Perspectives on Children and Young People

Kylie Smith
Kate Alexander
Sheralyn Campbell *Editors*

Feminism(s) in Early Childhood

Using Feminist Theories in Research and Practice

Perspectives on Children and Young People

Volume 4

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Foreword

It was a delicious moment when this book arrived. Opening the pages of a new book about feminism(s) in early childhood edited by three women (Kylie Smith, Sheralyn Campbell and Kate Alexander) who have had a positively profound impact on my own life in early childhood as a feminist was tantalising.

I first met Kylie and Sheralyn in their undergraduate studies in the late 1980s and Kate in her undergraduate studies in the mid 2000s. Each stood out for their determination, insight, integrity and intellect; and, for their commitment to equity and justice. I had the agreeable privilege of supervising their undergraduate research studies, later their graduate research projects as well as working with them as colleagues. Since their undergraduate studies Kylie, Kate and Sheralyn have had diverse, sometimes intersecting trajectories in early childhood as administrators, managers, researchers, students and practitioners. For nearly two decades, I've watched them embrace complexity as a necessary friend in meeting injustice, galvanising their own feminist advocacy and practices and inspiring others to do the same.

Against this background, I anticipated that this book would be thoughtfully constructed to canvass a broad and complex sense of what feminism is, does and can do to make early childhood a more respectful space for children and those they live their lives with in early childhood. It does not disappoint. It seeks to show why feminism(s) are still needed in early childhood and how they are being actively used in different countries and different arenas of early childhood with important effect.

These goals are achieved powerfully by drawing on the work of feminists in early childhood in contexts as diverse as Pakistan, Kenya, Ireland, Australia, Indonesia, Norway, the United Kingdom and the United States and who work as policy makers, researchers and practitioners. The editors' thoughtful choice of contributors means that the reader is intentionally engaged with a breadth of feminist concerns and contributions in early childhood. The book ranges from an analysis of structural inequalities for the girl child in Africa (Musomi and Swadener—Chap. 7) through inequities in the pay and conditions for care workers in Ireland (and beyond) (Murray—Chap. 8) to ways of reimagining the role of the feminist

researcher in micro-level research with children (Davies—Chap. 6) and with teachers in Pakistan (D'Souza Juma—Chap. 11).

Whilst policy frameworks, pay and conditions and the role of the researcher/researched relationships are not new concerns for feminists in early childhood (and beyond) the contributors to this volume craft compelling arguments about why and how feminism(s) are useful in current times in diverse early childhood contexts and arenas. This is not a simple, or a simplistic call for a feminist way in early childhood. Several chapters persistently embed aspects of 'intersectionality' (analysis of how racism, sexism, homophobia, transphobia, ableism, xenophobia, classism, etc. are interconnected) in their analysis and so their calls to action are nuanced and contextualised. This is seen powerfully in Atkinson's intriguing and skilful exploration of gender relations, feminism and the struggle for decolonisation for Victorian Aboriginal people through the place of the didgeridoo in Australian early childhood programmes (see Chap. 2). It is also central to Salazar Pérez's well-argued case for 'endarkened' black feminist thought to become a persistent everyday essential to meaning-making in early childhood (see Chap. 4).

As several chapters demonstrate (e.g., Coady—Chap. 2; Osgood and Robinson—Chap. 4; and D'Souza Juma—Chap. 11) there is still lively debate about what feminism is and who counts as a feminist in early childhood (and beyond). Despite this, this volume solidifies the centrality to early childhood of feminists as its shapers and reshapers. We see in this in Coady's clear illustrations of the enduring and transformative legacy of early feminists as macro policy makers and service designers in Australia and in the work of Musomi and Swadener (Chap. 7), Murray (Chap. 8) and Simpson Dal-Santo (Chap. 13) we see feminists proactively reshaping its purposes in the contemporary and shifting policy contexts respectively of Kenya, Ireland and Australia.

Feminists across time and diverse contexts have also made the politics of the interpersonal and the micro-level of the everyday core targets to shape and reshape in their quest for gender equity and justice. The continuing need to do this in early childhood is potently and powerfully taken up by several contributors (e.g., Gaches—Chap. 10; Marpinjun and Ramsey—Chap. 12; and Osgood and Robinson—Chap. 4). Davies (Chap. 6) reminds us this is no simple or easy task as she challenges feminist researchers to negotiate what it means to research amongst the tensions and materiality of the lived gender order so that we are open to the not yet thought possibilities of what is right, proper and possible to live and enliven gender justices in early childhood. It is undeniably complex. However, despite its complexities feminists in early childhood in contexts as diverse as Australia, the United States, Pakistan and Indonesia are navigating them with a skill and a determination that produces a politics of optimism for the possibilities for gender justice when its impossibilities push toward them and at times surround them.

Given how persistently and consistently Kylie, Kate and Sheralyn have lived their feminism(s) in early childhood and navigated the complexities it has brought to them, it should be no surprise that they have been able to assemble a powerful and diverse group of writers in this volume who galvanise the new-wave

feminism(s) in early childhood and validate their value over time. They urge gender justice in and through its everyday policies and practices now and into the future and in doing so offer some possible points for navigation towards the not yet thought in which gender justice and equity might lie. For this reason, I believe that this book will be an inspiring catalyst and support for feminists in early childhood who driven by their indignation about the persistence of gender inequity, violence, oppression and misogynies in our societies strive to create a world in which gender justice and equity can prosper. The feminist imagination(s) that come to the fore in this volume powerfully illustrate how feminism(s) not only live in early childhood, but are essential to its capacity to shift and shape to enliven gender justice and equity in all its complex possibilities across sexualities, races, classes, abilities and borders.

It has been a personal-political pleasure and privilege to re-meet feminist colleagues from my time in early childhood and to meet early childhood feminists new to me in the pages of this book. For what they champion, imagine and reimagine through their feminism(s) the field of early childhood should be immensely grateful and proud. They have shaped a book that deserves a prominent space in the lives of all who live and work in early childhood or are about to.

Victoria, Australia Glenda Mac Naughton
August 2016

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We would like to acknowledge the influence of Glenda Mac Naughton's feminist research and politics on our work. Initially as supervisor to each of us and now as a critical friend she has introduced us to multiple feminist theoretical, methodological, pedagogical and policy possibilities. Glenda has supported, challenged and inspired us to question taken for granted truths about gender performances and patriarchal dominance and violence. Her work and her questions have enabled us to map many different paths to creating change. We thank her for modelling how to live feminist politics in everyday life and for constantly supporting others to work together to share and enact their own feminism(s).

We would also like to acknowledge the work of Elizabeth Dau (1942–2015) and the anti-bias work that she undertook and supported in Australia in early childhood education and care. She has also made it possible for us to travel feminist paths in early childhood pedagogy and policy.

We would like to thank our colleagues Anne Farrelly and Jessica Crofts for their support and assistance in bringing this book together and to our families who support us in our work.

Thanks go to the many women and men whose daily work in early childhood education begins with asking questions about how social justice is experienced and who are so brave in their attempts to make changes.

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Contributors

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Bronwyn Davies is an independent scholar based in Sydney and a professorial fellow at the University of Melbourne. She is a writer, scholar and teacher and has been a visiting professor in the last few years in the US, Sweden, Denmark, Belgium, Finland and the UK. She is well known for her work on gender, literacy and pedagogy, and for her critique of neoliberalism. In 2014 she published *Listening to Children* with Routledge, and her first work of fiction for children, a rewrite of the classic Australian story *The Fairy who Wouldn't Fly*. More details of her work can be found on her website at bronwyndavies.com.au.

Sonya L. Gaches was a classroom teacher for over 25 years, as a teacher of toddlers, first graders and as developer of, and teacher in, a first through third grade multiage program. She is currently Assistant Professor of Practice in Early Childhood Education at the University of Arizona, teaching undergraduate courses in child guidance, child development, using data to guide instruction, and professional reflection and leadership and graduate courses in early childhood foundations, child development through post-structural and sociocultural lenses, and children's rights. Her research interests include children's rights, transformational professional development, and issues of power in classroom experiences.

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Identities: Indigenous women and the urban experience, Melbourne, 1997'. This research which demonstrated the complexity, multiplicity and uniformity that unpins the dynamic of Indigenous culture inspired her to apply these understandings to further research into early childhood spaces. Subsequently she gained her Ph.D. in 2009 by research into 'Indigenous self-determination and early childhood education and care in Victoria' with the strong support of her local Aboriginal early childhood community. She is currently an Honorary Research Fellow at the Graduate School of Education at the University of Melbourne. Sue has two adult children Anthony and Bianca and lives with her partner Dave and her two cats.

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Kerry H. Robinson is Professor of Sociology in the School of Social Sciences and Psychology at the Western Sydney University (WSU). Her research interests include: diversity and difference, gender and sexuality, gender and sexuality diversity, sexual and gender harassment/violence, constructions of childhood and sexuality, sexuality education, and transformative pedagogies. She has published widely in her research areas, including her recent book, *Innocence, Knowledge and the Construction of Childhood: The contradictory relationship between sexuality and censorship in children's contemporary lives* (2013, Routledge, London); and a co-authored book, *Diversity and Difference in Early Childhood Education: Issues for Theory and Practice* with Criss Jones Diaz (Robinson and Jones Diaz 2006, Open University Press), of which a second edition will be published by Open University Press in 2015. Kerry is currently co-authoring a book entitled: *Feminists Researching Gendered Childhoods: generative entanglements* with Jayne Osgood as part of the Bloomsbury *Feminist Thought in Childhood Research* Series.

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Beth Blue Swadener is Professor of Justice and Social Inquiry and Associate Director of the School of Social Transformation at Arizona State University. Her research focuses on internationally comparative social policy, with focus on sub-Saharan Africa, impacts of neoliberal policy on local communities, and

children's rights and voices. She has published 11 books, including *Children and Families "At Promise"*; *Does the Village Still Raise the Child?*; *Decolonizing Research in Cross-Cultural Context, Power and Voice in Research with Children, Children's Rights and Education and Reconceptualizing Early Childhood Care and Education: A Reader*. Beth is a co-founder of the Jirani Project, serving vulnerable children in Kenya (www.jiraniproject.org) and Reconceptualizing Early Childhood Education (RECE) (www.receinternational.org) and is active in several social justice and child advocacy organizations.

Abbreviations

CECDE	Centre for Early Childhood Development and Education
CEDAW	United Nations Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women
CoE—ACRWC	Committee of Experts on the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child
CRC	United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child
CSO	Civil Society Organizations
DCYA	Department of Children and Youth Affairs
DES	Department of Education and Skills
ECCE	Early Childhood Care and Education
ECE	Early Childhood Education
ECEC	Early Childhood Education and Care
EFA	Education for All
EYLF	Early Years Learning Framework
FGM	Female Genital Mutilation
FPE	Free Primary Education Policy
GCN	Girl Child Network
IDG	Interdepartmental working group
KPSA	Koorie Preschool Assistants
KUSA	Kindergarten Union of South Australia
MACS	Multifunctional Aboriginal Children Service
MDG	Millennium Development Goals
NCCA	National Council for Curriculum and Assessment
NGO	Non-governmental organizations
NQRAP	National Quality Rating and Assessment Process
NQS	National Quality Standards
NVCO	National Voluntary Childcare Organisations

OMC	Office of the Minister for Children
TLDS	Transition Learning and Development Statement
UTC	University Teachers College
VACCA	Victorian Aboriginal Child Care Agency

Chapter 1
Introduction

Kylie Smith, Kate Alexander and Sheralyn Campbell

Abstract Feminism(s) in Early Childhood pays attention to the need for feminist discourses to examine how we educate young children and their families about gender and equality in everyday early childhood classrooms. This edited collection brings together international scholars from around the globe to examine how different feminist theories are being used in early childhood research, policy and pedagogy. The array of feminist discourses captured by the authors offer contextualised possibilities for disrupting dominant patriarchal beliefs and producing change. The authors address and challenge a range of gendered effects for children of how early childhood development, educational outcomes, access to resources and belonging to community are seen and assessed. In this way, the book contributes to the global effort to end gender-based inequalities and violence across local and global communities.

Keywords Gender · Early childhood · Feminism(s) · Equity

Feminism(s) across the world seek to engage with and change gender based relations of power at political, institutional and personal sites where the effects of gendered knowledge and practices are lived as inequities. These inequities can be globally seen in the levels of gender-based violence inside and outside of the home, the under-representation of women in government and senior executive positions, the continuing pay disparities in the work place and the lower literacy levels and educational participation rates for girls/women when compared with boys/men. Globally, societies are structured by embedded gendered assumptions that both

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divide and link public and private life. This is played out through institutions which structure our lives and act as gate-keepers of who is heard and what counts as 'true' and 'correct' knowledges and practices. In public life this can be seen in a myriad of material ways including who are the key leaders in government and business; how policy is formed and resourced and by whom; which research and programs are prioritised and funded; and which knowledges are authorised. However, there are also innumerable and less obvious ways that institutions constitute gendered effects across the public and private spaces of daily life. As former Australian Prime Minister, Julia Gillard identified in *My Story* (Gillard 2014):

> In contemporary Australia, despite so much progress being made, both women and men continue to be trapped in gender prisons. As Australia's first female prime minister, I came to see the outlines of the bars of mine. But of all the experiences I had as prime minister, gender is the hardest to explain, to catch, to quantify. If you point to specific examples, they sound trivial (p. 98).

Education plays an important role in how community membership is constituted now and in the future, yet education is dominated by edu-capitalism and neoliberal education policies with their investment in a gender-neutral individual who can be measured and managed. This book acknowledges over thirty years of research evidence that children as young as three years of age can develop clear views of what it means to be a girl/woman or boy/man. At times, these constructions draw on narrow, stereotypical understandings of femininity and masculinity that lie at the heart of some of today's gender based inequities. This book argues that gender discussion matters in the early childhood space within research and pedagogical practices because it goes to the heart of how power works through meanings of gender to constitute material differences for educators, children and families. A central criticism of early childhood theory has been its origins in white, male, patriarchal experience and knowledge. While there has been over thirty years of important research in gender in the early childhood space, this collection of work is unique as it brings together diverse feminist theories and perspectives that bring to the fore explorations of gender and feminist discourses such as feminist new materialist methodologies where human and more-than-human explorations of gender, identity, power, knowledge and truth are (re)imagined.

This books draws on feminist writers using history, institutions and pedagogical practices as mechanisms for addressing the practical implications of how knowledge and theory are produced and authorised, and by whom (Weedon 1997). In this way feminism(s) offer an opportunity for reconceptualising knowledge, and thus research and practice, not as a binary but rather intrinsically woven together and able to produce effects for political feminist action in many spaces and across many countries and continents. In particular, the feminism(s) in this book invite us to review and reconceptualise how knowledge is experienced as institutional, embodied and material, considering practices like early childhood policy and funding, educational resources and teaching strategies, research methods and theories, media images, health-care, family safety and services, and so on.

This book came about through conversations we had around how gender issues were disappearing within Australian early childhood documents such as curriculum frameworks and regulatory requirements at a time of much change for the early childhood field in Australia. While the new *Victorian Early Years Learning and Development Framework* (VEYLDF) (DET 2016) re-introduces gender into the early education curriculum, this currently remains an exception to the broader documents framing Australian early childhood. We reflected on the work of early childhood feminists who had foregrounded the importance of responding to these issues with young children and revisited some of their work. We wanted to know what was happening now in the early childhood field and if and how people were continuing to use feminism(s) in their work. We wanted a resource that demonstrated diverse ways of using feminist theories and the value of these to educators, researchers, students, policy-makers and those in advocacy roles in and outside early childhood. This book brings together international contributors and explores how feminism(s) are being engaged with in early childhood research and pedagogical practices. Each chapter demonstrates feminism(s) are more than oppositional discourses by bringing together examples of how diverse manifestations of feminism(s) are transforming research, knowledge and practice. Feminism(s) have emerged from and provoked a range of changes including access to education, citizenship, the right to vote and own property, employment and how knowledge is constituted to name a few. Key to understanding the power of feminism(s) for reconceptualising the world of early childhood is to look globally at the similarities and differences we share and ask how these call into question our own history, knowledge and practices. In this way we might engage new connections and alliances that reconceptualise and transform knowledge, research and practice. The work of the contributors to this book locates how early childhood education today is inseparable from feminism(s) and demonstrates the need to continue feminist conversations. The book is divided into three parts: *Feminism(s) Reconceptualising Histories*, *Feminism(s) Reconceptualising Institutions* and *Feminism(s) Reconceptualising Practice*. As this book is situated in early childhood feminist work being conducted across histories, contexts and locations, there are different terms used for institutions and teachers working with children and families in the early years of life throughout the book. While an array of terms are used, their meanings and intent intersect which demonstrates the global, shared political commitment to engage with inequities and create change.

The first part of the book, *Feminism(s) Reconceptualising Histories*, reflects on the use of feminism(s) in the early childhood field over time. Reconceptualising the history of feminism(s) within early childhood research, institutions and pedagogical practices focuses on questions of how others have used feminism(s) and where the reader might go to from here and with whom. There are opportunities to layer the past and present, use emerging contradictions, tensions and contexts to gaze differently at work currently being done from the perspective of those whose histories, stories and experiences were/are different. In this way, the reader may find new questions about connections and alliances for how their feminism(s) can be used to change gendered relations of power. These chapters draw attention to the

productive power of feminism(s) for interrogating silences, gaps, contradictions and unintended effects of research and pedagogical practice. It opens with a chapter by Margaret M. Coady that outlines the role of women in the establishment of the early childhood field in Australia and explores the connections to feminism. Her chapter shows that the ways in which feminism is understood and practiced at points in history are complex, multiple, contradictory and contested. However, her history shows there are always connections between common interests that when pursued as alliances can produce important changes with children and families as the beneficiaries. She offers a repositioning of early feminists as politically astute agents of change who used the early childhood educational arena with intent as a mechanism for broader social transformation. While feminism is for everybody (hooks 2000), Coady acknowledges that the work of early feminist activists held omissions that disadvantaged some groups of women in Australia, particularly Aboriginal women. Sue Lopez-Atkinson demonstrates how all forms of knowledge produce unintended effects, contradictions, silences and gaps. She illustrates some of these as she describes the impact of the destruction of Aboriginal families within a colonised Australia to reflect on how it has shaped the focus of feminism(s) in early childhood today. She discusses the intersections of race and gender using a case study of the didgeridoo and considers these issues from a perspective of decolonisation. Jayne Osgood and Kerry H. Robinson continue to map feminism(s) and research in early childhood and review how this has changed over time. They demonstrate the strengths of exploring many forms of feminism(s) in order to work theoretically, contextually and practically and reconceptualise how gendered relations of power are lived. They illustrate this showing how a strong recent tradition of using the intersections between poststructural feminist research and queer theory has disrupted silences around how gender and sexuality matter to children in early childhood. They celebrate the significant contributions of feminist scholars and in a response to postfeminist claims that gender issues are no longer significant, highlight the potential and value of contemporary feminism(s) to the field including post-humanist and new materialist approaches to gender. This inspires questions about how combinations of theory, research and pedagogical practice might be brought together to create contextualised change within human and more-than-human worlds. Part I concludes with a chapter from Michelle Salazar Pérez who picks up and continues an interrogation of whose interests are served and whose are silenced by how research and practice are lived as material effects. She responds to global absences of the perspectives of women of colour to provide examples of how Black feminist thought can engage the operation of power and open up a myriad of possibilities for theorising and reconceptualising early childhood research, teacher education and early childhood practice.

Part II, *Feminism(s) Reconceptualising Institutions*, looks at the use of feminist theories in research, policy and advocacy work. This part takes up the challenge of interrogating and reconceptualising how gender is understood, researched and experienced in early education through the material practices of institutions like education, government and workplaces. Bronwyn Davies explores four challenges in conducting feminist research into how gender is produced in the early childhood

arena. She uses her work in Sweden to explore how it might be possible for those involved in researching to move beyond categorical analysis and to develop ethical research practices that offer new connections into the 'not-yet-known'. Her examples provoke educators and researchers to move away from individualism and (re)consider the questions that shape their work, their research, their methodologies and findings. From a different human rights perspective that is embedded in the issues facing parts of Africa and elsewhere across the globe, Mercy Musomi and Beth Blue Swadener present a detailed look at the work of the Girl Child Network in Kenya and the important role of policy in working for equal rights. Their work illustrates the feminist tensions that inhabit social, economic and educational policy and practices as they are lived through the experiences of girls/women. This is developed in the context of Ireland by Colette Murray who demonstrates how 'equality of condition' offers an alternative theoretical perspective from which to explore these institutional manifestations of a gendered social order. She examines policy and the conditions of those working in early childhood in Ireland to call into question the growing silence about 'love and care' in early childhood language and asks in whose interests this operates. She shows how feminist theories might create space for supporting the continuation of the value placed on love, care and solidarity in early childhood care and education. Finally, Marcela Montserrat Fonseca Bustos brings the manifestation of gendered institutional practices and their unintended effects into the classroom as she provides a complex appraisal of heteronormativitieS in Norway kindergarten classrooms. She uses images and text from prescribed books to vividly illustrate the subtle, contradictory and heterosexist messaging that inhere within seemingly inclusive and non-heterosexist media. She invites questions about how educators are engaging with children and families in their own classrooms, and the ways that heteronormativitieS are authorised within curriculum resources.

The final part, *Feminism(s) Reconceptualising Practice*, turns attention more closely to intersections between feminisms and gendered life in early childhood educational settings. It traces commonalities in how using feminism(s) to work with educators and children offers opportunities to reconceptualise gendered relations of power as they are lived by educators and children in early childhood classroom practices. Sonya L. Gaches analyses activity systems as they operate in schools to unpack Madeleine Grumet's (1988) concepts of a patriarchal project and maternal project. From Gaches' research with Kindergarten teachers she challenges this over-simplified binary and questions how institutional systems and relations of power within the schooling context might be reconfigured to enable teachers the time and spaces to work differently. Audrey D'Souza Juma shows the importance of acknowledging and respectfully engaging gender issues within the context in which they circulate. She discusses how feminist poststructuralist theory provided a framework which enabled early childhood teachers to navigate the terrain of what gender equity work with children looks like in Pakistan and open dialogue with children about essentialist gender discourses. Sri Marpinjun and Patricia G. Ramsey explore the complex historical and political context of Indonesia to outline the challenges for undertaking gender equity practices within early childhood

education. They map new ways of approaching and practicing feminism(s) with women and men who are teaching in the early childhood field. Rebecca Simpson-Dal Santo outlines the impact of recent changes to Australian early childhood regulations, standards and curriculum. She explores the implications for children and educators of excluding gender identities in the early childhood curriculum framework and questions the political effects of attempts to measure and assess a child's identity. Also in this part we report on the early findings of a pilot project on the place of feminism(s) in pedagogical practices of early childhood educators. Our chapter reflects on how educators negotiate their feminist politics in their daily work in classrooms. We trace the threads of feminism(s) across time in the work of educators today, and question how we can continue the journey together to engage gender politics in early childhood education.

Feminist perspectives and feminist theories can support change and help people to advocate for more equitable discourses situated in their context and community by providing opportunities to engage alternative knowledges and to reconceptualise ways of speaking and acting. They encourage us to question the material effects of how gender is part of institutional practices and of our daily life. This collection harnesses the global commitment to engage inequities and create change with chapters that can be read for their local and contextual feminisms and the opportunities these experiences offer for creating different alliances. The three parts offer readers an opportunity to look at history, institutions and practice from several viewpoints. In returning to our desire to seek out our similarities and differences to engage gendered relations of power across the globe, there are opportunities across these three parts for the reader to begin their own journey into reconceptualising knowledge and pedagogical practices using new questions, connections and alliances. For example, the alliances between Mercy Musomi and Beth Blue Swadener show that change driven by government policy can make a positive difference, but without providing sufficient resourcing produces many unintended effects within small communities with long cultural histories. These unintended effects are often diverse, contradictory and complex as shown by Michelle Salazar Pérez in her description of collective actions in which she took part following the cyclone that affected New Orleans and by Marcela Montserrat Fonseca Bustos in her close reading of heterosexist messaging found in prescribed early childhood texts in Norway. Similarly, Sri Marpinjun and Patricia G. Ramsey provide another example of how unintended effects are produced by external attempts to simply create change by moving a successful approach from one context to another. Their work in changing how educators understand gender in their teaching demonstrates the importance of ensuring changes are constituted locally with concern for the complex historical, social and economic context of early childhood. Audrey D'Souza Juma shows in her use of poststructural concepts in Pakistan, that it is possible to harness, transform and recreate knowledge so that it speaks and works across cultural contexts. The array of feminist discourses captured by authors situates the complexity of feminism(s) in early childhood education across the globe and offers many possibilities for disrupting dominant patriarchal knowledges and producing contextualised changes. The authors address and challenge a range of gendered

effects for children, families, educators, policy makers and researchers. These chapters demonstrate the personal investments that feminism(s) represent and how working together can create real, sometimes risky and practical change. More importantly this collection shows that change can occur in many ways—at a global and national level, and in the daily experiences of researchers, educators, children and families. We hope this book will contribute to the world-wide effort to end gender-based inequalities and violence across local and global communities.

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Part I
Feminism(s) Reconceptualising Histories

Chapter 2
Feminism and the Development of Early Childhood Education in Australia

Margaret M. Coady

Abstract Feminism has multiple definitions and even more manifestations, but many women working in the late nineteenth century/early twentieth century for the development of early childhood education in Australia were undeniably feminists, part of what has been called the "first wave of feminism" (Krolokke and Sorenson 2006). This chapter looks at the views and activities of some of these women who were prominent in the establishment of kindergartens in New South Wales, South Australia and Victoria. Whilst active in the women's suffrage movements, they also advocated innovative views of education which were only just being explored in Britain and the USA. Examining their views on education give an insight into the kind of feminism they represented. Debates on women's suffrage were relatively straightforward and indeed women's suffrage was established remarkably early in Australia. Debates in the field of early childhood at the time, though cutting edge in terms of educational theory, were more complex in practice. The debates were often about philosophies of education, control of educational institutions, and the necessity or otherwise for training early childhood teachers and the kind of character appropriate to such teachers. One writer has argued that these debates "exemplified the issues that fractured the field of early childhood education for most of the twentieth century" (Whitehead 2010, p. 87). The fractures manifest themselves in the "second wave of feminism" in the 1970s where childcare provision was a major concern. Bitter disputes on the value of childcare between different sections of the early childhood field meant that during this second wave of feminism there was no strong united voice for feminism from the early childhood field.

Keywords Feminisms · Australian history early childhood · Progressive education · Maternalism and early childhood · Splits in early childhood feminist views

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Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to look at a few of the key persons who played roles in establishing institutions for the care and education of young children, in Australia particularly in New South Wales (NSW), South Australia and Victoria in the late nineteenth and early years of the twentieth centuries, exploring the kinds of feminism espoused by these figures and connecting decisions made during that period to later expressions of feminism in the early childhood movement. It has been noted before (Brennan 1998, p. 14) that several important figures in the kindergarten movement were also significant in campaigns for women's suffrage. It is the contention of this chapter that this was no accidental connection and that further exploration of the political philosophies and philosophies of education influencing the early kindergarten movement in the Australian colonies throws light on the kinds of feminism embraced by these key players.

The term 'feminism' has multiple definitions and even more manifestations. hooks (2000) adopted the following definition: "Simply put, feminism is a movement to end sexism, sexist exploitation, and oppression" (p. 1). But the quest for simplicity failed, first because the meaning of sexism is itself problematic and second because hooks was using this definition partly as a way of bringing men who were opposed to sexism into the fold of feminism, a move that not all agreed with. In the late nineteenth century the understanding of feminism may seem less complex. The term gained currency, according to Haslanger et al. (2012), as part of the struggle for women's suffrage in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Two of the colonies of Australia gained suffrage very early, South Australia in 1894 and West Australia in 1899. The Australian Federal Constitution 1902 gave, to our shame, all non-indigenous Australian women (Wilson and McKeown 2003) the vote.[1] One prominent Australian feminist, Goldstein (1910), writing just a few years later, gave an explanation of this relatively rapid success in achieving women's suffrage in Australia. Goldstein (1910) explained that there were numerous and diverse groups fighting for reforms, such as temperance societies, societies for the protection of children, groups wanting to change the age of consent, others wanting to change divorce laws and to give women equal custody of children and equal pay for equal work. Goldstein (1910) pointed out that it was only by persuading these diverse groups to put women's suffrage on the top of the list that these other objectives had any hope of being achieved. She cites a member of parliament who "said frankly, 'I would sooner speak to five men with votes than to five hundred women without them.' [After achieving suffrage] five women are as important as five men" (Goldstein 1910, p. 10). Education, particularly education of

[1]The history of Australian indigenous women suffrage is complex. The Australian constitution of 1902 gave the vote to all women who already had the vote in their state. This included only indigenous women in South Australia and Western Australia. It was not until the Commonwealth Electoral Amendment Act of 1983 that indigenous people in Australia were formally recognized for voting purposes on the same bases as non-indigenous (Norberry and Williams 2002).

the very young and education for women were significant inclusions on these lists for reform.

One woman actively fighting for reform on several fronts was Maybanke Selfe-Wolstenholme-Anderson. Deserted by her first husband in 1884 and left with three sons to support, she set up a very successful school. By 1891 she was vice-president of the *Women's Suffrage League of New South Wales*, and in 1895 assisted in setting up the first free kindergarten in Woolloomooloo in NSW. She worked with the *Kindergarten Union of New South Wales*, and was secretary of the *Playgrounds Association of NSW*. She worked for the reform of the divorce laws and benefitted from these reforms when she was able to divorce the husband who had deserted her and marry Francis Anderson, Professor of Philosophy at Sydney University. Anderson is a useful source since her voluminous writings, published first under the name Wolstenholme, the name of her first husband and later the name Anderson, cover the period from the 1880s to 1920s. The topics range over working women, vaccinations, the eight hour day, sex education, teacher training, women beggars, midwife training, free love and of course many aspects of both women's suffrage and of kindergartens. She saw no tensions between these many concerns. Rather they were all part of an integrated view of a progressive society, a society in which women played a powerful role.

What role was kindergarten to play in this ideal society? In an interesting study of the diffusion of the Froebelian kindergarten through many cultures and geographical settings Wollons (2000) asserts: "Whether as a part of large compulsory schools systems or as small private enterprises, the kindergarten is a politicized institution, directly linked to the goals of the state in the formation of national identity, citizenship, and moral values" (p. 2). Other writers make similar points (e.g., Boreham 1996). Certainly much of the discourse about kindergartens and the fact that kindergartens in Sydney and Melbourne were so often set up in areas which would serve the poor and neglected child, would seem to support the thesis that the function of kindergartens was to train the lower classes to be subservient workers. Add to this the fact that many of the most active and effective workers for kindergartens had power through their social connections, Anderson through her university connections, others, for example Mrs Alfred Deakin, wife of the first Prime Minister of Australia and first president of the *Kindergarten Union* in Melbourne, through government and society connections. The activities of the kindergarten movement could easily be construed as control exercised by the socially powerful over the poor, as philanthropy with strong class control.

