woman?"' (ibid).

The profound complexity of the third tier is knowing oneself as a woman and in that knowing breaking the bonds of words and images and metaphors that have held oneself inside the male / female dualism, that have made one a woman in phallogocentric terms. (Davies, 1990b: 514)

8.6.1 Theoretical conclusions

Feminist subjectivity is theorised further in this chapter, through the addition of a theory of feelings and emotions as socially constructed, albeit in ways specific to each individual, and through the development of the theorisation of power, using the psychodynamic concept of investment. While gender is acknowledged as a social product, this does not mean that it will change in direct response to changing material inequalities (Hollway, 1982). The social nature of feelings

and emotions is a factor which must always be taken into account in any theory of how change will take place. The ways we read the world, our relationships and ourselves have practical consequences for change which might be slight at first, but build up in such a way as to transform our subjectivity, through transforming our positions and relations. Each instance of a change in positioning changes the way the signifiers 'woman' and 'feminist' are produced. And if the signifier 'woman' is changed, the signifier man must change also (Connell, 1995; Hollway, 1982; Segal, 1990).

Power is analysed as a two-way phenomenon, through the use of the concepts of discourse and discursive positioning. In addition to being a way to protect vulnerable selves through the take-up of powerful positions within any one discourse (which was illustrated in Chapter Seven), power emerges as the energy which invests identity through the benefits of taking up certain positions, whereby one can meet one's own needs (cf Hollway, 1982). Because different positions in different discourses are being taken up from moment to moment, it is no longer adequate to theorise people as always victims or as always oppressors. In traditional terms, power is the exclusive property of dominant groups. The analysis made here demonstrates that the person who would be traditionally characterised as victim has power to move or to change positioning, or to take up new positions. The emphasis is on the relationality of power, that it is a two-way production.

This is not the same as equating men's and women's power in social relations. Men's power (and the power of members of any privileged group) is backed by resources and reproduced through dominant discursive power. 'This discursive power is the kind that produces oppression, backed up as it is by material resources' (Hollway, 1982: 464). The analysis provides a means to explore the possibilities for action towards change, by examination of contradictions, such as women's positioning in sexist discourses and what is suppressed (women's power) in these discourses. This was sketched in the chapter on relations (Chapter Seven), but has been further developed in this chapter's analysis of

emotional investments in certain discursive positions which may confer power, but whose acknowledgement may remain repressed or misread.

Such a theorisation allows a focus on where feminist women are aiming to go and how they can get there, rather than remaining fixed on where women have come from (cf L. Connolly, 1996: 62), or how they are held in place by imbalances in material or economic resources between women and men. A materialist analysis is not to be discounted, but needs to be enhanced by the addition of a theory of power which takes into account its dynamic and constantly shifting nature. Thus, the use of Foucauldian theory is seen to be particularly useful for analysing the production of gender and the means of re-producing the signifiers 'woman' and 'feminist' in changed ways. Without an analysis of power which sees it as capable of being exercised by the oppressed (cf Hollway, 1982), it is not possible to explain feminist women's investment in positions of femininity, nor is it possible to see the possibility of disruption of the gender status quo in cathectic relationships.

Through the use of the concept of repression, the 'victim' is seen to be not without power. What is repressed in discourse nevertheless has effects in the take-up of discursive positions (ibid) and the self-conscious divesting of oneself of certain kinds of power, such as the power conferred through either reflexive or interactive positioning in sexist discourses, is illustrated as a transformational and liberating process, given certain discursive resources, such as P1 and P3 had. It also appears to be an adult process, since it is the result of feminist identities adopted in adulthood and honed in adult social relations.

8.6.2 Pedagogical implications

Femininity may confer a certain power, but it is ultimately a power which is constraining. If women prioritise the power of motherhood and domesticity and caring as essential feminine characteristics, this will ultimately be to their

detriment. And moreover, it will facilitate their interactive positioning by other people as essentially maternal and domestic. This is not productive of agency. Women need to look after their own needs if they are not to become neurotic and guilt-ridden (Coward, 1993). Both Baker Miller (1986) and Lerner (1985) assert that the more developed women are, the more they can liberate other people. 'The greater the development of each individual, the more able, more effective and less needy of limiting or restricting others she will be' (Baker Miller 1986: 11). I take this further to assert that people who do not have access to radical discourses of the human subject will not use psychodynamic concepts with politically radical effect. This is the connection with the next chapter, where I try to take up the challenge for the feminist poststructuralist educator of making those discourses available in the context of women's personal development education.

The essence of a liberal humanist approach to contemporary femininity is to make inequalities appear as equalities (Hare-Mustin, 1991: 82). In drawing attention to the ways that positioning in discourses of femininity can provide positions of power for women, as I have done, there is a danger that such power may be regarded as equal to men's power. This kind of analysis is something I would have attempted to do only with feminist women who have thought in fairly radical feminist terms about themselves. Expecting women in personal development courses, for whom the courses are often a first step outside their immediate circles and into adult education, to engage in this kind of analysis would have the effect of reinforcing the status quo. Such an analysis of women's investments in femininity is radical only insofar as it is mediated through discourses which challenge liberal humanism, as was the case for both P1 and P3. This is an appeal to readers not to misread the analysis in this chapter. In some ways, it is for 'advanced feminists only'. 'When I read your paper, I felt that I could talk meaningfully to you about all of this' (P1).

Feminists who are on the verge of new discourses, through engaging in new practices, could find this useful. I suspect that many women try to develop

altered practice (the forerunner of new discourses) without having a language which would advance the practice to the status of discourse. This is one place where education can play a role.

For women who have a history in feminist discourse, our achievements in the public arena, or our acts of agency as younger feminists are not always enough to sustain us. Politicisation is not the same as agency. What I think is useful for the practice of personal development education is the way that attention to contradictions can be a starting point for altering practice. It is on contradictions that the radical self-analysis of P1 and P3 hinges. The challenge is to share feminist poststructuralist discourses in ways that can articulate or collude with the positioning of each woman who comes to a course. In Chapter Nine, I discuss how I attempt to respond to this challenge.

CHAPTER NINE

USING A THEORY OF MULTIPLE SUBJECTIVITY IN WOMEN'S PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT EDUCATION

9.0 Introduction

In this chapter I discuss the ways that my epistemological stance and my theorising of politicised feminist subjectivities undertaken in Chapters Six, Seven and Eight, influence my pedagogical practice. It is where I expose for scrutiny myself as a personal development facilitator trying to work from a feminist poststructuralist perspective in a field dominated by overlapping and complementary liberal humanist and feminist discourses of a unitary self and an essential femininity. I am not trying to present a formula for this kind of work, since each course and each situation is different and my analysis so far is highly contextualised. I discuss what I have found to be important issues in the practice of Stage One personal development education (see Chapter One, Section 9 for an outline of the content of such courses). Any generalisations I make are careful and revisable. Yet I go as far as asserting the importance of discourse, relations and psychodynamics in any educational practice which concerns itself with the production of politicised subjectivities and feminist agency.

This chapter represents research on myself and on my practice of adult education, which draws on my experience in personal development courses over a period of five years, both as participant, as co-facilitator and as facilitator. While I facilitated a personal development course specifically for the purposes of this research (see Chapter Five, Section 2.3 for details), and any quoted material is taken from participants of that course, I am drawing on much more than that one course to write this chapter. This is educational research, distinctive in its own right, as an educator researching her own

attempts at praxis (cf Lomax, 1994: 11). It is not research on education from a purely psychological or a sociological viewpoint. I think that this is a timely development for feminist pedagogy, since so much of feminist research into education up to now has relied on exposing and mapping oppression as I did in previous work (A. Ryan, 1992), or calling for completely new systems to be put into place, as do Belenky et al (1986). The biggest challenge is to 'transcend the gap between principled scholarship and practical strategies' (Acker, 1988: 307). I want to make feminist poststructuralist discourse into useful feminist knowledge for people apart from myself. I contend that this is possible in the practice of women's personal development education and need not be confined to the academic world.

As Chapter One (Section 9) indicated, in Ireland hundreds of women take the first step into community based adult education via personal development courses, which are being colonised by supposedly neutral liberal humanist practices. We need politicised facilitators (Clancy, 1995) who are aware of the capacity of liberal humanism to mask power relations and to depoliticise educational practice. In Chapters Six, Seven and Eight of this work, we have seen self-defined feminist women trying to transcend the gap between their feminist theories and their practical strategies. Now is the time when I have to expose for scrutiny how I try to do this in the personal development classroom.

Just as the problem of experience is at the core of my approach to methodology (see Chapter Five, Section 3), I also problematise experience in my practice of facilitating personal development education. I believe that experience is interpreted according to the discourses available to mediate it. I do not come to these courses as if I was a neutral facilitator. I have a theory (feminist poststructuralism) which is based on a subaltern discourse of feminism and I want to make it available in a way that is meaningful to the women I work with. But I also have to find a balance between my desire to predict and control the outcomes and the women's rights to take my theory and engage with it in their own ways, and to modify it.

9.1 Locating resistance and constructing agency

Patriarchal relations and interactional processes (which include discourses of femininity) exist, in which all women, to a greater or lesser extent, are positioned. Feminist responses to them are multiple, collective and sometimes internally contradictory. We have to choose, as educators, where to intervene. For women coming to Stage One personal development classes, the family, power in the family, and heterosexual relations, are often the place to do that, when we are responding to their questions such as 'how can we be different, now?' (cf Games, 1991, cited in Kerfoot and Knights, 1994: 78) These sites are bearers of the gender status quo and a site of the production of gender differences. They are where patriarchal relations are at their most naturalised and normalised. We live in a formally egalitarian liberal democracy, where it is acceptable for women to take on roles outside their homes, in paid work, sport, party politics and many other arenas. Yet, through discourses which position them as essentially domestic, maternal and caring, women are still widely constructed as the only sex properly suited to primary childcare. Issues of domesticity and maternity surface time and again in the personal development courses I facilitate. Dealing with these issues is a major challenge to contemporary feminism (Coward, 1993; Hochschild, 1990a, b).

A 'radical' or separatist feminist approach would be to dismiss the family and heterosexual relations completely. But the problem with this perspective is that it fails to deal with the large numbers of people who live in families and in heterosexual relationships of one kind or another. Another way of approaching the issue of family and heterosexuality is to ask how we can re-shape families and heterosexual relations for feminist ends, that is, to disrupt the gender status quo. These structures, as we know them now, are generally self-contradictory in any feminist terms. But family and heterosexual relationships which are arenas for a radical democratisation of the emotions (cf Giddens, 1994a), may be very important images for the future of feminism. What is more, they allow

the women I have met in personal development courses to have the things they say they want, namely intimate relationships with men and children, as well as the changes they desire. Such a vision of radically changed families is inclusive of women who choose to live without men. It is also recognition of the fact that masculinities are constructed and can change (see, for example, Connell, 1995; Segal, 1990).

I must emphasise here that women coming to Stage One are invariably nervous, often losing sleep the night before the first class. It may be their first experience of an educational setting since leaving school, which may itself have been a painful experience for them. The need for a facilitator to be gentle, while at the same time challenging women, cannot be overemphasised. Some may have difficulties with reading and writing, while others are highly literate and enjoy reading. For many, speaking in a group is terrifying at first. At the same time, it would be wrong to assume that they are not politicised. All have experience of power and resistance, as well as of conformity, although they may not use these terms to describe their experiences. Some have highly politicised consciousnesses and vocabularies. In their resistances, they have devised strategies, some of which may have been successful, some not. Every moment of resistance devises its own strategy, as the analysis so far in this work has illustrated. Yet, the ways that they / we resist can produce agency, or not. I am concerned with facilitating them to examine the ways their resistance can be agentic.

The challenge for me as a personal development facilitator is to find a pedagogical method which is adequate to my analysis of feminist subjectivities. I believe that the content of a standard personal development course can be used to position women in a feminist discourse of multiplicity, just as much as it can position them in essentialist discourses. I use the course structure and content which I have outlined in Chapter One (Section 9), but I approach courses as educational and learning events, not as therapy. To encourage women to read themselves as multiple feminist subjects, I filter the content

through the following pedagogical tools:

- The productive and positive nature of the experiences of contradictions, and how they create possibilities for movement.
- Kristeva's three tiers and other feminist analyses of women's situations, which I regard as discursive content.
- Lerner's (1985) idea that relationships are like a dance. People need to **stop** doing certain work, to unlearn patterns that maintain dynamics of power and of male / female dualism. I see this as a pedagogical tool which corresponds to the relational elements of subjectivity, as developed in Chapters Seven and Eight of this work. .
- A focus on one's own needs, 'treats' and bodily relaxation, as a means to producing self-awareness. By mediating this self-awareness through discourses of multiplicity and discussions of power, I aim to facilitate acknowledgement of unconscious investments in certain 'feminine' positions and recognition of repression and projection in intimate relationships. 'For a woman to change her relation to power, she must become the centre of her own life' (Goodrich, 1991b: 25).

9.2 Personal development as a political process

Any exploration of agency in personal development must begin with a recognition of the power dynamics embedded in the personal development process itself. Feminist practice of personal development is not a neutral endeavour (cf Hollway, 1991a: 95). There is a hierarchical relationship between a facilitator who is paid for her expert knowledge and skills, and the group members who are seeking the benefit of that expertise. The facilitator is in a more powerful position than the group members by virtue of her expertise, qualifications, status, position, and the fact that the women are probably paying

for the course, even if it is a nominal sum (cf Hart, 1990). Consequently, the facilitator's words, directions, questions, beliefs and interpretations are weighted by the group as possessing more power than their own. Only by recognising that power and privilege in teaching / facilitating relationships can I use this power in ways that facilitate agency.