A study of Maybanke Anderson's writing, however, throws into doubt this view that the purposes of early kindergarten advocates were mainly philanthropic. She explains, the "policy which made philanthropy go hand in hand with education has been justified from the beginning. A cry for reform in education would have been at that time unheeded, but it was comparatively easy to arouse interest in the conditions of neglected children, and the imminent dangers of larrikinism" (Anderson 1911/2001a, p. 214). In other words, education was their main interest but to obtain the necessary funds to establish kindergartens, they used the threat to social order posed by undisciplined "larrikins" as part of their propaganda. And to use the word

"education" could lead to an underestimation of the kind of education they were referring to. While Maybanke Anderson did talk about production of citizens, these were not to be citizens who were unquestioningly compliant with the state. One education commissioner recently returned from a tour of Europe and America was enthusiastic about kindergartens explaining that *"Kindergarten will introduce a new spirit… It encourages a child to think for itself. …If as primary school teachers say, pupils from a Kindergarten are for a time hard to manage, it is true also that they afterwards become the most tractable, because their mind culture has made them able to see the need for discipline"* (Anderson 1911/2001a, p. 222).[2] Some critics at the time were in fact concerned that children were being educated "above their station" and argued that education "unfits people to become servants" (Anderson 1911/2001a, p. 214). The purposes and possibly the effects of this kindergarten approach was to produce active citizens, not subservient workers, though indeed Maybanke Anderson also wanted to recognize that work was honourable.

To gain a better understanding of the nature of the education being promoted by those like Maybanke Anderson, it is necessary to look further at both the social context and theoretical influences of the time. In the second half of the nineteenth century all the Australian colonies passed Acts to establish compulsory education, to provide a predominantly secular curriculum and to withdraw public money from denominational schools (Campbell 2014). A variety of educational theories, most originating from parts of Europe, were being explored and interpreted. Preeminent among these as far as kindergarten was concerned were the theories of Friedrich Froebel, whose influence spread, as described by Wollons (2000), not just in Christian English-speaking countries, but to Muslim Turkey, Buddhist China, Buddhist/Shinto Japan and also to Russia and Vietnam (p. 6). Of course there were multiple interpretations of his theories, including interpretations of his "gifts"—a cube, a sphere and a cylinder—and the "occupations"—paper cutting, modelling with clay and drawing—the latter sometimes being thought to help with hand/eye coordination and therefore as good preparation for manual workers. This was very far from Froebel's understanding of both a cognitive and a spiritual significance in these objects and activities.

Other parts of Froebel's theories are also open to interpretation, controversy and disagreement—his emphasis on learning by doing, the important role he sees for mothers, and his insistence that kindergarten teachers needed quite extensive training. The two latter aspects are particularly important in considering the kind of feminism expressed by the early kindergartners in NSW, South Australia and Victoria.

[2]There is an interesting echo of this in the later period of feminism where primary school teachers complained that child care graduates were hard to manage (see Seyfort 2007).

Maternalism and the Early Childhood Movement in Late Nineteenth Century

To modern and postmodern feminists the linking of mother and child so closely may well raise alarm bells. One such feminist is Susan Moller Okin who argued in the 1980s that the kinds of injustices suffered by women were related to the division between the private world of the family and the public world of politics and work. Women's vulnerability, she argued, was related to the gendered operation of the family (Okin 1989). Her definition of gender is "the deeply entrenched institutionalization of sexual difference" (Okin 1989, p. 6). Women were socialized to be the persons primarily responsible for work in the home, but this work in the private sphere of the home, though essential to the economy, was not recognized and not valued in the public world. Okin (1989) argues for the "genderless family":

> It is more just to women; it is more conducive to equal opportunity both for women and for children of both sexes; and it creates a more favourable environment for the rearing of citizens of a just society (p. 183).

In Okin's (1989) view differences between men and women had to be played down. Froebel however stressed, as did many nineteenth century philosophers, the difference of women. For Froebel maternal interactions were important for the well being of all children. His *Mother Play* was translated into many languages and certainly adopted by the early kindergartners in many countries, including the Australian colonies. In similar spirit, though without so much stress on mothers, Anderson (1902/2001c) published *Australian Songs for Australian Children*. Froebel appeals to "nature" to explain the close link of mother and baby, but when the children begin to utter words, "the education of man, at this stage is wholly committed to the mother, the father, the family to those to whom by nature, the child still forms an undivided whole" (Froebel 1916, p. 63). Here there is a supposed natural link with the father also. There is not here the sharp division between the mother as the affective carer to be contrasted with the father as the authoritative rational educator, a distinction found in some other nineteenth century theorists of education (Davis 2011).

But for all his emphasis on nature, Froebel argued that education for the new society was too important to be left to natural instincts and required extensive training (Allen 2000). He wanted his kindergartens to be a unifying factor in society by being available for all classes and rejected the "condescending philanthropic approach" (Allen 1986, p. 437) of the day care societies of his time which were directed at controlling the children of the poor. Froebel's aim was not to produce social or religious conformists but individuals who could think for themselves while recognizing how they could contribute to the wider society. Froebel was critical of solely home-based childrearing partly because it was so often given over to young nursemaids and partly because of its lack of social vision and narrow religious outlook (Allen 2000).

There is little in Maybanke Anderson's writings portraying a romantic naturalism about motherhood. True, in the journal *A Woman's Voice*, established by her in 1894, she speaks of kindergarten trained women as being "remarkably useful wives" (Wolstenholme 1895/2001a, p. 168), and later she does speak of "the training of the child" as the "natural work of women" (Anderson 1913/2001b, pp. 228–232). However as early as 1895 she was arguing "many married women, exhausted mentally, physically and morally, by the bearing of a large family, and details of home life, are unable to do their fair share of public and social work" (Wolstenholme 1895/2001c, p. 104) and was already proposing cooperative housing to free women from the isolation and burdens of a single household, the establishment of "one cooperative home, with a few families, a kindergarten nursery, and a kitchen managed to supply the needs of the whole establishment" (Wolstenholme 1895/2001c, p. 105). She seems to have been aware of and sympathetic to at least some aspects of the socialist theories of the nineteenth century.

The overwhelming concern of her writing is about the unfair differences between women and men, not so much their natural differences, but differences brought on by social circumstances. She knew from personal circumstances the difficulties of being in an unhappy marriage, and she took steps to change the situation for herself and other women through working for divorce reform. Again from personal circumstances she knew the difficulties of single mothers having to work to support children. She dealt with the challenge, this time by opening a school in her own house. But her concerns went beyond her own circumstances, covering sex education, equal pay, working conditions and job opportunities for women, prison reform, many aspects and stages of education, as well as of course women's suffrage. In each of these cases she was trying, sometimes successfully, to bring about a change to women's social condition. She was working to give them the powers and rights that men already held. She recognized that this would involve structural change. In an article entitled *Women and Capital* she proposed a women's cooperative to which "wage earning women" would contribute. She notes that the clothes-making industry had been in the hands of women, but had been taken over by the superior monetary power of men "The claim to equality will not tell while the commercial power is all in the hands of men" (Wolstenholme 1895/2001b, p. 170). There are echoes here of the Owenite feminists[3] earlier in the nineteenth century, reference to which causes some uneasiness about referring to the suffragettes of the late nineteenth century and early twentieth century as the "first" wave of feminism.

Anderson could be described as maternalist in that she saw women contributing something special and different to the education of children, a difference partly imaged in the mother's first interactions with the child. But she was not the kind of maternalist who would restrict women's place essentially to the home, though she

[3]Feminist socialist who were followers of Robert Owen (see Taylor 1991).

was realistic in believing that many, perhaps most, women would marry and many middle class women would leave the workforce because of this. In her eyes, women played a public role even while raising children both because they were educating the future citizens, and importantly by exercising their vote. However, she proposed extensive reforms going beyond even suffrage which would enable women to lead a more public life.

Training of Preschool Teachers

As noted above, Froebel believed kindergarten teachers should receive extensive training. The fact that there has been from the late nineteenth century in Australia an emphasis on preschool teachers being trained has been noted by commentators (Clyde 2000). Harrison (1985) records that the Sydney Kindergarten Training College had a three-year training program for kindergarten teachers from 1898, whereas, it was not until 1976 that a three-year program was required for elementary school teachers (p. 6). Maybanke Anderson argued in 1885 that “there should be systematic teaching of theory, as well as thorough supervision of practice, strict examinations at stated periods, and formal bestowal of certificates” (Wolstenholme 1895/2001d, p. 211). In her 1911 account of the development of the kindergarten union in New South Wales she describes the early development of a training board, lectures and examinations. Examinations and certificates were important both as guarantees of standards and as indicators of the complexity of the work. They also had the effect of providing public recognition of kindergarten teaching as a profession, thus increasing women’s opportunities for professional work. A similar situation had occurred in Germany; Allen (2000), referring to the German situation, states, “The kindergarten was by no means the first early childhood institution to employ women teachers… but it was the first to link early childhood education explicitly to doctrines of female emancipation and professionalism” (p. 20). For women this was an important step forward.

A New Education?

Froebel proposed a system complete with a philosophy of education covering the entire period of schooling, a method, a particular concept of childhood and a plan for social reform. This whole package was of interest to the feminist educators of the late nineteenth century. The *Kindergarten Union* deliberately sought out international influences to establish Froebelianism in NSW. Margaret Windeyer, secretary to *National Council of Women in Australia* visited America in 1895 and provided her friend Maybanke Anderson with the Annual Report of the Golden Gate Kindergarten Association of San Francisco. Another German influence on the

Sydney education scene was Miniuska Scheer from Hamburg who ran a kindergarten in the Wesleyan Ladies College and was later influential in the setting up of the *Kindergarten Union*. Scheer had trained in Hamburg and according to Harrison (1985), "it was said she had been a pupil of Froebel in the last classes he conducted" (p. 10). The search for the first principal of the training college involved "long and tedious" (Anderson 1911/2001a, p. 216) correspondence with both England and America, finally settling on Ridie Lee Buckey who had graduated from the Chicago Normal School in 1895 (Prochner 2009, p. 201), where there was a group of very influential Froebelians. It was also a time when John Dewey, at the University of Chicago, was "intensely interested" (Shapiro 1983, p. 155) in the kindergarten movement, and a time when Cook County Normal School was a "Mecca of Progressive Education" (Knoll 2015, p. 208). The first words of Dewey's Pedagogic Creed were "I believe that all education proceeds by the participation of the individual in the social consciousness of the race. This process begins unconsciously almost at birth" (Dewey 1897, n.p.). Dewey recognized the importance of Froebel, acknowledging him as the first to see the child's mind as "an instrument of knowing" (cited in Shapiro 1983, p. 156). He also admired his linking of learning with doing. Dewey was not uncritical of Froebel's views and finally came to reject the kind of Idealist philosophy associated with Froebel. But both Froebel and Dewey recognized the social nature and purposes of education.

Links between NSW Kindergarten union and Chicago continued for some years, and several more principals and teachers, familiar with the productive ferment of discussion in Chicago around education were persuaded to come to Sydney Kindergarten Teachers College. Further correspondence with Chicago brought Frances Newton, a graduate from the Normal School of Chicago, who became the second Principal of the Sydney Kindergarten Teachers College. More evidence of the spread of Froebelianism was when Newton in 1905 travelled to South Australia at the invitation of a group of philanthropists and academics, to give kindergarten demonstration classes with a pupil from Sydney, Lillian de Lissa. De Lissa, Sydney born but a devout Froebelian, in 1906 became director of the first free kindergarten in South Australia. The first person to pay dues to the Kindergarten Union which had set up this kindergarten in Adelaide was Catherine Helen Spence, notable writer and feminist. Spence's credentials as a feminist were impeccable. She was vice-president of the *Women's Suffrage League* in 1896 and in 1897 ran for the Federal Convention thus becoming Australia's first female political candidate.

Froebel's philosophy was clearly attractive to these women who were working for a reformed, more equal society. In its view of childhood it was revolutionary. As de Lissa said: "Such have been our false standards of virtue in the past, that the child who has passively obeyed, we have held up as the good child, while he who valiantly fought for his own right, for obedience to an inward demand, has been considered the naughty child" (de Lissa 1914, pp. 14–15). The intentions of these Froebelians were not to "civilise" in the sense of control, but to give children what they needed to develop into active citizens.

A New Education for All Citizens?

Froebel's belief was that his philosophy of education was applicable to more than the kindergarten stage of education; it was applicable to all stages of education and to all socio-economic groups. He believed the kindergarten would be a unifying factor in Germany both in terms of religion and class, on Allen's (1982) account deliberately using the term "Kindergarten" to avoid the term "Bewahranstalt", or child care centre because of the latter's working class and custodial overtones. In NSW Maybanke Anderson also believed in the unifying effect of the kindergarten: "Rich mother and poor mother, employer's wife and factory hand, meet on the common ground of motherhood, all alike interested in the child and home" (Anderson 1913/2001b, p. 232). If the Froebelian kindergarten was intended for all children it can be fairly asked, and indeed was asked (Anderson 1913/2001b, p. 231) why they were not set up in state-run education departments. The answer to this is complex and disputed.

In Sydney, William Wilkins had attempted to setup a kindergarten along Froebelian lines in the Fort St Model School in 1850s but it was not well accepted. In the private schools Froebel's ideas were more readily received. Maybanke Anderson had established a Froebelian kindergarten in her own school. Scheer, with her German-based Froebelian influence, ran a kindergarten in the Wesleyan Ladies College. The *Kindergarten Union* had provided training in Froebelian methods to the Department infant teachers (Anderson 1913/2001b) but the classes soon stopped apparently due to clashing timetables. Maybanke Anderson's own answer in 1913 to the question, "Why not leave the business entirely to the Department?" was that, while she could admire "excellent kindergartens in many schools", those who criticize the Kindergarten Union for their separate operation "do so in ignorance of the conditions" in the Department, which had "an inspection always demanding progress in actual knowledge, and teachers anxious for promotion" (Anderson 1913/2001b, p. 231). The term "actual knowledge" is interesting and she presumably intends it to apply to facts learnt by memory, in the words of Professor Anderson (1903), to a system which had the effect of forcing "the memory of the child to do the work of all the other mental powers" (p. 8).

A much more fiery debate on the same issues of separation of kindergarten teacher training from other teacher training occurred in South Australia. In 1910 the executive of the Kindergarten Union of South Australia (KUSA) which was dominated by prominent academics and business men proposed that kindergarten teachers should be trained at the University Teachers College (the UTC) which trained students for department of education schools. Lillian de Lissa's reply to the proposition was published in full by the daily press, and included the much discussed sentence, "It would be a decided disadvantage for kindergarten students to mix with the State teachers" (cited in Whitehead 2010, p. 93). She claimed that the first duty of kindergarten teachers was "not to obey like dumb-driven cattle, but to think out problems for themselves" (de Lissa, cited in Whitehead 2010, p. 93). The Director of Education countered that she had unfairly criticized the state teachers.

To which her reply was “I did not deprecate your teachers but your system” (de Lissa, cited in Whitehead 2010, p. 93). As with Francis Anderson in Sydney, what de Lissa held against the state-run training was that they were “merely places of instruction” (cited in Whitehead 2010, p. 93).

Disabling Divisions

The words of de Lissa at this time are a key in understanding the separation of kindergarten both from state systems of education and from childcare in most of Australia. But de Lissa’s words have been open to an array of interpretations. It could be speculated that this and similar moves in other states were attempts by women to maintain control of a domain, which had been developed and promoted largely by women, rather than be absorbed into the domain of state education where males held the power. Or it could be argued that the Australian states were not yet ready for progressive education. This latter was probably true of Wilkins’ attempts to introduce Froebelianism in NSW in 1850s, but by 1910 South Australia had a director who was knowledgeable of and enthusiastic about progressive education. Similarly in Victoria, Dr John Smyth, Principal of what was to become the Melbourne Teachers College and an extremely devoted Froebelian, wanted closer ties with the Kindergarten Union (Edgar 1967, p. 283). Again it was resisted by the *Kindergarten Union*. He gave a similar account to that of Anderson in Sydney: “Our large classes, the demands of the inspectors, and the ruling aims of our system, are all to blame here” (Victorian Education Gazette 1904, p. 84, cited in Edgar 1967, p. 78). Like de Lissa somewhat later, it was the “system” which made it difficult to bring Froebelianism to state education. Having a director or a principal with progressive ideas was no guarantee of achieving the massive changes in outlook and vision required. The *Free Kindergarten Union of Victoria* in 1914 defined the kindergarten as “neither a nursery school, a playground, nor a school but a combination of the three for it aims at the all-round development of the child through educative play” (cited in Gardiner 1982, p. 26). There seems justifiable reason to believe that this complex idea would not have survived the state education systems of the time.

It would be a mistake to underestimate the extent to which the Froebelians’ belief that they were the custodians of a new, even revolutionary, view of education, of society and of the individual’s place in it, played a central role in their resistance to having kindergarten absorbed into state education. For de Lissa, part of that new view involved encouraging individuals to think for themselves and to resist mere conformity. She thought of this as applying to both adults and children, to the teachers and the students. De Lissa’s words have been described as “elitist” (Jones 1975, p. 141). This word can be ambiguous between “best” or “exclusive” In de Lissa’s eyes kindergarten was not exclusive but unifying. Her intentions were not elitist, but her resistance to amalgamation with state-run departments in the end had elitist effects. The break between state education departments and kindergarten

training institutions meant that these kindergarten training institutions had to be fee-paying and were therefore, in spite of provisions of some scholarships, largely the province of the middle and upper socio-economic classes (Brennan 1998, p. 30).

Second Wave Feminism in Australia

It is common to mark the different waves of feminism by reference to publication of a particular book. In the US it was Betty Friedan's *A Feminine Mystique* (1963) which heralded the rise of second wave feminism. In Australia Germaine Greer described her book, *The Female Eunuch*, as "part of the second feminist wave" (Greer 1970, p. 11). What can be said of the second wave was that it was given strong impetus by the existence of a reforming government, even though that government had no child care policy when it came to power (Brennan 1998, p. 77). Feminists gained hope that their programs would succeed. Many of their hopes, such as equal pay for Commonwealth public servants, abolition of sales tax on contraceptives and the beginning of moves towards maternity leave, were achieved. But the education and care of young children proved more complex. In Brennan's (1998) words, "of great significance to the development of child care policies under the Whitlam government was the fact that there was no *single* feminist group putting forward a coherent and widely agreed upon position and no *single* feminist vision of what a commonwealth child care policy might look like" (p. 79). Preschools served better off families; it was unsuitable because of its short hours for families where both parents were in the workplace. It is doubtful whether many of the members of the Kindergarten Unions in the 1970s would have regarded themselves as feminists, and the *Free Kindergarten Union of Victoria* reports in 1974 with obvious hostility to "feminism", that "suddenly during this last year or so the preschool movement as it is accepted in our community and as we know through kindergartens and kindred groups, became attractive first to the Education Department, then to the Social Planners, to political extremists and feminist movements" (cited in Brennan 1998, p. 94). Bitter divisions grew up, both in the general population and among those who claimed some expertise in the matter (Seyfort 2007) between those who believed women should remain in the home for the sake of their children and those who held that women had an equal right to work outside the home. Such emotionally charged divisions were inimical to fruitful solutions. The happy coincidence of vision between feminism and progressive educational ideas which characterized the first wave of feminism had broken down.

Conclusion

The Froebelian women described in this chapter are middle-class and had social capital which enabled them to travel and have access to important theoretical movements in Europe, Britain and the USA. They certainly expressed concern for working class women, particularly on issues of pay, but just how many working class women were actually part of the movement is hard to calculate. As Marik (2011) has argued with regard to Owenite feminists, the views and activities of working class women are less likely to have been preserved. In her influential *The Female Eunuch* Greer (2007) has sneeringly and unfairly referred to the first wave of feminists as genteel middle class ladies only too happy to return to their corsets and middle class way of life after achieving suffrage. In contrast, according to Greer, in 1970 “ungenteel middle-class women are calling for revolution” (p. 11). The present chapter has not been concerned with assessment of the second wave of feminism. It has concentrated on the remarkable women who established kindergartens in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries and has argued that it is a gross underestimation to describe them as just philanthropists or simply concerned for the suffrage. Inspired by both liberal and feminist socialist theories, they were working for a dramatic change in social outlook and practice based on a complex utopian vision central to which was an educational theory and view of childhood which, while they had antecedents, were certainly revolutionary.

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Chapter 3
The Didgeridoo, an Instrument of Oppression or Decolonisation?

Sue Lopez-Atkinson

Abstract This chapter explores the use of didgeridoo as a central symbol of Australian Aboriginality in early childhood spaces. This practice raises questions around the place of Aboriginal women and girls in particular within these experiences. As the didgeridoo is largely understood to be a traditional men's instrument in the Aboriginal community in Victoria this chapter explores the specific question 'should girls and women be allowed to handle and play the didgeridoo?'. In this chapter, two interrelated case studies examine the place of the didgeridoo within the gendering of Aboriginality in Victoria through the lens of feminism, human rights, decolonisation and cultural appropriation. In negotiating this complex terrain, the writer finds that the gendering of the didgeridoo is positioned as an act of decolonisation rather than an act of gender oppression.

Keywords Aboriginal feminism · Aboriginal identity · Decolonisation · Aboriginal perspectives · Cultural appropriation

Introduction

The colonisation of Australia by the British in 1788 had a devastating effect on Aboriginal people across Australia. The systematic destruction of Aboriginal families with the removal of children, the loss of land, language, culture, autonomy and life itself impacted on every aspect of Aboriginal existence (Atkinson and Swain 1999). More specifically, this assault on Aboriginal people subordinated Aboriginal women under Western patriarchy, eroding their status as holders of cultural knowledge, as mothers and as autonomous beings within their clan groups (Fredericks 2010).

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Although Aboriginal women and families in Victoria have largely survived this assault, the intergenerational effects have been profound. This is evident in the persistent gap in educational outcomes between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal children and the continuing removal of Aboriginal children from their families (Australian Government, Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet 2015).

The 1970s was a time of renewed opportunity to address this legacy of dispossession. The Aboriginal self-determination movement saw a new wave of activism in Victoria. Aboriginal women were key activists in establishing organisations such as the Victorian Aboriginal Child Care Agency (VACCA) and Yappera Children's Service. Both of these organisations were established to uphold the rights of Victorian Aboriginal children in the field of welfare (VACCA) and early childhood education and care (Yappera) Although these spaces are traditionally female and dominated by women in their establishment and execution, they are inherently political in their challenge to Western patriarchy. The principles around their establishment are that of self-determination, empowerment and healing. These principles used strategically in early childhood spaces are the basis for decolonising Aboriginal families and communities, including the decolonisation of gender.

The 1970s also saw a new wave of feminism in Australia which also addressed gender politics. Aboriginal women were reluctant to engage with this movement in order to support gender decolonisation as feminism was seen as middle class and Anglo Centric and a form of colonisation in itself. The issue of race within feminism was also seen as a marginal one. Addressing the oppression of the Aboriginal community as a whole, being Aboriginal before being a woman (Fesl 1984) was positioned as much more pressing. Although the 'mainstream' feminist movement has made a space of sorts for Aboriginal women, Aboriginal feminists such as Morton-Robinson (2000) continued to be critical of the movement around issues of race.

Although issues of gender are spoken about in Aboriginal-specific early childhood services around the healing of families and the reclaiming of women's culture and status, it is not usually theorised around feminism but decolonisation as a whole. This chapter will be based on two tangled case studies that provoke questions around the intersection of race and gender in sharing decolonised Aboriginal knowledge and skills in Victorian early years' spaces.

The Didgeridoo Within an Indigenous Specific Early Childhood Space

The didgeridoo is a wind instrument made from a hollow tree branch, traditionally played by the Aboriginal people of Northern Australia. As it has become an icon of Aboriginality across postcolonial Australia, the didgeridoo often finds a central place when presenting Aboriginal inclusion in early years programmes. But its

position can be complex in terms of gender. The question often arises as to whether girls and women should be permitted to play and handle the didgeridoo which is largely understood to be an instrument belonging to men. As Nowland (2006) recommends when discussing making didgeridoos from cardboard cylinders:

> The Didgeridoo is traditionally played in ceremonies and is a male's playing instrument only …When completed, play some Aboriginal music and boys can blow into the Didgeridoo and the girls can partake by using tapping sticks… (cited in SNAICC 2007, p. 9).

The application of these restrictions is particularly complicated in areas such as Victoria where the instrument was not traditionally played but has become part of the postcolonial landscape. As such there is no recourse to local tradition in the debate around women and girls playing this instrument.

The instrument originated in Northern Australia and was only played by men in ceremonies. In parts of Northern Australia, such as the northerly parts of Western Australia, it is common for women to play the didgeridoo in informal situations. The tightest restrictions around women playing and touching the didgeridoo seem to be in areas in the south-east of Australia such as Victoria (Barwick 1997).

The consensus in Victoria seems to be that women and girls do not play the didgeridoo out of respect for those Aboriginal groups whose tradition restricts it to men. That this position is a negotiated one in a postcolonial world is illustrated in the following example from a Multifunctional Aboriginal Children Service (MACS). The MACS was established across Australia to provide Aboriginal children with long-day care services in addition to at least one other service such as Kindergarten. The services are based on local Aboriginal Culture and pedagogy, governed by a committee of Aboriginal people and largely staffed by Aboriginal early childhood practitioners. In Victoria where Aboriginal people often identify themselves as 'Koorie', the Koorie Preschool Assistants (KPSA) play a pivotal role within the MACS. In one such MACS, Lee, a non-Indigenous early childhood practitioner, working with Jodie, a KPSA, describes a dilemma:

> With the Yorta Yorta, (a Victoria clan) they say only the boys can play the Didgeridoo but people from Western Australia, the Nyoongars say boys and girls can play it. We have some Western Australians here, so what are we saying? You girls can and you girls can't, you boys can? Do we divide up the girls and say "You can and you can't and you boys can?". This is a classic example where Jodie stepped in and decided no girls. We can't divide up the girls and if we allow the girls to use it accidently, the parents aren't happy (Lopez-Atkinson 2008, pp. 99–100).

Within these negotiations Lee was positioned within the logic of the West:

> It was explained to me that there was a physical reason why they don't let the girls play the didgeridoo for medical reasons. This appealed to me as a white person and I said 'That sounds logical' (Lopez-Atkinson 2008, p. 100).

Colonisation has been grounded on the irrationality of the colonised, with reason opposed to ignorance, scientific knowledge opposed to Indigenous knowledge, Christianity to superstition and professional history to oral history (Kincheloe and

Steinberg 1997). But appealing to Western logic in this case returns us to the irrationality of the Indigenous as being the link between the didgeridoo, gender and 'medical reasons'. Although these 'medical reasons' are not specified by Lee the 'medical' consequences of females touching or using the didgeridoo are sometimes discussed around the loss of fertility (Neuenfeldt 1997). This reframes the debate as being outside of logic rather than within it as concluded by Lee.

How does removing the debate from scientific logic and reframing it within a human rights perspective add to these postcolonial negotiations? The right to practice culture, addressed in the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People (2008), in this example is complicated by not only by a lack of clarity around the relationship of women to the didgeridoo in areas where it originated but by the issue of individual human rights.

In claiming her human rights of equal access to the same social, cultural, economic and political rights as men, does an Indigenous woman have the right to play the didgeridoo? Does testing the theory of human rights against the specificity of cultural rights assist in negotiating this terrain? The UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Article 11 'addresses the right to practice and revitalise their culture and customs including future manifestations of culture' (United Nations 2008, p. 6). Does reference to future manifestations of culture open up a space for Aboriginal women to negotiate a postcolonial identity within their communities? This may be especially pertinent as the discussion around the didgeridoo and gender is an ongoing one. But negotiating identities as Aboriginal women through a lens which engages with gender politics can be a fraught one for a culture based on community rather than individuality. This is echoed in Article 35 of the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People as the 'right to determine the responsibilities of individuals to their communities' (United Nations 2008, p. 12). In the UN Declaration and in Aboriginal life individual rights therefore appear to be subsumed under the rights of Indigenous communities.

Central to the concept of an Aboriginal identity is the position of the self as continuous and connected to a particular Aboriginal Community or Communities (Lopez-Atkinson 1998). This concept of the self is reflected in the Aboriginal early childhood sector which positions Community as vital to the Aboriginal child's development and to the vision, philosophy and practice of the sector (Yappera Children's Service n.d.). Aboriginal children are ideally raised to see themselves as part of their Community. As sons and daughters, sisters and brothers, cousins, nieces, nephews and as grandchildren, they are part of a web of connection running from the individual to the extended family to the wider Aboriginal community.

In a culture built on the principles of collectivism in which the aspirations of the group are reflected in the actions and ambitions of the individual what might be the position of an Aboriginal woman in Victoria asserting the right to play the didgeridoo in an early childhood space? Aboriginal early childhood spaces are positioned as important places of decolonisation in reclaiming Aboriginal culture (Lopez-Atkinson 2008). When decolonisation includes the gendering of the didgeridoo, could an Aboriginal woman's claim see her positioned as complicit in colonisation?

Even as negotiation around the didgeridoo sees girls excluded from this space as in the MACS example, complexity around gender does not disappear. In early childhood settings women will still be in a position to assist boys to construct didgeridoos in early childhood spaces albeit from cardboard cylinders. If women are not allowed to handle the didgeridoo, when in the process of making the instrument does it become a didgeridoo and the woman's role again becomes contested?

Perhaps these are lesser questions to theorise in the face of greater oppressions faced by Aboriginal women in the face of dispossession and racism on a daily basis. As Liddle (2014) states in relation to the question of women playing the didgeridoo 'considering the multitude of pressing issues that Aboriginal women face in Australia a question such as this is not a defining Aboriginal feminist question' (p. 2). In terms of power both Aboriginal men and women are more oppressed by racism than gender. Race is seen as central in uniting the Aboriginal community in its struggle against oppression rather than being divided along gender lines in defence of feminism (Fesl 1984).

There is no clear way forward on a theoretical level around constructing and using didgeridoos in early childhood spaces. On a practical level we can temporarily resolve contradictions and tensions by suspending the debate if excluding girls from playing the didgeridoo was implemented and its construction by boys was led by men. Should we continue this practice, viewing the didgeridoo as part of a contested tradition which has no substantive effect on Indigenous women's position in society but may prove as a distraction from the debate around decolonisation of Aboriginal culture more broadly? But when the debate around the didgeridoo explores the issue of decolonisation and culture appropriation it can cut across gender and highlight the interplay of race and power.

Ramifications for Daring Girls and the Didgeridoo

The Daring Book for Girls by Peskowitz and Buchanan (2007) is described on its back cover as 'for every girl with an independent spirit and a nose for trouble here is the no boys allowed guide for adventure'. The book's activities include, make a camp fire, go fishing, bird watching, camping out, pitching a tent and weaving friendship bracelets. In 2008, an Australian version of this American book which included didgeridoo lessons for girls was being prepared for release.

Dr. Mark Rose, a Victorian Gunditjmara man and General manager of the Victorian Aboriginal Education Association at the time, responded strongly against the inclusion of the lessons citing this as 'extreme cultural insensitivity and mammoth ignorance' (Rose, cited in Skatssoon 2008, n.p.). He cited Aboriginal cultural protocols constructed around gender in his response:

> We know very clearly that there's a range of consequences for a female touching a didgeridoo- infertility would be the start of it, ranging to other consequences. I won't even let my daughter touch one (Rose cited in Publisher offends 2008, n.p.).

These protocols can be viewed through the lens of maintaining gender inequality by the linking of female infertility to women taking on men's roles across cultures and centuries (Clark 1873). The theory of altered fertility and the crossing of gendered boundaries highlights the interplay of gender and power and has been rejected in the West as pseudoscience (Sax 2010). Rose taking offence through the lens of fertility in the twenty-first century may appear as an irrational offence but most troubling for Rose was that of the issue of cultural appropriation. Cultural appropriation causes offence across gender because it fails to place respecting the rights of Indigenous people around culture at its centre. As Rose states:

> The lack of consultation with the Aboriginal communities from which the Didgeridoo originates is especially offensive to Aboriginal Australians as it undermines access to power over cultural transmission and representation (M. Rose, personal communication, July 24th, 2015).

The publishing director of HarperCollins Australia, Shona Martyn in defending the decision to include the didgeridoo lessons before later apologising, argued that there was a:

> divergence of views amongst Aboriginal people… and I'm not convinced that we've offended all Australian Aborigines (Martyn, cited in Skatssoon 2008).

If the debate is framed around causing offence to a majority, what is the position of the marginalised voice in debates around Aboriginal culture? It could be argued that the Victorian Aboriginal community has experienced amongst the earliest and greatest impact of colonisation in terms of dispossession around 'traditional culture'. Considering the loss of family, language, story, ceremony and the land on which this culture was based, it is astounding that the culture has survived at all (Atkinson and Swain 1999). When addressing cultural dispossession, has the voice of the Victorian Aboriginal community as one that has been marginalised in a particular way, a particular right to be heard? Victorian Aboriginal cultures have rebuilt, reclaimed and redefined themselves in a postcolonial world of which the didgeridoo is now a part. In this context maintaining the gendered place of the didgeridoo can be seen as a symbol of resistance to ongoing colonisation.

If we start from the position that the didgeridoo is a gendered instrument in Victoria how do we talk to young children about the restrictions on girls playing the didgeridoo? When challenging the restraints of gender roles as a philosophical basis for curriculum construction in early childhood spaces (Smith et al. 2014), this is especially complex. Talking to children in terms of respect and acceptance for a cultural practice that has been eroded by colonisation can raise the complex issue of Aboriginal patriarchy. Although there is debate around how Aboriginal patriarchy was positioned in Aboriginal societies (Morton-Robinson 2000), Aboriginal men were disempowered under the patriarchal rule of the colonisers. Is the gendered

position of the didgeridoo in Victoria reinstating some of the power Aboriginal men lost during colonisation and is therefore justified?

Presenting the didgeridoo as a central symbol of Aboriginality and gender relations in early childhood spaces needs to be thoughtfully considered. When presented within a tokenistic and stereotypical didgeridoo and boomerangs approach (Glover 1996), a more authentic representation of Aboriginality including that of gender relations is lost.

Positioning the playing of the didgeridoo as 'daring for girls' appears to be constructed in defiance of the restraints of patriarchy within the 'daring book for girls'. Ironically other activities that girls in the book dare to do such as camping, fishing, bird watching, weaving jewellery and pitching a tent (constructing a shelter) were part of the everyday lives of Aboriginal women. These women's lives were vilified and placed outside femininity (Brook 1994). What is described in the book as daring was seen as primitive and vulgar by the colonists. Such negative assessments were used in justifying intervention into Aboriginal communities in the interests of 'saving' women and children from such savagery (Atkinson and Swain 1999). Through the policy of segregation on missions where Aboriginal people lived under the control of church and state and the forced removal of children to institutions Aboriginal women were dispossessed of their traditional roles and their families.

Conclusion

Re-empowerment for Aboriginal women has been a movement of decolonisation in reclaiming and reimagining the place of Aboriginal women. Aboriginal women have been especially active in the area of welfare and education in order to reframe these systems around social justice for Aboriginal families and communities (Brook 1994). Within these spaces and beyond, the roles of Aboriginal women has been strengthened and revived. Demonstrating this are female Elders performing Welcome to Country, a ceremony that welcomes 'visitors' to their traditional land often at the opening of a special event; Aboriginal women as mothers and grandmothers nurturing the next generation; teachers practising the Aboriginal pedagogy of storytelling, art, reflection and observation with children and artists reviving intergenerational skills such as weaving and basket making.

Embedding Aboriginality by representing and engaging with Aboriginal women in these roles gives the early childhood programme a greater authenticity beyond the didgeridoo as a lone representation of Aboriginal culture.

Returning to my original question: is the didgeridoo an instrument of oppression or decolonisation? This is a question the Victorian Aboriginal Community appears to answer in terms of decolonisation. The didgeridoo as gendered is part of a community reclaiming an Aboriginal identity in a postcolonial world. The subject position of Aboriginality does not erase gender but positions it within a framework of dispossession that both Aboriginal men and women share. Collective action

based on common understandings and experiences of colonisation forge collaboration across gender in the struggle for decolonisation.

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Chapter 4
Celebrating Pioneering and Contemporary Feminist Approaches to Studying Gender in Early Childhood

Jayne Osgood and Kerry H. Robinson

Abstract This chapter charts feminist research in early childhood and the generative potential it offers to continually revisit childhood and gender—and the important ways in which this has shifted over time. This review celebrates the significant contributions feminist scholars have made to the field; and demonstrates the potentialities within contemporary approaches such as new materialism and posthumanism to respond to postfeminist claims that gender is no longer an issue. Our intention is to identify the centrality of feminism to the field of early childhood studies and the continued relevance of gender to all early childhood debates. The chapter addresses the following issues: the influence of feminist theory to conceptualizations of the child/childhood; the relationship of feminist theory to post-structuralism and to queer theory in relation to understandings of childhood, gender, and sexuality; equitable and transformative pedagogies in early childhood education; advances in theoretical perspectives that contribute to contemporary understandings of gender in the lives of young children, including the tensions that can exist around some feminist perspectives and gender diverse and trans children; the perceived relevance of gender issues in early childhood policy and curricular frameworks; and identifying the current gender issues pertinent to early childhood education and to young children's lives.

Keywords Early childhood · Feminist theory · Queer theory · New materialism

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Introduction

Since the 1980s gender has increasingly been acknowledged as an important aspect of children's subjectivity to be addressed in early childhood research. This research has increased awareness and understandings of gendering processes in childhood and its relationship to the constitution of children as sexual subjects (Davies 1989; Thorne 1993; Greishaber 1998; MacNaughton 2000; Blaise 2005; Taylor and Richardson 2005; Robinson and Jones-Diaz 2006; Robinson and Davies 2008). This chapter explores the significant contributions that feminist theorists have made to advancing understandings of gender and sexuality in childhood over the past 30 years or so and how this has been taken up in research. Feminist scholars have continued to be at the forefront of debates in this area, challenging long-established perspectives in early childhood education, which locate children's gender primarily within biological and developmentalist frameworks. Within these debates, feminist and queer scholars have disrupted the notion that sexuality matters only to adolescents reaching puberty and to adults, highlighting the influence of sexuality norms on processes of doing gender.

Feminist educational research during this time has highlighted the centrality of sociocultural discursive construction of gender and sexuality in children's everyday lives. Feminist post-structuralist researchers have shifted awareness of constructions of gender and sexuality in childhood through troubling children's passive involvement in sex role socialization, to highlighting children's centrality as key agents in the construction of their own gender and sexual subjectivities, as well as in the regulation and policing of gender and sexuality norms in other children (and adults). We know that young children from very early ages begin to explore gendered and sexual identities from the narratives or cultural stories they are told by their families, educators, peers, and the media about what it means to be a girl or a boy. Intersections of feminist post-structuralist research with queer theory has provided critical perspectives that challenge and disrupt binary understandings of gender and heteronormative assumptions about children's latent (hetero)sexuality. Increased public awareness of gender diversity and transgender identity in young children in recent years is highlighting the importance of further research into understanding gender diversity in childhood and the inadequacy of gender binaries to capture the diversity of gender that exists in young people's lives.

Despite decades of feminist scholarship outlining the processes of gender construction in childhood, biological and developmentalist theories of gender difference have maintained a strong influence in early childhood education, especially with the reinforcement of these perspectives arising from a reemergence of brain theory-based explanations of gender differences. Media has been particularly interested in pursuing and perpetuating brain theory perspectives of gender difference but feminist scholars continue to point out the pitfalls and lack of evidence behind such explanations.

The discussion in this chapter charts feminist theorizing in early childhood and the generative potential it offers to continually reconfigure childhood and gender

and the important ways in which this has shifted over time. Childhood, gender, and sexuality continue to be reconceptualized, shifting over time, space, and place. New feminist perspectives point out the importance of considering the interrelationships between the sociocultural, materiality, and affect in theorizing childhood. These perspectives are raising the potential for posthumanist methodologies to reach fresh understandings of gendering processes in early childhood. These new and exciting feminist approaches have the potential to reignite an awareness of gender in early childhood education, which might be argued to have fallen off the early childhood education agenda.

The chapter addresses the following themes: the influence of feminist theory to conceptualizations of the child/childhood; the relationship of feminist theory to post-structuralism and to queer theory in relation to understandings of childhood, gender, and sexuality; equitable and transformative pedagogies in early childhood education; advances in theoretical perspectives that contribute to contemporary understandings of gender in the lives of young children, including the tensions that can exist around some feminist perspectives and gender diverse and trans children; the perceived relevance of gender issues in early childhood policy and curricular frameworks; and identifying the current gender issues pertinent to early childhood education and to young children's lives.

Feminist Challenges to Biological Determinist Discourses in Sex Role Theory: The Rise of Socialization in Gender Differences

One of the most significant contributions that feminist scholars have made to gender studies has been to challenge the hegemony of scientific, biological determinist discourses on gender differences. Within this perspective gender difference is constituted within binary understandings of gender, in which males and females are considered to be 'natural' opposites, attributed to male and female bodily differences, brains, sex hormones, and genes. Gender differences in intellectual, psychological, and behavioral characteristics are assumed to be biologically determined; they are considered to be the essence of the constitution of masculinity and femininity. The traits perceived to be associated with being male—for example, being strong, tough, rational, courageous, brave, creative, mathematically inclined, having greater spatial ability and persevering—are contrasted with those perceived to be associated with being female—dependent, passive, emotional, weak, sensitive, irrational, and fearful. Women and men were considered to be 'naturally' suited to particular roles based on their sex and consequently channeled into particular professions—women into nurturing and caring roles— such as mothering, nursing, teaching, secretarial work, and services; men into management, professional, business, science, and military-based professions. The private/public divide was constituted in binary gender relations—women generally relegated to the

private domain of the home to fulfill expected roles as mothers, carers, and nurturers of children, husbands, and other extended family members; whilst men were relegated to the public sphere, the powerful world of politics, business, technology, and education, and expected to provide financial security for the family.

From the late 1960s to the 1980s gender researchers and feminist theorists began to challenge the all-pervasive discourse of biologically determined sex role differences. These researchers and theorists critiqued the essentialism and hegemony of biological explanations of gender arguing that social factors were more significantly influential in the development of gender differences (Money and Ehrhardt 1972; Maccoby and Jacklin 1974). Feminist theorists and researchers argued that the psychological and behavioral characteristics associated with being male and female were not 'natural' but were largely a result of the process of socialization in which children learnt through everyday narratives and practices, what it meant to be a boy or a girl. That is, sex roles were learnt through the everyday messages received from families, peers, schooling, media, and the broader society and gender differences were also largely developed through sociocultural values and perceptions of males and females. Maccoby and Jacklin's 1974 book titled *The Psychology of Sex Differences* was especially groundbreaking. In that it not only challenged the centrality of biology in determining gender differences but also pointed out that there are fewer differences between genders than is perceived, with much greater differences often existing within genders. Maccoby and Jacklin (1974) also highlighted the significance of children's 'self-socialization' and of peer influences in the process of acquiring gender identity and reinforcing gender differences.

In association with the research challenges to understandings of sex differences during this time, feminist theorists provided critiques of the way that biology had been used to justify gender inequalities in society. Feminists also highlighted the sexist perspectives that were generally inherent in scientific explanations that 'naturalized' gender differences. The feminist and queer studies scholar, Teresa de Lauretis (1987) in her book titled, *Technologies of Gender: Essays on Theory, Film and Fiction* argued: 'Gender is not sex, a state of nature, but rather the representation of each individual in terms of a particular social relation which pre-exists the individual and is predicated on the conceptual and rigid (structural) opposition of two biological sexes' (p. 5). De Lauretis (1987) points out that gender 'is always intimately interconnected with political and economic factors in society… (and) systematically linked to the organization of social inequality' (p. 5). Feminist researchers provided a powerful analysis of the way that everyday practices of dressing children in gender stereotyped clothing, buying gender stereotyped toys, the perpetuation of gender stereotypes in advertisements, songs, television, games, books and magazines, and children's gender stereotyped play and interactions, were central to constructing gender differences around biological sex. Alice Honig (1983) argued that by the age of four, gender influenced children's play preferences, behavior and social expectations of themselves and others. Echoing the earlier words of the feminist theorist Simone de Beauvoir (1949), the educational researcher Thorne (1993) pointed out, 'if boys and girls are different, they are not born but *made* that way' (p. 2).

The role of schooling in the process of gender socialization and in the perpetuation of sex role inequalities became a central focus of feminist educational researchers during the 1980s (Askew and Ross 1988; Browne and France 1986; Honig 1983). Reproduction theory was central to explanations of gender differences, arguing that adults, including teachers, reinforce traditional sex role stereotyping through their own modeling of stereotypical gendered behaviors and in their differential treatment of boys and girls. In particular, this research explored the perpetuation of sex role stereotypes in children's books, in teaching materials and schooling curricula, and highlighted how teachers' differential practices with boys and girls, including giving more classroom time to boys, reinforced gender differences, and associated inequalities. Attention was drawn to the prevalence of sexism across the different educational sectors, including early childhood education. Early childhood teachers, reflecting broader sociocultural perceptions around gender, generally perceived that children *naturally* gravitate to play and to roles associated with their gender—girls *naturally* chose to play in the 'home corner' with dolls, whilst boys *naturally* chose more adventurous and outdoor activities. Children's books in particular emphasized sex role differences, with boys often the main characters so as to appeal to boys' interests, as they preferred to read books with male main characters. This was largely to counteract the disinterest that many boys often demonstrated in reading.

It is important to also acknowledge the social construction of gendered experiences in terms of intersectionality of gender with other aspects of identity, or multiple subjectivities, or locations from which people come, for example, sexuality, ethnicity, and socioeconomic class. Feminist theorists such as hooks (1984) and Lorde (1984) aptly pointed out that much feminist theory was imbued with white and middle class values and experiences, and did not resonate with the experiences of women of color, or with the issues they perceived as priorities in their lives. These feminist theorists argued that the oppression that women of color experienced was different to that experienced by white middle class women, and that racism and its process of marginalization was more central to women of color's experiences of oppression than just patriarchy—racism and marginalization that white middle class feminists were implicit in perpetuating through their racist practices and privileged position in society. The works of Lorde and hooks, and other theorists, such as Mohanty (1991), provided a critical reminder that social inequalities and relations of power need to be considered and analyzed through the lens of intersectionality. They also point out that it is crucial to be aware of whose knowledge becomes the 'truth' and whose knowledge is written out of history or social experiences. This is an important point for recognizing and understanding the different experiences associated with gender in children's lives from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds.

Cannella and Viruru (2004) have provided a valuable analysis of how colonialism has worked to influence the way that gender and childhood have been largely defined and viewed through western discourses (see also Robinson 2013). Utilizing postcolonial theory, which has obvious links to intersectionality, Cannella and Viruru (2004) point out that in relation to gender, 'Discourses of racial

difference (and superiority) have also been predicated on beliefs about gender; racism and sexism have become so intertwined that they are impossible to separate' (p. 42). They go on to argue, 'Gender is a false truth that has been used by some European and American males (and others who accept the notions as beyond question) to impose patriarchy, racism, and control on indigenous and other colonized people' (Cannella and Viruru 2004, p. 43).

The recognition of the social construction of gender provided a different discourse on gender identity formation, gender differences, and on gender inequalities. In contrast to biological determinist perspectives of gender, which fix and universalize perceived gender traits and differences in biology, social constructionist perspectives viewed gender and inequalities as being socially nurtured.

Children's Subjectivity and Agency—From Gender Sex Role Theory and Socialization to Feminist Post-structuralism

From the 1990s, knowledge of gender and gender identity formation has been significantly influenced by feminist post-structural perspectives, which have extended understandings of the social construction of gender in childhood (Davies 1989; Greishaber 1998; MacNaughton 2000; Walkerdine 1990). Often incorporating the influential works of philosophers such as Michel Foucault (knowledge and power), Judith Butler (gender performativity), and Jacques Derrida (deconstruction) feminist post-structuralist accounts of gender focus on multiple, contradictory, or shifting subjectivities, relations of power, agency, and processes of deconstruction. Within these theoretical contexts, subjects make sense of themselves as gendered beings through the various cultural discourses (in the Foucauldian sense) of gender available to them; gender differences and gender relations of power are perpetuated and maintained through the cultural binary male/female that is foundational to the oppositional thinking associated with masculinity and femininity; and children are viewed as active agents in the construction of their own gender identities and in the regulation of the gender identities of their peers and others. Feminist post-structuralists critique the passivity of sex roles and socialization theory and the lack of agency accredited to children in the process of gender formation (Davies 1989; Cannella 1997; Robinson and Jones-Diaz 2006). Davies (1989) argues 'These theories [socialization and sex role theory] of the person obscure our recognition of the complex and contradictory ways in which we are continually constituting and reconstituting ourselves and the social world through the various discourses in which we participate' (p. 6). Children are not born 'clean slates', which society begins to write and act upon at the time of their birth and throughout childhood, socializing individuals into being 'appropriate' boys and girls, with minimal resistance. Children actively negotiate, resist,

constitute, and perpetuate the cultural narratives of what is considered 'appropriate' and 'correct' gender performances of being male or female.

In feminist post-structural accounts of gender, man, woman, boy, and girl are unstable and contested social categories whose meanings and representations are open to change across and within different cultures over time. These scholars have highlighted the multiple ways in which masculinities and femininities are performed within and across cultures, challenging outmoded fixed and universalized understandings of binary gender. Butler's (1990, 1994) account of performativity of gender argues that it is through the process of iteration that the individual gender subject comes into being. For Butler, iteration is the regularized and constrained repetition of norms and it is through this process that identities are constituted and others excluded. It is also through this process of iteration, Butler points out that differences also occur resulting in change. Through acknowledging the performative, relational, and discursive nature of gender, feminist post-structural scholars have shown how change is made possible.

Feminism and Queer Theory: The Relationship Between Gender and Sexuality

The inclusion of sexuality issues in early childhood education has always been a contested area. There has been some recognition of the importance of acknowledging same-sex families in relation to family diversity in young children's lives, but beyond this, sexuality has generally been perceived as irrelevant to children. However, in recent times, feminist researchers, often with a queer theory perspective, have explored the formation of children's sexuality identities, the relationship this has with gender, and the influence of children's early education on this process (Blaise 2005; Epstein 1995; Renold 2005; Robinson 2013; Robinson and Davies 2008, 2010, 2015; Robinson and Jones-Diaz 2006).

Butler (1990) in her concept of the heterosexual matrix argues that 'natural' and 'normalized' bodies, genders, and desires are culturally rendered intelligible through their heterosexualization. Incorporating this perspective, Robinson (2013) has argued that the construction of heterosexuality and heterosexual desire in young children's lives is an everyday occurrence, which largely goes unrecognized as it is normalized within hegemonic discourses of gender and child development—that is, it is perceived as a normal and healthy part of children's gender development. Research conducted by feminist queer scholars (Blaise 2005; Renold 2005; Robinson 2013; Robinson and Davies 2008, 2010, 2015) with young children, point out that children's understandings of sexuality and sexual identity are largely constituted through heteronormative discourses of gender. These scholars have argued that play is not just a significant site of gender construction in early childhood, but it is also an important site in which heteronormative discourses operate. Mock weddings, mothers and fathers, kiss and chase, girlfriends and

boyfriends are all part of children's heteronormative play narratives. However, educators, or adults more generally, do not view these activities as linked to children's early sexuality formation. They are commonly viewed as 'children being children' and a natural part of growing up.

The research conducted by feminist queer scholars in children's sexuality has opened up spaces for critical conversations around children as sexual subjects, the impact of heteronormativity in early childhood education, and the ways in which children and educators regulate normative discourses of both gender and sexuality. Epstein (1995) aptly pointed out that sexism cannot be understood without an analysis of its relationship with heterosexuality.

What Does Postfeminism Mean for Understanding Gender in Early Childhood?

The emergence of postfeminism has contributed to shadowing of gender issues in early childhood education. 'Postfeminist' is a term that continues to be applied to young women who have benefited from the feminist movement through their access to employment, education, and more flexible family arrangements, but do not necessarily push for further political change (Aronson 2003). Postfeminism is also often accompanied by the myth that gender equality has generally been achieved over the past 40 years or so, with women experiencing minimal limitations on their choices and agency in their personal and professional lives. Additionally, an antifeminist undertone is associated with the perception that girls *should* be able to choose traditional gendered roles and relationships if they so wish—that is, 'girls have the *right* to be girls', and 'boys have the *right* to be boys', echoing the biological determinist ideology challenged by feminists and prominent gender theorists (Butler 1990).

This is particularly troubling in the field of early childhood education and care (ECEC) where the workforce remains persistently female-dominated, undervalued, and poorly remunerated for work that continues to be constructed as 'women's work' (Osgood 2012). Furthermore, research with early years educators reveals that views informed by postfeminism coexist alongside biological determinist discourses (Robinson and Davies 2008; Osgood 2012). This underlines an important need to continue to study gender in early childhood contexts and to investigate the complex gendering processes at play and the implications for young children in contemporary early childhood contexts.

Posthumanist and New Materialist Feminist Approaches for the Study of Gender in Early Childhood

Perhaps in partial response to postfeminist claims that gender equality has been largely achieved, and therefore debate is no longer necessary, there has been recent growth in more experimental approaches to researching gender in early childhood which recognize it as ever more nuanced and slippery. These experimental approaches, framed by posthumanist and new materialist feminist theories and methods, aim to extend some of the ideas and approaches taken up by feminist post-structuralists outlined earlier.

This growing body of feminist research has been influenced by the work of philosophers working in other disciplinary fields (notably science studies) but who share feminist concerns about the world and the place of the human within the world. Their ideas have been particularly helpful to scholars in ECEC to reconfigure postmodernist discourses and lived experiences of gender in early childhood that continue to be shaped, regulated, and normalized. In particular, the work of Haraway (2008), Barad (2007), and Braidotti (2013) have been taken up to find ways to extend understandings of gender in early childhood that attend to embodied, material-semiotic, and discursive processes.

Feminist scholars taking up posthumanist and new materialist theories have opened up opportunities to think beyond the human subject (e.g., Lenz-Taguchi 2009; Olsson 2009). By decentering the human subject it becomes possible to engage with the idea of gender in early childhood as endlessly produced and reworked through entanglements with other subjects and objects. Recent attention to the corporeal, material, and affective aspects of lives lived in ECEC contexts offers a rupture to how we have come to think about children, childhood, early childhood pedagogies, and research practices and to (re)consider how gendering processes are infinitely playing out and with what effects.

Such approaches are appealing in research with very young children as they create space to view children differently; offering an invitation to observe (material-semiotic-affective) entanglements and therefore the means by which children resist, challenge, indulge, and transgress gendered ways of becoming through their inter- and intra-actions with human (e.g., peers, parents, educators), nonhuman (e.g., material, animal), and more-than-human (e.g., computers) through verbal, nonverbal, and physical enactments in the routine unfolding of everyday life in childhood. Such reconfiguring opens up possibilities to chart and learn from and about gender in early childhood, rather than assuming that we 'know' the child—and in developmentalist discourse if the child we think we know is lacking against normative expectations we might then fix that child (Blaise 2013). Posthumanist decentering approaches set us free from this preoccupation so that we might pursue ideas that the child is variously and constantly interwoven within particular entanglements (Davies, 2014). In doing this, ways are offered to understand *gendering processes* in early childhood rather than to view the child as inherently gendered or reworking a gendered subjectivity.

Attending to microscopic, multisensory examinations of the relational entanglements of people, sensations, sounds, smells, and matter, is well suited to research in early childhood. Early childhood is readily characterized by highly physical, emotional, unpredictable, and seemingly chaotic encounters. This offers the feminist researcher infinite possibilities to turn attention to inter- and intra-actions formed of noise, smell, touch and to consider how such entanglements might inform our grapplings for new understandings of gendering processes (Jones 2013; Osgood 2015a). The practical implications of posthumanist approaches to studying gender in ECEC is that they allow for a recognition of identities as generated relationally with objects, spaces, places and they are multisensory becomings that constantly mutate and transmute—making certainties about gender infinitely uncertain. Those who have taken this approach (Renold and Mellor 2013; Blaise 2013; Osgood 2014, 2015b; Lyttleton-Smith 2015; Huuki and Renold 2015) have provided powerful illustrations of how the becoming child in early childhood contexts reworks and negotiates ways of being and transgressing what is thought knowable, doable, acceptable for little girls and boys.

Whilst such approaches might be criticized for obscuring wider debates about gender and childhood (i.e., heteronormativity, misogyny, and how gender intersects with social class, ethnicity, disability, and age), important investments have been made to ensure that these metanarratives remain in play when undertaking posthumanist research with young children. The wider stratified, social, political, and economic contexts and the discursive production of inequalities and prejudices remain matters of concern to feminists working within this theoretical framework (Taylor et al. 2012). However, it requires that researchers are prepared to be surprised, to question their worldviews and consider afresh the interconnections of such metanarratives as they play out in and through the micropolitics and material-semiotic entanglements within early childhood contexts.

As argued previously (Osgood and Giugni 2015) applying posthumanist and new materialist approaches to the study of gendering processes in early childhood creates opportunities to reconfigure so that we might move beyond hegemonic discourses, curriculum frameworks, and research/pedagogical practices that fix children into place, or mark them as deficient because they fall short of the mark. There is huge liberatory potential in offering children (and educators) the space to play with (gendering) processes of becoming, to understand ourselves as always relationally entangled within material-semiotic-affective assemblages.

Implications for Early Childhood Education

This chapter has mapped the important contribution that feminist research has made to exposing, exploring, and experimenting with ideas about gender in early childhood. It has underlined the significance of these contributions to the field and the vital political role that they play in refusing to allow gender to fall off the agenda. Gender remains a crucial aspect of all childhoods and life in early childhood

contexts. Through convictions to problematize, critique, unsettle, map, and reconfigure gender in early childhood a long history of challenging what counts as valid knowledge (Lather 1993) emerges. We urge that the field continues to interrogate who gets heard and what gets silenced or obscured from view in debates about gender and to consider deeply what queering dominant ideas about gender in early childhood research, theory, and practice, might afford us.

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Chapter 5
Black Feminist Thought in Early Childhood Studies: (Re)Centering Marginalized Feminist Perspectives

Michelle Salazar Pérez

Abstract Early childhood as a field, historically, has been informed by the perspectives of white men from the global north (Burman 1994). This has resulted in the universalization of development discourses, producing rigid constructions of childhood/s, and Othering those who do not fit into dominant identity constructs. The reconceptualist movement has been instrumental in uncovering regulatory discourses and opening spaces to reimagine and rethink childhood/s (Bloch et al. 2014). Still absent, however, in early childhood studies are the perspectives of women of color. As such, this chapter calls for a more prominent presence of theories from the margins like Black feminist thought (Collins 2008). Specific examples are shared that illustrate how Black feminist thought can provoke the telling of lived experiences, unveil social and systemic power hierarchies in both methodological approaches and in teacher education, and inspire activism. The chapter concludes with a discussion on why Black feminist thought is essential to the field.

Keywords Black feminisms · Early childhood · Reconceptualist movement · Activism

Introduction

> The white fathers told us: I think, therefore I am. The Black mother within each of us—the poet—whispers in our dreams: I feel therefore I can be free (Lorde 1984, p. 38).

Audre Lorde and other influential Black feminist scholars have elicited powerful emotions in women of color, not easily felt when reading the works of white men.

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For me, they have provoked tears, laughter, the revisiting of painful memories, and individual/collective healing. Embodying Chicana/Mexican American, white, and Black heritages, I have felt a profound connection and solidarity with Black feminisms (Crenshaw 1991; hooks 2000b; James 1993). Collins' (1990, 2000, 2008) *Black feminist thought*, in particular, has provided a "theoretical home" for me and Others (Saavedra and Pérez 2012), where marginalized knowledges are (re)centered and legitimized as important contributions to the world. As a scholar in early childhood studies, a field founded upon white patriarchy, I am especially compelled to contest the lack of theoretical influences by women of color.

Early childhood, historically, has been dominated by the perspectives of white men from the global north, producing rigid constructions of childhood/s and limiting what is thought to be possible for research, public policy, and pedagogical approaches in early childhood care and education (Burman 1994; Cannella 1997; Viruru 2007). Since the 1990s, the reconceptualist movement has vehemently pushed back on these regulatory discourses, opening possibilities to reimagine, and rethink childhood/s (Bloch et al. 2014). Through the use of critical, feminist, postcolonial, and poststructural perspectives, reconceptualist scholars have "queered" normative views on gender and sexuality (Boldt 2001; Cahill and Theilheimer 1999), challenged colonialism (Viruru 2007; Rau and Ritchie 2011), interrogated oppressive childhood public policies (Bloch et al. 2003; Dahlberg et al. 2007; MacNaughton et al. 2007), and destabilized human/more than human binaries (Blaise et al. 2013).

Even though the reconceptualist movement has fostered the use of feminist, postcolonial and indigenous perspectives in early childhood studies, theorizing, and experimenting with methodologies in previously unrecognized ways (some of my own work included) has often remained grounded in the work of white, male scholars like Foucault, Derrida, and Deleuze and Guattari. When feminist theories are utilized, they tend to be from white, western perspectives (e.g., with the use of Haraway, Butler, and Barad). Without a doubt, rethinking childhood/s from these positionings has illuminated multiple ways of being/becoming in the world. However, how can perspectives from the margins, such as Black feminist thought, be viewed as more essential to early childhood studies, from informing pedagogical practices and analysis of public policy to research and methodological approaches to childhood/s inquiry?

Why Black Feminist Thought?

My petition to make early childhood studies more inclusive of marginalized feminist perspectives (in both mainstream and reconceptualist spaces) stems not only from a desire to provoke social justice for children and communities of color, but also to garner support for those who wish to use marginalized feminist onto-epistemologies to inform childhood/s research, pedagogies, and praxis, something not readily felt. To exemplify, when presenting my work using Black

feminist thought over the years, I have been asked on numerous occasions, “how is *this* early childhood?”. A question that feels most poignant when educational scholars outside the reconceptualist movement inquire, how I could neglect to cite “foundational” early childhood theorists such as Piaget, Vygotsky, Rousseau, Froebel, Dewey, Gardner, and Erikson. When teaching history and philosophy courses at the university level, finding it necessary to expose students to these theorists (mainly because knowing their work is required to pass teacher licensure exams), I ask students to identify what each have in common. After a short time contemplating, students surmise *they are all white men*. As I look around the room at an almost exclusively female (and typically white) student body, I witness a light bulb go off for many—the exact reaction I had when I realized that early childhood is a field built upon white patriarchy. Although critical and/or postmodern, post-structural, and feminist perspectives have provided tools to interrogate the patriarchal foundations of early childhood, I and Others find it is rare that challenges are theoretically informed by women of color.

Unpacking white patriarchy in early childhood studies and the inequities it produces is important for students, practitioners, and researchers, particularly in regards to the visceral disconnect they evoke for many women and women of color. Marginalized theoretical perspectives like Black feminist thought provide the language and embodied ways to uncover, challenge, and rethink sexist, racist, heteronormative and colonizing aspects of the field. Doing so is important not only to seek equity for marginalized peoples, but for all involved, even the dominant (hooks 2000a). With this purpose in mind, in this chapter I urge readers to consider how Black feminist thought can recenter subjugated knowledges made invisible within early childhood studies, inspire the field methodologically, and connect scholars more intimately with the global/local struggles of the marginalized.