I try to produce conditions in the personal development classroom which will facilitate self-understandings of the participants which are not confined to liberal humanist discursive interpretations. I do this particularly by naming power and by emphasising the social nature of feelings, emotions, desires and contradictions. If I do not name power in the personal development classroom, then I mask it and its relations and I individualise women's experiences of contradictions and desires for change. At the same time, I want to promote feminist poststructuralist ideas about power and multiplicity, not essentialist ones. Yet I must let go of my own desires to predict and control the ways that the women will engage with these ideas.

I wish to be an empathic listener and encourage the women to be the same for each other, but I also want to take a critical role in examining the stories that they tell, such as life-maps, check-in stories at the start of each class, and stories about relationships and feelings which arise throughout the sessions together. As with the practice of memory work (Stephenson et al, 1996), these stories are recounted because they are formative. I believe that they can be loci for change, if I can engage radically with the women to facilitate more social and multiple readings of them. Some of the stories may be expressed in terms of regulatory discourses and how I respond to them can have the effect of disrupting these discourses, or not.

The power of the facilitator is considerable. By virtue of my position, I have credibility and clout and my comments and information carry weight. I know this from experience of how people act in relation to me as a facilitator. My way of being can produce ways of being in other people. That is, I can attempt,

by my method of relating to them and by the content and information (discourses) that I introduce to the course, to interactively position them in ways that assist them to recognise and negotiate their own multiplicity, rather than bury it.

I know also that there are limits to personal development. So one of the things I need to do is to be active outside the class and to share that with the women and encourage them to become active also, in their own ways. In changing beliefs, it is important to work on an action level as well as a conceptual level. But if action tasks are encouraged too early (either outside the family arena or within it), results may be superficial. Agency needs to be collective as well as individual, in order to have maximum social impact. But I must not replicate the agency / structure or individual / society dualism, by implying to the women that public action is superior to private actions.

In my practice of personal development facilitation, I find that such exercise of power involves walking a fine line of deliberately reducing hierarchy by using self-disclosure and by putting as much information and control as possible into the group's hands, while at the same time not denying or undermining my own authority and competence. I try to be as aware as possible of the values I express, either directly or indirectly, and to be open about what I believe. Following Avis (1991), I clarify for the group what I believe: for example, 'I believe we need to examine power in our lives', or 'I believe that relationships work best when people have equal power'. I also make it clear that each person should reveal about herself only what she wants to reveal and feels comfortable about revealing, and that it is fine to decide not to continue with the course. I also tell the group that the course is not counselling or therapy. I explain that it is an adult learning programme, but one which is not like the schooling they may have experienced.

9.3 The facilitator's relationship with the group and relationships within the group

Women's experiences of schooling have generally demanded that they embrace socially acceptable forms of femininity (Lewis, 1993: 155, 185, 6; Ryan, 1997; Spender and Sarah, 1980/88). Many of the stories I have heard in previous courses have illustrated women's bad experiences as children at school, a great deal of them related to their social class positioning and poverty. Many of the women learned to cope with this as children by trying to please the teacher and to develop a special relationship with her and this may continue to happen in the adult learning situation of the personal development course. It is important to remember that this is a relationship with a group and that the members can provide support for each other when I am gone, and in between class meetings, since I don't usually live in the areas where I teach.

Because of positioning in discourses of femininity, frequent patterns for some women are to 'rescue' others in the group and to avoid looking at themselves. When caught in this pattern, we (both myself and the other women) may make the error of giving advice, telling a woman what she should do, or encouraging her to take a particular direction such as leaving an abusive relationship. Women also often attempt to be the all-powerful, nurturing, and wise mother in relation to others in the group. This is disempowering for the woman who is the focus of it (Avis, 1991). I find that by talking about these things on the first day, when we are setting ground rules for the group, we can avoid it, although I need to continually watch out for it. Bringing up the issue in this way on the first week also has the effect of sometimes making women reflect on it in relation to their behaviour as mothers in their own families, so the seeds are sown for discussing such patterns when we come to examine relationships.

On the other hand, it is not necessarily indicative of a lack of politicisation if a woman focuses on the situations of other women in the group. This may be part of her process of consciousness raising. Although I believe that each person needs to look at how the personal and political are implicated in each

other, not everybody does this in the same sequence. It is important, however, that women do not get into the role of advice-givers for other women in the group. I usually deal with the possibility of this by reminding the group about the ground rule of not giving advice, but of sharing what may have worked for oneself.

As facilitator I need to continually work on myself in these issues also (cf *ibid*). As Chapter Eight in this work shows, it is an issue of both politics and power to avoid focusing on one's own internalised oppressions and focus only on other people's. A facilitator's politicisation needs to be sustained and developed by a continual radical self-reflection on the ways one is interacting with the group members.

9.4 Facilitating skills

The facilitator needs a thorough understanding of the economic, political, social, cultural and biological constraints that shape women's lives and behaviour. This includes a knowledge of the variety of feminist discourses and analyses, as well as understanding issues of poverty, violence, sexual abuse, gender construction, guilt and ambivalence about change. Even if we consider ourselves feminist, we must examine ourselves for any anti-women biases we may have absorbed from dominant discourses (*ibid*).

A facilitator must evaluate women positively, which includes recognising and acknowledging the strengths of the women before they come to personal development, while simultaneously acknowledging their desires for changes. When I feel irritated because women don't seem to be making changes, I need to understand their behaviour in the larger context of the oppression of women, and not to draw on liberal humanist discourses which psychologise them as inadequate or not wanting to change. Emotional investments in power and in femininity and embeddedness in patriarchal social relations mean that the process of becoming agentic is simultaneously threat and desire (Lewis, 1993:

154, 5). The dynamics of agency **do** involve contestation of the status quo, however small or slow these changes may be. These dynamics are born of knowledge which, once acquired, changes the way a person views the world. Challenging the status quo can result in women getting 'change back' (Lerner, 1985) messages from men and children, who also have emotional investments in power and their identities. These identities are threatened when women change their relationships to power (cf Hollway, 1994: 268).

9.4.1 Naming power

I use the word 'power' in the courses as early as I can. This can be difficult, because it can put women off and it is important to keep them attending from week to week. It is rare that people coming to courses articulate power differentials as a reason for their desire for changes or for some of the difficulties they experience in making changes in their lives. The maintenance of men's power in the family is arguably the most diverse in its forms. In marriages, there is often not outright oppression, but the unacknowledged pre-eminence of men's desires and the subordination of women's desires (Avis, 1991). The patterns of desire, desirability and object choice moulded within the family extend beyond that institution to permeate the wider world of labour and authority (Segal 1990: 99, 100). The challenge for me is to get the women to see relational patterns as political patterns, or patterns of political institutions, with all the power implications of that view, as well as simply relationships, which is how they would be portrayed in a liberal humanist personal development framework.

I describe power initially as an ability to have control over one's life and to be able to influence other people and the decisions that affect one's life. I explain that women often have difficulty using the word power. A gentle way to introduce it is to use some elements from Jeffers' (1987) 'pain to power' chart:

PAIN	POWER
I can't.....	I won't
I should.....	I could
If only.....	Next time
I have to be perfect.....	I'm a fine person, just as I am
I have to please others.....	I want to look after myself
I have to always be strong.....	It's alright to have needs
I should try harder.....	I'm doing the best that I can
Hurry up.....	I can take my time

I tell women that it is often difficult for women to think of themselves as powerful. We are taught that powerlessness is appealing, submission is erotic and helplessness is feminine. Yet they all know how much they do in their own families, how they are far from helpless in many different ways. I ask them to think of a story where they were not helpless, and to talk to another person in the group about it. I do not ask to hear the stories, but afterwards I ask how they felt. Feeling powerful is not the same as having power, or being agentic, but it is a necessary step. Understanding different ways that power can work and how a change in positioning can change those workings is part of a production of agency

PD1. My mother-in-law visits every Sunday and stays for tea. I always used to cook a full fry, set the table, all that. And this was one thing I wanted to change. It was putting too much onto me every Sunday. I thought of changing 'I should cook a fry' to 'I could cook a fry, but I don't want to and I don't have to'. The Sunday after that, I just had sausage rolls and apple tart, and we ate off our knees, by the fire. Nobody said anything, but I felt much better. It really made me think about the way to change things, small things, and how they make you feel much more in control.

In talking about communication and assertiveness, I also focus attention on situations where the other party has the power to refuse a woman's request for change. It is not always the case that if a woman communicates clearly what she wants, that a reasonable other will facilitate her. It is necessary to know what one wants and needs, but getting it may be much more a matter of strategy and power than simply asking for it. Nevertheless, it is important to know what one wants. Discussion based on these issues can be a good lead-in to the social nature of feelings, especially feelings of anger and depression at

powerlessness. In naming power, I am articulating a collective feminism which gives people terms outside of individualist discourses in which they can interpret their experiences.

9.5 Challenge and empowerment

In personal development education, challenge and empowerment are each part of the other. I cannot facilitate women's empowerment or the construction of agency if I do not challenge their beliefs, their expectations of themselves and others and their learned behaviours, thus making them conscious of how their lives are structured. To do this, I draw on Avis (1991: 189) and strive to:

1. provide a context in which the processes of politicisation and becoming agentic can occur;
2. communicate my own politicised views, along with my beliefs in the value of women and every woman's potential to be agentic;
3. provide social analysis which gently challenges internalised belief systems which may keep women from moving in the direction of agency. This includes overtly challenging sexist or demeaning or essentialist views of women which may be discussed in the group and which often arise from discussions of current news stories and media representations of women;
4. help women to take actions in their own lives, however small, according to what they identify as necessary and as best for themselves.

Avis' (ibid) work on women and power in family therapy has provided these four headings. The rest of this section examines their use and potential for personal development education and continues to draw extensively on her work. Importantly, however, I situate the work in the arena of feminist pedagogy, as distinct from a one-to-one therapeutic relationship. The collective

nature of an educational setting is important for the process of politicisation in the context of critical adult education. The list is not exhaustive, but represents my beliefs in the potential of personal development education for feminist ends. The beliefs are not distinct from each other. They overlap and complement each other in relation to the course content.

9.5.1. Personal development education: providing a context within which the process of becoming politicised and agentic can begin and develop.

Women coming to a women-only group are taking time for themselves and beginning a process of individuation. Individuation is a political act and statement for women who are often constructed in an ideology of women's relatedness and connectedness. Traditional femininity is not geared towards the individuation of women. In the very act of individuation, 'the subject becomes an active agent, a point of intelligibility, a self that constitutes itself in relation to history' (Poster, 1989: 61, cited in Faith, 1994: 42). Emphasising individuation is not to deny the connectedness which so many of the women value, nor the importance of relationships to them, but it is often the first time in a long time that they have had a space in which to think of themselves as distinct. It is a process which is distinct from individualism and it is often immensely liberating for women.

This space allows women to reflect on and discuss their needs, without worrying about protecting family members, partners and friends. It also allows new relationships and / or friendships to develop within the group, fostering collectivity as well as individuation. Working on one's individuation in a group context can counteract the individualisation of women's problems. It also breaks down the isolation and shame which women often feel.

The presence of other women allows women to build up personal authority through the telling of and listening to their stories and they may re-view them

through the use of key questions from the facilitator. These key questions often concentrate on **how** and **why** certain situations have come about, rather than on the telling of **what** the facts are. For instance, by using 'how' and 'why' questions, PD5, a women in her sixties who had been 'churched' after the births of her four children was able to connect this to the oppression of women within the church and to connect her feelings of hurt with anger at social injustice.

With regard to relationships, I emphasise to women that the reason for paying attention to them in the course is so that women will stop assuming the burdens for them, not because they are responsible for the relationships. PD2, a woman whose three grown-up children were deaf used this piece of information as the starting point for ceasing to constantly worry about them. Such an emphasis allows me to communicate a view of women as separate individuals from their relationship systems and allows the women to develop this view of themselves. I point out that motherhood, for example, is on the one hand a relationship, but also a political institution, as are all relationships (Avis, 1991). I talk about culture and beliefs about motherhood, as a way to make such theory accessible. Forming friendships with other women is an important resource for women in discussing and taking on board such theory.

Life-stories and narratives: Women can 'share the stories of their lives and their hopes and their unacceptable fantasies' (Heilbrun, 1989: 44). Identifying with other women can help a woman understand her position in oppressive social relations and how she has been shaped by them.

One studies stories not because they are true or even because they are false, but for the same reason that people tell and listen to them, in order to learn about the terms on which others make sense of their lives; what they take into account and what they do not; what they consider worth contemplating and what they do not; what they are and are not willing to raise and discuss as problematic and unresolved in life (Brodkey, 1987: 47, cited in Brookes, 1992: 33).

I have to listen very carefully to people's stories, in order to discern the

women's current understandings of power and control in their lives. Maybe I can create a shift, by the way I ask a question, and thereby emphasise a different aspect of the story or of her character from what she has emphasised. This is part of the creation of belief, a very complicated task and more complicated than the sharing of facts and details (Avis, 1991). I may be able to lead to the creation of multiple interpretations of the same event, which may contradict each other. The same set of events can inspire a story in which great personal authority is demonstrated, as well as stories emphasising passivity, weakness, or deprivation. In this way, I emphasise the multiplicity of each person.

Through attention to their stories, the women can reclaim aspects of the past and present not readily apparent to me. Much of this reclamation, as Brookes (1992) suggests and as I have suggested already, is dependent upon the quality of questions which the teacher asks. There is a relationship between good questions and radical self-reflection. This situation is different from Haug's (1987) and Stephenson et al's (1996) process of collaborative memory-work within groups, but can draw on it. It is different because here, I am a teacher, set apart from the group, by virtue of my status. But I do not have to set myself apart completely, in that I share my story with them, and encourage them to ask questions of me. The way that I share my story is also important, in giving information about me and about feminism. In this way, I can try to keep a check on power imbalances which might occur between me and them.