Black Feminist Perspectives

Black feminisms are diverse and represent a range of theoretical positionings. Emerging from civil rights movements in the United States in the 1960s, Black feminists were forced to express their “politics in the cracks” (Springer 2005, p. 2). Unrecognized within male dominated, afrocentric organizations and confronting different issues than white women in feminist movements, such as racism, Black women felt it was necessary to unify around both race and gender. Subsequently, organizations like the Third World Women’s Alliance and *Black Women Organized for Action* were formed. Although these groups primarily focused on Black women’s race and gender rights, “in the process of organizational and identity formation, black feminists found, sometimes in difficult ways, that black women held a plurality of visions for social change because of their differences from one another in sexual orientation, class, color, and educational achievement” (Springer 2005, p. 4). As such, Black feminist movements, organizations, and activists have historically united for justice and equity concerning an *intersectionality* of identity

politics. Central to Black feminist theoretical perspectives, then, is the legitimization and advancement of Black women's intellectual and aesthetic contributions to society as well as the liberation of *all* that experience oppressive conditions.

Examples of various Black feminist positionings include Womanism, endarkened feminism, and Black feminist thought, each with unique purposes. Womanists take a holistic approach to the world considering the cosmos, humanity, the environment, and spiritual realm. As Maparyan (2012) explains, the architecture of the womanist idea is embodied "not so much as a 'theory' or 'philosophy', but rather as a worldview, a metaphysics, a methodology, a movement and a spirit" (p. xi). Endarkened feminism, in its positioning and nomenclature, purposefully challenges "enlightened" feminist insights, which have arisen "from the well-established canon of white feminist thought" (Dillard 2006, p. 3). Endarkened feminism is transnational, maintains spirituality as a principal theme, and is "located in Black women's existence at the intersections of race, class, and gender oppression in a society that privileges whiteness, maleness, and wealth" (Evans-Winters and Love 2015, p. 4). A major influence in the development of endarkened feminism and other Black feminist perspectives, is Patricia Hill Collins' (1990, 2000, 2008) *Black feminist thought*. As a critical social theory, Black feminist thought has expanded discussions about Black women's empowerment, intersectionality, and the organization of power and oppression.

While broader discussions could be had surrounding the range of Black feminist positionings and how they can contribute to early childhood studies, my focus in this chapter is on Collins' Black feminist thought. From Black feminist thought emerges the potential to transform early childhood, making it a field informed by the perspectives of women of color rather than constructed solely on white patriarchy.

Black Feminist Thought

> Because elite White men control Western structures of knowledge validation, their interests pervade the themes, paradigms, and epistemologies of traditional scholarship. As a result, U.S. Black women's experiences as well those of women of African descent transnationally have been routinely distorted within or excluded from what counts as knowledge (Collins 2000, p. 251).

Although intimately connected to the multiple Black feminist perspectives that exist, Patricia Hill Collins' *Black feminist thought* has been generated as a specialized critical social theory. Building upon the ideas of influential Black feminist thinkers such as Audre Lorde, Alice Walker, Maria Stewart, and Angela Davis, among others, Collins' work has been instrumental in forging a space that recognizes the importance of Black feminist ontologies and epistemologies to both academia and larger society. Theorizing begins with everyday lived experiences of women of color, illuminated by oral herstories, storytelling, music, poetry, art, and other aesthetic representations. From these tellings, the organization of power, or

"matrices of domination," is theorized. Matrices shift and change as they assemble across structural, disciplinary, hegemonic, and interpersonal power. These intersecting "domains" (p. 276) create and maintain systemic oppression, subjugate the critical consciousness of people of color, and produce power relations in our everyday personal encounters (see Pérez and Williams 2014, for an in depth discussion on domains of power). Entanglements with matrices of domination create social and institutional contexts where one experiences *both* power *and* oppression depending on her or his multiple and intersectional identities.

Having been informed by U.S. Black women's experiences, Collins recognizes the complexities of employing Black feminist thought across geopolitical locations. She posits:

> On some dimensions, U.S. Black feminism resembles that of women within and from Black diasporic societies, while on other dimensions, it remains distinctively American. Collectively, these common areas of concern link the feminisms of women of African descent within a broader transnational context. They also provide a useful starting point for examining the common differences that characterize an intercontinental Black women's consciousness movement, one responding to the intersecting oppressions that are differently organized via a global matrix of domination (Collins 2000, p. 238).

While Black feminist thought must be appropriately situated and negotiated within transnational contexts, it remains a perspective pertinent to the individual and collective empowerment of women of color globally.

Black Feminist Thought and Early Childhood Studies

Based on theoretical assumptions of Black feminist thought, there are myriad possibilities for its contributions to early childhood studies, each social justice oriented. To address these possibilities, through sharing my own work using Black feminist thought, I first discuss how centering the lived experiences of oppressed peoples challenges narrow interpretations of childhood/s and provides a space to make whole fragmented identities. I then discuss how theorizing power with Black feminist thought unveils systemic oppression, encourages collaborative activism between scholars and communities of color, and serves as a transformative pedagogical tool for early childhood teacher education. I conclude by discussing why Black feminist thought is essential to early childhood as a field.

Expression of Lived Experiences

Since lived experiences are central to Black feminist thought, its standpoints on all facets of social life, including those that comprise early childhood studies, inherently reveals the injustices that occur in the lives of marginalized peoples. Herstories originate from our ancestors', mothers', and sisters' tongues, providing a

raw telling of the brutality committed against Black women in the United States and globally and the strength embodied to resist individual and systemic violence.

The expression of lived experiences by women of color inspires notions of existing in the world beyond those constructed by the "the master's tools" (Lorde 1984). These are not academic, jargon laden knowledges, only understood by a privileged few given access to their meanings; rather, they are generated as powerful testimonies of women of color accessible to all. My mother, for example, imparted lessons about love, compassion, justice, and freedom through the sharing of her life struggles as a Mexican American woman living in poverty. She also taught me, and I learned from my own experiences at a very young age, about the perils of patriarchy present not only from white, colonist ethos, but also performed by ourselves and other Brown and Black men and women in our own families and communities. These teachings were known and expressed without the use or understanding of white male academic perspectives—they were lived. It is precisely why marginalized feminist perspectives, as theories in the flesh (Moraga and Anzaldúa 1981), elicit profound connections for women of color. For early childhood, theorizing lived experiences with Black feminist thought (rather than white patriarchal viewpoints) challenges and broadens past and contemporary constructions of childhood/s and calls for research, policies, and pedagogies to centralize the perspectives of women of color and other oppressed peoples.

In my own work using Black feminist thought, I have been inspired to share personal herstories of childhood abuse with the hope of provoking action for social change (Pérez 2014). To illuminate agency that exists within childhood abuse survivors, often positioned as "victims," Black feminist thought has informed the juxtapositioning of my experiences of abuse with moments of empowerment. Using ideas surrounding matrices of domination and examining the intersectionality of race, class, age, and gender identity constructs, I have illustrated how patriarchy, particularly white patriarchy, creates the social conditions necessary for abuse to occur. As an example, structural power embedded in legal systems in the United States and around the world is situated to "protect" children while at the same time denying them equitable opportunity to report and remove themselves from abusive environments. As this intersects with other identity factors, such as race, class, and gender, children of color living in poverty have, at times, found themselves subjected to abuse by adult white men with class privilege (which was the case in my circumstance and with Jerry Sandusky, a white university football coach in the United States who abused countless African American youth). Because Black feminist thought encourages the centering of lived experiences, I was inspired to share in a more personal way how structural power is (re)produced through intersectional identity hierarchies and privileged social positionings. Lensing my abuse with Black feminist thought also allowed me to disrupt "victim" narratives by illustrating how I experienced both empowerment and oppression synchronously as a child.

Expression of lived experiences has allowed people with marginalized positionalities to recenter, reclaim, and attempt to make whole their fragmented identities (Lorde 1984). This "impulse toward wholeness" evokes a connection between feeling, emotions, and thought, something that the "white western patriarchal

ordering of things requires that we believe there is an inherent conflict between" (Bereano 1984, p. 8). Centering Black feminist thought in early childhood studies challenges the separation of theory from the flesh, making visible the oppression and empowerment of children of color, and informing multiple understandings of childhood/s and the world.

Theorizing Power

Black feminist thought unveils systemic reproductions of power, inspires collaborative activism among researchers and local communities, and informs transformative teacher education.

Addressing Systemic (Re)Productions of Power

In 2005, New Orleans, Louisiana in the United States experienced unprecedented loss and destruction, not when hurricane Katrina struck, but when the knowingly unstable levees failed and an influx of water flooded Black and poor communities (Arena 2012). Neighborhoods where wealthy, mostly white families resided were situated on higher grounds with more structurally sound levees, and therefore, experienced significantly less impact. For public services like education, housing, and healthcare, the failure of the levees incited disaster capitalism, or what Klein (2007) describes as "orchestrated raids on the public sphere in the wake of catastrophic events, combined with the treatment of disasters as exciting market opportunities" (p. 6). Education was targeted through accelerated and sweeping changes in public policies, permitting state leaders to take control of local school districts and fire thousands of Black teachers and school staff while they were displaced (in some cases forcibly) in cities across the nation (Dingerson 2008). Politicians and newly appointed district officials from the private sector shut down a majority of traditional public schools, which predominately served African American children, and reopened them as charters, creating a market-based system for *public* education (Pérez and Cannella 2010). As the city with the greatest concentration of charters schools in the United States, New Orleans has become the "great experiment" (Augustine 2012, p. 341) for privatizing public school systems across the nation (Buras 2011; Greenblatt 2014).

Black feminist thought combined with situational analysis (Clarke 2005) provided a contextualized approach to examining the neoliberal efforts to privatize public education in New Orleans. As illustrated in Fig. 5.1, central to analysis was Black feminist domains of power, assisting in theorizing discourses of opportunity, experimentation, and urgency, which served as the impetus to exploit and silence children, teachers, and communities of color (Pérez and Cannella 2013).

From this research, Black feminist thought exposed how domains of power functioned and intersected across multiple social spheres, providing a context for

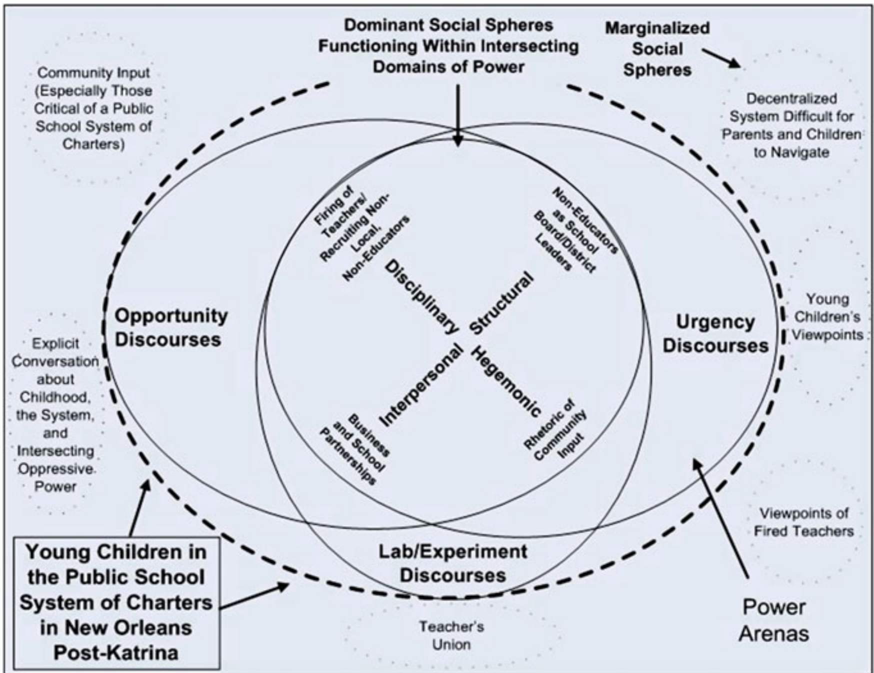

Fig. 5.1 Social spheres/power arenas *map*. Relationships between power arenas that support social spheres and the construction of exclusions (Originally published in Pérez and Cannella 2013)

the firing of local teachers, the business sector to play a significant role in privatizing education, and the silencing of community input.

In addition to revealing systemic reproductions of power, Black feminist thought has also inspired collaborative activism between researchers and local New Orleans communities.

Black Feminist Activism

During my time engaging in research that addressed the dismantling of public education in New Orleans, a long time African American activist, Eloise Williams, and I participated in what we term Black feminist activism (Pérez and Williams 2014). Through our collective efforts and partnering with others in the community, we have addressed a range of social inequities related to public housing, education, and healthcare. An example action in which disciplinary power (Collins 2008) was interrogated came about when Eloise shared her concern with illegal dumping in her neighborhood (a crime most often committed by privileged outsiders) and the health hazard it posed. Using my technology resources and position as a university

professor, Eloise and I collaboratively wrote a petition and took pictures of her neighborhood to send to a number of city offices. Weeks later, the area was cleared, giving Eloise new hope to assist in the revitalization of her community grounds. Other examples of our Black feminist actions include generating strategies for speaking out against disaster capitalism and cautioning non-local volunteers that calls for help from the corporate sector, and some political officials to rebuild the city were part of the neoliberal agenda to deny employment opportunities to local or displaced New Orleanians and immigrant laborers arriving in the city seeking work. This message was especially important for university students traveling to New Orleans during their holiday breaks to assist in rebuilding efforts. As an alternative, we encouraged students to find opportunities to engage more intimately with local communities in order to gain a better understanding of their struggles and become politically active in local grassroots movements.

Black feminist activism encourages early childhood researchers, educators, and students to engage meaningfully with communities of color. The relationships these engagements cultivate open spaces to learn about issues that communities themselves consider to be important and to develop collective approaches of resistance. This allows us to better serve the communities our social justice efforts are intended to benefit, rather than solely addressing our own, sometimes unknowingly oppressive agendas.

Black Feminist Thought as a Pedagogical Tool for Teacher Education

Black feminist thought can also provide teacher educators with a theoretical framework to discuss power and oppression with students in an accessible way. In higher education settings, having students engage meaningfully with communities, as addressed in the previous section, is not always possible, especially considering limited face-to-face time and number of weeks in a semester. As an instructor, there is also concern about students (especially those who are socially privileged) superficially interacting with people experiencing hardships before they have had the opportunity to unpack the social consequences of structural inequities and know who they are as a person and an educator at that point in their lives and career. Both are important issues to address when considering interpersonal relations with families and communities. Black feminist thought has given me tools as a teacher educator to work within this dynamic.

As a regular instructor for an early childhood families and communities course at a university situated near the border of the United States and Mexico, Black feminist thought has theoretically situated our course discussions on power and oppression (Pérez et al. 2016). The domains of power described by Collins (2008) combined with course content and the use of photovoice, a participatory pedagogical and research tool (Wang and Burris 1997), allows for students to engage

more deeply with ideas surrounding power and oppression and how it impacts families and communities. Taking pictures on campus during class to abstractly represent structural, disciplinary, hegemonic, and interpersonal power, students have worked together to interrogate historical and contemporary colonial conditions in the United States; understand regulatory school structures that create unsupportive experiences for parents with children labeled as dis/abled; gain insight into the welfare system in the United States and how it reifies inequities for struggling teen mothers; and the oppressive circumstances many LGBTQ families face when teachers and schools undervalue what they provide to school culture and larger society. Black feminist thought has also helped students strengthen their understandings of intersectionalities, allowing them to unpack their own identities, and in turn, confront taken on oppressive biases. Through engagement with Black feminist thought, students have learned how their identities and viewpoints on the world are intimately tied to the ways in which they create relationships and support diverse families and communities.

Black Feminist Thought as Essential to Early Childhood Studies

> Where the words of women are crying to be heard, we must each of us recognize our responsibility to seek those words out, to read them and share them and examine them in their pertinence to our lives. That we not hide behind the mockeries of separations that have been imposed upon us and which so often we accept as our own (Lorde 1984, p. 43).

In this quote, Audre Lorde implores each of us to seek, listen to, and embrace Black women's knowledges. For early childhood, this means viewing Black feminist thought as essential to the field—and at the very least, relying on it *as equally* as white perspectives. With this in mind, I conclude by returning to and offering other specific contributions that Black feminist thought can provide for early childhood studies.

Black feminist thought centers perspectives from the margins, transforming pedagogical and inquiry approaches and encouraging/affirming the presence of women of color as early childhood educators and researchers. A colleague who has struggled with discriminatory treatment over the years as a lesbian woman teaching in early childhood has shared that it was a powerful gift as a university student to see herself in the curriculum. Having had similar experiences throughout my school and higher education experiences, I have made it a priority to engage early childhood students in content that reaches beyond patriarchal influences. Many students have shared how this has provided a sense of belonging, making them feel as if they can exist in and transform early childhood, whether as a student, teacher, or a researcher.

The underrepresentation of women of color as teachers, teacher educators, scholars, political leaders, and public policy makers, likely explains why Black

feminist thought is not more central to the field. Infusing Black feminist thought into all aspects of early childhood provides new ways to conceptualize research, pedagogies, and praxis. These rethinkings can evoke more profound connections for women of color and Others (rather than marginalizing them), making early childhood a more accessible space to work within, and in turn, shifting the cultural dominance of white teachers, scholars, and worldviews that have historically informed the field.

Lorde (1984) speaks of her experiences with university faculty hesitant to include Black feminist perspectives in their courses, making statements like "we have no one in our department equipped to teach their work." Lorde (1984) responds that, "In other words, racism is a Black woman's problem, a problem of women of Color, and only we can discuss it" (p. 125). Further challenging the lack of perspectives from the margins in higher education, Lorde asserts that "all too often, the excuse given is that the literatures of women of Color can only be taught by Colored women, or that they are too difficult to understand, or that…they come out of experiences that are 'too different'" (p. 125). This is said by "women who seem to have no trouble at all teaching and reviewing work that comes out of the vastly different experiences of Shakespeare, Moliere, Dostoyevsky, and Aristophanes. Surely there must be some other explanation" (Lorde 1984, p. 117).

Audre Lorde's message rings true for the field of early childhood, both as educators and in our theoretical contemplations as researchers. Whether or not one embodies or feels culturally connected to Black feminist thought and/or other marginalized onto-epistemologies, their contributions can still be made central to the field. Just like white men and women's perspectives inform both mainstream and reconceptualist understandings of childhood/s, greater effort can be made to engage with, promote, and use theories from the margins. Recognizing that some poststructural thinkers in reconceptualist spaces have encouraged us to move beyond notions of critique (MacLure 2015), and therefore may take issue with embracing "critical" social theories, connections can still be made with the many diverse standpoints of Black feminisms, such as Womanism, which grapples with materialities and our spiritual connections with each other, the earth, more than human, and the cosmos. As such, there are numerous theoretical points of entry for people with a range of interests to connect with and include Black feminist perspectives in their pedagogical and research practices.

A greater presence of Black feminist thought in early childhood studies explicitly politicizes children's and teachers' understandings of social inequities. A recent visit to a Reggio Emilia inspired school in the United States, with a mostly white, upper class student body and almost exclusively white teaching and administrative staff, affirmed my desire to call for a greater presence of Black feminist thought in early childhood studies. As I walked down the hallways, viewing the array of children's school experiences documented by teachers, my guide, who was an administrator, proudly showcased an activity where the children discussed New Orleans and hurricane Katrina. She explained that the project began after students heard about the flooding in New Orleans on the news, prompting an investigation of hurricanes. Living in the southwest region of the United States, the

children had little personal experience with hurricanes, and therefore, were intrigued to learn more about them as a weather phenomenon. Since the documentation displayed on the wall omitted discussions of race and class inequities that allowed for the destruction of poor and Black communities in New Orleans, I inquired whether any of these important issues had been raised. Her response was that teachers at the school were encouraged to avoid any political discussions that the children or parents themselves do not introduce. Clearly she was not aware that choosing not to discuss race, class, and gender was in itself a political statement. If Black feminist thought had informed the project, children would have been engaged in activities that helped them understand the race, class, and gender inequities that placed poor and Black communities in low-lying areas of the city with unstable levees. Students would have heard actual lived experiences from Black women, men, and children from New Orleans which undoubtedly would have addressed not only the threat that hurricanes pose to coastal regions (the original focus of the activity), but also how protection from "natural" disasters is not always equitable across all races, classes, and genders.

There are many other reasons I could share to petition for a more centralized presence of Black feminist thought and other marginalized feminist perspectives in early childhood studies that are beyond the scope of this chapter. Imperative is to urge each of us in early childhood to challenge our reliance on white male, and even white feminist perspectives. Informing research, pedagogies, and praxis with Black feminist thought brings to the forefront the struggles and empowerment of women and children of color and moves early childhood into multiple and new directions that inspire us to work collaboratively across cultural differences and better support all children and communities.

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Part II
Feminism(s) Reconceptualising Institutions

Chapter 6
The Entangled Enlivening of Being: Feminist Research Strategies in the Early Years

Bronwyn Davies

Abstract In this chapter, I will examine four current challenges in the conduct of feminist research in the early childhood arena. The first challenge is to move beyond categorical analysis. Rather than categorization we need concepts that focus on movement, on what Barad (2007) calls the entangled enlivening of being. Our second challenge is to simultaneously develop repetitive research practices that are recognizable as "research," while seeking out the breaks, the creative leaps that we, and those we research, might make into the not-yet-known. The third challenge is to move away from individualism, shifting our gaze away from individual intention toward events as they emerge, asking what is the event, and how is it made possible? The fourth and related challenge is to listen not for what we already know, but to listen with all our senses to the not-yet-known.

Keywords Entanglement · Gender · Epistemology · Ontology · Ethics

Introduction

Developing feminist research strategies is not only, or even primarily, about new methods of generating data. What is vital is how we think about the data we generate. Feminism, now, in 2015, demands new strategies for thinking about how it is that gender is produced in the early childhood arena, and we need concepts that enable us to go beyond what we know already (St Pierre 2014). The data I draw on here to tease out concepts for thinking about feminist research in early childhood was generated during my visits to Trollet, a preschool in the south of Sweden (Davies 2014). "Data" itself is, of course, a contested term. Conventionally it suggests something lying there waiting to be found or recorded by the researcher. More recently, it is understood as being generated in intra-action with the researcher and with the apparatuses that make it visible, recordable, and thinkable. How we

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generate data and how we think about it will affect what that data is; the data itself is in that sense mobile. In such work the approach to the data is not only epistemological, investigating the discursive production of gender and of childhood, but also ontological—a matter of bodies and their e/affect on each other. And thus feminist research now is always also a matter of ethics, questioning how things are being made to matter (Barad 2007).

The first conceptual challenge facing feminist research now is to move beyond categorical analysis. Scientists have generally relied too much on categories, on sorting the new into a preexisting order (Bergson 1998). Deleuze (1992) points out that strategies of categorization not only narrow what it is possible to see or to think about what has been, but they actively produce what is to come. Any conceptual repertoire is a mode of action, a way of doing things with words. Language functions not simply to communicate neutral information, but to enforce a social order, and in this case, the gender order, by categorizing and thus (re)producing that order. Rather than categorization we need concepts that focus on movement, on what Barad (2007) calls the entangled enlivening of being.

Diffraction

In the complex task of examining that entangled enlivening, Barad (2007) offers us the concept of diffraction. Drawn from physics, diffraction opens thought up to the minute and material detail of the multidirectional, continuously intra-active lines of force through which gendered subjectivities are accomplished. Rather than using language as if it were a transparent tool capable of revealing a real world (of sexism, of disadvantage, of lack of privilege, of subordination), a diffractive analysis seeks to locate the lines of force that are at play, along with their effects on each other.

Lines of force are like waves meeting on an ocean. Each wave has its own particular line of force; each affects the other, intra-acts with the other—changing what it is possible for the other to be; each is always in motion, and each is integrally part of a larger whole. Lines of force are made up of words spoken or written, of repetitive social practices, of material artifacts, of emotions, and intensities.

A diffractive analysis abandons the orthodoxies of reflexivity. The metaphor of reflection is insufficient to the analytic task at hand, which must take account of the way different forces continually affect each other. In contrast to reflexivity, Barad (2007) says, the concept of "diffraction does not fix what is the object and what is the subject in advance… diffraction involves reading insights through one another in ways that help illuminate differences as they emerge: how different differences get made, what gets excluded, and how these exclusions matter" (p. 30). A diffractive methodology is, then, not interested in differences as categories that hold things in place. It focuses, rather, on movements through which multiple differences both emerge and are submerged. It focuses on encounters, in which a movement or force or intensity, which is at once specific *and* integral to the whole,

encounters another, affecting and being affected by that other (Davies 2014; Davies and Gannon 2009).

We are each, singly and collectively, produced through these encounters; we are multiplicities, always in process of becoming other than we were before. In Deleuze and Guattari's (1987) words:

> …the self is a threshold, a door, a becoming between two. Each multiplicity is defined by a borderline…but there is a string of borderlines, a continuous line of borderlines (*fiber*) following which the multiplicity changes. And at each threshold or door, a new pact? (p. 249).

Each movement across a threshold, between one and another, potentially contributes to the creative evolutionary force of each one, and of the community as a whole.

Bergson's Lines of Ascent and Descent

Looked at in this way, the world is in continuous motion, changing in multiple intersecting encounters, yet the gender order has a remarkable capacity to stay the same. To understand the way in which social change can be continually folded back into the existing social order, Bergson (1998) gave us the concepts of lines of descent and ascent. Lines of descent are made up out of automated repetitions, while lines of ascent take off into the not-yet-known. He emphasizes, on the one hand, the *necessary interdependence* of these two lines of force. On the other, he argues that the creative evolution of life emerges not from docile conformity to preconceived gender norms, the line of descent, but from the surprising and new, the line of ascent. Regularity and repetition, the line of descent, creates the familiar live-able world by holding things the same. Creative lines of flight that open up new modes of thought and ways of being, the lines of ascent, give life its energy, its creative life-force. The lines of ascent are, at one and the same time, necessary for life, sometimes dangerous, and always subject to being reterritorialized, and thus reincorporated back into lines of descent. It is a constant movement.

This brings us to our second challenge. The research strategies we develop must be repetitive in order to be recognizable as research, and they must enable us to seek out the breaks, the potential lines of fault, and the creative leaps that we, and those we research, might make into the not-yet-known.

Territorializing Movements or Lines of Descent

Deleuze and Guattari (1987) extend Bergson's thinking about lines of ascent and descent with their concepts of de- and reterritorialization. Watching children at play and at work we see the endless repetitions through which they become skilled at

taking up their allocated position within the gender order. Those repetitive practices shape the normative embodied subjects anticipated by, and required within, the gender order. Normative, binary modes of speech and thought work to "make sense" of the gender binary, and of the positioning of individuals within it. They make it seem both normal and natural when girls are "feminine" and play games that invent and reiterate material and relational order in shops and kitchens, and when boys are "masculine" and play team games developing the intimate knowledge of risk-taking, and tribal warfare. Each subject, singly and in intra-action with others, practices modes of enunciation and bodily practices through which the perfectly honed subject becomes recognizable within the gendered lines of force that run through the collective body.

Individuals are called to order within that collective body, and so the body of each subject is progressively territorialized—made to make sense within existing modes of enunciation. The potency of the lines of force through which order is created cannot be underestimated. Children, who have been sexually "mis-assigned" at birth, may become emotionally disturbed if reassigned after the age of two (Kessler and McKenna 1978; Davies 1989/2003). The accomplishment of self as that which one has been assigned, becomes real very quickly, both epistemologically and ontologically.

As we observe children at play we can see them rehearsing the skills necessary to ensure recognition of themselves within the gender order, enabling them to live out the identification of self within the binary stratifications, endlessly rehearsing the specificity of their positioning within that order. The territorializing lines of force that they enact are not only, or even primarily experienced as oppressive. Rather, they "are comforting: they enable the chaos of the world to be reduced to discrete categories of meaning and structure. They are also necessary, for they enable us to interact with the social world; to form relations with others and to have a political "voice" (Malins 2007, p. 153). *At the same time* they "reduce the range of connections a body can make with the world around it; diminishing its potential for difference and becoming-other" (Malins 2007, p. 153).

Deterritorializing Movements

Play makes the gender assemblage real through its repetitive practices, and it also has a vital role to play in creating possibilities of deterritorialization and becoming other, what Deleuze calls the room for molecular movement—a movement away from obedience to the already known order, toward an infinite number of shifts and minor innovations through which transformations might take place, and through which the specificity/singularity of any one event is constituted. "Singularity is not the individual, it is the case, the event, the potential (*potential*), or rather the *distribution of potentials* [my emphasis] in a given matter" (Deleuze in Deleuze and Parnet 2007, p. 160). This opens up the third major challenge for feminist research now—the move away from individualism and its sourcing of desire and agency in

individualized identities. Deleuze works to shift our gaze away from individual intention toward events as they emerge, asking what is the event, and how is it made possible?

The distribution of potentials that open up the possibility of transformations cannot be specified in advance. Transformations are usually of a molecular kind, not putting an end to stratifications, but finding the movement possible within them. The gender assemblage, like any other assemblage, depends on molecular shifts to keep it alive and in motion. Stratified systems, no matter how rigid they seem, need movement. Children's play and learning is not only repetitive, but also holds enormous potential for difference and becoming-other. A child can become a mythical hero, a mother, an uncle, a father, a princess, an animal, an engine, an acrobat, a baby, an artisan, a teacher, a leader, an inventor—infinite possibilities of becoming can be unfolded (imagined, lived, and negotiated).

Creative evolution, Bergson argues, rests on a capacity to let go of the status quo. That letting go creates a deep opening for new possibilities when fixed identities and fixed patterns no longer hold everything the same: where what one understands by oneself and the other are vibrant, emergent materialities engaged in mattering (Bennett 2010). Life becomes, in this understanding of it, "mobility itself" (Bergson 1998, p. 127). In that mobility, in that intra-active becoming, the ethical questioning of what is being made to matter in any encounter is an ongoing responsibility.

Emergent Listening

The fourth and related challenge is to listen not for what we already know, but to listen with all our senses to the emergent, to the not-yet-known (Nancy 2007). What we usually think of as listening, particularly as adults listening to children, is most closely aligned with lines of descent; we listen in order to fit what we hear into what we already know and to judge it accordingly. Listening that opens up lines of ascent, or that deterritorializes normative assumptions and practices is emergent listening. This involves working, to some extent, against oneself, and against those habitual practices through which one establishes "this is who I am" and "this is who you are." It presents a major challenge to liberal humanist and phenomenological constructs of what it means to be human, where those constructs begin with the concept of self as an entity, an entity that is continually judged against an imagined ideal, and found wanting (Deleuze 1980; Davies and Wyatt 2011).

Emergent listening, in contrast, "requires a suspension of our judgements and above all our prejudices" (Rinaldi 2006, p. 65). But more than this, it means opening up the ongoing possibility of coming to see life, and one's relation to it, in new and surprising ways. Emergent listening might begin with what is known, the line of descent, but it is open to creatively evolving into something new, with/in the line of ascent. Emergent listening opens up the possibility of new ways of knowing and being, both for those who listen and those who are listened to. "To be listening

is to be at the same time outside and inside, to be open from without and from within, hence from one to the other and from one in the other" (Nancy 2007, p. 14). Research that engages in emergent listening opens itself up to the unexpected, to the minute and material detail of intra-actions with children as they unfold. Integral to emergent listening is the interchange of knowledge and skills. The researcher who listens does not presume to know already what children know, or should know.