A lot of the story-telling process is not so much telling new stories, or new things, but saying the same basic things again and again. Brookes (1992: 156): cites Williamson (1981), suggesting that it makes little difference what we teach, as long as it leads to questioning of the assumptions which inform our social practices. Consciousness raising through autobiography and storytelling are practices which can be taken up immediately, in any classroom, with both women and men, without devising a separate curriculum (Brookes, 1992: 156). Groups can discover their collectivity, as well as affirming each member's

personal authority to 'tell' their lives. This is in contrast to Belenky et al's (1986) suggestion that we need to devise a whole new curriculum for women. This is one way of integrating a feminist perspective into women's interpretation of their everyday experiences.

9.5.2 Communicating a belief that women can be agentic

I try to communicate to the women that they are all competent and capable of agency and that they know what is best for themselves, each one in her own situation. This is in line with my belief that every moment of power and resistance devises its own strategy. In order for them to gain access to their own competence, they may also need information, in the shape of discourses of feminism and social analysis (see Section 5.3).

Many women who come to personal development are out of touch with their own needs and are accustomed to meeting and responding to others' needs. One of my first goals as a facilitator is to help them develop relationships with themselves and to listen to, validate, articulate and meet their own needs (cf Avis, 1991). Ways of tuning in to the self and one's needs are listening to the body's symptoms and what they can tell us about our situations. Headaches, fatigue, overeating and depression can all be listened to as messages from the self denoting fear, anger, lack of agency, inequality. I emphasise listening to themselves, as well as listening to other people in the group. I advise daily relaxation and / or visualisation to help them make contact with their own needs. I devote nearly half an hour of each class period to meditation, relaxation or guided visualisation.

Writing, drawing and collage-making can also be tools for women to develop relationships with themselves. In the process of these activities, they often discover new and powerful self-awareness and self-appreciation, making conclusions and generating knowledge they were not aware of before and which they may not even articulate during the course. Resistances can be

produced which I am not necessarily aware of. That is, they may not be shared with the group, or articulated verbally, but this does not mean that they are not happening.

I try to affirm each woman's reality and feelings, ideas and experiences, accepting them as unique to each person, yet emphasising that they are social in origin and are often shared by other women in the group. It is usually a relief for women to find that other women share their feelings of anger, guilt at feeling anger, resentment, being burdened and powerless (ibid). 'The discourse of silence is one salient feature of our engagement of the social world' (Lewis, 1993: 105). Yet in overcoming silence and learning to talk to each other, women need to be presented with discourses which position them with agency, rather than with discourses which simply map their oppressions. Women often bond around the experience and the telling of abuse and oppression (Bart, 1993: 248), but they need to develop the resources to go beyond simply describing them, to identifying where they already resist and where they can resist further and make changes. I try to assist this development by pointing to the strength and resilience that they have shown in the past, when dealing with oppressive situations (cf Avis, 1991). However, I need to be careful not to situate women's strength within a discourse of essential feminine qualities, rather to show it as constructed out of social relations.

Because of my own positioning in discourses of femininity and caring, I have to work hard at avoiding over helping (ibid). I have to communicate my belief in their competence, by not giving too much help. I can give information and encourage people to meet and support each other outside the group. As a facilitator, I must not be over protective towards the women, if I feel that they are depressed about their situations. This can increase women's feelings of inadequacy and prevent them from becoming agents of their own lives. I can lead the women by making suggestions or giving advice, and encouraging them to meet each other for mutual support outside the classroom. This active stance on my part will provide a model for the women of being assertive, as well as

caring (ibid). I must offer gender-sensitive and feminist perspectives, which may differ from some of the values held by some of the women. I have to do this in ways that challenge the women without alienating them from me and from the course.

Often, halfway through a course, women say that they feel strangely depressed, in contrast to the first few weeks of a course, when they often feel excited at the newness and the prospect of changes which they envisage. I emphasise the importance of going slowly and of paying attention to the parts of themselves that are being cautious. I affirm the importance of waiting until they are ready to make changes and of making small changes to start off with. At the same time, I can affirm that change will take place, using terms such as 'when', rather than 'if' (ibid). One can also reassess as strengths what might otherwise be regarded as deficits or illness. Thus, depression can be seen as a healthy normal reaction to difficult circumstances and can be examined for what it tells women. Normality can be redefined to highlight women's strengths, rather than their deficiencies.

9.5.3 Providing information which may be contrary to the discourses through which women interpret their experiences

This component of personal development is indispensable to both the politicisation and the becoming agentic of women. It includes feminist analyses, discourses and social analysis. It is one way of introducing the feminist discourse of multiple subjectivities, as a framework for interpreting everything else that happens on the course. It is where connections are made between the personal and the political. It is partly rational, intellectual and theoretical. It is where I, as an intellectual, try to make feminist poststructuralist theories available to women.

There is a dilemma for feminist pedagogy in deciding what practical forms of pedagogy to adopt. One response to this has been to argue

that all feminist education should be student-centred, in the sense that pedagogy should always be seen as arising out of and as providing a response to the immediate experiences and needs of students. Yet if knowledge can be seen not merely in terms of 'power over' but also of 'empowering', then sometimes a failure to provide and make accessible more structured forms of knowledge might itself be seen as failing to provide resources for empowerment which some have and others do not. (Grimshaw, 1993: 61)

Theoretical, rational and cognitive elements: Many women coming to Stage One personal development education often believe that their problems are of their own making and that they are inadequate, stupid, ignorant or inept. When they tell their various stories, to each other in pairs, or to the group, I draw again on Avis (ibid) and ask questions, or provide them with questions to ask each other, such as:

- where did you learn that you are responsible for making other people happy?
- who told you that you shouldn't ask directly for what you want?
- where does this belief come from?
- does this still make sense to you?
- how were you taught to look after children?
- how were you taught to look after men?
- what would happen if you said no?
- what would happen if you stopped doing something?
- what do you need?
- how did things get to be the way they are?

Providing information: Since information is one form of power, it is important to find as many ways as possible to put this power in women's hands (ibid). When people first tell their stories, and I have had a chance to identify some of their beliefs from these stories, I provide information which challenges these beliefs and supports alternative constructions of reality. I do so in several ways:

1. I discuss and elaborate the process of gender socialisation, which helps women to understand that their beliefs have been taught to them, that they are not absolutes. I keep it simple, but not reductionist, with sentences like 'women are taught from birth that other people's needs are more important than theirs'; 'women are taught that it's not respectable to want sex'; 'I'm not surprised that you feel guilty about not making the beds for the whole family -- most women feel guilty when they make changes, because they are taught to put everybody else first before themselves'. These are simple statements, but I have learned that, when a course is going well and women are enjoying it, they hang onto every word that the facilitator says. I have met some women months or even years after a course ended who are able to repeat things I said during the course.

2. New information can also be provided in the form of statements which challenge women's beliefs about themselves and other women, such as 'women need to take care of themselves in order to be able to really care for others'; 'by caring for yourself and meeting your own needs, you are teaching your children how to respect and care for themselves'. It can be also useful to report on research findings about issues like sexual abuse, housework, or depression (ibid). This research adds weight to my message, while at the same time giving the women more information.

I try to introduce the idea of multiplicity in this way also, making statements like 'we can be different people at different times, depending on the situation'. I use games, especially remembered childhood games to illustrate that we do not jettison parts of ourselves that we may have thought were in the past. The use of games and laughter also gives a

pleasurable dimension to the course which is crucial in forming feminist subjectivities (cf Kenway et al, 1994).

3. I give information through reading material, in the form of handouts which I produce myself and in the form of recommending books. I can use cartoons, poems, newspaper and magazine articles, as well as books. It is important however to be aware of literacy difficulties that may exist within the group and not to disempower women by giving them material to read that is too difficult, too academic or too long. For women who do enjoy reading, I lend books and articles and recommend that they buy some of their own. I have found Lerner's (1985) *The Dance of Anger* a very useful book to share with women.

'We' statements: I have found that this type of statement is a simple and powerful way to connect the personal and the political, to decrease hierarchy between me and the group and to encourage a collectivity with other women and in particular with the other group members. Again, Avis (1991) provides suggestions:

- As women we have been taught that ... (we should not get angry)
- Many women feel ... (depressed, angry, guilty)
- Most of us have learned ... (to blame ourselves when things go wrong)
- A lot of the groups I work with ... (have had similar experiences about this issue)
- As women, many of us have experienced ... (harassment, intimidation, violence)
- As women, we are often ... (badly paid)

'We' statements are also ways to examine Kristeva's three tiers. I explain about different 'stages' of feminism, showing that they can exist together. If we talk

about women's need for access to jobs, education and economic independence, then we are articulating a liberal feminist perspective. If we talk about women as a group and their ways of doing things, or if we laugh about how hopeless men are at certain tasks, then we are articulating radical feminism which values female ways of doing things, but without necessarily being essentialist (Davies, 1990b). This can be one way to discuss projection and how we may project the parts of ourselves that we do not like onto other groups or individuals. This can again lead into discussion of multiplicity and the idea of Kristeva's third tier, where gender identity is not fixed. The challenge is to be able to 'know' where a group is 'at' and to give them the next piece of information that will lead them to a different way of looking at themselves, at other women and at men.

Making connections: I use Dolphin's (1994) spiral model of social analysis to help women examine and analyse the workings and the power relationships operating in their lives. I use a big poster of the spiral, designed to show how each level -- personal, social, cultural, political and economic -- interacts, interlocks and influences the others. Becoming aware of these levels enables an understanding of the roots of oppression and inequalities. I generally introduce the spiral in the same session where I introduce human rights. I ask women to reflect on the following questions:

- Personal: how do I experience things?
- Social: how do people relate to each other?
- Cultural: what are the dominant beliefs and values and how are they passed on?
- Political: how are decisions, policies and laws made and who makes them, at all levels of society -- homes, workplaces, parishes, communities, the state?
- Economic: who controls and owns resources of money, raw materials, land,

equipment and technology.

PD3 worked as a cleaner in a hospital. On the first day of the course, she talked about how she felt invisible and 'nothing' when medical staff walked by her without a greeting or acknowledgement, 'as if I wasn't there'. In an interview after the course, she commented:

PD3. I came to the course because I felt so down in myself. I thought that it would help me feel better. The most important thing for me was the day you showed us the spiral. I took it home and stuck it on the fridge. I talked about it to my husband. I brought it to work and showed it to my friend. I was raging, really raging I was. I decided to do something about it. You remember I asked you to photocopy the human rights for me? Well, I gave them to her and we decided to stick them up in the kitchen at work. I often saw people reading them. That was really important.

9.5.4 Helping women to take action in their lives

Clarity regarding responsibility. Many women come to Stage One feeling and believing that they are responsible for every aspect of their family life and intimate relationships. I find it helpful to clarify the things for which women are and are not responsible (cf *ibid*). I use the concept of human rights to do this, emphasising that other people have rights and responsibilities also. This is often a first step in helping women to understand that there are power differentials at work when they experience difficulties in making changes. The second step is to help the women to see what they are able to change and where emotional investments may be blocking change. Women may not always be able to make changes in their relationships with their husbands or partners as fast as they would like, but they often are able to make changes in their relationships with their children and with friends.

I find that a trigger for these changes is often the 'treat' for themselves that they have to do for 'homework'. Taking time for themselves apart from course time often triggers a release of the excessive responsibility which some of them

feel for their children. Success or agency in changing relationships with children can lead to a consideration of patterns of power and control. I find that women reflect a great deal between the weekly classes. Reflection on successful changes, that is, where they have been agentic, is important in learning to make further changes in heterosexual relations. Often, at check-in at the beginning of a class, they talk about their engagements with the previous week's material and how they acted, or not, in relation to it.

PD4. My friend wanted me to go guarantor for her at the Credit Union. It was for a big sum of money. And anyway, I didn't want to go guarantor, even if it was a small sum. She just took it for granted I'd do it, gave my name without asking me and told me on her way home. I thought about what we had learned about saying 'no'. I didn't want to do this for her, I went round to her house and said it straight out. It took an awful lot out of me. I said I didn't want to break up our friendship, but that I didn't want to be her guarantor. I asked her to go back to the Credit Union and tell them. She did. She's not speaking to me yet, but I'm just glad I did it.

I often use the metaphor of martial arts to examine power, emphasising that **not** doing things can be as important as doing things. This is useful in helping women think from a power perspective about situations they want to change and understand that head-on resistance is not always the best strategy for agency. This requires self-awareness. It has also led some women to take up martial arts, or self-defence classes based on martial arts.

Anger. Helping women to acknowledge and to express their anger and to use it to make changes is potentially one of the most politicising, resistance-focused and agency-producing actions that personal development education can do. It is also potentially the most depoliticising action, depending on the discursive framework of the course. Politicisation is often represented by liberal humanism as a passing if necessary stage in identity formation: anger represents this phase (Kitzinger, 1987: 56). Radical political identity is seen as a penultimate step in achieving maturity: the liberal humanist well-adjusted and non-politicised identity is the final one (ibid). But maturity is a concept that is socially constructed and therefore reflects the values and interests of the

hegemonic culture (Clark and Wilson, 1991). Writing about the construction of lesbianism, Kitzinger (1987: 56) asserts: 'In directing the lesbian's attention away from the outer world of oppression and offering a satisfying inner world as a substitute, psychology offers salvation through individual change rather than system change'. If the facilitator does not recognise the necessity of politicisation, as well as attention to individual needs, personal development education will have the same effects that Kitzinger discusses: it will encourage women to 'deal with' their anger within the gender status quo, rather than use anger to disrupt it.

When we discuss feelings and relationships in courses, anger is always brought up. I tell the women that anger is a vital part of becoming more conscious and of making changes and I deliberately try to mobilise anger by predicting it and affirming it as a highly positive emotion for women, as recommended by Avis (1991).

I use social analysis to point out how women have been robbed of anger and taught to be docile and therefore out of touch with power and strength. Women's relationships with others are affected by the necessity to deny and disguise the anger that arises from a lack of power. The only acceptable voice for women in a male world is a voice that does not directly express anger. Caring, represented as a fundamental female quality, can be better understood as a way of negotiating from a position of low power. Patriarchy is represented, not by outright oppression, but by the unacknowledged preeminence of men's desires and the subordination of their own. If a woman wants to exercise authority it must be indirect or manipulative, or else in the service of others. The same is true if she wants to show anger (ibid).

I explain how, because of these social conditions, we may project anger onto others and not acknowledge it in ourselves. This facilitates a view of the person as multiple and is able to accommodate both anger and caring in the one person, thus undermining male / female dualism. I share some of my own experiences of anger with groups. This always catches their attention, because

they are surprised that somebody whose manner is as mild as mine appears could feel anger as strongly as I describe. I talk about the cost of anger to women, whether it is directed at ourselves in the form of depression or illness, or directed at other people, where it affects relationships with bitterness and resentment. All the time, I emphasise the social nature of anger.

I often use the metaphor of a cleansing white light to describe the benefits of anger, pointing out that it is a clear and strong emotion which has the potential to energise and focus energy onto the areas where change is needed (ibid). I make it clear that the experience of anger in situations of oppression is to be expected. I explain how anger can affect the body and I encourage physical release by pounding pillows or screaming into them. I encourage women to see where their anger is coming from and to make plans in the group for dealing with certain anger-causing situations where they **can** make changes. Again, I find Lerner's (1985) book about anger an invaluable tool to share with women.

Saying 'no'; stopping certain practices; unlearning: I ask the group where in their lives they want to say 'no', but have difficulty. I ask them to role play situations where they practise saying no directly. I encourage them to examine how they could stop doing an activity that they no longer want to do. We discuss the guilt that women can feel when they say 'no' to demands or expectations from partners, children, friends or colleagues. I emphasise again that each situation demands its own strategy and its own ways of resisting. The more agentic women become in their families and in other close relationships, the more changed will be the emotional and logistical patterns that have shaped experiences and dynamics in those relationships. We discuss how it can be difficult for us to learn to tolerate not being seen as healing and helpful.

We discuss how relationships can be reorganised to support women's new interests and activities. By being different, they are creating different situations which they need to learn to deal with. They may get strong 'change back' messages from family and friends (ibid) and it is essential that I warn women about them. The family can be threatened, because of the ways that traditional

families revolve so completely around women, so that even small changes in the woman's role may mean that work and emotional patterns are disrupted. I explain that everybody is capable of the emotional work that the mother or wife traditionally did, but that women sometimes find it difficult to let other people do their own emotional work, because it is one of women's few traditional sources of power.

In the meantime, it may be enough for women to learn to say 'no', in small things, perhaps not even to say no directly, but to take time for themselves. I explain that this is not just to feel good, although that is one of the effects of taking time for treats, but also to get rid of some of the burdens they are under, including housework and emotional labour.

9.6 Personal development education: the beginnings of a pedagogy of the body

We are embodied subjects. Feminist resistances of the 1960s began with the body and a woman's right to choose how it is or is not used. For both women and men, the body is one medium through which the world is experienced. On the other hand, women are objectified bodies. 'Under constant critical surveillance by others, women begin to experience their own bodies at a distance. They view themselves as the objects of the intentions and manipulations of others' (Davis, 1996: 115).

I tell the women of my belief that our oppressions and our emotional investments are not only felt rationally and at a level of feeling, but also at the level of the body. The body has a role in self-regulation, in that the gut responds not only to food but also 'digests' stress and the emotions. The body needs to be relaxed to establish or re-establish a free flow of energy. Again, the martial arts metaphor is often one that women find easy to relate to, in thinking about energy flowing.

Insofar as the emotions are social and are ways of knowing our world and our relation to it (Hochschild, 1990b), they trace how social factors influence what we expect and thus what feelings actually 'signify'. Emotions are embodied experiences which radiate through the body as a structure of ongoing lived experience. For individuals to understand their own lived emotions, they must experience them socially and reflectively (Denzin, 1989). Attending to the body is another pedagogical tool which I consider vital to a politicised practice of personal development.

At Stage One, this is primarily approached in the form of the relaxation and visualisation exercises already mentioned. It is also dealt with when we discuss feelings and relationships. I give people a blank drawing of a body and ask them where they experience various feelings. Relaxation helps to restore 'sensual authority', without which we can become muscularly rigid and perceptually dulled (Taylor, 1991: 62). The body is a meeting point between private and public. For women, particularly, patriarchal power can dictate how the body is constructed and social (Davies, 1990b). I ask women to talk to each other about what they learned about their bodies as children and as adolescents. They often focus on commands such as 'keep your legs together while sitting' which held the secret to becoming respectable (cf Haug, 1987; Stephenson et al, 1996).

Attending to the body can contribute to a growing awareness of the structuring of subjectivity through the embodiment of dominant ideologies (Taylor, 1991: 72). Yet, to move beyond unconscious challenges or emotional defiance, there has to be a critical connection able to thread together the fragments of the contradictions, accommodations and resistances. Resistance without a grounding in political critique is limited in its effects on everyday practices and existences (ibid). In the sharing of stories and narratives, a common experience of resistance and oppression is recognised, in relation to the body as well as other aspects of women's lives. Paying attention to the body in this collective setting is capable of beginning a process of a critical pedagogy of the body,

although such a pedagogy is one that is ongoing. Stage One personal development education is just a first step.

9.7 Personal development education: part of a feminist project

My discursive analysis in Chapters Six, Seven and Eight of this work has shown that a person is never totally powerful, or totally powerless. I posit, then, that if, in my courses, I can get women to focus on contradictions, that is, the reasons why they want changes in their lives and came to the course in the first place, and where these desires show up the cracks in the social façade then there is the possibility of politicisation. If I can facilitate women to see where they **are** powerful and resisting, as well as seeing how constraining power relations work in their lives, this can help them make changes and be agentic. We can look at intimate and immediate manifestations and operations of power in this way. Nevertheless, the discursive analysis does not deal with questions of authority and the powerful social status of experts to produce ‘truth’ (see, for example, Fraser, 1989: 173,4). This is an aspect of power which I refer to and try to make explicit through the use of the spiral analysis.

The personal extending which personal development education can bring about is necessary, then, but not everything. It is necessary to acknowledge the limits of personal development, both to myself and to the groups I work with. Sometimes, recognising limits can be comforting, by allowing us to say, ‘I’ve done all I can do here’ (Avis, 1991). Part of my feminist project is to encourage them to move into other groups which will continue to develop their politicisation.

The possibility of reorganising families as a result of personal development education is limited by the gender relations sanctioned by the larger society. The options open to the facilitator are limited too, by the dominant discourses in the larger social system of which women and their relationships are part.

Nevertheless, by opening up the possibility of alternatives to the dominant discourses in personal development education, we can begin to transform practice in the existing social order. Foucault identifies liberation with resistance rather than revolution, the acting out of refusal at multiple points of power relations (Faith, 1994: 53). The task is to change the regimes which produce truths about people. In changing family and relationship dynamics, women can begin to change one of those regimes of truth.

Feminisms produce a mosaic of resistances which address the family, language, courts, churches, media, welfare, educational and health institutions, violence against women, political economy, heterosexism, colonization, racism, imperialism and all other impositions of patriarchal truths. The targets of feminist wrath and appeal are vast, deep, intricate and constantly shifting. Whereas individual feminist voices may convey a dogmatic certitude of analysis, as a broad and internally diverse social movement feminism moves beyond the model that would simply replace one regime of truth with another. Feminisms are local in their expressions and global in their collective, potential force. (ibid)

Resistances can occur beyond that which is articulated, observable or conventionally politicised. As a facilitator, I need to be aware of this. It is not always possible to measure learning outcomes, as Brookfield (1986) reminds us. I must not make assumptions about what course participants have or have not learned. Too many women make personal development education their first or only contact with adult education for us to leave it untheorised and to neglect its politicised practice.

There is a problem for the feminist poststructuralist facilitator, regarding the content of such courses. She is constantly in competition with dominant discourses (feminist and non-feminist, both drawing on liberal humanism) of what it means to be a woman, while simultaneously using human relations processes, such as empathy, participative techniques and drawing on personal experience. She also needs to be aware that it is not enough to ground her practice in simplistic notions of false consciousness and to see feminist personal development teaching as mediation or, worse, as a charitable act (Lewis, 1993:

177). Experiences in the feminist personal development classroom can be a deeply emotional for many women, offering the opportunity to claim relevance for the lives they live as the source of legitimate knowledge (cf *ibid*). Women don't need to be taught what we already know: that we are marginalised in a mainstream culture for which our productive and reproductive labour is essential. We need opportunities to reflect on our situations outside dominant discourses of the personal. From that viewpoint, a personal development course can construct for women an island, or a 'holding environment' (Avis, 1991), in which they recognise, understand and change their role in inequitable power relationships and cathectic relationships. This may include deciding to leave those relationships.

I want courses to end with 'woman' signifying differently for the women than it did at the beginning, that is, with interpretations available to them which are not mediated by the dominant discourses of woman. In this way, the signifier 'man' can also begin to be changed (cf Connell, 1995; Hollway, 1982). Any changes that women make also interrupt men's positionings.

Concern for this basic struggle should motivate feminist thinkers to talk and write more about how we relate to men and how we change and transform relationships with men characterized by domination. (hooks, 1989: 130)

This is feminist work that focuses on strategies women can use to speak to men about domination, oppression and change. It is the sort of work that is not readily available (*ibid*). Yet, many women have a deep longing to share their desires for change and their feminist consciousness with people to whom they are close. They want their feminism to reach into their relationships, in order to transform them. How we understand 'femininity' and 'masculinity' affects how we see our options for doing such transformative work and our choices for the future. It is crucial that personal development facilitation practices do not actually produce women in liberal humanist terms and then claim to 'discover' what they have produced. It is essential that the facilitator has a keen political

awareness of the conditions of her own production.

Naming power and the multiplicity of power and the social nature of feelings and contradictions are concepts central to my assertion that personal development practice can be politicised and can produce feminist agency. Personal development education deals primarily with intimate relationships (structures of cathexis), underpinned by emotional investments. Being involved in intimate relationships, including marriage, can be a source of agency and power, as well as constraint (Hollway, 1995). Through personal development, women can learn not to do the emotional work for others in their relationships and thereby affect structures of labour and power as well.

In discontinuing both emotional and practical work for others (including projection of certain qualities or feelings onto men as individuals and as a group, see Coward 1993 and Hollway 1994: 260), they often need to learn to deal with guilt and ambivalence which arise because they are leaving behind traditional positions of power for women, with their associated emotional investments in those positions. My analysis in Chapters Seven and Eight shows that women who can deal with uncertainty, contradiction and feelings of ambivalence are likely to be agentic in pursuit of feminist goals in a multiple and complex social world. Learning to deal with these feelings of ambivalence requires a strong sense of what one's own needs are (Coward, 1993), which many women are lacking, when they first come to personal development education. Chapter Eight has shown that what is unacknowledged is often reproduced unchanged. Constructing self-awareness in feminist poststructuralist discourses can lead to the abandonment of such reproduction and the re-production of women and men in modified ways.

Feminist personal development done outside liberal humanist discourses of the self can thus play an important part in the construction of new selves. Deleuze (1988: 115, cited in Faith, 1994: 42) suggests that social change, such as shifts in capitalism, 'find an unexpected "encounter" in the emergence of a new Self as a centre of resistance'. This is what poststructuralist feminisms are doing,

although not in the individualising way that Deleuze intends. This is also consistent with Giddens' (1991) assertion that, in late modernity, the creation of self-identity is a political project. 'Women who want more than family life make the personal political with every step they take away from the home' (Sichterman, B. 1986: 2, cited in Giddens, 1991: 216).

9.8 Conclusion

This chapter has put forward a way of facilitating politicised personal development education, based on my own practical experience and on my theorising earlier in this work. While my practice may be flawed, if I have no practice, then there is only empty theorising. Yet, if we do not theorise in order to inform our practice, then our work is open for colonisation by the dominant discourses of the self. These liberal humanist discourses depoliticise our feelings, desires for change and experiences of contradictions, and reduce them to effects of our individual psychologies and / or pathologies. Where Chapters Six, Seven and Eight address the first of my research questions about the nature of feminist subjectivity, this present chapter has tried to examine the second question: under what conditions can we do politicised personal development education?

A politicised practice of personal development education has the potential to be a successor to earlier feminist practices of consciousness raising, incorporating its strengths, while avoiding the weakness of a lack of a nurturing dimension and support for women in working on feelings of guilt, ambiguity, and ambivalence. In this, it is capable of living up to consciousness raising's theoretical goal of examining lives with all senses, including an equal emphasis on feelings. Drawing on feminist poststructuralist theory, it is capable of challenging the gender status quo by demonstrating that gender differences are produced and thus available for modification.