Stories from Trollet

In the playground at Trollet, the teachers are simultaneously companions who play with the children, adults who contribute new ideas for play, leaders who resolve disputes and regulate the forms play will take, and also judges intervening when they deem the play to have become dangerous or otherwise unacceptable—using order words to reterritorialize the event-that-has-begun-to-emerge. As well, they are careful observers who make spaces in which the children can work things out for themselves. I begin with a story about Francesca.

> When Francesca first came to Trollet she looked very much like her older sister and her mother, both with long blonde hair and elegant feminine dresses. But now she looked very different. I mistook her for a boy when I first saw her running through the forest with her short hair, blue jeans and striped purple t-shirt. Her mother had told the teachers that Francesca had been caught in the act of cutting off her beautiful hair, causing her mother serious distress. Her mother had taken her to the hairdresser, who created a stylish, androgynous cut that made her look like a girl from one side and a boy from the other. On the day I first saw her, she also had on pink nail polish.

The event of the hair-cutting, in which Francesca, her mother, and the hairdresser were all involved, was, in Barad's (2012) terms, an agential cut: the cut, was a "cutting together-apart" of the gender binary—cutting Francesca apart from the princess-style femininity of her mother and sister, cutting male and female together on Francesca's body.

Agency, in this way of thinking, does not lie in the individual's intentions of Francesca or her mother or the hairdresser—but in the event—the intra-action of all the entangled elements: a family in which princess-style femininity is valued; a school community that values strong girls; a preschool playground that provides space for girls to swing high on the swings, to scale giant rocks and find sticks to play war with in the forest; the possibility that girls can wear jeans and t-shirts similar to the boys where boys' clothes signify masculinity, courage, and strength; an available pair of scissors; a space that is private enough for the act of cutting to go briefly undetected; a history of mother–daughter encounters with the brushing and management of hair. All of these forces may have been at work to produce a playful moment of hair-cutting, and out of that emerged a girl who looked ultra-feminine no longer, and a mother who reiterated in her upset the power of those locks to signify a desirable femininity, and a creative resolution that brought male and female together on the same body.

The second next story from Trollet takes place on the day of a picnic. I wrote in my fieldnotes:

> We are going to the "big hill," approximately 10 minutes' walk away from Trollet. We walk in file through open fields and bushland, some children holding hands and some helping carry the picnic mats and bottles of juice. One bigger girl is carrying a stick and a stone and a mat and holding the hand of a smaller girl. She manages all of this dexterously until almost at the hill, but they are lagging behind, so she lets go of the hand of the smaller girl and tells her to run after the others, which she does joyfully.
>
> On top of the hill teachers and children settle onto the mats the teachers have spread in a semi-circle and the teachers hand out drink and food. Together they point to things and talk about what they can see. Some children form pairs and talk to each other—Francesca with her best buddy Liam. Then Francesca talks and jokes with one of the teachers. Luke and 3 other boys play with their crusts which have now become wild animals.
>
> One of the teachers turns the water jar into a drum and three small children sing. Suddenly seven children swarm down the hill to explore a large broken branch. This turns into a game of running up the big hill and down again many times. They seem to know how far away they can go, and they mill at that invisible boundary on the hill-side of the footpath.
>
> Then two girls burst over the boundary, across the path and into the field. A teacher goes after them and reestablishes the boundary of the picnic space.
>
> Three boys tumble together in a tangle of wrestling bodies. The bottom one squeals. The teacher intervenes to say the wrestling must stop. Four boys become a lion and some dragons. Liam is a lion chasing three other squealing boys into the forest and then out of the forest and down the hill. The squealing spreads to three other boys. Then the lion gets chased by two other boys. They land again in a wrestling tangle.
>
> Francesca goes alone to the forest and is playing with a stick. The boys join her. They run out of the forest with Francesca running out in front looking powerful with her stick.
>
> Francesca goes back into the forest alone with her stick and Liam runs after her. He is puffing from all the running. Then he needs to pee so a teacher takes him over behind a tree. Francesca is now with three girls with sticks.
>
> A lion comes over to the girls roaring, but no-one is scared and they ignore him.
>
> Francesca is leading the other girl with a purple striped shirt through the forest. They both have sticks. Liam joins them with a stick and a plan! It is to be a war with guns. You must point the gun and yell *hey jo.*
>
> But picnic time is over. Francesca is in the forest collecting sticks. A teacher tells her to pick up her jacket. Francesca says 'never in my life' and looks at me as if to say 'I know it's ok that you hold the jacket for me'. I carry her jacket.

The picnic expands the territory of the preschool out of the school gates and onto the hill, the forest, and the open field. The act of walking in a file, hand-in-hand, the setting out of picnic mats in a semicircle, the distribution of food and drink by the teachers, the reassertion of the boundary at the footpath, the management of the boys' rough play, are all lines of force reiterating the status quo–its limitations and striations. The small lines of flight or deterritorializations include crusts of bread becoming wild animals, the water-jar becoming a drum, the girls bursting across the pathway to expand the territory, the boys becoming wild animals, being dangerous

and being in danger, the boys' wrestling, the sticks-becoming-guns, and a refusal to pick up a jacket.

The play is rhizomatic, moving rapidly from one possible scenario to another. The territory of the picnic can potentially become anything, though it is rapidly reterritorialized when boundaries the teachers define as unsafe are crossed. Francesca momentarily appears to lead the boys in running with the sticks. In that moment the potential is realized for her to be leader of the boys, but that potential just as rapidly disappears. She realigns herself with the girls and the moment of her power seems lost. But no, when a boy comes roaring, embodied as lion, the girls ignore him completely. They are collectively powerful, and the lion rapidly retreats. Liam, Francesca's special buddy, joins the girls and they reterritorialize their play as (masculine) war-play. Francesca's "never in my life" can be heard as a further trace of the power she has just experienced.

Francesca's position appears to be similar to that of Joanne's in my book on preschool children and gender in Australia (Davies 1989/2003). Joanne wanted to be part of the dominant group of boys, but they almost never let her be the leader, she told me, and pressed her into being the princess who needed to be saved. She emphatically rejected that position, and so would entice her special buddy, Tony, to leave the boys to come and play together with her in ways that enabled them to take over high status places, such as a new tree house, making it into their own strongly defended territory.

How we come to desire and go on desiring our recognizability in the gender order, or outside of it, is not a matter of either culture or nature: "What counts in desire is not the false alternative of law—spontaneity, nature—artifice; it is the respective play of territorialities, reterritorializations and movements of deterritorialization" (Deleuze and Parnet 2007, p. 99). The hair-cutting event both de- and reterritorialized Francesca's body, and an unanticipated cutting together/apart of male/female was accomplished. The event does not necessarily carry over into Francesca's daily becoming Francesca. Nevertheless in intra-action with the forest, the sticks, and the boys, she can become a leader of the boys, if only momentarily, she can, in intra-action with the girls, ignore the power of boys/lions, and she can draw the other girls and her buddy Liam into games of power similar to those played by the boys.

Risk-taking and disruption of the social order are most often engaged in by boys, opening up potential lines of flight, where lines of flight are vital for life. What is vital for life, through practice, is thus strongly linked with masculinity. The risk-taking engaged in by the girls, as it was in the hair-cutting event, met with the kind of disapproval that lets them know that the risk they have taken is incompatible with who they are—or should be—as girls, so aligning girls with lines of descent, catching them up in territorializing rather than deterritorializing lines of force and becoming.

To the extent that risk-taking, and deterritorializing acts are life giving, where life is "mobility itself" (Bergson 1998, p. 127), this difference is significant. Today's girls are often encouraged to be assertive and courageous, and they are also encouraged to cut this together with princess-style ultra-femininity; this is a cutting

together that can be the source of a great deal of tension, and potential loss of power. The cutting together/apart of femininity and masculinity on children's collective bodies is an area crying out for further research.

The boys' agency cuts masculinity together with life; taking risks folds them out into the world as masculine. Girls' agency often involves cutting life and risk-taking apart from femininity, making this a tension in constant need of management and resolution as they are folded into the world, and fold themselves out into it. This tension *matters*; it is material, and its ethical implications *matter*. "Iterative intra-activity configures and reconfigures entanglements [and]… *Entanglements are enfoldings of spacetimematterings*" (Barad 2012, p. 41). The children's play and its emergent intra-active folding with the gender order both reiterate the gendered world and open it up to changes through space and time; these are changes that matter; as adults we need to be mindful of blockages to those changes, the materiality of them, and the ways they come to matter.

Conclusion

The feminist research I envisage in the early childhood sphere is one where we become more aware of the oppressive lines of force of dominant discourses and practice as they work on us and through us. At the same time the research I envisage is able to catch the moments of creative evolution that catch us up singly and collectively in diffractive *encounters* that take us beyond the confines of repetitive humdrum clichés and the gendered individualism that has become a dominant line of force in the twenty-first century. In the research I envisage, encounters between researchers and research participants are intra-active, involving us in emergent listening, where each is open to being affected by the other. Such listening takes us beyond moralistic judgments that trap us inside endless repetitions or lines of descent, toward an ethical recognition of the other and an affective openness to emergent differences. That openness to encounters with the other is not just to encounters with other humans, but also to the material world in all its manifestations—a material and social world that one is emergent *with*. This is a feminism that does not already know what is right and proper, but is experimental, courageous, open and evolving, always mindful of the being of others, both human and nonhuman.

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Chapter 7
Enhancing Feminism and Childhoods in Kenya Through Stronger Education Policy, Access, and Action

Mercy Musomi and Beth Blue Swadener

Abstract This chapter draws from the experiences of the first author in strengthening children and youth rights in Kenya and the second author's cross-nationally comparative work in children's rights. Internationally it is estimated that out of the 67 million primary school-age children who remain out of school, 54% of them are girls, and that 74 million lower secondary school-age children are out of school (UNICEF 2014). To uphold, promote, and respect the rights of girls and boys, we must remain committed to enhancing equity in access to Universal Primary Education. This chapter examines the intersecting themes of feminism, policy, and practice in Kenya in reference to childhood. The authors analyze feminism in the context of childhood, legal, and policy frameworks in Kenya on education and their practice in promoting the rights of girls in Kenya to enhance equity and identity. The chapter will highlight both benefits of and barriers to education policies and share critical personal insights of the coauthors.

Keywords Children's rights · Girl child · Universal Primary Education · Kenya

Introduction

This chapter examines intersecting themes of feminism, policy, and practice in Kenya in reference to childhood and access to education, drawing heavily from previous research projects in Kenya and the advocacy work of the Girl Child Network (GCN), a coalition of 312 children's rights advocacy organizations and gender-focused nongovernmental organizations (NGOs). GCN's leadership utilizes what might be named African feminism as a framework.

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We analyze gender issues from the standpoint of African feminism in the context of childhood, and describe legal and policy frameworks in Kenya related to education and their practice in promoting the rights of girls in Kenya to enhance equity and identity. This chapter will highlight both benefits of and barriers to enactment of education policies and share critical personal insights of the coauthors who have previously collaborated on child rights-based work for an international project (Una 2011) and complicate discourses of "education for all" (Bloch and Swadener 2007; Brock-Utne 2000; Mukundi 2004).

Internationally, it is estimated that out of the 67 million primary school-age children who remain out of school, 54% are girls and 74 million lower secondary school-age children are out of school (UNICEF 2014). To uphold, promote, and respect the rights of girls and boys, it is critical to remain committed to enhancing equity in access to Universal Primary Education. This in return, can enhance the identity of the girl child and her participation in development and decision-making spaces. Governments supported by UNICEF and other development partners have made significant progress in enhancing access to education contributing to universal and free primary education. The provision of free basic primary education improves access, retention, performance, and quality of education.

In order to achieve sustainable development in any society and build stronger communities and economies without extreme income inequality, the promotion of women and girls' rights and education is critical. This encompasses and reflects changing community perceptions, beliefs, ideas, movements, and involves advocacy for more girls to be in school, to play, to grow positively, and be confident with the love and encouragement from their family and an extended community of caring adults. Girls must live free from fear, safe from violence and protected from all forms of abuse and exploitation. They must be empowered actors in their own development. This chapter draws from the experiences of the first author in strengthening child and youth rights in Kenya through the GCN and the second author's cross-nationally comparative work in children's rights and early childhood education in Kenya.

Children's Rights in Kenya and the Roles of the Girl Child Network

Feminism has multiple definitions and complex histories cross culturally that include voices of women in the Global South and advocates for a range of issues affecting the girl child and women, including postcolonial theorists and Third World feminists (Herr 2014; Mohanty 2003; Jackson 2011). At a basic level, feminists engage in advocacy for women and girls' human rights on the grounds of political, social, and economic equality with men and boys. This involves a range of movements that define, establish, and ensure implementation of the same human rights for equal participation of women and girls in community and national development. It also means protecting girls from early marriage, genital mutilation, and sexual abuse.

In Kenya, an estimated six million children require special care and protection, of which approximately 2.4 million children are orphans (UNGASS 2010). However, national data on child protection issues are very limited. Nevertheless, various studies and media reports indicate that violence against children and exploitation of children are serious problems in Kenya. There are reported cases of gender-based violence, corporal punishment, child labor, and child neglect, with children being the most vulnerable and affected by internal strife and conflict, as seen most recently during the Kenya's post-election violence of 2007/2008. The Kenya Demographic and Health Survey (2013) indicates that annual deaths among children under five years of age are on the decline, as is the number of children a woman has ever borne. However, the infant mortality rate for under-fives remains a serious public health concern in Kenya and 34% of girls between the ages of 15 and 19 years have been circumcised. This figure increases to 98.9% in the North Eastern Province (Kenya Demographic Health Survey 2013).

The GCN was founded in 1995 as an independent, nonpolitical, nonreligious, not for profit organization registered in Kenya with regional operation in Africa to champion the rights of children, inclusive of orphans and other vulnerable children, with emphasis on the girl child. This forms her mission to advocate for women and girls rights on the grounds of political, social, and economic equality to men and boys. GCN was formed after the Fourth World Conference on Women, in Beijing, by participating Kenyan Civil Society Organizations (CSO) to facilitate implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, specifically Article 12 (United Nations 1995), and coordinate child rights programming in Kenya, with an emphasis on the girl child. GCN is a membership organization comprised of a wide spectrum of actors on issues of child protection, gender, democracy and governance, research, policy advocacy, education, health, capacity development, HIV/AIDS, and emergency response. GCN has a strong legacy in improving the welfare of children and promoting inclusion of girls in education and civil society.

At the international level, GCN has undertaken research to inform the status of the girl child and actively participated in the preparation of the CSO shadow reports to the African Union and the United Nations. GCN has provided technical support to the government in the drafting of the state party report on the implementation of the UNCRC. At the continental level, GCN has participated in a CSO forum engaging with the Committee of Experts on the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (CoE—ACRWC) that ensures participation of CSO in the implementation of the ACRWC and gives recommendations to the CoE.

At the national level, since her inception, the GCN has actively engaged various stakeholders and duty bearers in advocacy for enactment, review, and implementation processes of legislations and policies related to education, child protection, and gender-based violence that has greatly impacted positively on the welfare of children in Kenya. On specific legislation, GCN engaged the National Sexual Offences Act Task Force in prioritizing development of implementation guidelines of the Sexual Offences Act (2006). On basic education, GCN lobbied for the mainstreaming of gender and child rights into the Education Act (2013). GCN has

engaged stakeholders in advocacy for the formulation of Teachers' Service Commission Act (2012), the Prohibition of Female Genital Mutilation Act (2011) as a direct response to Anti-FGM campaigns and Gender Policy in Education (2007).

At the community level, GCN has sensitized communities to support girl child education, contributed to initiatives that support abandonment of retrogressive cultural practices, empowered women's participation in community processes and facilitated infrastructure development in schools which significantly contributes to improved teaching and learning processes. This has at times been done at great risk to those advocating for girls' rights and working to prevent early marriage, female genital mutilation, and sexual abuse, as some community members, particularly men, have strongly and at times aggressively resisted these efforts. GCN staff have been attacked, one has disappeared and at least one has been killed. Although our chapter focuses primarily on policy changes and advocacy strategies, it is important to acknowledge that this is high stakes and at times high risk advocacy work.

We will return to more advocacy arenas, policy changes and stories from the field in a later section, but next we wish to provide readers with an overview of relevant Kenyan education policy frameworks that promote the well-being of children and issues facing girls in Kenya.

Kenyan Education Policies and "Education for All"

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989) and the Conventions on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (1979) established girls' basic education as a basic human right. Children's rights in Africa are also emphasized in the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (1999). Girls' education over the years has thus become a development priority area to enhance gender equity and parity in the world. Governments have since ratified the above conventions, developing legislations that will ensure the universal goal is realized. According to UNICEF (2014), between 1970 and 1992 combined primary and secondary school enrolment for girls in developing countries rose from 38 to 68%, though Africa had the lowest percentage enrolments of 47% at the primary and 12% at the secondary school level. Therefore, basic education for all children and completion of primary education by at least 80% for girls as well as boys became the target in 2000. The Millennium Development Goal 2 sets universal primary education as a key target in the world by 2015 (Republic of Kenya 2003). Free primary education was identified as critical to attaining that goal. In view of the above, governments including Kenya, have developed, enacted and reviewed various policies and legislations to enhance access to basic and quality education in Kenya for girls and boys.

Like many nations in the Global South, "education for all" in Kenya has been an unrealized goal, particularly for children in marginalized settings including pastoralists, high poverty urban informal settings and many rural areas. In 2003, the

government of Kenya introduced Free Primary Education (FPE) Policy. This meant that primary education became compulsory for all girls and boys between the ages of six and fourteen years. Since then, according to UNICEF, primary school enrolment levels have risen from 5.9 million children in 2002 to 7.5 million children in 2006, and 8.8 million children in 2010; while enrolment in secondary school increased from 860,000 in 2007 to 1.4 million in 2008. The Net Enrolment Rates increased from 77% in 2002 to 86% in 2006. The primary completion rate has also increased from 62% in 2002 to 77.6% in 2006 and more children are now transiting to secondary education (UNICEF 2014).

With the introduction of free primary education in 2003 in Kenya, the government and its development partners were to provide tuition, textbooks, science kits, and other instructional materials to the primary schools. The enactment of FPE did not require parents and communities to build new schools; rather, they were to refurbish and use existing facilities such as community and religious buildings. These efforts to expand educational opportunities through the provision of FPE and, more recently free secondary education, are however being enacted at the same time that privatization and government divestiture are being aggressively pursued to fit global economic models at the heart of the neoliberal economic agenda (Wachira et al. 2011; Swadener et al. 2007). The expansion of education opportunities happened rapidly and without needed infrastructure for absorbing the large number of students who entered or re-entered school resulting in a decline in the quality of education.

To enhance FPE, the Kenyan Government released The Kenya Sessional Paper (Republic of Kenya, Kenya Ministry of Education 2005) on the Policy Framework for Education, Training and Research which recognizes education as key to the development and protection of democratic institutions and human rights, fundamental to the success of the Government's overall development strategy, especially Vision 2030, toward the realization of the national economic blueprint.

Despite these policies having been able to provide mitigation measures in addressing several obstacles, a number of inhibiting factors especially to girls' and women's access to education still persist, limiting their participation in social, economic, and political development. These factors include cultural and religious orientations and attitudes among various stakeholders that hinder their practice to realize desired change. It is believed by many social actors that with full implementation of various legal and policy frameworks in Kenya, the country will realize progress toward equality among men and women, equal educational opportunities and equal compensation among males and females. It will call for women's participation in the workplace, accord equal rights for all women and girls regardless of race, creed, economic or educational status, physical appearance or ability, or sexual orientation. It would mean the community manifests change of perceptions, beliefs, ideas, movements, and agendas for action—advocating for societies that treat men, boys, women, and girls equally.

Gender Issues: Economic and Social Marginalization

According to Hale (2013), social exclusion or marginalization is a function of one's economic conditions in terms of poverty, inequality, and power influence right at household, community, and nation level. This defines power and inequality in a society, especially within capitalist society. Marginalization weakens the connections between an individual and the society leading to social exclusion. Education for girls enhances their power and influence through civic integration and self-management and power. Education also contributed to their economic integration, and resource mobilization. The rights and privileges of many who are marginalized are neither respected, upheld, or promoted, nor do they participate and the capacity to meet their matching responsibility and demand for their rights. Education enhances one's capacity to acquire social and economic capital thus challenging the vicious cycle of poverty imposed challenges, which often place primary responsibility for families on women.

Feminist literature from and about the Global South (Herr 2014; Mohanty 2003; Spivak 1999) has called for recognition of the multiple roles that women play in "development," decolonizing related scholarship, and recognizing the role of postcolonial histories in feminist writing from the Global South or subaltern spaces (Spivak 1999). Within the discourse on education for all and rights of the girl child to education, a number of nuanced arguments have been made about ways in which traditional cultures and western influenced postcolonial education come into play. Switzer (2010), for example, interviewed 98 Maasai school girls and completed qualitative research in their community. The study analyzed the practical construction and effects of the schoolgirl as an "emergent social category in contemporary Kenyan Maasai society against mainstream development's figuring of the girl-child" (Switzer 2010, p. 1). Her field work with this Kajiado Maasai community led to observations of a "contradictory resistance to traditional gender norms and social forms characterizes the schoolgirls' narratives of education and development in their daily lives" (Switzer 2010, p. 1).

We agree with Switzer (2010) that "[t]hese narratives are embedded in larger questions regarding the transnational intersections of ethnicity and gender in the formation of local identities in marginalized indigenous communities in postcolonial Kenya" (p. 137). While we are working with various projects that materially support girls' education, as feminists, we join Switzer (2010) in the desire to "problematize the seamless rhetoric concerning formal schooling as a neutral public good in order to open up the complex conversation about educational access and attainment in the Global South today" (p. 137).

Marginalization and social exclusion define a majority of Kenyans' social life. According to the Income Gini Coefficient 2010, Kenya was placed 128th out of 169 countries (Forti and Maina 2012). As per GCN field experience, rural women in Kenya are mainly dependent on males due to traditional gender roles that define division of labor, and are therefore subordinate socially, economically, and politically. Even though Kenyan women are equal to men before the law, legal protection

is based on their relationships with their husbands or male family members if unmarried or widowed. Assumptions based on traditional gendered roles perpetuate female subordination to males and prevent access to agricultural rights and economic resources. The inability for women to gain access to resources restricts their bargaining power and their ability to provide for their families. Due to the emphasis on social status and dependency of rural women on men who cultivate on small farm plots, they are subjected to restricted land rights and exploitation.

Despite a lack of access to resources, Kenyan women continue to bear the primary responsibility for the welfare of the family. According to the World Bank (2009), 33.9% of Kenyan households were female-headed. Many female-headed households live in the sprawling slums of Kenya's major cities, or remain in the rural areas with the father leaving to find work in a town or city. Over 68% of the urban poor are in the informal sector engaging in mostly retail trade (World Bank 2009). Paid labor continues to be gender-segregated in postcolonial Kenya, with women below males in labor participation. Males, for example, account for 79.4% of the total formal employment with women accounting for only 20.6% (World Bank 2009). Men have migrated to work in urban areas or commercialized crop factories, leaving women to tend to the agricultural duties on land plots technically owned by the men with no legal protection. This gap can also be traced to colonial policies, in which career training institutionalized a gender-segregated work force (Chege and Sifuna 2006; Kiluva-Ndunda 2001). Austerity measures and a worsening economy have greatly affected women, as they often have little education due to past discriminatory policies in the provision of education, high pregnancy rates, sociocultural perceptions about the role of women in the society (e.g., women should be dependent on men), cultural expectations and values (e.g., fear that a highly educated girl may have difficulties finding a husband or being a "good wife"), and a school curriculum that is not responsive to girls.

In addition, girls and women are often oppressed in other ways, especially those dependent on males, who yield more power economically and socially in the Kenyan society. Women cannot inherit property, wife battery, rape, wife inheritance, child marriages, and forced circumcision are all aspects of life among several of the ethnic groups in Kenya (Kilbride et al. 2001; Ombuor 2001). Kilbride et al. (2001) observed that having a baby before marriage may expose the girl to punishment by the parents or relatives and expulsion from school.

Against this backdrop of economic and social disadvantages for women, the Children's Act (Government of Kenya 2001) considers children born out of wedlock the responsibility of the mother alone. There is no legal responsibility on the part of the father to support and maintain his illegitimate children unless he wishes to accept that responsibility and applies for such in court (Amisi 2001). However, the Kenyan Constitution 2010, Sec 53 (1)(e) states that "parental care and protection, (which) includes equal responsibility of the mother and father to provide for the child, whether they are married to each other or not". This example conveys the complexity of advocating for children, girls, and women's rights in the Kenya policy context.

Girl Child Network's Roles in Advocacy and Legislation

The GCN believes in feminist jurisprudence. This is a philosophy of law based on the political, economic, and social equality of sexes. Thus, GCN's mission is to promote a society that upholds, promotes, and respects girls' rights and having an environment that facilitates this, has pushed GCN to be a key player in advocacy and legislations in Kenya. This involves playing a significant role to influence discourse and the process of legal and policy development, review, and implementation in Kenya. The GCN has advocated and advised government bodies on matters of education, sexual, and domestic violence, inequality in the schools, and gender-based prevention of and responses to abuse, including addressing the stigmatization of girls experiencing sexual violence. GCN has been able to identify gender components and implications of normalized and culturally accepted laws and practices.

The GCN has lobbied for laws at the national and county levels affecting education, adolescent reproductive health and gender-based violence. All have benefited from the analysis and insight of feminist jurisprudence in a male dominated and led community. This is to ensure male-written policies have a bias and voice of women and girls in the concepts of human nature, gender potential, and social arrangements. GCN pushes for the appropriate language, logic, and structure of the laws and reinforce acceptable community values, addressing some of the gaps thereof in law. The role of the GCN is very liberal, asserting that women and girls are just as rational as men and therefore should have equal opportunity to make their own choices. The GCN empowers women and girls to challenge underlying social and cultural assumptions and practices and seeks to mainstream gender through policy thus enabling women and girls' equality with men and boys.

The GCN is well placed in the advocacy arena and has a wealth of experience. Her network members who are spread in almost every corner of the country form a critical mass for advocacy and policy influencing. All GCN members have been trained on the rights of children, laws and policies, lobbying and advocacy strategies, monitoring of government compliance to international, national, and regional instruments for the protection of children. Most advocacy described in this chapter focuses on government policies, but some has been quite practical, focused on identifying and removing barriers to girls' school attendance in marginalized communities. This community-based work has included providing sanitary towels and underwear to girls who had missed many days of school due to menstrual cycles, as well as making latrines and private spaces available to both girls and boys. The GCN has had many global partners in this practical work, which has impacted the school attendance of girls and the understanding of all students through related human development and hygiene education programmes.

At the national level, the GCN has continued to engage with the Children's Act (Amendment Bill 2014), which seeks to align the Act to the Kenyan Constitution 2010. These two legal frameworks provide for children's rights as human rights clearly stipulating the duty bearers responsible for the promotion and upholding of

these rights. The Children's Act (2001) provides for fundamental rights to development, life and survival, protection and participation. These apply to girls and boys equally. The most fundamental parental responsibility is the provision of basic and quality education. The Children's Act (2001) gives effect to the obligations of Kenya under the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child and the ACRWC. It provides for parental responsibility, fostering, adoption, custody, maintenance, guardianship, care and protection of children and makes provision for the administration of children's institutions, and finally, asserts that all children, boys and girls, are equal in law.

The supreme law in Kenya is the Constitution. The Constitution states that every child has the right to a name and nationality from birth; free and compulsory basic education; and to basic nutrition, shelter and health care among other rights. The Constitution states that the State shall not discriminate directly or indirectly against any person on any ground, including race, sex, pregnancy, marital status, health status, ethnic or social origin, color, age, disability, religion, conscience, belief, culture, dress, language, or birth. Under the Constitution of Kenya, key gains were made in girls' education and rights in section 53 under the Bill of Rights chapter. Section 53 (1)(d, e) provides for all children to be protected from abuse, neglect, harmful cultural practices, all forms of violence, inhuman treatment and punishment, and hazardous or exploitative labor; and to have a right to parental care and protection, which includes equal responsibility of the mother and father to provide for the child, whether they are married to each other or not.

The Basic Education Act (2013) gives effect to Article 53 of the Constitution and other enabling provisions to promote and regulate free and compulsory basic education and to provide for accreditation, registration, governance, and management of institutions of basic education in Kenya. Generally this Act provides for every child, the right to basic and compulsory free education and penalties for any parent/guardian who fails to enroll his or her child to school. Basic Education refers to the educational programmes offered and imparted to a person in an institution of basic education and includes adult basic education and education offered in pre-primary educational institutions and centers. All children should be provided with education which means appropriate curriculum differentiation in terms of content, pedagogy, instructional materials, and alternative media of communication or duration to address the special needs of learners and to eliminate social, mental, intellectual, physical, or environmental barriers to learners.

The Sexual Offenses Act (2006) is the most fundamental law in Kenya that addresses direct threats to the realization of children and women's rights, education and protection against sexual violations. In order to mitigate against such offences, the Sexual Offences Act, also known as Act No. 3 of 2006, was enacted in 2006. The Act provides comprehensive legislation addressing sexual offences in Kenya being the first gender-related Act to be passed in the Kenyan parliament since independence. The Act details 14 sexual offences, introducing minimum sentences for persons found guilty and setting up of a DNA data bank and a pedophiles registry.

Other processes include safeguarding CSO space in the current amendments being proposed to the Public Benefits Organization Act. In this process, the GCN is part of the Child Rights Cluster, a working group under the wider CSO Reference Working Group. In addition, GCN continues to engage the Civil Society working group on the Post 2015 Development Agenda and Sustainable Goals with a focus on safeguarding child rights, gender and education concerns. The GCN is part of the technical committee with the Gender Directorate under the Ministry of Devolution and Planning in the development of the State Party Report to Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women.

Over and above these legal frameworks, GCN has successfully lobbied enactment and review of other key policies and legislation. Some of the key laws and policies that GCN has been part of lobbying include but not limited to: the Marriage Act (2014); Teachers Service Commission Act (2013); Gender Policy in Education (2007); National Special Needs Education Policy Frame Work (2009); Engaged the National SOA Taskforce in prioritizing development of implementation guidelines of the Sexual Offences Act (2006) and their mainstreaming into the Education Act; and the In Vitro Fertilization (IVF) Bill (2015). The reach and effectiveness of the advocacy work of the GCN is evident in this cumulative record of legal impact that relates in both obvious and more nuanced ways to feminist principles on policy directly affecting girls and women. It also relates to the African feminism referred to earlier in this chapter in that it addresses structural issues that oppress and exclude women and serves to decolonize their lives.

Conclusions and Future Challenges

Over time, it is evident that women and girls' marginalization has negative existential effects and also has instrumental and structural effects on their communities and nation. Fighting for girls' rights can be seen as challenging cultural norms but ultimately contributes to the quality of life in local communities and helps build the nation. A close look at the Millennium Development Goals (MDG) and Sustainable Development Goals reveals that the majority of stated goals are directly targeted to women and girls. Thus, the overall realization of the MDG objective of halving poverty and the goals of Vision 2030, can *only* be realized with active participation and empowerment of women through education of the girl child.

Feminist movements have brought with them revolutionary thinking, from the many women's self-help groups in Kenya to broader national and global action. The GCN's direct involvement in the policy process enhances ways in which the movement challenges the pervasive negative attitudes and practices against women in Kenyan society; and challenges women and girls to take a place within systems and do the same things that have been traditionally reserved for men (Anderson 2003; Gergen 2001a, b). The Child Protection Programme aims to establish a comprehensive child protection system, addressing the continuum from prevention to response of violence against children [including exploitation and female genital

mutilation (FGM)] and family separation. This can only work if done in partnership with Government of Kenya, civil society, the private sector, and the community. It will include information flow, coordination, and budgeting processes in place to support the system.