CHAPTER TEN

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS, IMPLICATIONS AND SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER WORK

10.0 Introduction

This chapter summarises my empirical findings, examines the theoretical, political and pedagogical implications of the work and makes suggestions for further work. Stimulated by an intense personal engagement with feminism and issues of agency, I have aimed in this study to research and theorise feminist subjectivities and to examine both their similarities to and differences from my own. Subjectivity has been treated as a process by which a person discursively, relationally and psychodynamically constructs a sense of self, or of identity. I have undertaken the study in order to deepen our knowledge about how feminism 'works' for feminist women and how they produce knowledge about feminism and about themselves as feminists. I have drawn on the pictures presented of feminist subjectivities, to suggest a practice of women's personal development education which is capable of producing politicised and agentic subjects. The work has drawn on two primary theoretical frameworks, namely, Foucauldian discourse analysis and psychodynamic accounts of the relationship between signification and emotional life, including the unconscious, as developed by feminist poststructuralists, particularly Hollway and Mama.

Theory and practice must meet and engage with each other and I have approached this engagement at one meeting point which is constituted by feminist subjectivities, including my own. I have attempted to take this further and see how these subjectivities can provide sources and themes for another meeting point between theory and practice: that constituted by feminist personal development education. This attempt at linking theory with classroom practice gives the work its pedagogical focus.

10.1 Summary of findings

10.1.1 Discourses of feminism

Three major discourses of feminism were evident in participants' accounts, along with another discourse concerned with a 'real feminism', which I interpreted as anti-feminist in its effects. These were analysed in Chapter Six. Central to my use of the term discourse was the understanding that there were different meanings about feminism held by the research participants and that people are positioned in relation to these meanings. Discourses, as analysed in this work, were found to position individuals in relation to one another socially, politically and culturally, as similar to or different from; as 'one of us' or as 'Other'. In this way, different positions and powers were made available to people. The signifier feminist achieved its meaning for feminist women in this discursive context. I treated discourses as the content of feminist subjectivity. I also kept in mind the conditions of existence of discourses and their practical fields of deployment.

The discourses which I selected from the participants' data were:

Discourse One: feminism as an expression of a natural femininity which is oppressed under patriarchy;

Discourse Two: feminism as a rejection of women's and men's socialisation into different roles;

Discourse Three: feminism as a move away from male / female dualism;

Discourse Four: a 'real feminist' discourse.

The first three discourses reflected Kristeva's three stages, or tiers of feminism, although they were not identical to them. Discourse One, the discourse of a female culture or an essential female nature repressed under patriarchy, appeared to be the dominant discourse and to have the greatest explanatory

power, because of its resonance with patriarchal forms of knowledge about women. However, even while meshing with dominant patriarchal discourses of women, this discourse challenged them, by also subverting the dominant symbolic order and empowering women through its resonance with alternative ideologies and cultural practices. What was analysed as the dominant discourse within feminism was simultaneously analysed as a subaltern discourse in patriarchal relations. This characteristic of Discourse One was one of the first illustrations in the thesis of the multiplicity of discourse. It was also used subsequently to illustrate the multiplicity of subjectivity.

Discourse Two treated feminism as a rejection of women's and men's socialisation into different roles. It had less explanatory power and broke down more often in participants' accounts, due to its dependence on socialisation theory, which is unable to account for the complex and contradictory ways that people constitute and reconstitute themselves in the social worlds in which they participate. Yet this discourse continued to have appeal, because of its relation to the dominant humanist model of the subject as having a core identity which is unchanging, but overlaid with social layers.

Discourse Three was that of feminism as a rejection of male / female dualism. It contradicted both patriarchal and other feminist discourses and was the subaltern discourse within feminism, as well as within mainstream discourses. Yet for those who drew on it and operated in it, it had agentic and empowering feminist effects. In addition, its awareness of the existence and value of first two discourses, in specific contexts, gave it, in my view, a greater political refinement and sustainable potential.

With Discourse Four, the discourse of 'real feminism', some participants positioned or felt themselves positioned by a standard relating to the amount of change they were creating and by a persistent insecurity about what 'being a feminist' (a politicised identity) actually was. This discourse took change as visible, public change. It was to some extent in conflict with the discourse of 'the personal is political', central to all feminist thought, because so much

personal change is invisible to other people.

I used a psychodynamic explanation of expressions of a real feminist discourse, suggesting that many women were not as sure of their feminist identity as they would have liked. I suggested that this was a result of continuous confrontation with the reality of women's oppression and the lack of power of feminist discourses in the face of hegemonic discourses of essential female sexuality, male sexual drive and other manifestations of patriarchy. As well as that, feminist women's own multiplicity meant that one simply did not take up a once-and-for-all position in feminist discourse and thereby take on a new identity, shedding older positions and related emotional investments without a trace. This, I asserted is probably true of any identity adopted in adulthood, especially politicised identities.

10.1.2 The relational construction of feminist identity

The discourses analysed in Chapter Six did not form a comprehensive list of the content of feminism. They clarified some of the content of feminist subjectivities. It became apparent from respondents' accounts that individuals have many discourses and discursive positions available to them, and that the positions they take up are momentary, changing with the different social contexts and relations in which they find themselves. Not only do people take up positions (reflexive positioning), but they are also positioned by other people (interactive positioning), in discourses they do not like, 'against their will', so to speak.

Analysing subjectivity as positions in discourse allows for the person to be conceptualised historically, as changing over time and in different contexts. It also advances the idea of people having multiple subjectivities. Each discourse is responded to in ways that are unique to each individual. This means that discourses are not an omnipresent monolithic force acting on passive victims.

Instead, they are also responded to collectively by the creation of new discourses and by individual movement between discourses as well as individually through psychodynamic processes.

In Chapter Seven, a relational aspect of feminist subjectivity was thus seen to exist simultaneously with participants' preferred discursive explanations and interpretations of feminism and feminist action. In taking up a relational position, participants did not abandon the discursive positioning. Relational and discursive positioning occurred simultaneously, with movement between positions allowing one or the other to dominate at any particular moment. In this way I further conceptualised multiplicity. It was seen to be based on contradictions and ambiguity, with some feminist women living more easily with multiplicity than others.

The signifier feminism was seen to achieve its meaning within a framework of intersections between discourses and relations in the present moment. Choice, collusion, strategy, movement and positioning for feminist resistance and agency were important elements in the construction of feminist subjectivities and the production of feminist agency. The specific relation or situation in which significations were negotiated was referred to throughout the analysis as practice. The data suggested that changes in practice could have structural effects. For participants, movement between or within discourses took place as a result of a thought-out strategy, as a result of a formal pedagogical situation or as a less deliberate result of finding oneself positioned in a sexist discourse or in any kind of oppressive situation.

In making strategic choices for agency, feminists found themselves also treading a fine line between operating in feminist discourses and drawing on more dominant discourses, in order to open lines of communication with other people. Work relations in organisations and heterosexual couple relations featured as important sites for the transformation of practices concerning the gender status quo. The disruption of structures of labour in the home was also shown to be both relational and discursive. In addition, their disruption was

capable of stimulating feelings of guilt and ambiguity which pointed to the existence of related psychodynamic processes.

Different feminist discourses were expressed, repressed or modified, as a consequence of their effects on the subjective experience of power and feminist agency. Some feminists opted for more singular routes and more unitary views of women, of politics and of gender difference. Those who lived most comfortably with ambiguity and multiplicity moved in and out of various subject positions in the course of their social relationships and interactions with a diverse array of groups in their personal, political and working lives. I interpreted this as a more or less conscious stance arising out of a process of social and personal reflection. The self-reflection also laid bare the character of some of the psychodynamic processes of individual women.

10.1.3 Psychodynamic processes at work in the construction of feminism and feminist identity

In Chapter Eight, I examined how psychodynamic concepts can be used for the development of feminist poststructuralist discourses, drawing on concepts of repression, splitting and projection. In the psychodynamic analysis, a feminist discourse of multiplicity (Discourse Three) emerged again as complex and sometimes apparently contradictory. I analysed participants' accounts of private and emotional change and the ways that such change was affected by the discursive contexts in which it took place. The signifiers 'feminist' and 'feminine' were seen to depend on each other for meaning, rather than being mutually exclusive opposites. The accounts cited illustrated discursive interventions into the ways that the signifiers 'woman' and 'feminist' were produced. A process of radical self-reflection pushed forward the explanatory power of a feminist discourse of a multiple subject. The analysis of the self-reflection showed it to be situational and constantly in process and also to have feminist and other discursive content which was outside dominant

liberal-humanist discourses of the subject, although not uninfluenced by them. It showed how psychic life is relational and social, as opposed to being a purely intrapsychic and individual phenomenon.

This analysis led me to an account of the constructed nature of desires and contradictions in the feminist subjects participating in the research. A recursive relationship between discourses and psychodynamic processes was illustrated and the signification in the psyche of a feminist discourse of multiplicity was theorised, adding to the theorisation of multiplicity in relations, already put forward in Chapter Seven. Material which was repressed in the psyche was seen to be reproduced in discourse. For example, femininity which was repressed in feminist discursive positionings was seen to be reproduced in feminist practices. The analysis took a deconstructive approach to examining how femininity and feminism are not dualistically opposed. The signification of feminism in the psyche was also seen to be achieved in a discursive context.

Power was analysed as a two-way phenomenon, through adding the concept of investment to the concepts of discourse and discursive positioning. Power had already been theorised in the relational analysis of Chapter Seven as a way to protect vulnerable selves through the take-up of powerful positions within any one discourse. In the psychodynamic analysis of Chapter Eight it emerged as the energy which invests identity through the benefits of taking up certain positions, whereby one can meet one's own needs. The meeting of needs produced psychological investments for the women whose accounts were involved in this analysis.

Because different positions in different discourses were being taken up from moment to moment, I asserted that it is no longer adequate to theorise women as always victims or as always oppressors. In traditional terms, power is the exclusive property of dominant groups. The analysis made here demonstrates that the person who would be traditionally characterised as victim has power to move or to change positioning, or to take up new positions. The emphasis in the analysis was on the relational nature of power, that it is a two-way

production. It was emphasised that this is not the same as equating men's and women's power in social relations. Men's power (and the power of members of any privileged group) is backed by resources and reproduced through dominant discursive power. This discursive power is the kind that produces oppression, backed up as it is by material resources.

10.1.4 Applications to women's personal development education

Drawing on the findings outlined, I turned my attention in Chapter Nine to their application to women's personal development education. I asserted that women need to look after their own needs and that the more developed they are in this respect, the more they can work towards their own and other people's emancipation, provided they also have access to political discourses which facilitate this. I asserted that such political discourses must include discourses of the human subject which do not assume a unitary subject, either female or male. What people can report, and how that is made sense of in an educational context, is affected by what discourses are available. If the only discourses available are those which assume a unitary subject, women and men will not be able to use psychodynamic concepts with politically radical effect.

Personal development education in particular is an arena where feminist women versed in discourses such as those provided by feminist poststructuralism need to get involved in facilitation and I described my attempts at practice. Furthermore, I asserted that my findings on the subjectivities of feminist women indicate that politicisation is not the same as agency. In fact, they are recursively positioned with regard to each other, so it is essential to have a theory of agency as well as of politicisation.

While the analysis of feminist subjectivities undertaken in Chapters Six, Seven and Eight, was complex and highly theoretical, I asserted that such a theoretical grounding is necessary for a politicised practice of personal

development education. This is particularly so where it attends to contradictions and the ways that they can provide starting points for altering practice in the gender regime and thus constructing feminist agency. Without a theory of the person which deals with contradiction, the way is open for dominant discourses of a unitary subject to hold sway.

I thus also attempted in Chapter Nine to show the relevance of the concepts of multiplicity and multiple subjectivities to a feminist practice of personal development and how it deals with the experience of contradiction. It is not enough to say that people are multiple, they also prioritise certain positions in the construction of their lives. An important motivational feature in taking up positions in social relations was to achieve power, as the analysis of the feminist women's subjectivities in Chapters Six, Seven and Eight had shown. For this reason, I asserted that the introduction of power as a topic in personal development is essential and I attempted to show how I use the concept in my own practice. I also emphasised the distinction between liberal humanist individualism, which I considered inimical to politicisation, and individuation, which is an important part of resistance and agency experiences for many women who take personal development courses. A central assertion of the discussion was that the facilitator is not neutral and that she must be aware of her own politics and stance regarding the human subject.

10.2 Theoretical conclusions

The theoretical implications of this research for both feminism and adult education stem from the development of a theory of subjectivity which can cope with identities taken on in adulthood. The multi-layered nature of identity and subjectivity must be taken into account in efforts to politicise people or to develop critical thinking. Adult education and feminism both need to ask what psychologies and social theories are adequate to this. Otherwise, dominant discourses of the human subject will be taken for granted as 'common sense',

with all the ideological implications of such an adoption. There is no practice without a theory. We need to be aware of what our theories are.

The theoretical resources of feminist poststructuralism as I read it in this work are capable of mobilising counter hegemonic feminist definitions and interpretations of women and of gender differences. Meanings can be changed through inter-discursive work, that is, through the articulation of concepts in new and different ways which may stand in stark contrast to other feminist theoretical traditions, but which nevertheless have concerns about women's oppression which have much in common with these other traditions (cf Kenway et al, 1994: 190).

Subjectivity, ideology, discourse and power are contested issues within the diverse body of feminist thought. The feminist poststructuralist attention which I have brought to them here provides a complex understanding of different forms of oppression, resistance, agency and signification experienced by both feminist and non-feminist women, of the ways patriarchal relations operate and the conditions of re-production and resistance. Below, I review the usefulness of some of the theoretical tools provided by the feminist poststructuralist framework which I used for the analysis in this work.

10.2.1 Discourse

The production of discourses and knowledge can have political effects. The creation of new feminist discourses and their implication in the construction of politicised subjectivities and pedagogies are pivotal to this thesis. For that, we need a theory of discourse which is both sophisticated and practical. The concept is centrally concerned with content and allows us to magnify for examination a set of assumptions which cohere around a common logic and which confer particular meanings on the experiences and practices of people in a particular sphere (Hollway, 1984b).

The concept of discourse also allows us to see individuals using different mechanisms to interpret their experience almost simultaneously, or in the course of one conversation or situation. In this way, it facilitates examination of the ideological work which produces femininity and feminism as a set of relations arising in local historical settings, without segregating ideology from the economic and social relations in which it is embedded and which it both organises and by which it is determined (Smith, 1988). It also challenges monolithic and totalising notions of causality and determination and allows the deconstruction of signifier / signified relationships which are commonly viewed as natural and normal.

By refusing certain discursive practices or elements of those practices, and by searching for new ways to position themselves, individuals can be seen to construct new and different forms of discourse and thus of material practice. They are seen at the same time to be constrained by existing discourses, structures and practices. These are not simply external constraints, but are also responsible for the psychic patterns through which individuals position themselves as feminist or feminine and through which they privately and emotionally experience themselves in relation to the social world (Davies, 1990c: 13).

The concept of positioning in discourse has proved valuable, allowing us to see that people can be positioned simultaneously in different discourses, prompting contradictions to manifest themselves. This concept is more dynamic than a static definition of roles and is able to focus on how self-signification is achieved in encounters between people in social situations. As Hollway's (1982, 1989) work shows, and as this work also demonstrates, people are positioned in discourses in ways such that they are motivated to reproduce certain positions in discourse and therefore certain significations. Because people are never positioned in only a single discourse, contradictions occur and subjectivity is not determined. Change is possible through the contradictions between discourses and how people experience themselves as positioned

through more than one discourse. Because these discourses are a recursive product of a domain of material and cultural changes, the reproduction of gender is not determined (ibid).

If we accept that people are not rigidly fixed in a single identity, then we can study the ways in which they are able to change, to resist and oppose dominant discourse, either by taking up positions outside these discourses, or by developing alternative ones, or both. When we look at the processes by which women living in a sexist and anti-feminist environment constitute themselves as feminists and take up positions in feminist discourses, we are examining how politicised subjectivities are constituted in oppressive environments and in environments of resistance.

As Mama (1995) points out, discourse in the general sense is something which is not separate from the individuals who make it up. It is not just a conceptual process. Theorised in this way, feminism becomes both a contradictory and multiple collective experience that women respond to in the process of constructing themselves as subjects. Existing feminist discourses are therefore both a vehicle for individual development and a generative factor in the production of new feminist discourses.

There remain theoretical problems with the concept of discourse. These problems concern where one discourse ends and another begins, the relation of discourse to the material world and its precise relation to 'practices' as I have used the term in this work (for example, are practices always discursive practices?). And although positioning in discourse improves on the notion of the individual as a set of roles, it is easy to slip into discourse determinism, as Foucauldian discourse theory does, and as radical feminist theory tends to do, because they do not account for each person's unique relation to discourse. This is where the theorisation of emotion and investment is valuable.

The idea of emotions as discursively constructed connects discourse, the unconscious and subjectivity and allows for different individual reactions and

responses to discourses. It also challenges the notion that desire, emotions or feelings are an expression of the real or true essence of an individual. People can be controlled by perceptions of what is true or real about them. Perceptions of women's true nature, illustrated by the expression of their 'real' desires, have been shown to be open to challenge, to demonstration of their constructed nature.

Challenging perceptions of what women are really like from a radical feminist or liberal feminist perspective alone is not enough (although it may sometimes be necessary), because these feminisms rely on a model of the human subject which allows that there is such a thing as a real and true femininity. They thus lend themselves to universalisms regarding women, which feminist poststructuralism considers to be inimical to emancipatory moves. The bases of the other feminisms in essentialist models of the subject make their approach to change reliant on rationality and voluntarism. These may be useful tools, depending on the situation, but they are not sufficient to deal with people's investments in certain discursive positions and their resistance to transformation.

10.2.2 Theorising the person, the personal and human agency

Because of the focus of my research and my pedagogical interests in the personal, there is a danger that this work could be dismissed by those interested in political and social change as an idealist analysis of change at the level of the individual (cf Hollway, 1982: 491). My focus is intentional, however, derived from my conviction that the political includes the personal and that the personal must not be left untheorised in any consideration of politics. Otherwise the personal will be subject to either liberal humanist idealist, or to social constructionist interpretations.

A critical adult education which is effective in its efforts to produce political

and social change needs a sophisticated theory of the subject, just as all social theory does (Giddens, 1993: 5). In my emphasis on recursiveness between discourse, relations and psychodynamics, what Giddens (ibid: 2 - 8) refers to as 'duality of structure', I believe it is possible to avoid the reductionism about the human subject to which both humanism and structuralism are prone. By taking this approach I add to theories of the person produced by other critical theorists (for example, Hollway, 1989; Mama, 1995) which give an account of the social and the psychic as dynamic mutual productions open to change.

As developed in the work of Hollway (1982, 1984a, 1989), signification as a starting point for examining the self, the person, or subjectivity does not already privilege either side of the individual / society dualism which I have identified as problematic and as characteristic of the opposition between liberal humanism and social constructionism. Situations and events signify differently and uniquely for each person but this must not be taken to mean that the process of signification is not social. Emotions must be articulated through the content of discourses. There is no other way to articulate them (Hollway, 1982: 493). Signification is produced in discourses and is therefore expressed in relation to discourses which pre-exist a person.

Drawing on Foucauldian concepts of power and Hollway's assertion that power is linked to emotional investments allows us to recognise that power operates differentially depending on the social relations involved in a situation, the discourses people recognise and the positions they take up in different discourses. By accounting for power and discourse in each case, an analysis based on signification privileges neither individual nor structure.

Since discourses do not exist 'out there', the duality of structure also refers to the circulation of signification (and thereby of discourses) between people, rather than between a person and a discourse (Hollway, 1982; Mama, 1995). People participate actively -- even if sometimes unwittingly -- in the production and reproduction of discourses, and therefore of change. The plethora of small everyday significations which we take for granted must be taken into account

in the search for a useful theory of change.

A theory of the person that relates contradictions, desires and emotions to discourses which position us as women and as feminists and which also provides alternative positions for us to take up is a good basis on which to challenge the kind of rationalism on which critical adult education -- in its desire for social and political change -- is based. This rationality has had limited success. Signification and related concerns with the construction of meaning offer a way beyond rationalism and its dualistic opposite, 'pure' feeling. This area of theorising needs to be given continuing attention by critical adult education.

10.2.3 Political implications for feminism

Gender is a system of difference production which depends on labour, power and cathexis for its effects, as Connell (1987, 1995) and Hollway (1994) have argued. If signifiers of 'woman' remain the same, then 'man' will continue to signify the same. Moves that women make to change their positions thus have effects on men's positioning. The difficulty with this is that change involves feminist women trying to change both themselves and men at the same time. It is nevertheless encouraging that any change interrupts men's positioning in discourses as well as women's. This is work that men can do also and into which they have been encouraged and sometimes precipitated by women's feminism (cf Connell, 1995; Griffin, 1997). Another implication is that a focus on gender relations is required. Men and men's subjectivities, especially as they engage with emancipatory discourses, including feminism, cannot simply be left out of the equation, as radical feminist theorising tends to do.

When people come to read themselves through different discourses, the structures of labour, power and cathexis and the system of gender difference production which they facilitate are challenged. Many women and men do not

recognise that other discourses, practices and possibilities exist, apart from those based on an essentialist perception of what it is to be women or men. Their incorporation into femininity and masculinity comes about not only through divisions of labour and imbalances in material and economic power, but also through complex and less acknowledged emotional, psychic and sexual workings of desire and cathexis. Dominant sexist discourses encourage them to interpret these workings as evidence of their true 'feminine' or 'masculine' selves. In dominant feminist discourses, these are interpreted for them as evidence that attention to the personal will never achieve emancipation, or, alternatively, for women, that they need to leave the heterosexual relationships within which they experience these feelings (Hollway, 1995).

Feminist researchers and teachers must not underestimate the cathectic attachments which can exist to certain discursive practices and positions. It should also be understood that investments can seem like freely made choices, or can be portrayed as choices. Another implication is that feminist educators need to be aware of discourses which challenge liberal humanism's and radical feminism's dominant views of the human subject, and that they are able to develop the discourses in the collectives of which they are part, and to find ways of communicating and developing different discourses when working with women or men in any learning situation.

10.2.4 Power and agency for feminist change

Feminism has been preoccupied with power throughout its history and it is a current concern of Irish feminist activists. Critical adult education practice and theory aimed at social change also take power and empowerment -- theorised in this work as agency -- as central concerns. From a feminist poststructuralist point of view, 'it does not make sense to think of political change simply in terms of emancipation from oppression, as feminists conventionally have done. It does make sense to think of transforming political relations through the

production of new discourses and so new forms of power and new forms of the self' (Ramanazoglu, 1993a: 24). What has this work added to the theorisation of power and agency?

Power has been theorised throughout the study as an outcome of discursive practices and positionings which exist in recursive relationship with psychodynamic processes. It is acknowledged that there are other ways of theorising it (see Cockburn, 1983; Fraser, 1989: 32), but it is asserted that the discursive form of power is one of the least obvious manifestations, and one which needs to be acknowledged. In this way, power can also be seen in terms of an ongoing, relational production, open to change, instead of simple suppression.

I have attempted to integrate psychodynamic accounts with interpersonal relations, including family dynamics and unconscious motivations and with sociological structures, practices and relationships, as advocated by Segal (1990: 93). Segal considers such an integration rarely attempted, outside feminist writing on mothering, which tends to treat it as a timeless, ahistorical institution. To do this, I have used Connell's (1987, 1995) theorisation of structures of labour, power and cathexis, with an emphasis on cathexis. I further assert that all three of these structures can be dealt with in a politicised practice of personal development education. Whatever about achieving a 'complex integration' (Segal, 1990: 93), I have shown how structures of cathexis permeate labour and power structures. As Segal (*ibid*: 102) points out, power also permeates all aspects of the structures to an extent that it is probably inaccurate to treat them as analytically distinct. 'The solution is perhaps to avoid any tripartite structural divisions for a more flexible naming of the central dynamics of gender hierarchy. Power, surely, is everywhere -- in the economic, the political and the interpersonal; desire, and its opposites, fear and loathing, are similarly ubiquitous' (*ibid*).

The analysis of power in this study has concentrated on emotional investments in certain positions and cathectic relations. It has shown that women are not

without power, as women, or as feminists, when it comes to getting people to engage with feminist discourses and thereby have feminist effects. But I have emphasised also that this does not mean that women's and men's powers are equal, nor that the power of feminist discourses is equal to the power of dominant sexist discourses. Firstly, the power conferred by being the other (that is, the woman, or the feminist woman) in various relations in the present is not equal to that of men because it does not signify the same in dominant sexist discourses (Hollway, 1982). In addition, in practice, such power operates at the same time as many other powers, such as socially sanctioned authority and material resources. Such alternative sources of power and power relations also pertain in heterosexual couples and between adults and children, resulting in social sources of power within intimate relations (ibid: 484). This is where we need to include materialist and economic analyses:

The resources which usually have accrued to the men through other discourses and practices confer powers which are not usually left unexercised in the struggle to control the object of his desire for the other. (ibid)

The feminist women in this study are examples of women who have access to multiple sources of power because of their independent economic status. Some women have only one power to lose and when this is the case, they are less likely to challenge their position with ease (ibid). The importance of keeping in mind the material inequalities between women and men is thus emphasised. It needs to be kept in mind by any facilitator of women's personal development education who is hoping to produce politicised and agentic subjectivities and who draws on such an analysis of power.

Socially critical understandings are not in themselves a guarantee of being able to make changes associated with being agentic as a feminist. This is where radical feminist theorising and earlier consciousness raising practices are lacking.

My analysis makes it clear that power and agency are not the same thing.

Having power is not the same as being agentic, but to achieve agency, it is vital to understand politically the different ways that power works and how one is implicated and positioned in those workings. Every moment of power and resistance devises its own strategy. Some forms of resistance to the workings of power produce agency, others do not. The analysis of power as a two-way production indicates additional moves that women can make to achieve feminist agency. Such moves have not been analysed in liberal feminist and radical feminist theorising.

The concept of positionality was again useful for analysing patterns of power relationships and the construction of agency. I took it from the research arena into personal development education. It allows women to approach change when they are feeling 'stuck', through an examination of their own positionality and the ways they position other people. 'Conscious choices, even when they are less than ideal, help us to transcend our sense of entrapment' (Lipman Blumen, 1994: 128). Personal development education can help people to make some choices, from a positional perspective. But collective agency is necessary also: the limits of personal development education are recognised.

Another benefit of the concept of positionality is that it allows women to recognise that they simultaneously occupy a range of social and cultural positions and to incorporate the social into their reflection on experience. This was illustrated in this study as occupying simultaneously feminist and feminine positions, but does not have to be confined to such positionings (see, for example, Kenway et al, 1994: 199). Through using positioning and positionality, it is possible to come to see power as multiple. The implications for a theory of change and hence for a meaningful feminist politics are significant. It takes us beyond a view of women as either stuck in a system where they have no meaningful access to power, or, alternatively, as powerful in the maternal, domestic and sexual arenas only. It prevents feminism from falling into 'psychobabble' on the one hand, or a structural-based movement incapable of politicising the personal, on the other hand (Burman, 1995: 132).