The urgent need to enhance feminism and childhoods in Kenya through stronger education policy, access and action underscores the need to create a new way of operating that reflects and honors knowledges of women that have all too often been silenced, or even met with violence, in Kenya and other nations of the Global South. The purpose of our chapter has been to use examples from the work of the GCN to better understand the inclusion of gender issues in recent Kenyan legislation and policy and the critical roles that education plays in practical and cultural change for Kenyan girls and women. We have also sought to convey the complexity of engaging issues of gender within contradictory individual discourses that carry historical, cultural, and social reflections of persistent gender inequity. The GCN has long fought to secure an accurate and adequate representative state as experienced by women and girls in Kenya. This informs practices and modes of enhancing early childhood development and early childhood education, and focuses both on the development of girls as individuals and the role of the state in creating and implementing systems to protect their rights. This, through policy and legislation, can help ensure sustainable and gradual process of attaining progress. With women's development and empowerment, more girls will access basic and quality education and be part of advocating for stronger education policies on access and action taken toward implementation of the policies.

The process of advocating for policies that support girls in education is not devoid of challenges, which include the following:

- Ensuring the concept of girl's access to basic and quality education is grounded in the legal and policy framework;
- Maximizing the impact of advocacy on girls' and women's empowerment;
- Implementation of child friendly and gender appropriate justice procedures for child victims, witnesses, and offenders;
- Ensuring that a comprehensive response to victims of violence, including sexual violence is implemented;
- Increasing the capacity of Government to address identified needs;
- Communication strategies to address harmful social norms at community level; and
- The ongoing amendment of the Children Act 2001 provides an opportunity to strengthen the legal protection of children in Kenya, while the current social protection movement in Kenya provides an opportunity to increase focus on child protection.

It is our intent that sharing specific strategies, experiences, and challenges of the GCN in Kenya will be relevant and may inform feminist approaches to improving childhood in other global contexts.

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Chapter 8
What's Wrong with Equality? Developing a Critical Conceptual Understanding of *Equality of Condition* in Early Childhood Care and Education

Colette Murray

Abstract There is a deep ambivalence in Western society about caring and loving generally (hooks 2000). Love and care is seen as a largely personal and private matter. This is despite the fact that love, care and solidarity are essential components of human survival and Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) practice. In Ireland, the ad hoc nature of the ECCE policy structure, the limited conceptualisations of quality and equality in the sector for both children and adults, as well as increasing demands on ECCE workers draw our attention to the gendered nature of the sector, and to women being essentialised as carers. Recent moves at policy and practice levels to discard care in the naming of the sector in Ireland (replacing ECCE with Early Childhood Education) can be linked to the value placed on care and to the status of ECCE workers versus education and primary teachers. This might explain why some ECCE workers have begun to refer to themselves as early childhood *educators*. This could be seen as an effort to bring them closer to the dominant discourse, achieve recognition and status in an effort to improve working conditions. This chapter draws on feminist and egalitarian theories to critique the 'equality of opportunity' principle that is present in various ECCE policy documents in Ireland. Through a more robust equality framework *Equality of condition* (Baker et al. 2004) I examine the conditions afforded to the ECCE sector versus the primary school sector. My particular focus is on the dimension of love, care and solidarity (Baker et al. 2004) in ECCE.

Keywords Equality · Conditions · Love · Care · Early childhood care and education

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Introduction

> Caring, in its multiple manifestations, is a basic human capability serving a fundamental human need (Nussbaum 2000).

There is a deep ambivalence in Western society about caring and loving generally (hooks 2000). Love and care is seen as a largely personal and private matter, while attention to solidarity is largely absent from public consciousness. This is despite the fact that love, care and solidarity are essential components of human survival and Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) practice. In ECCE policy documents and frameworks in Ireland 'care' and 'love' appear as nouns (child*care*, *care* routines, *love* of learning), never as verbs describing fundamental human activities and necessities: to care for and love fellow human beings. Solidarity is never named although working in partnership with parents is discussed. Hayes (2007) writes about a nurturing pedagogy encompassing both care and education, overall however, the aspirations of policy documents relate to the quality of learning and educational outcomes for children. Recent moves at policy and practice levels to discard care in the naming of the sector (replacing ECCE with Early Childhood Education) are a further indication of the narrow discourse around educational attainment for the economic betterment of society (Osgood 2006a). People are more than economic instruments; they are moral and deeply relational beings (Lynch et al. 2009; Sayer 2007). Elevating education and discarding, removing or side-lining care is problematic and ignores the pivotal role relations of care have in enabling and maintaining a caring society.

In this chapter, I call for a reimagining of policy and pedagogy that places equality of care, love and solidarity at the centre of ECCE, and to create more robust discussions about how feminist and egalitarian theories (Mac Naughton 1997; hooks 2000; Goldstein 1998; Noddings 1984; Baker et al. 2004) might support shifts in thinking and conceptualising of equality in ECCE. Exploring the idea of a more robust equality framework beyond 'equality of opportunity' could support ECCE workers to frame their needs from a broader equality perspective.

Irish authors Baker et al. (2004) have developed a much more comprehensive framework for analysing inequalities in society. They argue that providing equal opportunities is not enough to overcome structural inequalities (Baker et al. 2004). Through the lens of an *Equality of condition* framework (Baker et al. 2004). I examine and question some of the barriers we need to overcome in the Irish system to ensure 'high' quality and equitable ECCE conditions for both adults and children. I use Baker et al.'s (2004) framework as a device to examine the working conditions afforded to ECCE versus primary school with no intent to polarise the sectors.

The caring encounter is real and particularly important today where education and ECCE have become trapped in the neo-liberal dirge of individualised outcomes, competition and performativity (Osgood 2006b). As Noddings (1984) states "caring involves stepping out of one's own personal frame of reference and into the others" (p. 24). Would seeing caring and love as a strong foundational basis for

curricular decision-making rather than minimising perceived traditional gendered roles and behaviours (Goldstein 1998) enable the ECCE sector to proactively claim the concept of care as essential to 'high' quality ECCE practice? A workforce can often operate out of what Swadener (1992 cited in Goldstein and Lake 2000, p. 867), called the 'hegemony of nice', which can contribute to maintaining marginalisation and powerlessness within the sector. In this chapter I will focus on how the dimension of care, love and solidarity (Baker et al. 2004) might support more equitable environments for ECCE[1] both workers and children.

Equality of Condition

The aim of *Equality of condition* (Baker et al. 2004) is to address overall inequalities in society focusing on the structures that create inequality including capitalism, patriarchy, racism, disablism and other systems of oppression. The focus is on the rights and advantages of groups rather than the individual, and how social factors contribute to successes and failures. *Equality of condition* recognises how social factors affect people's choices and actions critiquing redistribution (e.g., through welfare payments) and the public–private divide. It is concerned with addressing the reproduction of inequalities in society at economic, political, cultural and affective levels. Baker et al. (2004) outline five dimensions of equality:

- equality of respect and recognition
- equality of resourcing
- equality of power
- equality of working and learning
- equality of love, care and solidarity.

The ideology and beliefs of a society inform the actions and decisions of a society and its governance. Beliefs about the political, economic, cultural and affective systems either sustain inequality or promote equality. Beliefs and assumptions about these systems influence government decisions that affect all levels of society. The ECCE system is just one example of how state decisions impinge on the lives of young children, their families and the workers who support them (Murray and Urban 2012).

[1]Please note the nomenclature for ECCE, varies within the Irish sector. Childcare and/or Early Childhood Care and Education is generally used by the Department of Children and Youth Affairs (DCYA) and includes afterschool provision. Early Childhood Education (ECE) is used by the Department of Education and Skills (DES) and Early Years is used by the Child and Family Agency Tusla. More recently the main colleges delivering early childhood degrees have adopted the term ECE. In this paper I use ECCE to emphasise the importance of care.

Early Childhood Care and Education: The System

> The scattered provisions [in Ireland] for childcare support are complicated and difficult to navigate (European Commission 2015, p. 60).

Context

Over the past 20 years, ECCE in Ireland has evolved into the disjointed conglomerate it is today. While it would appear that the policy sector is operating contrary to its own 'quality agenda' for systemic improvement (Urban et al. 2011, 2012), there is no denying there have been considerable improvements for children and families in ECCE in Ireland, in particular in terms of provision. In the 1990s, early childhood was relatively absent from policy agendas, with childcare seen by the state as a private matter. ECCE continues to be dominated by a market, private-for-profit approach rather than fully supported as a public good (Lloyd and Penn 2012). Manager/owners have been asked to embrace considerable change and engage with a myriad of institutions (ten in all[2]) and ensure they are compliant with many new regulations and at the same time have the resources to pay their staff. These changes have been imposed largely in the absence of any equitable discourse on ECCE staff working conditions including the gendered, non-unionised, part-time, low-paid work paradigm. These conditions leave workers in very precarious working situations. This is in stark contrast to their counterparts within the public primary system who in general have secure, salaried and unionised conditions.

Background to the ECCE Sector

In 1997, for the first time, all interested parties (voluntary, private and state ECCE representatives) came together to address childcare in the Irish sector. It came under the lens of "promoting equality for women and especially in promoting equal opportunities in employment" (Department of Justice Equality and Law Reform 1999, p. 4)—an interesting positioning of the sector in an equal opportunities paradigm. This irony is not lost on the ECCE sector and the theme of this paper. Since then the sector has seen the development of a plethora of policy reforms in

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[2]Department of Children and Youth Affairs; Department of Education; Department of Finance; Department of Public Expenditure and Reform; Department of Health; Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform; Health Service Executive; Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht; Department of the Environment Community and Local Government; and Department of Social Protection.

rapid succession and large-scale investment from the two key departments; the Office of the Minister for Children (OMC, established 2005 and replaced JELR), currently the Department of Children and Youth Affairs (established 2011) and the Department of Education and Skills (DES) (formally Department of Education and Science). A split system binary became well established, with DCYA focusing on provision of childcare through a public/private lens, for example providing capital funding for development (e.g., buildings) of service provision. DES, on the other hand, focused on the development of quality through Quality Standards, *Síolta* (CECDE 2006), Curriculum Frameworks, *Aistear*, (NCCA 2009) and the recent *Aistear/Síolta Practice Guide* (NCCA 2015).

One of the seminal policy actions in the sector saw the introduction of the *Free Preschool Year* (FPSY) in 2009, which offers 3–4 year old children access to a limited amount of funded weekly preschool hours the year before primary school. The compulsory school starting age is 6 years but 4–5-year-old children attend state funded primary schools. While the introduction of FPSY was welcomed it embedded further structural rules, obligations and constraints on a sector already heavily burdened with administration. It also solidified the intractable, inequitable working conditions for workers in ECCE.

Four initiatives aimed at improving quality[3] in the sector were launched in 2015. The initiatives come under the auspices of the two main departments, DES (2015) and DCYA (2014b, 2015b; OMC 2006). The working conditions for those employed under each department, e.g., Early Years Education Inspectors (DES 2015), Early Years Specialists (DCYA 2014b), are different and particularly significant for the polarisation of a developing ECCE sector.

The *Report of the Interdepartmental Group, Future Investment in Childcare in Ireland* (DCYA 2015a) was launched in July 2015 presenting recommendations and policy options for funding. It fell short on recommendations about ECCE workforce conditions and the professionalisation of the sector, a key 'quality' and equality issue.

One critical area of difference in the sectors is qualifications. Until 2013 the preschool regulations required staff to be 'suitable and competent' (DCYA 2006, p. 6). Following the public exposure of poor quality a requirement for mandatory qualifications (Level 5) was introduced beginning in September 2016 (DCYA 2015c). ECCE providers who sign up for the FPSY are required to have a higher qualification (Level 6). Where workers have a Level 7 degree or Level 8 honours degree in ECCE they receive a higher capitation grant per child.

In short, the ECCE system in Ireland is complex and fractured by a binary system which has consequences for both the conceptualising and development of ECCE in Ireland and workforce conditions.

[3]Quality and the workforce was highlighted by a recent undercover investigation of ECCE by national television RTE programme *Prime Time Investigates*; a Breach of Trust (Journal 2013) that revealed neglect, abuse and poor practice.

Concepts, Understandings and Practice: No Quality Without Equality

> Many things in life have not been named; and many things, even if they have been named, have never been described (Sontag 2011, p. 275).

The policy initiatives while flawed are seeking ways to improve ECCE. However, the conceptualisation and implementation of equality within quality is inadequate. There are many ways of defining equality. In Western societies *equality of opportunity* is commonly used (Wilkinson and Pickett 2009) and generally means that people should have an equal chance to compete for social advantages in society by having access to and participating in a given service and achieve benefits from that experience (Lynch 2010a). Irish policy documents include equality concepts, likewise the ECCE sector embraces equality principles (CECDE 2006; NCCA 2009). The definitions in Irish policy and the ECCE sector vary but are in keeping with equality of opportunity and generally refer to access, participation and benefits. In some cases, they recognise the need for support or targeted services for those in most need or disadvantage. In policy documents specific to ECCE equality is defined largely in relation to how children should be treated and how they should be provided with access and participation to fulfil their potential. Equality, in these documents, does not extend to equality for those working in the sector. For example, the *Síolta Quality Framework* (CECDE 2006) equality principle states:

> It requires that the individual needs and abilities of each child are recognised and supported from birth towards the realisation of her/his unique potential. This means that all children should be able to gain access to, participate in, and benefit from early years services on an equal basis (p. 7).

The *Aistear Curriculum Framework* (NCCA 2009) equality principle reads:

> Promoting equality is about creating a fairer society in which everyone can participate equally with the opportunity to fulfil his/her potential (p. 8).

Under 'equality', the *National Children's Strategy Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures* (DCYA 2014a) notes:

> Reducing inequalities is promoted throughout Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures as a means of improving outcomes and achieving greater social inclusion. All children in need have equality of access to, and participation in, a range of quality public services (p. 20).

It is interesting to note that *Aistear* mentions the need for a fairer society without indicating how it can be achieved. The other two concepts are focused on outcomes for children arising out of equality of access and participation. There is however little in terms of addressing the conditions of children and families in terms of equitably participating in services or indeed conditions of the ECCE workers to support children's equitable outcomes.

Policy documents specific to the ECCE workforce, *A workforce development plan for the early childhood care and education sector in Ireland* (DES 2010) are about improvements in terms of qualifications and quality service provision. These

improvements to qualifications are designed to equip practitioners with the skills, knowledge, competencies, values and attitudes to deliver high quality and enriching experiences to children, to work effectively with parents and guardians, and to engage in interdisciplinary professional work practices designed to support the delivery of consistent quality. At the same time the policy document states that "issues such as the status and the terms and conditions of employment of people working in the sector while to the fore is outside the scope of this policy document" (DES 2010, p. 2). The recent IDG Report mentioned earlier also addresses the need for upskilling the workforce to achieve quality service provision for children and families but again does not address the conditions and inequalities of the workforce (DCYA 2015a).

While equality principles are welcomed and seen as core to policy documents, there is a question about how equality principles are elucidated, or not, throughout the documents, or indeed understood and implemented by ECCE staff in practice (Smith 2013). To realise equality in everyday practice for children, a much more in-depth understanding of what equality actually means and how it can be implemented is needed. High quality equality and diversity training, developed and evaluated in the Irish sector (Murray and O'Doherty 2001; Duffy and Gibbs 2013) can support this understanding as illustrated by a practitioner below:

> I always understood that equality is just about having the same access. I have never actually thought about the same opportunity or outcomes for people. I think this is a basic mistake made in the childcare services. For example, lots of the crèches in their policies emphasise that they allow access for every child but they never talk about participation and then outcomes. They do not explain how they are going to work with children from minority groups. It is a similar situation with childcare workers; they might have children from minorities in the group, and what's more they are proud of the fact that they are equally open to every child. But they do not know how to work with these children; they do not have proper equipment, ideas, and preparation. There might be pictures of children of different ethnicities sticking on the wall, but no one does anything with them. This is my experience (Practitioner, 2009, cited in Murray and Urban 2012, p. 23).

Understanding Equality in Providing ECCE to Families and Children

> Equality is an expression of the value placed on human worth by society (Crowley 2006, p. 17).

Equality of opportunity at economic, political, cultural and affective levels tends to focus on the individual and not on the collective, neither does it address our emotional dependence and interdependence at both the public and personal sphere (Murphy 2011). It accepts that structural inequalities exist in society and regulates for this through targeted intervention for those experiencing disadvantages. For ECCE workers, the focus on the individual worker distracts from questioning structural inequalities that exist in their working conditions and professional

development. These inequalities are engrained in the structures of the market model within the Irish sector.

ECCE workers deliver ECCE programmes in some very difficult situations, under very poor working conditions, with a state expectation that they deliver equality of opportunity for children as part of 'quality' provision in ECCE (CECDE 2006; NCCA 2009). Not only is equality of opportunity a limited and underdeveloped concept in terms of ECCE, it also means it is inadequately addressed and poorly implemented in the ECCE sector in terms of practice and/or labour. Murphy (2011) argues there is a 'cost to caring' that is paid by those who shoulder the burden of care in terms of their own equality, inclusion and health. ECCE is largely market driven and inequitable for both families "who pay some of the highest 'childcare' costs in the world" and the workers "…on low wages, with many paid an hourly rate barely above the minimum wage" (Start Strong 2014, p. 5). Both private and community services are expected to operate within a business model despite their precarious financial situation.

There is however an even greater cost in not caring. We know that the burden of care labour in early childhood falls mainly to women working in poor employment conditions (Murphy 2012). As a gendered and undervalued profession, with poor monetary benefits, the sector is continually reproducing inequality for both the workforce (e.g., poor qualifications and lack of career prospects) and for children (underqualified workers). The private–public divide and equality of opportunity lens limits sectorial development because it does not address societal and structural issues nor does it put a spotlight on areas such as the benefits of care in society.

Today ECCE workers in Ireland are beginning to mobilise and engage politically. This is largely through the recent development of the *Association of Childhood Professionals*[4] in response to the myriad of existing and new demands on the sector from various state policy initiatives to improve quality and accountability.

A shift of focus is needed, urgently, and feminist and egalitarian literature offers an opportunity to examine gender, patriarchy and the affective domain and its effects for ECCE workers. To deconstruct the conditions of the ECCE workers, I argue that we need a more comprehensive equality concept.

Equality of Condition: The Framework

The *Equality of condition* framework (Baker et al. 2004), together with the work of feminist thinkers such as Mac Naughton (1997), hooks (2000), Lynch (2009), Goldstein (1998) and Noddings (1984) who theorise the gendered nature of care and power and challenge the presumed 'truths' about providers of care and love,

[4]See website at: www.acpireland.com.

can help to unpack how ECCE is positioned within ECCE specifically and society generally.

It is not the intention of this paper to polarise the education and ECCE sector. These sectors share similarities including gendered systems and most importantly they both seek to serve children in our society.

However, these similarities between the sectors provide a good starting point for exploring the differences between the conditions for the ECCE workforce and those of the Primary education workforce and the implications of public versus private funding sources. These are particularly evident and concerning when positioned within the *Equality of condition* framework. This comparison raises many questions about gendered inequalities, the differential values placed on 'care' and 'education', and the effects of public versus private funding.

Applying the Framework to the ECCE Workforce

> Equality of condition [requires] that both the burdens and the benefits of work are much more equally shared and that the conditions under which people work are much more equal in character (Baker et al. 2004, p. 39).

Research has emphasised the importance of high quality ECCE provision of the first five years of a child's life (e.g., Sylva et al. 2004). Both Primary and ECCE sectors provide care and education to young children and are required (though it is not mandatory) to implement the *Aistear Curriculum Framework* (NCCA 2009) in the early years. There are some acknowledged differences in teacher qualifications between sectors but this does not negate the need to unpack issues of diversity and power within the two groups and give attention to gendered inequalities in the sector. These include the subordination of women to women (e.g., middle class to working class, ECCE worker versus primary teacher). It is necessary to give active attention to gendered inequalities in the sector. I believe that government policy in ECCE must go beyond a child only focus on 'high' quality provision, and recognise the structural conditions which trap ECCE workers in precarious low quality employment. All the while expecting the ECCE workers to provide 'high' quality equitable provision for children and families.

The discussion below provides a general overview of the conditions for ECCE providers (0–6 years of age) versus those in the primary school sector (4–12 years of age) through five dimensions of *Equality of condition*. The two dominant Departments, that is DCYA and DES, provide for policy requirements and funding to the ECCE sector while primary school is provided for through DES. With greater demands on the ECCE sector for quality educational outcomes for children, a critical look at working conditions for early childhood workers is required (International Labour Organisation 2014).

The five dimensions of Baker et al.'s (2004) equality framework discussed below are by no means distinct categories. They are interconnected and only make

sense if seen as part of an integral picture. Nonetheless I will show that they can be used as lenses (i.e., analytical tools) to be applied to better understand the inequalities in the ECCE system.

The Five Dimensions

The first dimension of '*equality of respect and recognition*' (Baker et al. 2004) reveals the impact of continuing to situate practitioners in the ECCE field within the dominant societal discourse of care as a 'labour of love' by women rather than necessary valued care labour. The demeaning connotations associated with care places a lesser value on ECCE workers than that of their counterparts in primary education. Low esteem and value are manifested in both the state policy and society: "you are doing a degree to learn to look after children, sure anyone can do that, are you using it as a stepping stone to get into primary teaching?" (Repeated statement made by ECCE undergraduates in class on the perception of ECCE amongst their peers and society generally). High esteem and value are afforded to the primary school sector from both the state and the public (Start Strong 2014). If we accept that care is a social right embedded in human relations and necessary for ECCE, we need to demand that government policies proactively recognise, respect and raise the value of care.

This manifests in the lack of *equality of resourcing* between the two sectors. Primary educators receive a permanent, salaried position (some have contractual work) with paid holidays, and professional development is recognised within working hours and resourced. The infrastructure of schools is covered by the state.

Unlike primary school teachers early childhood workers are paid just over the minimum wage. ECCE workers with comparative qualifications consistently earn between 33 and 66% less than their counterparts in primary education. Within the ECCE, field workers have no recognised pay scale and there are additional differences in their pay rates that are linked with the type of service in which they work. This contributes to the fragmentation and lack of solidarity within the field and continues to support the assumption that 'care' is less important than education. ECCE working hours are longer and many are contracted for sessional work with no holiday pay (Start Strong 2014).

Two recent initiatives, the introduction of the Education Focused Inspectorate by DES (2015) and Better Start, a National Early Years Quality Initiative (DCYA 2014b) have similar discrepancies in salaries and conditions despite both posts requiring an ECCE degree and a level of experience in the field. The recent Interdepartmental Group (IDG) report (DCYA 2015a) costed possible investments to improve ECCE without making any provision for increased wages or an introduction of a pay scale. To date, there has been no cost analysis to identify the resources that are needed for workers to deliver high quality ECCE. The discrepancies in salaries demonstrate the internal inequalities of a sector that values inspection and regulation over quality support for work with children and families.

Some professional development is subsidised by the state through a learner fund (DCYA 2013) to raise the qualifications of the sector. This is undertaken outside of working hours with little or no time off in lieu for these hours for many workers. Infrastructure (e.g., buildings) of some ECCE services is supported through a one-off capital grant (DCYA 2015d). There is an expectation that ECCE workers upskill in their own time but little value is placed by the state on the extended time needed for the complex 'caring' aspects of ECCE workers role, and little recognition of the long working hours.

Ongoing resourcing of the infrastructure is not covered by the state. There are also obvious differences between salaries because of the levels and variety of qualifications within the ECCE sector. However, for those at higher qualification levels in ECCE (Level 8) conditions are decidedly inequitable. The lack of permanent employment at all levels within a competitive employment marketplace also impacts on the capacity of the ECCE workforce for solidarity internally or externally.

In terms of *equality of power* primary teachers have union support and professional status, hence strong representation and power in decision-making. Working conditions are good (e.g., regulated salary, shorter hours, paid summer break). Structures of care are in place for the primary teachers. ECCE workers are generally not unionised and poorly informed. They have very limited power in decision-making for their sector, working through the representative organisations. Working conditions are unsatisfactory. Hierarchies of power can also limit capacity for solidarity between the sectors.

Regarding *equality of working and learning*, conditions of value and recognition, remuneration and resourcing dictate this dimension. The qualifications in the primary sector are statutorily recognised and linked to their working position in terms of salary and conditions. Professional development is supported directly by the state. They also have full employment protection. ECCE workers have limited if any employment protection. Salaries and qualifications are lower than those of primary teachers. In addition ECCE workers' professional development is ad hoc, often at the expense of the learner despite the learner fund (DCYA 2013). Individual job satisfaction, which can manifest in poor quality service provision in both sectors but particularly in the ECCE sector, where some workers feel they have no other option, also comes under this dimension.

Finally, *equality of love, care and solidarity* are limited within a divided sector where one profession is valued over another. Where one sector is exploited for their care and education labour and the other is recognised and rewarded. Where one sector is market driven and the other is a public institution. In this position, it could be argued that the lack of care or solidarity from the state to support the ECCE workforce directly exploits and leaves vulnerable those most in need of love, care and solidarity; the children. How these issues for example are embedded in the language used in policy documents actually constitute boundaries for what is possible in practice.

In terms of ECCE policies *Aistear* (NCCA 2009) and *Síolta* (CECDE 2006), care and love are defined as passive nouns. This is mirrored by the primary

teachers' code of professional conduct that names care as a noun: "Teachers practice is motivated by the best interests of the pupils/students entrusted to their care. Teachers show this through positive influence, professional judgment and empathy in practice" (Teachers Council 2012, p. 4).

The research paper, *Perspectives on the relationship between education and care in early childhood* (Hayes 2007) commissioned by the NCCA to support the development of the *Aistear* curriculum framework, points to a "growing body of research on the critical value of understanding the nature of care and its role and status in a healthy and equitable society" (Hayes 2007, p. 9). Hayes (2007) goes on to affirm that the debate "has relevance to the wider discussions about the role of care and affective equality in society" but (unfortunately) concludes "it is beyond the scope of this paper" (p. 9).

I see this as a lost opportunity at a time of ECCE sectoral development. To place a critical emphasis on care as a social right and fundamental to human relations and our interdependency within ECCE a key research document would have given necessary orientation for future government policy developments. As Noddings (1984) outlines "each caring encounter is an interaction between a person giving care and a person receiving that care: a one-caring and a cared-for" (p. 30). This is what we do in ECCE. However, it remains a taken-for-granted concept rather than a respected concept which has essentialised women as carers (Goldstein 1998) missing the essence of the ECCE practitioners role as a valued, caring, responsive worker (Faragher and Mac Naughton 1998) supporting the human capacity in young children's development.

The general failure to value care work effectively diminishes women's economic, cultural and affective equality. It maintains ECCE practitioners in low-paid, low-status employment and it affects their ability to participate in decision-making processes. A more equal society would involve recognition of the value and importance of care (Goldstein 1998; Mac Naughton 2000; Osgood 2006a; hooks 2000; Crowley 2006; Murphy 2011; Lynch 2010b). ECCE services are necessary and in fact indispensable to enable society to function.

Conclusion: Equality of Condition-Moving the Debate Forward

Acknowledging the gendered nature of ECCE from a feminist perspective, I conclude with a broader reflection on the affective domain through the dimension of equality of love, care and solidarity. As the ECCE workforce is pushed more towards accountability, performativity, and conformity, there is a shift for some to knowingly locate themselves closer to the dominant valued discourse of education. A move, perhaps in an attempt to improve their status and conditions, and to distance themselves from the societal stigma and oppression associated with the role of 'the carer'. As Lynch (2010a) points out:

> a society cannot have political economic or social justice without taking account of the care domains of life; people are rational, affective (emotional and moral) agents, not autonomous beings and both interdependency and, at times, deep dependency, are integral to the human condition (p. 4).

To overcome the inequalities outlined above, ECCE has to be recognised as a profession: "ECCE must have the qualifications, wages, working conditions and career development pathways—as well as the public esteem—that characterise a profession" (Start Strong 2014, p. 9). I believe one way forward is for ECCE workers to reclaim 'care' and elevate an 'ethic of care' where intimacy, commitment and solidarity are crucial parts of our recognised professional identity. This would enable us to address how *Equality of condition* can be written into policy and funding as a prerequisite to service quality and social equality.

hooks (2000) asserts that we are taught to believe that the mind, not the heart is the seat of learning. She maintains that to talk about love and caring within work with young children can be viewed as inappropriate, weak or even irrational. Goldstein (1998) building on Noddings (1984), proposes another view where ECCE workers could "reposition the concept of care, transforming it from a personality trait to a deliberate and decisive action" (p. 247). A caring that allows practitioners to think of caring and love as a sound foundation for curricular decision-making and not, as a natural or traditional gendered role behaviour (Goldstein 1998).

Some areas highlighted for further reflection from a feminist perspective are; repositioning and reconstruction of care and love openly within ECCE; reclaiming care and love as a moral choice; deconstructing ECCE care labour though the five dimensions of *Equality of condition* towards empowerment of the workforce; and finally, addressing equality of love, care and solidarity in ECCE for citizenship.

In order to build a visible ethic of care for the development of a caring and equal society it is my contention that it is also necessary for the sector at all levels to develop a more critical understanding of equality from governance to practice. Or at the very least adopt a more comprehensive understanding of equality and accept its implications for both practitioners and the children in their care. This would not just address ECCE workers issues; engaging with *Equality of condition* for practice is a necessary precondition for practitioners to understand the connection to equality for children, families and society—and themselves. *Equality of condition* can support ECCE workers to broaden their perspective and analysis beyond equality of opportunity, for example, how *Equality of condition* can serve their desire for more equitable conditions in ECCE. Even if state policy does not (yet) recognise *Equality of condition*, the ECCE sector can and should use such a framework to elaborate and elucidate their arguments for better work conditions.

Applying the concept of *Equality of condition* to ECCE provides a starting point for a bigger exploration of more tangible and practical aspects of equality in ECCE workers conditions and in practice with children and families. The sector needs to move beyond equality of opportunity to a more robust framework of *Equality of condition*. The structural dichotomy between ECCE and primary education, along with the gendered nature of the sector exposes the power dynamic and the lack of

value, support and respect for working with young children. Understanding equality concepts is a prerequisite to providing equitable practice for children. It also empowers staff to reflect on their own conditions within the workforce. Approaching equality within ECCE practice from five equality dimensions and a feminist perspective enables us to think about respect, recognition, power, working and learning and love, care and solidarity from a holistic perspective, and to recognise that inequality persists. While the *Síolta* and *Aistear* frameworks in ECCE are robust and detailed, and they place equality and children's rights in the foreground, the principles do not transfer well to the body of the frameworks. Workers conditions are not prioritised in ECCE policy documents. Affective equality is absent and the emphasis on education precludes the maintenance of care. The challenge of breaking free from the status of devalued care servers to become care emancipators is real and perhaps utopian in the current context. Feminist and egalitarian theory and epistemology could provide a space to uplift and give women a confident voice to reclaim their sector. Forging a relationship between feminism, egalitarianism and early childhood care and education would benefit both fields.