10.3 Pedagogical conclusions

Feminism is a massive pedagogical project (Faith, 1994: 61). Generating new theoretical perspectives from which the dominant can be criticised and new possibilities envisaged is especially important. It is one of the aims of this thesis to show the practical value of feminist poststructuralist theory. What gives this work its focus on pedagogy is my desire to share something of feminist poststructuralist discourses and to engage in the production of knowledge.

The concept of pedagogy draws attention to the process through which knowledge is produced. In this section, I treat feminism and critical adult education pedagogy as almost interchangeable terms. I think this is justifiable, since feminism is a politics usually adopted in adulthood. I also assert that adult educators need to know about the consequences of identities adopted in adulthood. Tennant and Pogson (1995: 117) claim that a transformative practice of adult education is a version of Foucault's (1988) 'technologies of the self' (cf Giddens, 1991).

Lusted's concept of pedagogy is appropriate for a feminist poststructuralist pedagogical project, because it recognises the relational nature of teaching, learning and the production of knowledge. 'How one teaches is therefore of central interest but, through the prism of pedagogy, it becomes inseparable from what is being taught and, crucially, from what one learns' (Lusted, 1986: 3; see also McDonald, 1989). Feminism and pedagogy converge at the point of intersection between personal experience and commitment to transformative politics. As an instrument of social change, a truly transformative pedagogy requires the embodiment of a subjectivity conscious of her own subordination (Lewis, 1993: 54) and of her successful resistances. But if our understanding takes us only as far as pinpointing the construction of femininity and oppression, then it is inadequate for a transformative pedagogical practice. The social transformation of gender identities is an explicit concern of feminist pedagogy. Subjectivity and, specifically, feminist subjectivity and its production

is therefore central to any feminist pedagogy.

One challenge for both feminism in Ireland and for critical adult education pedagogy (especially where they come together in women's personal development education) is to find a praxis adequate to the accounts of feminist subjectivities presented in this thesis. I have asserted more than once in this work that any curriculum which places personal growth at its centre must negotiate some tricky ideological ground (Kenway and Willis, 1990). The requirement of the pedagogy is that it can provide a framework where people can go beyond rational accounts and can do this without slipping into mere feeling accounts (cf Hollway, 1989). In other words, it has to avoid dualism.

Much feminist exhortation and adult education practice in this country comes down on one side or other of the dualism. Reactions to rationalism tend to concentrate on the spiritual and emotional. Reactions to the personal call for more emphasis on the structural. Humanist practice is seen as a radical alternative to religious practice in personal development education, but when humanist practice is then found to be inadequate for forming politicised subjectivities, the call is made to leave the personal, or to move beyond it, and to concentrate on the structural. The call to 'move beyond' personal development (cf Mulvey, 1995) assumes a hierarchy of development from personal to political, from individual to structural.

My analysis and account of my own stance have made clear that I do not consider any of these responses adequate, and I advocate a politicised account of the personal and a recognition of how personal the political is, in order to move beyond the stalemate which exists, with people taking to one camp or the other. This, I believe, is what a poststructural input into theory and practice can do for feminist adult education.

When women arrive at radical feminist and social constructionist ways of seeing things for the first time, it is enormously exciting. This produces the 'aha!' factor. But, even though these ways of interpreting the world provide

very important insights, they are not the sole explanations for women's condition. Unfortunately, because we are so attuned to the idea that fundamental truths exist, most people stop there. They look for reductionist explanations in all walks of life. So, pedagogically speaking, we need to go beyond the reductionism of 'aha!', while acknowledging its importance. This is reminiscent of Kristeva's project of operating in three stages of feminism -- radical, liberal and deconstructed -- all at once. If women consider that an essential femininity is the whole truth about them, this can operate to perpetuate the current power status quo. If they consider that the only way to emancipation is to tackle social structures, it can have the same effect, because the personal is left untheorised in a politicised manner and the assumptions of a liberal humanist perspective are taken for granted. Foucault shows truth, reason and goodness as ideas produced inside a mode of life in order to ratify it (cf Hollway, 1991a). He exposed distinctions operating between rational and irrational as operating for power's sake (Cocks, 1989: 18). Distinctions between the personal and the structural can operate in the same way.

Feminist poststructuralism provides a radical framework for understanding the relation between people and the social world and for conceptualising social change (Davies, 1990c: xi). The structures and process of the social world are recognised as having a material force, a capacity to constrain, to shape, to coerce, as well as to make possible individual action. The processes whereby individuals take themselves up as persons are understood as ongoing processes. The individual is not so much social construction which results in some relatively fixed end product, but one who is constituted and reconstituted through a variety of discursive practices. It is the recognition of the ongoing nature of the constitution of self and the recognition of the non-unitary nature of self that makes poststructuralist theory different from social construction theory (ibid).

The solution, then, to the very real problems outlined in Mulvey's (1995) report on women and power in Ireland, as discussed in Chapter One of this

work, is not a straightforward turn to the structural conditions of life. It is not a move 'on' to awareness of structures. This implies that there is a hierarchy of moves which can lead to liberation, starting with the personal and moving on to higher forms of conscientization such as the structural. They all have to be tackled at the same time: not an easy task, but an essential one. For feminists and educators committed to social transformation, it is not enough to say that a course of action can emphasise one aspect only. This means that all choices for action have limits which must be recognised. Neither is the solution to abandon spiritual development or individuation, or the awareness which liberal humanism has created of individual human needs. However, if women remain preoccupied with introspection and healing, people with vested interests in retaining the status quo will get on with that task (cf Inglis, 1995: 4).

The concept of multiple and contradictory discourses, powers and subjectivities can act as a resource for women, and for men, who want to make changes. Radical self-reflection can create awareness of how all of these positions and discourses overlap in the same person, that is, how the person is multiply constructed. Awareness of this is profoundly liberatory in its potential, especially insofar as it has the effect of freeing people from guilt or ambivalence, or at least can give them the tools to free themselves.

But how does this differ from a human relations discourse, when people want to know 'Who am I?' It can be frustrating not to be able to settle on an idea of who one is, even while at the same time accepting the constructedness and multiplicity of human experience. Wetherell (1995: 135, 6) draws on Hall (1988a: 44) to address this issue. Hall argues that we do, indeed, answer the question and come to conclusions and settle on positions in various relationships (cf Davies and Harré, 1990) and often maintain these versions of ourselves for a considerable length of time (or find that others maintain them for us). Identity is thus about closure, as well as difference and multiplicity. It is about refusing **all** the possible versions and choosing one, for a time. So subjectivity, the sense of oneself, is often formed 'at these points where we

place a full stop' (Wetherell, 1995: 136). This has implications for the sustainability of feminist politics and strategy. A feminism where the constructed nature of self is accepted but where choices for action are made nonetheless, based on a conviction that closures have to be made, however flawed, is eminently sustainable.

10 3.1 Implications for politicised adult education

The study of feminist subjectivities in this work has shown that so much of feminist life is the daily project of establishing a social identity. How can it work, then, if it is based on a deconstruction of the category 'female'? Again drawing on Hall (1988a, 1988b), Wetherell (1995: 141) calls for a

politics of articulation ... that is, a politics which tries to combine two contradictory movements -- opening and closing. Closing in the sense that effective political action involves putting, at some point, a stop to talking: in feminist terms it involves defining a community of women, and an identity from which to act. But also opening -- in that this community of women must not be taken for granted; the way it is constructed must be continually open to question (see also Gallop, 1982).

This might be one way to mobilise Kristevan theory and take it out of the marginal position it occupies.

Kristeva's concern to dissolve identity ... is necessary if resistance is not to replace the domination it struggles against with an equally repressive structure of subjugation. As far as can be seen, however, her politics, although subversive, lack mobilization thus remaining marginal for want of collective agency. (Kerfoot and Knights, 1994: 85)

Wetherell (1995) advocates feminist psychology as a model of this new method of politics. A self-consciously feminist adult education praxis could also provide such a model. Within it, a feminist practice of personal development education could have a role in introducing the model at grassroots level, as well as in its reflexive development. Personal development education is, after all,

where many women make the first contact with adult education and feminism. Such a model involves laying bare the power dynamics of different discourses of femininity and feminism, openly questioning the formulation of dominant discourses about women, pushing forward subordinated and barely formulated alternatives such as I have produced in this thesis, as well as others which I refer to in Section 5 of this chapter, on future research and pedagogical work.

The knowing subject of such a model of pedagogy will take on board the poststructural lesson *par excellence*, which is to be suspicious of authority and authoritative versions of who we are. It is important that feminist teachers can somehow make accessible to learners the various theoretical tools that are available for doing this, but it is equally important that such teaching does not take the form of an initiation into feminist theory as a disembodied form of knowledge. Feminist teaching projects must devise ways of teaching students about the various feminist perspectives in ways that focus them on students' everyday personal, intellectual and political dilemmas (Middleton, 1993: 31) and provide positions from which to act effectively for political change.

The model of subjectivity put forward in this work has potential for practical application in personal development education.

Much of the unfamiliarity and strangeness of poststructuralism recedes when applied to everyday life. Work, relationships, beliefs, skills, and we ourselves are not identical from one day, or even one moment, to the next or from one place to another. There are always differences ... What we do in everyday life is negotiated, compromised, contingent, subject to miscalculation, and flawed. (Cherryholmes, 1988: 142)

While authoritative and foundational theories may promise redemption, they cannot help us deal with confusion and imperfection, mingled in with success, as well as poststructuralism can. Poststructuralism has room for both constructors and deconstructors. Construction is based on the realisation that what is built is temporal, fallible, limited, compromised, negotiated and incomplete or contradictory. Each construction will eventually be replaced. And deconstructive argument must be shaped so that construction will be

encouraged and follow (ibid: 143).

Cain (1993: 83) claims that once a concept is discursively arrived at in feminist theory, women recognise it. The role of the intellectual in this is facilitative, clearing the roadblocks, from the standpoint or site of the group of people for whom you want to produce knowledge. If we fail to incorporate the practice of personal development education into our politicised and critical educational theory, then we leave open space for others to construct -- either implicitly or explicitly -- theories of the person and of experience which we may well find politically unacceptable.

It is important that intellectuals get involved in the 'arenas of practice' (Hollway, 1994: 268). Otherwise, dominant assumptions about women and men will be reproduced unchanged. For many intellectuals and deeply committed radical feminists, this entails a possibly difficult 'reconciliation of radical political commitment with an appreciation of the shades of grey in the social world' (Cocks 1989: publisher's introduction). It also involves taking a close look at our own powers.

10.4 The contribution of this work to critical adult education and feminism

Empirical analysis on politicised, specifically feminist, adult subjectivities has not been done before in an Irish context, nor in an adult education context. Using procedures developed in Britain by Hollway (1982, 1984a, b, 1989) on adult relations and Mama (1995) on the development of radically politicised black identity in women, I have developed a contextualised picture of some of the content and processes of feminism for women in 1990s Ireland and have drawn implications for the practice of politicised personal development education for women. In its examination of politicised identities adopted in adulthood, the study moves beyond the dualism apparent in most published

analyses of women, politicisation and power in Ireland, which emphasise either the personal or the structural and thus fail to overcome problems of either individualism or determinism.

Building on the work of other feminist theorists, this work claims that feminist women's desires for change and their resulting behaviour do not arise solely from individual psychologies or preferences, nor from the rationally adopted feminist discourses which feminists use to interpret their experiences in adulthood. Social relations and situations in the present also shape their feminism. This means that, while the situations and relations which shape feminism vary greatly, the ways that feminist women interpret them are not accidental or fortuitous.

Regarding personal development education, the desire for change in their everyday lives motivates women to attend courses. In more general feminist day-to-day life, there exists a consciously articulated desire to disrupt the gender regime. No matter what discourse of feminism a woman draws on most readily to explain her experiences, a crucial factor in any relation where the gender regime is under scrutiny by her is the opportunities in the present provided by a particular setting or situation. This influences what discourses are drawn on, where the boundaries between discourses become blurred, the explanatory limits of discourses and how feminist women approach resistance and the transformation of society.

In developing this approach, I have drawn on critical psychologies and social theories and have developed in the process a theory which I consider distinctly educational, because a pedagogical context allows us to address subjectivity as discourse, relations in the present and as psychodynamics in a way which few other situations allow. I consider this attention to subjectivity to be radical and a distinguishing mark of my project. This is more than being simply cross-disciplinary. It is an effort to develop theory in which feminism and pedagogy come together to form a living educational tradition. As such, it offers to critical adult education a revised conceptual framework for thinking

about the person and about gender. It builds on and pushes forward the development of consciousness raising and conscientization, in a manner which is context-specific. The emphasis on circumstances in the present gives the theory and practice its dynamic -- and therefore living -- quality.

Brookes (1992: 156) cites Williamson (1981), suggesting that it makes little difference what we teach, as long as it leads to questioning of the assumptions which inform our social practices. The production of emancipatory forms of subjectivity is a practice which can be taken up immediately, in any classroom, including the personal development classroom, with both women and men, without devising a whole new curriculum (Brookes, 1992: 156). This is in contrast to work which suggests that we need to devise a special curriculum for women.

The alternative which this study suggests is possible is to integrate a feminist perspective into students' reflection on everyday experiences and dilemmas (ibid). In this way, it is possible to create a dynamic educational practice where different subject positions are available to people, backed by a theory which puts forward for consideration debates about the social construction of selves and the reproduction and transformation of society (cf Stephenson et al, 1996: 184). The classroom itself can thus become an arena of practice.

In adult education, feminism has been addressed many times, but not from this starting point of feminist subjectivities. Personal development education has been addressed also, but from either social constructionist, empowerment or human relations perspectives, not from the feminist poststructuralist epistemological stance adopted here. This stance takes as given the necessity to have a politicised theory of the person and a personalised theory of the political, in order to make education dynamic and productive.

The stance taken builds on the work of Freire and Mezirow, discussed in Chapter Four. It addresses Freire's concern with social justice and asserts the value of praxis, as Freire does, but without assuming that all people's

experiences of oppression are the same, that is, without lapsing into universalism. In examining acts of resistance and change, the work also recognises that we are multiple, contradictory, desiring and embodied subjects. It thus addresses the assumption in Mezirovian theory that we are primarily rational subjects and that there is a close and unproblematic relationship between rational knowledge and action for change.

10.5 Suggestions for further research and pedagogical work

10.5.1 Subjectivity

Movements for social change need sophisticated theories of the person, the personal and human agency. Theoretical work on subjectivity provides an emancipatory discourse within which to position research (cf Hollway 1991a: 133) and pedagogy. This is important for adult education theory and practice which wish to develop a distinct pedagogy with the production of social and political change at its core, while drawing on existing theoretical traditions which are useful.

Following Hollway (1989: 42), I assert that unless researchers and educators have developed a theory of subjectivity, old assumptions will govern practice. Such investigations and pedagogical projects need to take into account the increasing multiplicity of male subjectivities, especially as men respond to feminist discourses (cf Connell, 1995). They can also address the theorisation of femininity and masculinity in ways which are not deterministic, thus encompassing the project of the production and modification of gender differences, to which I refer in Section 5.3 of this chapter.

I would like to see more research and pedagogical situations where women and men could analyse themselves as social subjects, as P1 and P3 did in Chapter Eight, rather than having a researcher or teacher offer interpretations. For this reason, I think that a memory work approach to methodology (see, for

example, Haug, 1987; Crawford, Kippax, Onyx, Gault and Benton, 1992, and Stephenson et al, 1996) would be useful in further work of this kind.

At the time I began the fieldwork and analysis, I was not aware of the full potential of the memory work approach, although I later learned that many of my aims are similar, namely, the problematising of experience as authoritative and the accounting for the ways in which subjectivity is both discursively and relationally produced (ibid: 183, 184). I believe that memory work is capable of producing, in group situations, a dynamic analysis of the self, which can help group members to theorise agency and change. I consider this crucial in any research which is going to be of use to radical pedagogies. I would like to see work like this done systematically on a large scale.

I have also made connections between methodologies used in emancipatory research and emancipatory pedagogies. They have the potential to be mutually enriching, by producing new knowledges which can help efforts for social change. The development of the memory work technique in particular is one which could provide a model for bringing together research and pedagogy which deal with subjectivity. The development of a group's sense of collectivity and collaboration are factors which affect the quality of the memory work process (Schratz and Walker, 1995: 62).

In discussing research and pedagogy, we also need to be aware of the common dangers between the genderising of methodologies for research and the ghettoising of women's education into 'what women need' in educational terms and 'what women do best' in terms of a research approach. Both of these views need to be deconstructed and shown to be social and historical. As Coward (1993) asserts, women need to talk, but they need to talk outside dominant discourses, otherwise these discourses can produce the very gender differences they claim to be describing, both in education and in research.

10.5.2 Power

The picture presented in this work of multiple subjectivities and experience calls into question any straightforward notion of power. Nevertheless, feminists and critical adult education practitioners need to continue to give consideration to it. This work shows it to be a productive force, present in relations of all kinds and capable of being exercised by the oppressed in a dynamic relationship, as well as by the oppressor. This is one sense in which it can produce knowledge (cf Hollway, 1991a: 11). Such a perspective on power needs to be incorporated into any work on oppression, resistance and change.

Many women earlier accepted the idea that power means having what men have, but this resulted in the second shift of housework added to work outside the home, as described by Hochschild (1990a). The inadequacy of this notion of power in turn has led to a flight into new age mysticism, with its accent on female spiritual power and its lack of engagement with material culture. A third way, currently popular, is to concentrate on female sexual power, where the Spice Girls, advertising agencies and the Machiavellian machinations of *The Princessa* (Rubin, 1997) come together. But female power is no threat to any gender regime if it is limited to sexual aggression based on 'in your face' essential sex differences and then marketed as titillation.

A ... methodological precaution ... [urges] that the analysis should not concern itself with power at the level of conscious intention or decision; that it should not attempt to consider power from its internal point of view and that it should refrain from posing the labyrinthine and unanswerable question; 'who then has power and what has he in mind? What is the aim of someone who possesses power?' Instead, it is a case of studying power at the point where its intention, if it has one, is completely invested in its real and effective practices. (Foucault, 1980: 97, cited in Cherryholmes, 1988:)

Real and effective practices include the words, statements, texts, discourses and experiences of participants in education and research. While power has always been a focus of feminist theorising, we need to constantly develop this, to produce ever more useful understandings of it, capable of dealing with the

complexity and multiplicity of its late twentieth-century expressions. Old dichotomies led to clear explanations and impetus for action; the new complexities of power may have the opposite effect (Jones, 1993: 165), if we do not develop ways of using them in classrooms to spark militant oppositional efforts (cf Cocks, 1989: 6).

10.5.3 Treating gender differences as produced, rather than as given

Feminist pedagogy and research need to address the fact that feminism will never get beyond critique to creating social change if the production of gender differences is not analysed. Personal development education is one area where this can happen for adult educators. It is where feelings and relationships are central, so they are available for deconstruction, if the facilitator knows how to do this. Social analysis and struggles for social and economic equity do not, of themselves, modify the production of gender difference. They are essential elements for change but, alone, not sufficient. It is not just a question of adding process to content either (if content is seen as discourses and social analysis). Recognition of the emotional investments and the dynamics they set up with partners and children is crucial.

These cathectic dynamics are areas where gender differences are available for modification. They are spaces where we can learn to move from critique to reconstruction (Wilkinson, 1996: introduction), that is, to act with agency. There is no point in trying to change structures of labour, culture, politics, economics and power, if it is not acknowledged that they exist in inextricable relationships with cathectic structures which must be addressed also. Cathectic relationships can undoubtedly be restraining, or a force for the maintenance of the gender status quo, but they can also be arenas of practice, where change can take place. Such relations are sites for the production of gender differences and therefore for their modification. This means that adult education needs to focus on gender relations as sites for the production of gender differences,

rather than on supposedly essential gender differences. This is a policy matter for course designers and providers of professional training.

We need highly politicised feminist women to train as personal development facilitators. They must be politicised already, before they start the training and they need to hone this politicisation as part of their training and their ongoing educational and political development. Furthermore, they need to have a radical theory of the human person at their disposal. They need to know how to go beyond essentialist feminisms and psychologies, as well as beyond social constructionist interpretations of human nature.

Human relations psychology is widely drawn on in personal development courses, as it is in adult education as a whole, for its learner centred and participative processes. Process has its own content and therefore human relations processes bring content with them. Facilitators need a high degree of awareness of this danger and an accompanying theoretical sophistication which can counter essentialist ideologies of women, as well as human relations and other liberal humanist claims to ideological neutrality.

10.5.4 The production of feminist discourses of emancipatory relations between women and men

Feminism needs to get to grips with relations with men and with heterosexuality as sites for political change for at least two reasons. First, gender differences are produced and are thus available for modification. Second, as Hollway (1995) points out, the experiences of many heterosexual women who are also feminist are being largely ignored in mainstream theorising about women's oppression. Nevertheless, there are interstices of practice where heterosexual feminists are engaged in relations with men which escape dominant forms of heterosexual relating. This space is social, in that it is related to practice born out of feminist discourses and it is also private and

unique to each individual through the workings of psychodynamic processes (ibid). It is a space which this study demonstrates exists, bearing out Hollway's work. Such practice is currently not a discourse, in the sense that it has collective resonance. There is an absence of any published debate about it in Ireland. The effects of not developing it may be the distancing of many heterosexual women from feminism, as in Britain (ibid), and / or a colonisation of matters concerning heterosexuality, marriage, sexuality, relationships and the family by forces with an interest in maintaining the status quo (cf O'Reilly, 1993).

The production of such a discourse would resonate with many women's experiences but requires more empirical work, informed by the theoretical stance of feminist poststructuralism. Hollway (1995: 100, 102) also calls for such work and suggests that she has been told informally by many feminists that they relate to these issues. She emphasises, as I wish to, that this is not a call for work which suppresses aspects of heterosex which contradict equality. Rather it is a call for discourse analytic work which has access to theoretical tools which can do justice to the full range of experience (ibid).

10.6 Concluding remarks

This work has highlighted the role that knowledge creation can play in the formation and evolution of the social movement that is feminism and the role that feminism, in turn, plays in the construction of knowledge and subjectivity. Social movements generate knowledge and typically form an identity in opposition to a constructed Other (Holford, 1995: 103). Feminism has done this, and in large measure has constructed itself as Other to a male culture. But the knowledge generated must be viewed critically, even by those who identify with the aims of the social movement and consider themselves part of it (ibid).

Poststructuralist theory is itself a discourse that we can take up, in order to critically view feminism. I have chosen to take it up here because it provides

me with the conceptual tools to make sense of my data and allows me to formulate answers to the central question of the study: under what conditions can we do politically radical women's personal development education? Equally importantly, I have also taken it up because it is a radical discourse which allows us to think beyond the male / female dualism as inevitable, to examine the processes through which we position ourselves as male or female and which we can change if we so choose. This is part of a pedagogical effort to produce new living subject positions which people can take up or enter.

Feminist poststructuralist theory has also been a part of my own efforts at shaping a feminist identity and feminist agency. It has enabled me to produce useful feminist knowledge in my own particular nexus of discourse, situation and psychodynamic processes.

Both Tong (1995: Chapter 8) and Richardson (1996b) place feminist poststructuralist theorising at the margins of feminism. It is certainly a subaltern discourse within feminism. Liberal feminism is dominant in schools (Ryan, 1997) and either social constructionist radical feminism or essential differences feminism, or a mixture of the two, dominate the explanatory frameworks of women's community movements and education. There is evidence that a small number of women are also beginning to engage in a class analysis of the community women's movement (see Dorgan and McDonnell, 1977). The discourses on which these manifestations of feminism draw do not change meaning or challenge dominant cultural assumptions about what it is to be female or male. I am not suggesting that feminist poststructuralism provides the 'Final Solution' but that it encourages feminist workers for change to see things somewhat differently and to ask some previously unasked questions, thereby refining and revitalising their work for change (cf Kenway et al, 1994: 197).

The analysis provided in this work is a means to explore the possibilities for action towards change, by examination of contradictions, such as women's positioning in both feminist and sexist discourses and what is often suppressed

(women's power) in these discourses. Such a theorisation allows a focus on where feminist women are aiming to go and how they can get there, rather than remaining fixed on where women have come from or how they are held in place by imbalances in material or economic resources between women and men. It moves beyond the dualism apparent in most published analyses of women and power in Ireland, which emphasise either the personal or the structural and thus remain trapped in either individualism or determinism.

A materialist analysis is not to be discounted, but needs to be enhanced by the addition of a theory of power which takes into account its dynamic and constantly shifting nature. Thus, the use of Foucauldian theory is useful for analysing the production of gender and the means of re-producing the signifiers 'woman' and 'feminist' in changed ways. Without an analysis of power which sees it as capable of being exercised by the oppressed, it is not possible to explain feminist women's investments in positions of femininity, nor is it possible to see the possibility of disruption of the gender status quo in cathectic relationships.

There is a need to reappraise the meaning and use of the term radical in feminist theorising. While present-day and earlier radical feminist theory is very important to feminist poststructuralism, it can no longer be considered the basis for a radical politics which encompasses a theory of how change happens. I believe that feminist poststructuralism is a discourse which is capable of producing women as active agents for feminism. It can be used to do this through personal development education, as well as in other arenas of feminist endeavour.

The use of feminist poststructuralist theory in this work has allowed me to produce knowledge which serves feminist interests of challenging the gender status quo. By extension, these interests are the same as those of a critical and politicised adult education. It has allowed me to demonstrate the explanatory limits of the 'structures vs person' debates about social change. It has also allowed me to contribute to the work of feminists who are developing a

dynamic theory of the psychic and the social as mutually recursive productions. Such theory is capable of theorising change and facilitating human agency, while not purporting to be universal.

In the process of contributing to this theory, I have shown that reflection on the self does not have to be purely individually focused, or individualistic in its effects. I have also shown that feminism 'comes together' very differently for each person, depending on individual history, and in engagement with discourses which carry the social and historical content of subjectivity and which are in turn inserted into a cultural web of narratives available to each individual. In addition, each situation, or moment of the process is important as an instance of production, circulation and consumption of feminism.

Politically agentic educators display a judgement capable of capturing the distinctive character of both an era and a specific situation. There is a way of understanding how people in a particular time and place think and act which also tells us what can be changed politically and what cannot. This is the 'sense of reality' (Miller, 1996) which distinguishes pedagogy, something quite different from knowledge of sociological and psychological 'laws'. Knowledge, subjectivity and meaning are constructed by feminism, along with other social movements. Adult education has a role to play in this process, in that adult educators can act as movement intellectuals, not to initiate people into academic knowledge, but to take academic knowledge into the frontline of educational practice and to facilitate its development in an engagement with students. Through our research, our theorising and our classroom practices, we can produce with them new positions in emancipatory discourses which are available for take-up by all of us. In this way, we have a central role to play in the emergence of new knowledges and thus in social change itself. As Holford (1995: 107) puts it: 'In no other area of their activity are adult educators offered so profound a role'.

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