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Chapter 9
Love and the Nuclear Family in the Kindergarten: Critical Analyses of HeteronormativitieS

Marcela Montserrat Fonseca Bustos

Abstract The aim of this chapter is to point to and problematize heteronormativity in early childhood education and care (ECEC) and disrupt patriarchal and normalized knowledge about love and the nuclear family. To rethink social justice in ECEC, I use the concept heteronormativitieS in plural and with a capital S. This is inspired by the work of Rhedding-Jones (2005a, b), as a part of an epistemological critique of the idea of meaning as stable and fixed. Heteronormativity is not a stable concept with a fixed meaning regardless of the context that plays out in a way that can be foreseen by preschool teachers in kindergartens. HeteronormativitieS rather play out in different and surprising ways, and therefore need to be reflected on critically in everyday practice. Children growing up in contemporary Norway have multiple and complex experiences around what it means to be a family, challenging heteronormative assumptions. In this chapter rather than defining what heteronormativity *is*, I play with what heteronormativitieS *can be* and *how* it *can play out* in ECEC contexts, by looking at how love and the nuclear family is represented in children's books.

Keywords HeteronormativitieS · "At the same time" · Romantic love · Nuclear family · Children's books

Introduction: Normal Love and Normal Families

This chapter will point to and problematize heteronormativity in early childhood education and care (ECEC) and disrupt patriarchal and normalized knowledge about love and the nuclear family to rethink social justice in ECEC. In this chapter,

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I use the concept heteronormativitieS in plural and with a capital S. This is inspired by Rhedding-Jones (2005a, b), as part of an epistemological critique of the idea of meaning as stable and fixed. Heteronormativity is not a stable concept with a fixed meaning regardless of the context that plays out in ways that can be foreseen by preschool teachers in kindergartens. HeteronormativitieS rather play out in different and surprising ways, and therefore need to be reflected on critically in everyday practice. In this chapter rather than defining what heteronormativity *is*, I play with what heteronormativitieS *can be* and *how* it *can play out* in ECEC contexts, by looking at how love and the nuclear family is represented in children's books.

Heteronormativity draws attention to how heterosexuality is constructed as the norm and thus how heterosexual practice is privileged over other practices, reproducing heterosexual love and the nuclear, heterosexual family as the way of loving and being a family. What is problematic with such normalized constructions is that a majority of practices are privileged thus reproducing other practices as different than the norm. Nordin-Hultman (2004) states that "Differences and dissimilarities then becomes not just differences and dissimilarities, but deviations [my translation]" (p. 165). If love and families outside the heterosexual norm are constructed not as different but as deviant, this needs to be critiqued in ECEC practice and research. Writing from a poststructural philosophical positioning the status of "the normal" is challenged through how language works. The work in this section is inspired by the French philosopher Jacques Derrida (1930–2004), who argues that the problem of language is not just one amongst other problems, and language can never guarantee pure, singular meaning (Derrida 1976). Drawing on these ideas, I challenge the idea that language can reflect a unique and fixed idea. Language is not transparent and innocent, and language does not just reflect reality, but rather constructs it. Hence language becomes the power that constructs contingent hierarchies and discursive truths about gender, love and about how to be and do a "normal" family. We word the world, St. Pierre (2000) argues, and how we word the world creates possibilities that privilege some words and their meaning(s) over others in a hierarchical system. Following this, everyday language and descriptions of practice are not transparent and innocent; language does not just describe what is already there. Rather it controls, offers and withdraws available subject positions for individuals by constantly producing and reproducing discourses about love and families. *At the same time* these discourses are not fixed, language fails to provide a homogeneous space of representation; alternative identity positions are thus always already available in a discursive play. This *at the same time* is the crux of the matter when disclosing heteronormativitieS in everyday practice in ECEC settings. Even though alternative positions are available, dominant and hierarchical positionings need to be identified and challenged. To play with how heteronormativitieS can play out in ECEC contexts I will analyze representations of gender, love and families in ECEC texts. But *at the same time* my critique of heteronormativity is not a critique of heterosexual practice. This article does not challenge heterosexual love and family life, but the truth regimes and discourses that construct hierarchical contingencies of normal ways of loving and being a family.

I will begin by exploring the issue of heteronormativitieS, with a focus on conceptualizations of love and families. Then I analyze children's books from a Norwegian ECEC context and end with some critical reflections regarding heteronormativitieS in ECEC today.

HeteronormativitieS in Early Childhood Education and Care

Heteronormativity as a critical issue is silenced in international research and practice on ECEC (Gunn et al. 2004; Robinson 2002, 2005b; Robinson and Jones Dias 2006; Surtees 2003). This chapter is written from a Norwegian positioning, and the same silence exists within the Norwegian contemporary early childhood context (Askland and Rossholt 2009; Bustos 2007, 2011; Jacobsen 2009, 2010; Røthing and Aarseth 2006). This is highly problematic when it comes to social justice and for children and their families' sense of belonging in ECEC settings. Further, it raises professional and ethical concerns regarding different ways of knowing and doing love and family life in everyday practice. Dominant knowledge regimes and discourses represent hierarchical power. St. Pierre (2000) argues that the ethical responsibility cannot be placed "out there" away from individual responsibility and everyday practice, but rather lies in the language we use and in everyday practice. This chapter raises awareness of this issue.

Heteronormative love is connected to gendered identities. This chapter takes up issues of gendered identities from a feminist poststructural philosophical perspective, arguing that gendered identity is not fixed and stable, but constructed in discourse and taken up and resisted by the individual through available subjective positions (Taguchi 2004; St. Pierre 2000; Weedon 1997). Gendered identities are closely connected to heteronormativity through what Butler (1999) conceptualizes as the heterosexual matrix; the belief that gender is natural, constituting gender performances through normative heterosexuality. Thus, gender identities are constituted in a binary relation in discourses of femininities and masculinities, and through "the process of gendering, children are constructed as heterosexual beings" (Robinson 2005b, p. 19). This point is also made by Surtees (2005). Children are inscribed in dominant discourses of heterosexual gendered identities, and use this knowledge in how they perform gender in ECEC institutions. But how children use this knowledge is not fixed. Blaise (2005a, b) and Ochsner (2000) showed how children do and regulate gender according to their understanding of heterosexuality, while Davies (2003) and Taylor and Richardson (2005) show how children do gender that challenges the heterosexual matrix. Hence, how children do gender in kindergarten is a professional and ethical responsibility for preschool teachers, and which discourses are made available for children influence what gendered identity positions the children can take up (Robinson 2002). The heterosexualization of

childhood is clearly traced in discourses about love and the nuclear family, and naturalize and normalize heterosexual gendered identities, heterosexual love and heterosexual families.

Early childhood is surrounded with myths and assumptions related to discourses outside the heterosexual matrix, and such assumptions might be the reason why heteronormativity is silenced in the field of early childhood (Bustos 2007). Robinson and Semann (cited in Robinson 2005a) interviewed ECEC staff about doing anti-homophobia and anti-sexism work, and someone said: “Unless we tell children what racism and sexism is, they do not know. Only grown-ups are racist’s or sexist’s” (p. 184). Assumptions and statements such as this one silences and makes it hard to disclose and examine heteronormativity. Hence they legitimize, produce, and reproduce heteronormative discourses in ECEC. Other assumptions reproducing heteronormativity surrounding the ECEC field are that children are assumed to be heterosexual, have heterosexual parents and grow up in nuclear families and surroundings with heterosexual adults (Gunn et al. 2004; Robinson 2002; Robinson and Jones Diaz 2006; Surtees 2003). The status of the nuclear family consisting of mother, father and children as the normal (and only?) way of doing a family is supported by the heterosexual matrix. Discourses that normalize heterosexualities sustain and reproduce the status of the nuclear family. The status of the nuclear family also reproduces and privileges singularity and ignores plurality and multiple ways of being and doing a family, and hence the everyday life of many children today. But children in contemporary Norway have multiple and complex experiences of what it means to be and do family, both in their own everyday family life, and also amongst the everyday life of families and friends close to them. In Norway there are no official statistics of how families with children are organized and thus what life experiences children have with being part of a family. However, the divorce rate for married couples is around 45% (and higher for cohabiting couples) (Ekteskap og skilsmisser 2016), and it is assumed the number of children growing up in same-sex families is between 10,000 and 20,000 children (Fjær and Backe-Hansen 2013). Therefore, to challenge the status of the nuclear family as universal is not to introduce something “new” in young children’s lives, but rather to include practices and structures that always already exist and are part of children’s current everyday life experiences.

One of the ways heteronormativity plays out in children’s everyday life is in the home corner (Bustos 2006; Taylor and Richardson 2005). The home corner is a common space in ECEC institutions in Norway and elsewhere. It is a play space constructed as a mini-home with elements from a home like a mini-kitchen, dolls and clothes to dress up for dramatic play with themes around family life. The home corner and children playing family games, boyfriend and girlfriend, and pretend weddings are rarely questioned in ECEC institutions. One reason that questioning or attention to gendered and sexualized play may not occur is due to the conceptualization of the innocent child. Children are viewed as innocent and not being able to be sexist before adults introduce sexism to them. They are also viewed as

heterosexual. So children playing mom and mom or dad and dad rather than mom and dad in the home corner may be seen as a threat to early childhood (Gunn et al. 2004; Robinson and Jones Diaz 2006; Surtees 2003). From such a perspective it can be argued that children playing same-sex parents in the home corner is a sexualization of childhood. Such a view on love and families is based on an idea of heterosexual love as neutral and innocent and about love and nothing else. While same-sex love seems to be not about love, but about sexuality or rather just about sex. Such a view on love is highly problematic in a pedagogical and social justice perspective. It reproduces an idea about *us* and *them*; us—the normal heterosexual engaged in romantic love, and them—the other non-heterosexual engaged not with romantic love, but with sex. Heteronormative discourses also disguise and silence the fact that heterosexually organized families and reproduction also involve sex, not just romantic love. So if same-sex family play in the home corner represents a sexualisation of childhood, then heterosexually organized families also do. This is an example of heteronormativity and how heterosexuality can be so invisible that it is hard to see.

Children and youth are inscribed in discourses of heteronormative love, and they use that knowledge (Haldar 2006; Quinliwan 1999). Haldar (2006) interviewed children aged 12 years about their knowledge of romance and family life. The children had complex knowledge about love and romance, but the love they spoke about was heterosexual love within the nuclear family. But children also challenge heteronormative ways of being and doing love and family when alternative discourses are available to them. At the same time as play in the home corner can reproduce heteronormativity, it can also reveal and challenge heteronormative discourses (Bustos 2006; Rhedding-Jones 2003; Taylor and Richardson 2005). In the following quote teacher-carers open up possibilities outside of the normative heterosexuality:

> In the playroom four year old girls are dressed up, with floating white drapes and white head veils. “We need a boy to have a wedding”, says one. Woman teacher-carer: “No, you don’t. Nowadays you can have two women together or two men together.” “Or you can decide not to get married at all” says another woman nearby. Girl: “oh”. She dances off to happily play man-less brides with the other girls (Rhedding-Jones 2003, p. 6).

Normative heterosexuality is the starting point for the girls wedding-game, but when alternative discourses are offered by the teacher-carer, the wedding-game continues in a way other than the way the girls started out, opening up for multiple ways of loving and marriage. Heteronormativity is not singular and easy to define, it rather plays out in multiple ways that can be hard to disclose. To grasp the concept of heteronormativity as multiple and changing rather than something singular and stable, from now on I will, inspired by the work of Rhedding-Jones (2005a, b), use the concept heteronormativitieS. By challenging heteronormativitieS and making alternative practices and positionings available for children, ECEC institutions can contribute to a more equal society.

Children's Books in a Norwegian Context

In this section we will analyze the representations of love and families in children's books in Norway to explore how heteronormative discourses operate within storylines and examine storylines that push back compulsory heterosexual narratives and represent "otherwise" performances of love and family. The exploration of heteronormative discourse through literature within the Norwegian context is important as the access and emphasis of literature in the ECEC context is prioritized through the Norwegian framework plan for kindergartens (Kunnskapsdepartementet 2011). This states that children in kindergartens shall experience literature every day. Children's literature thus informs the production and normalization of discourse in Norwegian kindergartens. By analyzing representations of love and families in children's books the dominant status of heteronormative love and the nuclear family is pointed to and problematized for the ways they produce and reproduce heteronormative discourses in early childhood settings in Norway. This issue needs more consideration in early childhood education and care. While the importance of literature in children's lives is not questioned, the dominant discourses represented through the literature that children have access to and the normalizing of heterosexuality is.

The data presented in the analyses are excerpts from children's books in Norway. The excerpts are gathered from three picture books aimed for children aged 1–6 years old with representations of families.[1] The books chosen are *Petra wants everyone to have a friend*[2] (Bringsværd and Holt 1996), *Petra wants to be a vet*[3] (Bringsværd and Holt 1993), and *My First Encyclopedia*[4] (Landsem and Kaasa 2004). The books about Petra are from a series about Karsten (a boy) and Petra (a girl), who are best friends. The books tell stories about their friendship and their everyday life. It is a popular series amongst young children in Norway, and has also been made into a television series and three movies based on the books; the latest movie was released in 2015. *My First Encyclopedia* is an encyclopedia for children, and was promoted as the first encyclopedia for children aged 1–6 years when it was published in 2004. The first chapter in this book is named "What is a family?".

I will start by introducing the excerpt, and then present the analysis and discussion. All translations are my translations.

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[1]The excerpts and analyses presented in this article are reworked rewritings of data and analyses from my master's thesis (Bustos 2007).

[2]My translation, original in Norwegian *Petra vil at alle skal ha en venn* (Bringsværd and Holt 1996).

[3]My translation, original in Norwegian *Petra vil bli dyrlege* (Bringsværd and Holt 1993).

[4]My translation, original in Norwegian *Mitt første leksikon* (Landsem and Kaasa 2004).

Representations of Love in Children's Books

This section analyses three excerpts. The analysis focuses on the discursive constructions of romantic love in children's books.

> **Excerpt one**: An illustration of Karsten (boy) and Petra (girl) in the kindergarten playing. Next to them there is another boy playing too.
>
> Here is Karsten, 5 years old.
>
> And here is Petra, almost five as well.
>
> They go to the same kindergarten.
>
> And they are best friends.
>
> They are so good friends that…
>
> …the other children believe they are sweet hearts.
>
> And some children tease them.
>
> (Bringsværd and Holt 1996, n.p.)

In this excerpt Karsten and Petra are playing together in the kindergarten. All the children in their classroom know they are best friends, and they are teased for being sweet hearts by some of the other kids. The assumption seems to be that since they are best friends of opposite gender they probably are sweet hearts. This reproduces the heteronormative assumption that all children are heterosexual and that best friends of opposite gender are not just best friends, but sweet hearts. Karsten and Petra resist such a positioning of their friendship as they are best friends and not girlfriend and boyfriend. But still they are being teased by some of the other children for being sweet hearts. When Karsten and Petra resist being called sweet hearts they position themselves and their friendship outside the heterosexual norm. However, at the same time, heteronormative discourse is reproduced by their resistance to being called sweet hearts; by resisting the teasing of the other children, they confirm that calling them sweet hearts is a legitimate claim to make, and that such a claim needs to be resisted. The book also produces heteronormative discourses about kindergarten children's love knowledge: the children know that romantic love belongs to opposite genders. Both Karsten and Petra have friends of the same gender that they play with, but these friendships are never questioned as something other than friendships. When Karsten is playing with another boy no one teases them for being sweet hearts in love with each other; that assumption is only related to Karsten and Petra, best friends of opposite gender.

> **Excerpt two**: Petra is being picked up from the kindergarten by her grandfather and his new best friend. When they enter the kindergarten playground Karsten asks Petra who the woman is.
>
> It is his new best friend, says Petra.
>
> Her name is Esther.

I think they are sweet hearts.

Yes, says Karsten. Because they hold hands.

(Bringsværd and Holt 1996, n.p.)

In the first excerpt Karsten and Petra resist being called sweet hearts just because they are best friends of opposite sex. In this excerpt they use the same knowledge they are resisting in excerpt one to infer that Esther is not just Petra's grandfather's new best friend, as Petra's mother has told her. The fact that they are best friends of opposite sex is enough for Karsten and Petra to state that they are sweet hearts, even though Petra's mom has told her that they are best friends. To confirm this inference, Karsten states that it must be so because they are holding hands. It is interesting to see that Karsten and Petra use the same knowledge they resist in excerpt one to make inferences about Petra's grandfather and Esther in excerpt two. At the same time this is how heteronormative discourse is produced and reproduced. The children have knowledge about romantic love, and they use this knowledge to resist and make inferences about romantic love between people young and old. This text could create interesting opportunities in the ECEC classroom to examine the shifting, complex and contradictory nature of how we see, understand and talk about love and relationships.

In analyzing the discursive production of romantic love in children's books I looked more closely at the families of Karsten and Petra. Karsten lives with his mom and dad and a sibling. Petra lives with her mom. I found this interesting, and wondered if I could find any traces about Petra's family, and which possibilities about romantic love were made available for the readers of the series about Karsten and Petra. In the book *Petra wants to be a vet* I find traces of Petra's family.

Excerpt three: Petra and her mom next to a bus.

Mom and Petra live some distance outside the city centre. So they need to go by bus when they go to the kindergarten. The bus only runs once each hour. Mom and Petra often talk about that it would be easier with a little car. They had a car when dad was alive. Mom wants to learn how to drive. But she never has the time to do it…

(Bringsværd and Holt 1993, n.p.)

Petra's dad lived with her and her mom earlier (and then they had a small car), but he died. The book does not linger with what happened to Petra's father, this is just stated and the story goes on. Here, there could have been possibilities available in resisting or challenging heteronormative discourse production. Instead there are traces that reproduce the heteronormative assumption that all children grow up with heterosexual parents. In Petra's case the father is not there because he died.

I have now pointed to what heteronormativitieS can be, and how heteronormalizing discourses can be produced and reproduced in children's books. In the next section will look at representations of families in children's books and the discursive production of the nuclear family as the (hetero)normative.

Representations of the Nuclear Family in Children's Books

This section consists of three excerpts. The analyses here focus on discursive production of families in children's books.

> **Excerpt four**: The text is illustrated by a picture of a woman, a man and three children.
>
> What is a family?
>
> A family can be different things. Often there is a mom, a dad and children, one child or a few. In some families the mom or the dad live together with a new boyfriend or girlfriend, and the children live sometimes with mom and sometimes with dad. It happens that children live together with two dads or two moms, and then they are a family. An old husband and an old wife are also a small family.
>
> In this family the mom and dad are married and they have three children (referring to the illustration described first).
>
> (Landsem and Kaasa 2004, p. 7)

This encyclopedia offers children facts about different issues, amongst these are facts about families. In this excerpt the concept of family is explained. In the written text the concept of a singular family is challenged, the written text opens up multiple ways of being and doing a family. Heterosexual and same-sex families are discussed. However, the illustration accompanying the text reproduces the traditional nuclear family as the norm. This book is written for young children whose literacy skills are emerging. The illustrations throughout the book are used to support young children to follow the storyline as adults read the text or create their own storyline through the illustrations when 'reading' the book by themselves or with other children. Following Derrida (1976) there is no outside-text, the written text and the illustrations accompanying them are parts of the same text, and the written text is not in a hierarchical order over the illustrations. When it comes to heteronormative discourse production it can even be claimed that the illustrations in children's books have a higher status in a hierarchical order than written text, since young children might not be able to read the written words without help from an adult. Hence, in the written text the possibilities of multiple ways of doing a family are presented, but in the illustration accompanying the text the heteronormative family is represented. This produces heteronormative discourses of the heterosexual nuclear family's status in a hierarchical system.

> **Excerpt five**: each phrase is accompanied with a small illustration that renders the written text.
>
> Other families can be:
>
> Cohabitants with a son
>
> Husband and wife
>
> Mom, dad, youth and baby
>
> Mom and daughter

Man and man

Grandfather, grandmother, daughter-in-law, son, and their two sons

(Landsem and Kaasa 2004, p. 8)

In excerpt five other families are presented. The wording used in excerpt four is "what is a family?" accompanied by an illustration of the nuclear family, while in excerpt five the terms used are "Other families can be" accompanied by illustrations of families that do not fit into the definition of the nuclear family. By using such wordings accompanied by such illustrations the idea of "us" and "them" is produced: we—the normal nuclear family, and them—other families. Heteronormative assumptions reproduce the idea that all children grow up with heterosexual parents. The illustrations accompanying the section "Other families can be" reproduce this assumption. There are six alternative families illustrated in this section. Four of the families contain children; cohabitants with a son; mom, dad, youth and baby; mother and daughter and the extended family consisting of grandparents, parents and children. In a multicultural perspective it is interesting to notice that the only family that are visual minorities is the extended family. The male members of this family have black hair and a beard, while the women in the illustration are wearing hijab. This illustration can be said to reproduce discourses of immigrant families as living in extended families which is opposite to ethnic Norwegians. It would be interesting to go further into this line of analysis, but that is outside the scope of this chapter. Returning to the illustrations of "other families": four of the families contain children and two of the families do not. The first of these two families is made up of a husband and wife. They are illustrated as an older couple, with grey hair and the older husband uses a crutch to walk. The second illustration of other families without children is the family made up of two men. In the illustration they are holding hands and are smiling, so they look very happy. In the written text in excerpt four it is stated that children can live with two dads, thus challenging heteronormative assumptions that children grow up with heterosexual parents. However, when a family with two dads is illustrated, there are no children in the illustration. Even though the written text opens up the possibility that children can grow up with two dads and be a family, the illustrations accompanying the text take the possibility away. Discourses of families can be conflicting, and heteronormativity is not produced in a singular and clear way. Rather heteronormativitieS are reproduced in multiple and even conflicting ways.

Since the discursive production of heteronormativitieS is the critical issue in this chapter, and the encyclopedia has a section about family both challenging and reproducing heteronormativitieS, I expand my analysis to explore how families were represented in other parts of the encyclopedia. Excerpt six is a summary of written text and illustrations.

Excerpt six: this chapter focuses on healthy food and physical activity. No written text from the book is presented here, only a description of the written text and illustrations accompanying it.

> The text focuses on healthy food, the importance of drinking clean water when thirsty and physical activity. The written text is accompanied by an illustration of a family sitting around the table eating a healthy breakfast. The family consists of a dad, a girl and a mother breastfeeding a baby.
>
> (Landsem and Kaasa 2004, p. 18)

In the book, the section about healthy food and physical activity follows the section on families. The written text about health is accompanied by an illustration of a family sitting around a table eating healthy food. The family represents the heterosexual norm. Although, the heteronormative family is challenged to a certain degree in illustrations of families in the book, even though the family of two men is not illustrated with children, when other issues not directly connected with family are illustrated, the nuclear family is the one represented. This is a way that heteronormative discourses about normal families and the hierarchical status of the nuclear family can be reproduced in children's literature.

Conclusions: Some Critical Reflections on Love and Families in Children's Books

I have shown how HeteronormativitieS, and normalized heterosexuality are constituted in ECEC settings through conceptualizations of romantic love and families in children's books. Heteronormativity is invisible in international research literature regarding early childhood. This chapter raises awareness of these issues and urges professional critical reflection on what heteronormativitieS can look like in ECEC settings, and how it can play out in everyday practice. In a Norwegian context where children's literature is part of ECEC curriculum, reflections about how dominant discourses in children's books play out in practice is one way of doing critical reflection for professional development. In other contexts there might be other ways of analyzing and dismantling dominant discourse production regarding heteronormativitieS. When sameness is privileged, subject positions constituted outside the norm and on the margins are silenced. This is problematic for professional practice as discourse production of "the normal", according to Nordin-Hultman (2004), can construct differences not as just differences, but deviance. By questioning and challenging what appears as normal in everyday practice, more possibilities can be made available for the children and families that attend early childhood institutions.

Writing from a poststructural philosophical positioning, language does not reflect reality, but rather constructs it. Language in use in everyday practice in ECEC institutions needs to be critically analyzed to examine the discursive production of love and families. Such critical reflection is an ethical practice and also a part of professional development for the field of early childhood. Meaning changes in discourse, hence the analyses of love and families in children's books in this chapter both reproduce and challenge heteronormativitieS, but the logic reproduced

is still an either-or logic that allows for practices that privilege some practices over others, and sameness over difference. Since identity positions and discursive constructions are always already at play, critical reflection about practices that challenge what is taken for granted and who is privileged and who is not is an ethical obligation and a part of professional development in the field of early childhood. This article urges the early childhood teacher to be critical in everyday practice to dismantle and challenge heteronormativitieS.

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Part III
Feminism(s) Reconceptualising Practice

Chapter 10
Time and Relationship: Paternal and Maternal Tensions in Teacher Narratives

Sonya L. Gaches

Abstract Grumet's (1988) citing of the patriarchal project to "claim the child and teach him or her to master the language, the rules, the game and the names of the fathers" (p. 21) is highly reflective of today's standards-based classrooms. In fact, the outer nodes of a classroom activity system (tools, rules, division of labor) (Engestrom 1999; Engestrom and Miettinen 1999) closely reflect Grumet's patriarchal project. Meanwhile, Grumet (1988) cites the maternal project as "relinquish (ing) the child so that both mother and child can become more independent of one another" (p. 21), echoing teachers' desires for students to become empowered in the classroom and to have choice and agency in their learning, creating a more fluid timeline of learning. This chapter privileges the voices of eight Kindergarten through second grade teachers, challenging this oversimplified binary. Through these teachers' narratives a complex interrelationship is presented, strongly representing this pull between forces of the patriarchal and maternal projects.

Keywords Feminist perspectives · Activity theory · Early childhood · Teacher experiences

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Introduction

> I think probably one of the biggest challenges is, as a teacher you have, I think, the strongest connections with the child. The relationship you have with the child in the school setting, as the classroom teacher, you really do feel like you know the kid: their personalities, their academics, their social skills. You are the one who really knows them and it can be really difficult sometimes when you think you're doing what's best for them but maybe it's not what other higher administrative decision makers… (trails off) (Redminne).

Redminne feels she knows her children far better than any administrators ever could. She has a relationship with the child. She knows the child and how to teach that child. Yet she expresses her frustration caught between what she thinks the child needs and what those who don't have this relationship are directing her to do. A binary such as this "teacher-administrator" tension can be indicative of a power relationship where one pole is more oppressive and the other pole will be more subservient (Tobin 2000). Similar power-filled narratives, especially about time utilization, were repeated over and over again in my conversations with eight primary grades teachers in a major metropolitan area of the American Southwest as we talked about the joys and challenges that they had experienced in their work with children and families.

Both Grumet's feminist theory and Engestrom's activity theory share a similar focus on relationships and can provide some insight into these tensions and power positions. Grumet's (1988) feminist theory focuses on human relationships, while Engestrom's (1999) theory focuses on activity systems, in this case the activity system of the classroom. This chapter will present each of these theoretical perspectives and will then draw upon their complementary nature to illustrate how primary grades[1] teachers' narratives can help us understand the power relationships in which teachers often find themselves. Finally, a call is made for moving beyond historical dichotomies of power, recognizing the mutual hold these power dynamics have upon each other (Foucault 1980) and for finding ways to better unify classroom activity systems.

Theoretical Perspectives

Grumet (1988) calls upon object relations and psychoanalytic theories in her description of human relationships. First, there is a mutually constructed biological relationship between mother and child. The mother and child have shared the same body, experienced the child's transition of birth, and have provided/received nourishment from the mother's milk and body. As the child grows, she is further influenced by her father as a primary purpose of this relationship is to break apart the child's didactic relationship with her mother and to "claim the child… moving

[1]First three years of elementary school with children ages 5–8 years old (American grades K-2).

to a two-term, cause/effect model, where the father is the cause and the child his effect" (Grumet 1988, p. 16). In curriculum this is translated into a patriarchal project to "claim the child and teach him or her to master the language, the rules, the games, and the names of the fathers" (Grumet 1988, p. 21). This patriarchal project takes form in today's standards-based classrooms, where teachers are required to manage classrooms so that children effectively and efficiently learn to read, write, and do maths. This performance is then expected to lead to high scores on high-stakes accountability testing. Simultaneously, Grumet (1988) described the maternal project as "to relinquish the child so that both mother and child can become more independent of one another" (p. 21).

Engestrom's (1999) activity theory breaks away from the dichotomous nature of Grumet's feminist perspective. While activity theory recognizes a strong dialectical relationship between subject and object (similar to Grumet's mother-child/father-child relationship) it builds upon Vygotsky's (1978) perspective that these relationships are mediated through the use of tools, specifically language and signs. Yet Leont'ev recognized that this subject-object-tools mediation occurs within, is influenced by and influences greater historical and cultural contexts (Barab et al. 2004; Wells 2002). Building upon these ideas, Engestrom expanded Vygotsky's three-pointed relational triangle to include additional nodes of rules, community, and division of labor (Fig. 10.1) (Engestrom 1999; Engestrom and Miettinen 1999; University of Helsinki 2004). All of these nodes relate to each other within a (primary) activity system whose purpose is described as an outcome. In the case of the primary activity system of a classroom, the subject-object relationship is that experienced between the teachers and students and the activity is directed toward the outcome of "learning" (Barab et al. 2004). The school curriculum, adopted curriculum programs, instructional strategies, assessments, and so forth, comprise the tools and artifacts through which the teachers and students mediate the learning outcomes. Other nodes of Engestrom's extended triangle can be seen in the rules and policies that govern the schools, the community of the school and the greater community of parents, taxpayers, and other stakeholders, and the division of labor in the prioritization of work and activities both within the classroom and in teachers' lives outside the classroom (Fig. 10.1).

Furthermore, an activity system is dynamic, always affected by changes in other activity systems and those systems' interactions with each node on the current activity triangle, just as changes within this activity system exert changes on those activity systems.

This connects to another similarity between these two theoretical perspectives. Both theories focus not only on the production of society, but also on the transformation of society (Barab et al. 2004; Engestrom 1999; Engestrom and Miettinen 1999; Grumet 1988). Activity theory seeks to describe how change occurs at two levels: internalization and externalization (Engestrom 1999; Engestrom and Miettinen 1999). Internalization is responsible for the reproduction of culture. As humans relate to each other through the various nodes of the triangle, they are enculturating each other to a sociocultural historic way of being. Externalization occurs as the related activity systems (e.g., governmental agencies, textbook

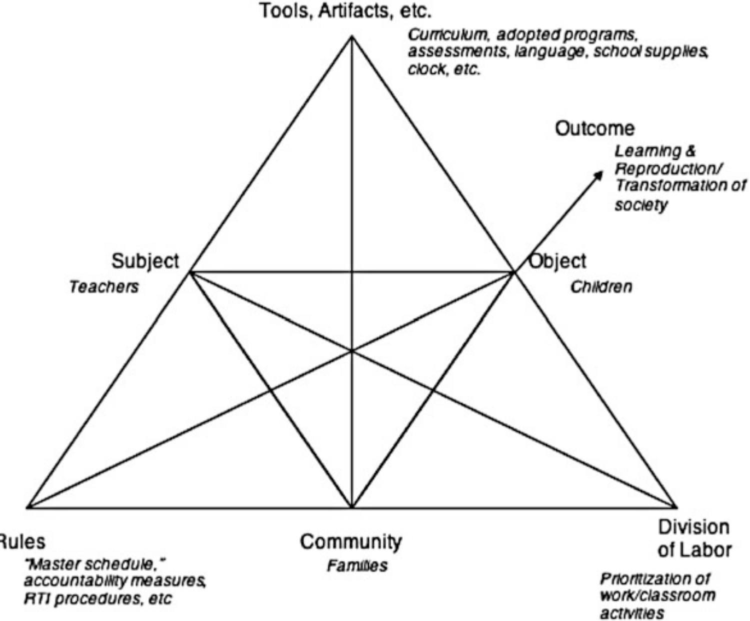

Fig. 10.1 The activity system of the school (Engestrom 1999)

companies, community resources) attempt to exert their influence and change upon that primary activity triangle's nodes. For example, new tools are created and new rules are implemented. Those new tools or new rules are interconnected to all elements of the triangle, thus affecting change throughout the system. Not only is there a dialectical relationship between the subject and object in activity theory, but also that dialectical relationship exists between the various nodes (internalization) and between activity systems (externalization) as the new tools are created, new rules implemented, etc. Furthermore, there is a dialectical relationship between the processes of internalization and externalization, as humans seek to simultaneously maintain and transform their current sociocultural historical systems. The impetus for these transformations can be described by analyzing conflicts that occur both within the activity system and between activity systems.

Grumet (1988) takes the phrase "reproduction of society" as a literal interpretation. She argues, "what is most fundamental to our lives as men and women sharing a moment on this planet is the process and experience of reproducing ourselves" (Grumet 1988, p. 4). We do this biologically through procreation. We do this socially as we recreate society through transmission of social and cultural ideologies, values, and practices (similar to activity theory's "internalization"). And we do this critically, as we attempt to create for our children a better childhood than we had, a better life, and a better way of being (similar to activity theory's "externalization"). I believe that it is this critical element of reproduction that is the

spirit of school reform. We are attempting to create for children of today a better childhood and a better life with more opportunities than other children "like them" have had in the past. However, Weiler (1988) has indicated that previous (and current) projects actually seek to reproduce society as it currently stands, maintaining the power of the patriarchal domain and more specifically the current social structures not only of gender, but also of race and class. Perhaps its best contemporary example in the United States is a national project whose stated goal is to change that status quo.

The reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, or the "No Child Left Behind" (NCLB) Act, has a stated primary purpose to transform society by closing the achievement gap between minority and white middle/upper income children (U.S. Department of Education 2002, 2005). To this point, most of its emphasis has been directed toward accountability for results on high-stakes tests and the emphasis on best teaching practices (Zemelman et al. 2005). The control of these elements has been very much in alignment with the paternal project, as described by Grumet (1988). Stress has been placed on foundational reading and math skills (National Institute of Child Health and Human Development 2000) and high priority has been given to those teaching methods that have followed the traditional scientific process that demonstrate a technical-rational cause and effect. Given these classroom controlling methods that have been traditionally used to reproduce society and maintain the status quo, one has to wonder how they can now be used to transform an inequitable education system. There are, in fact, many critiques of its ability to do so (Darling-Hammond 2007; Freeman 2005; Furumoto 2005; Haas et al. 2005; Hursh 2007; Nichols and Berliner 2007; Ravitch 2010; Welner 2005).

Both Grumet's (1981) feminist theory and Engestrom's (1999) activity theory have noted that transformation of society, especially within the schools has been a one-sided process to this point. This begins with an important connection between Grumet's delineation between the private and public worlds in feminist theory and the relationship between the primary activity system of the classroom and constituent related activity systems. In feminist theory, it has been noted that women's experiences with children have traditionally been relegated to the private domains, as they were responsible for the upbringing of the children at home (Grumet 1981). Even when they were seen as the "best suited" to educate children in school, it was because of their "domesticity, self-sacrifice, and submissiveness" (Cannella 2002, p. 141), not for the work they had been accomplishing for centuries in homes. Furthermore, traditionally it has been women who work everyday attempting to negotiate back and forth between these public and private worlds. Women nurture children at home and then send them off to school to become enculturated into the patriarchal project. This is similar to the work that teachers (subjects) do within the primary activity system of the classroom. The classroom activity system has been a private domain where teachers toil interacting with, influenced by and controlled by the public patriarchal structures such as externally developed standards, adopted programs, governmental policy and labor practices while building relationships

with children and nurturing the children's growth and development so these children can then be successful in the public world upon graduation (if not before).

From a feminist standpoint, therefore, the emphasis on school reform has only been through the theoretical father's public practices of science, calculation, and best practices (Osgood 2006). What has become of the maternal project as teachers care for and nurture the children and work to create learning environments where children have choice and are empowered? In schools, teachers are fulfilling the objectives of the standards and policy while attempting to create caring communities of learners.

The practices of this private activity system of the classroom have remained just that, private. Women's work in schools has been "work that is hidden" and that there is something about that work that has "prohibited our speaking of it" (Grumet 1988, p. xi). Grumet and others (Kozol 2007; Ladson-Billings 1994; Miller 1990, 2005) call for teachers and their lived experiences in the classroom to be the agents of change in transformation of the schools. Additionally, Engestrom (1999) calls for researchers to enter "actual activity systems undergoing such transformations" (p. 35) to uncover how transformation is taking place. This chapter is drawn from a study that entered into the classroom activity systems of eight primary grades teachers in search of their narratives connecting to these questions: How do teachers mediate between contemporary policies and local practices governing their professional lives? What do teachers do in their daily lives that help them to navigate between the public spaces of curriculum, policy, the community, division of labor, and the private spaces of their classroom activity systems?

Methodology

Of the eight participating teachers in this research project, four were kindergarten teachers (5–6 year old children), three taught first grade (6–7 year olds), and one teacher taught in a multiage Montessori classroom for children aged 5–9 years old. Three teachers taught in schools that were in higher income neighborhoods. Three teachers taught in a school with a great deal of economic, cultural, and linguistic diversity, which received some supplementary resources from federal sources. The final two teachers taught in schools that were designated as low-income, high needs and which received full federal supplementary support. Seven of the teachers were female and one teacher, a kindergarten teacher at a higher income school, was male. While, these eight teachers bring with them their own histories and experiences that are not necessarily representative of all teachers in all settings, their narratives here provide some insight on what teachers in this space and time are experiencing under current school reform measures.

I interviewed the teachers three times: once at the very beginning of the school year and then twice more after each of two classroom observation sessions, beginning each interview with an open-ended question such as "Tell me about your classroom joys and challenges". These classroom observation sessions had the dual

purpose of providing context and discussion points for our interview conversation. The observations also provided me with valuable triangulation data for trustworthiness of interview data. I recorded all of the interviews and then transcribed them for later analysis.

When analyzing the data, I first focused on identifying larger subsets of the teachers' narratives pertaining to the research questions. Then I examined these data subsets for particular linguistic details that appeared important in the situated meanings of that text. This analysis also included "looking awry" at the text (Tobin 2000; Zizek 1991) searching for such elements as aporias, performative texts, intersexualities, slips, binaries, and enthymemes. I then used Gee's (2005) 26 building task questions, especially those pertaining to "building activity" (p. 111), as guides in discovering patterns and themes within that particular text. I analyzed these patterns and themes alongside the guiding theoretical perspectives discussed earlier leading to working hypotheses. I then compared these working hypotheses to the research questions, other common themes, the context, and other elements of the text until the hypotheses and data had ran their course.

I then returned to the larger set of data to see how typical that small piece of data was and if the newly emerging theory could be supported or refuted. The task was then to find and analyze other examples and counterexamples in the larger data. This process was continued until analysis reached redundancy and no new theories, examples, or counterexamples could be found in relation to the research questions of this project.

Teachers' Stories of Time and Relationships

One of the biggest joys in these teachers' lives is their relationships with their students. In response to the question "What are your biggest joys in working with children and families?" Juliecarol[2] stated simply, "Getting to know these children." Similarly, Artshopper stated, "I just think the kids and getting to know them and them getting to know you and just how it becomes something really special." Both of these teachers are illustrating the special relationship and connection that mothers feel with their children that Grumet (1988) describes as, "The child is mine. This child is me" (p. 10). Juliecarol strives to know her children and Artshopper wants to not only know her children but also have her children know her. By seeking this reciprocity from the children they are creating one condition of care (Noddings 1984).

Further demonstrating this caring relationship through reciprocity is the joy that MariaM8311875 stated:

[2]Each teacher created his or her own pseudonym for this project and all names and places also utilize pseudonyms.

> Of course, the ah-ha moments when their eyes light up that they've caught something really great, but along with that, though, over the years I've had several children that have been scared of school. That's my own personal background, being really terrified of first and second and third grade. So to have them relax and their parents relax and have them really enjoy school is really special.

MariaM8311875 feels the "ah-ha" moments with the children, but what's just as important is that she reaches within her heart's memories to help children overcome similar fears she faced as a child further describing Grumet's (1988) maternal connection.

Kinderpal and neiivxs[3] also focus on this deeper understanding and engrossment with children:

> Getting a kid to realize that all those thoughts they had about themselves were wrong and the real treasure inside of them is something they can find if they just know how to look for it (Kinderpal).

> It's gotta be when I see a child realize that they have potential, that they have value. Part of that comes through in the classroom just between the child and myself (neiivxs).

Both of these teachers find their own joys in getting a "child/kid [to] realize" what is inside of that child once again bringing to mind Grumet's (1988) citing of Strasser in "the very possibility of my thought, of consciousness, rests upon the presence of a 'you' for whom I exist" (p. 7). For Kinderpal and neiivxs, their joy rests upon the students' self-realization of potential and treasure.

Yet there is the remaining part of the maternal responsibility which is to prepare the child for the world of the father (Grumet 1988). This was apparent for Wrigleymama as she stated her joy is knowing that each day it is "going to be something new and different and then just seeing when a child struggles with something and then finally that light bulb moment when it clicks." That "light bulb moment" is indicative of attaining the skills and knowledge of the outside world, the world away from the home. Grumet (1988) connects these skills and the knowledge of the outside world with the patriarchal project to "claim the child and teach him or her to master the language, the rules, the games, and the names of the fathers" (p. 21). Thus, Wrigleymama's greatest joy is connected to curriculum's maternal project "to relinquish the child so that both mother and child can become more independent of one another" (p. 21).

Redminne echoes this ultimate maternal project of curriculum in her initial statement of what brings her joy. Yet she brings another element into her statement:

> One of my favorites is when I see children enjoying what they are learning and making progress and celebrating small achievements that they make along the way and being able to share that with their families. And working together with their families to support what's happening in the classroom and help them make those progress jumps at home, too.

Redminne celebrates children's "small" successes with the patriarchal project and takes this celebration further by sharing these successes with the child's family.

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[3]This teacher has specified her name always be lower case and read as "anyone for tennis".

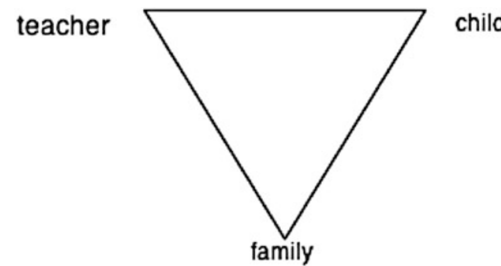

Fig. 10.2 Maternal-based relationships

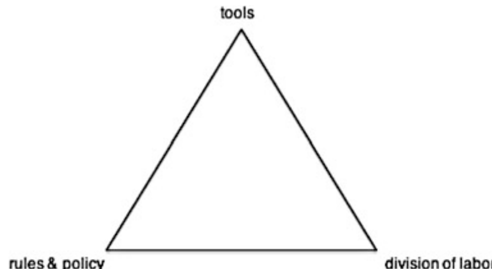

Fig. 10.3 Outer triangle of activity system (patriarchal project of schooling)

Thus, she is expanding the child-teacher relationship to include the child's family. This creates a triad relationship as the preliminary maternal-type relationship between the teacher and the child, the role of the family (Fig. 10.2).

Referring again to Grumet's (1988) statement of the aim of the patriarchal project, in order for the children to learn this language, rules, games, and names of the fathers, the schools use tools, such as curriculum, adopted programs, instructional strategies, the academic language of schools; they must have rules and policies on how to accomplish the tasks; and they must have some way in which to divide the labor in order for the task to be fulfilled. These points of instruction correspond to outer nodes on the activity theory triangle (Barab et al. 2004; Engestrom 1999; University of Helsinki 2004) (Fig. 10.3).

Teachers' descriptions of classroom practices included many aspects of the patriarchal project across the activity triangle. For Redminne the tools of the patriarchal project included the curriculum map and the clock:

> I think it just comes down to when you're the teacher, you're in the real world. Our classroom is not a (curriculum) map. It's not "You do this for five minutes." These are real kids.

The curriculum map regulates what is taught and the clock regulates the time in which children have to learn that curriculum. For MariaM8311875, in her Montessori classroom children use time and the clock to regulate their self-directed use of instructional time:

> We talk about the fact that picking up a work, taking it to your table, looking at it and putting it back really isn't a work. It takes a certain amount of concentrated time to do a

> work well, and to learn from it and it's usually 20 to 30 min about. If you get really engrossed it might be longer.

Another tools-time connection for neiivxs was paperwork, lesson planning, and communicating with families:

> Paperwork, time - there's never enough time - not enough time to collaborate, dealing with other colleagues, not enough time to plan a lesson plan, whether it's a day or a unit, not enough time to call parents.

For Artshopper, the fast pace needed to implement tools of curriculum, lesson planning, and assessments is a major driving force in her classroom:

> My classroom activities – just that all kids need to be performing in a certain level by this date, whenever mid-DIBELS assessment is given. I don't wanna teach them the test or anything like that, but it does drive a lot of the activities obviously that I've planned which is good because those are the standards I'm supposed to be teaching anyway. I think it plays a part in everything (pause) and just everything is just so rigorous now that I feel like things have to be a lot more fast-paced so that I can fit everything in.

Artshopper is also touching upon the rules of her classroom. Teachers are required by state, district and school policies to teach specific standards, using specific curriculum maps, adopted programs and materials, and to assess children's progress with specified assessments. In fact, Artshopper states her anxiety at being 15 min behind schedule according to the school's block schedule and has already created mental scripts of how her children "working with playdough or something" aligns to "what the (adopted program) is telling me to do" should someone enter her classroom and question her seeming noncompliance to policy.

For Janecrayon it's all about "packing it in there." She states that specific policies have made her a more focused teacher with less cutesy, artsy, play-based activities:

> There's not much time for that. You have to do 90 minutes of core reading; you have to do 30 or 60 minutes of interventions; you have to get some math accomplished; you have do the (specified instructional) strategies things. Your day kind of goes really quick and you learn to piggyback.

These policies regulated the work/learning schedule of the school day and year and are also connected to how labor is divided in the classroom. The day and year are divided into time to work in specific content areas with adopted programs' activities specified for particular intervals. When attempting to manage the labor in and outside the classroom teachers mentioned being "pulled in a million different directions" (Wrigleymama), "trying to suck watermelon through a straw" (Kinderpal), "stuck in a whirlpool…juggling and in motion" (Artshopper), and "this horrible imbalance" (neiivxs).

Thus, a unifying theme drawing together the three outer nodes of the classroom activity system (the patriarchal project of schooling) is time: how teachers implement policies dividing the labor of regulating instruction and learning toward specified standards using required classroom tools and materials. However, teachers

Fig. 10.4 The joining of maternal nodes with patriarch project "time" unity

are often in conflict between what the patriarchal project requires and what their relationships with children tell them:

> I wanna do what's best for kids, and I wanna do what's expected of me, and what's laid out as good practice and everything by the people above me. But at the same time, it conflicts sometimes with what I think might be best for a student… (Artshopper).

As teachers related frequent narratives entwining "time" with tools, rules, and the division of labor and how these time-combined nodes interacted with their relationships with their students and the students' families, this power relationship between maternal relationships and the paternal project of school takes on a hierarchical shape (Fig. 10.4).

In fact, if one were to draw a line from the top of the pyramid, the position of the patriarchal project of schooling where the nodes of tools, rules, and division of labor are united by the theme of time, to the middle of the maternal relationship triangle formed by the subject (teacher), object (students), and community (family), the resulting line would resemble a Panopticon as described by Foucault (1977, 1980). In this new Panopticon the control of time in classrooms is that tower looking into each cell of the maternal relationships between teachers, students, and families. Some examples of the Panopticon's actions were found in the teacher narratives. These included descriptions of walk-though checklists performed by administrators that inspect classrooms for standards in alignment with mandated curriculum mapped to the moment; for learning time spent with fidelity to adopted curriculum activities and instructional strategies; student on-task behaviors to make each minute of learning count; and Artshopper's prepared mental script ready to answer their challenges.

Moving Forward

This chapter used Grumet's feminist theory and Engestrom's activity theory to question how teachers mediate between contemporary policies and local practices governing their professional lives and what teachers do in their daily lives that help

them to navigate between the public spaces of curriculum, policy, the community, division of labor, and the private spaces of their classroom activity systems. Although one of the benefits of activity theory is its move away from a dichotomous view of relationships constituted in the patriarchal project, the analysis of these teachers' narratives repositions the patriarchal project of schooling, and maternal relationships in an apparent dichotomous, hierarchical position. To the contrary, the classroom is a whole activity system where nodes are in constant dynamic relationship with each other. Currently the public, patriarchal space of curriculum and policy and how labor is divided regulates the manner in which teachers are required to interact with the children. It is the position of power. While education reform movements have been focused on accountability measures, most especially in control of what happens in classrooms, the relationships between teachers, children, and families have been subverted and marginalized, putting nodes of the activity system in conflict with each other and upsetting the balance of the activity system. One way forward is to work to equalize these forces, acknowledging the importance of the teacher-child-family relationships and encouraging the empowerment of teachers', children's, and family members' perspectives in the ongoing daily lives of the classroom.

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Chapter 11
Engaging with Feminist Poststructuralism to Inform Gender Equity Practice in Early Childhood Classrooms in Pakistan

Audrey D'Souza Juma

Abstract This chapter focuses on teachers' engagement with feminist poststructuralist theory to inform gender equity practice in early childhood classrooms in Pakistan. While feminism as a construct has received much criticism in the context of Pakistan as being a Western construct and therefore unsuited to the needs of Pakistani society and classrooms; this chapter shows that when teachers are provided an opportunity to use this framework to inform gender practice it opens possibilities for challenging discursive practices in early childhood classrooms in Pakistan. This chapter provides examples of shifts in teacher's classroom practices and the construction of new understandings of gender. Dominant discourses circulating in Pakistani early childhood classrooms view gender as essentialist and biological sex as the prerequisite and thus dictate how gender is performed. In addition, limited access to performances of gender in the Pakistani society and early childhood classrooms, leave children with ingrained ways of being that are fixed and rigid. Merely changing storylines or offering alternatives can be a risky business especially if it does not take into account what exists at the core, in the case of Pakistan, the religious discourses circulating which dictate what is (im)moral and which speak into existence only certain ways of being. By working with feminist poststructuralism, this chapter shows how teachers participating in action research in early childhood classrooms in Karachi, Pakistan were able to disrupt essentialist discourses. Engaging in feminist poststructuralism helped teachers raise questions regarding the possibilities of gender equity work and what could be construed as permissible and appropriate in a patriarchal context such as Pakistan.

Keywords Gender equity · Early childhood · Feminist poststructuralism · Teacher engagement · Discourses

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Introduction

Gender equity has not received much attention in Pakistan. While the country struggles to provide access to education for girls and to achieve gender parity at a national level, gender practice within classrooms remains a neglected area. Understandings of gender and its significance in children's lives are limited and remain invisible in policy and curriculum documents. Likewise, teacher education courses do not focus on the effects of gender on children's ways of being or how to use a gender lens to work with children.

This chapter focuses on teachers' engagement with feminist poststructuralist theory to inform gender equity practice in early childhood classrooms in Pakistan. It also highlights shifts in teachers' understandings as they trouble constructions of gender through engaging in action research in early childhood classrooms in Karachi, Pakistan. Engaging in feminist poststructuralist theory helped teachers raise questions regarding the possibilities of gender equity work and what could be construed as permissible and appropriate in a patriarchal context where religious discourses have a place of centrality in people's lives.

Engaging teachers with feminisms of any kind in Pakistan is problematic, as the very construct 'feminism' is highly contested and debated as being anti-religious. While some scholars, especially some women, see feminism as a way forward without compromising religion, others see feminism as against religion and critique feminists along the lines that feminists tend to see religion as something that has a subordinating power (Hashim 1999). Feminism is viewed with mistrust, purporting that there is no place for feminism in Islam as the very notion implies that the sexes are unequal, which is not the case. Feminism is also viewed as a Western concept and something that women in the Western world have strived for; to fight the unequal treatment meted out to them by their male counterparts, whereas the tenets of Islam, the Quran, the Hadith and *Sunnah* are said to teach about women's rights. However, because gender practices in many countries are inequitable, misinterpretations and incorrect perspectives emerge amongst the West regarding women's status in Islam. Barlas (2002) argues that it is because "critics" see the Quran as "a patriarchal or misogynistic text" (p. 1) that they interpret it to mean that women are sexually unequal. She, however, claims that "the Quran's epistemology is inherently antipatriarchal" (Barlas 2002, p. 2) and should thus be read in this way. Anwar (2006) too, calls for Muslim women to "dismantle the patriarchal elements of Muslim culture that shape their thinking, life and knowledge" (p. 5). Both Barlas (2002) and Anwar (2006) claim that Islam is rooted in egalitarian principles in which women's rights are upheld. Anwar (2006) notes that the inherent equality of the sexes is visible in that both are created equal and out of the same *nafs* (self). Thus, "the Quran treats woman as an individual in the same manner as it treats man as an individual" (Wadud 1999, p. 63). Implicit within this claim is that in the eyes of God, a person's *amal* (deeds) distinguishes him/her from the other and not sex or gender.

These readings of the Quran, however, are on the margins rather than the centre, with majority interpretations privileging patriarchal readings. This has moved

Anwar (2006) to state that "the production of knowledge regarding women's issues has been gendered" (p. 24). Within Pakistan's historical past too, feminism has been severely criticized. General Zia's[1] era is marked as the most oppressive era for women in the history of Pakistan. Zia's policies of control were most felt by women who were constructed as 'Westernized' and were seen as a threat to patriarchy (Jafar 2005). It is against this backdrop that twelve women teachers came together to look for possibilities of promoting gender equity and to challenge discursive gender practices in their respective early childhood classrooms.

Working with Feminist Poststructuralist Theory

Feminist poststructuralism has offered ways in which we can think about "changing existing power relations between women and men in a society" (Weedon 1987, p. 1). It refers to a connection between language, social institutions and individual consciousness through which power flows and, therefore, poststructuralism "offers a useful, productive framework for understanding the mechanisms of power in our society and the possibilities of change" (Weedon 1987, p. 10). Thus, "matters of gender and a commitment to change are of central concern" within poststructuralism (Blaise 2005, p. 15).

MacNaughton (1998) states that the belief embodied within this feminism is that gender inequalities are ingrained in society because society upholds a 'correct' way of being male or female which is embedded in a 'gender order' that is patriarchal and values masculinity over femininity. Blaise and Taylor (2012) corroborate this view in their claim that "Gender discourses are more than ideas and beliefs about what it means to be female or male" (p. 90). They see discourses as a way of regulating individuals. This is because embedded within every society are behaviours which are considered 'normal' or 'natural' (p. 90), and it is within which individuals must position themselves.

Feminist poststructuralists use many poststructuralist concepts to make sense of gender and why gender inequity exists. MacNaughton (2000) states that by using the concepts of discourse,[2] power[3] and subjectivity,[4] there is a possibility of leaving behind essentialist accounts of gender, since these concepts assume gender to be a social construct rather than an essentialist one.

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[1]The "chief architect of the state-sponsored Islamization in Pakistan" (Jamal 2005, p. 54), Zia's regime lasted from 1977 to 1988.

[2]Discourses have been defined by MacNaughton (2000) as the "historically and culturally specific categories through which we give meaning to our lives, practise our lives, invest emotionally in our lives and constitute our social structures" (p. 50).

[3]According to Foucault, power is "exercised rather than possessed", it is everywhere and is not something that can be acquired or held by any one person or group, but is 'manifested' and 'exercised' in different ways (Foucault 1977, p. 26).

[4]The "subject position" an individual takes up within a chosen discourse (Weedon 1987).

Using Feminist Poststructuralism as a Framework to Inform Gender Practice

This participatory action research was undertaken in Karachi, Pakistan with an aim of reconceptualising teachers' roles in promoting gender equity in early childhood classrooms. Feminist poststructuralism provided possibilities for challenging discursive practices in early childhood classrooms in Pakistan. Our group of 12 early childhood practitioners 'troubled' gender practices, thereby constructing alternative 'knowledge' about how gender could be 'done' in the Pakistani context. As a group we desired to understand the effects of gender in our own lives and in the lives of the children and to disrupt the inequalities in gender practices that we saw in our practices. Gender equity as a construct was also 'imperfectly understood' as we struggled to determine how this could come to be defined in our particular context and in our work in an Islamic Republic. Action research provided us the methodology through which we could collaborate to bring about change at a 'community', 'organizational' and 'personal' level (Brydon-Miller et al. 2003, p. 14). Each of the twelve early childhood practitioners worked on an individual project around gender equity.

At the beginning of the project, essentialist discourses of gender were predominant with all the teachers locating themselves within this discourse. This discourse was expressed through two main truths that the teachers upheld in my early discussions with them: (1) that a person's biological sex determined gender, and, (2) that women had been created the weaker sex. The uncertainty of whether men should be privileged based on being the stronger sex emerged in many of the gender discourses that the teachers took up, and these discourses could be traced to religious discourses. The truth upheld was that God had created the sexes differently, one weaker, the other stronger, and division of labour was because of this difference. The imbalance in the gendered social order was testimony of this truth. The uncertainties and the 'truths' upheld regarding gender were evident in teachers' classroom practices. The essentialist reading of gender constructed human beings as born with certain genitals and this determined a person's gender. The teachers upheld the supremacy of men and pointedly framed men as being designated their position by God based on religious discourses which were firmly ingrained as truths. Essentialist discourses of women created as the weaker sex were taken up by teachers who viewed a person's sex as inscribed on their body, and because of this, the two sexes were seen as oppositionally different. Visible within this truth were notions that tasks assigned to men and women were according to their physical strength and their sex. Some tasks were seen as totally inconceivable in society because of one's sex:

> Look, there is some work in our society that we just cannot do equally. There is some physical work that women in our society cannot do even if they wanted to, some things have just not developed in our society (Naz)

The social order maintained and established what was (im)permissible. Sex was, therefore, inscribed through the body and spoke into existence the boundaries for women and men. Women as the weaker sex were in need of *support* and *help* from men. Men were created physically stronger than women, and God was seen as the writer of this discourse, creating human beings and their physical structures and, therefore, writing over their bodies what was permissible and what was not. Teachers thus privileged the claim that 'differences' between women and men are 'a function of nature/biology'. This truth claim vied for power as a gender discourse and operated not only to govern and shape constructions of gender within this study, but within many Muslim societies, including Pakistan. This investment in discourses of essentialism meant that there were certain performances of gender that were specific to each sex and were based on functions of nature or biology and the sexed body. The gender discourses circulating in the Pakistani society in general, and in the early childhood classrooms specifically had implications for gender equity work with children and defined the boundaries of what became (im)possible to achieve whilst working for gender equity in these classrooms.

Shifts in Teachers' Classroom Practices and Constructions of New Understandings of Gender

It was through the action research meetings that we began to raise questions and discuss gender, as a social construction and how power operated through discourses in society.

In a conversation we had at the third action research meeting, Naz talked about men engaging in what she deemed 'feminine' ways. This raised questions for us regarding what we meant by constructs such as 'to be man' or 'to be a woman'. We talked about the social construction of gender and how constructions of hegemonic masculinity were specific to certain eras and cultures. The conversation below highlights these constructions:

> Audrey: Interesting, what does it mean for us 'man banaa' or 'woman banaa'? (being/becoming a man or a woman).
> Haseena: Ya, I was about to ask this; in fact, she (Naz) said that he (a man constructed by Naz to be feminine) dyes (his hair), he does facials, he does this. I know that with our culture (men do not do so) anyhow; now bridegrooms go to the parlours.
> (everyone laughs, talking together)
> Everything is there, but according to daily routines, like according to month-wise schedules like we ladies go for the eyebrows and for the threading and waxing whatever; men they don't go-usually.
> (group agrees)
> Only the poor fellows who are getting married (they go) (mockingly) (everyone laughs).
> Audrey: These days the trend is changing; men do go.
> Group: Ya, exactly.

> Haseena: But is it about gender or about sex? Going for facials, what is it? I wanted to ask you; Is it about gender? Should there be this equality or does it have an effect on a man's masculinity? Does a problem occur with it?
> Audrey: I personally think culture defines that because there are many cultures; or even in the past if you see, it wasn't (only) women who did fashion and make up and things, it was men who wore frilly outfits (Haseena: Ya). Right up to the 1800s I think (Haseena: Ya) it was men who had high heeled shoes (Haseena: Ya). It was men who put (on) make up… (In the background: Shakespeare's dramas, agreement in the group) the clothes, the long hair was not women, was not defined for women. It's only with changing times and trends changing that now it is women who are associated with these things. So it's something for us to think about.
> Haseena: Well, I personally feel that if a man wants to look good, then I don't think so it's a problem, but like I'm talking to you, my hands are moving about; now in the way he talks this should not come (moving his hands a lot).
> Nazneen: Nor in his physical appearance.
> Haseena: (continues) Otherwise, if he wants to keep himself well and if he wants to look good.
> Meera: But, no change must be seen.
> Haseena: Ms, no, look a clean and tidy face (starts laughing).
> (everyone laughing)

At another such meeting, the teachers deliberating on God's intent of ensuring equity for women and men regardless of biological sex stated that equity was always intended and if this was not a case there would be a separate heaven and hell based on gender:

> If equity was not there, there would be a different heaven and hell for men and women.

However, the possibilities for engaging in gender work was not without risk; teachers risked being ostracized for disrupting discursive practices of society, especially those practices which had roots in religious interpretation. Given that gender is such a contentious topic with emotional overtures linked to religious interpretations, the risk associated could be fatal. While poststructuralist theory provided the framework from within which the teachers and I could understand our own subjugation as urban women from a particular context, we knew that only some truths could be imagined while others could not be spoken and had to remain obscure in our work.

Teachers continued planning lessons to ensure equity, challenging and disrupting what it meant to be a boy or girl in this society, shifting within/above our own constructions of gender. In what follows below, I provide examples from Maham's classroom of her attempt to afford alternative positionings for women that were beyond essentialist discourses of domesticity.

Constructing 'Femininity'

Maham used stories as a way to promote gender equity in her classroom. She attempted to construct stories around the inclusion of girls in what was seen as male

terrain and this was an important departure from normalizing discourses. She also tried to provide children with alternative positionings for women and men that disrupted taken for granted ways of being and challenged dominant discourses circulating in society. Both the girls and the boys in Maham's classroom had seen women and men positioned in particular ways, especially in the *muhallah's* (neighbourhood) where they lived. Men for example were positioned as in control, decision makers, heads of the family, capable, risk takers and occupants of the public domain, while women were seen as subservient, obedient to a man's will, passive, needing a man's support, fearful and confined within the domestic domain. These predefined constructions of women and men based on biological sex were manifested in children's responses and the ways in which they themselves positioned women and men. In the vignette below, the girls in Maham's classroom positioned women within discourses of domesticity and insisted that the only tasks a woman was capable of were '*Jharoo/poocha*' (Sweeping and mopping).

Maham read with the children the story *Amazing Grace* by Mary Hoffman. She renamed the character Grace, Rani. She narrated how brave Rani was and how she wanted to do great things; she wanted to be Spiderman and Tarzan. Rani wanted to participate in dramas and act and sing. After Maham read the story, she asked the children questions. Here is how the conversation unfolded:

Maham: Ok, now tell me, what work can girls do?
Girl: Jharoo poocha.
Maham: Yes, they do jharoo poocha - What else?
Girl: Wash utensils.
Maham (somewhat irritably): What else can they do?
Girl: They can do big things.
Maham: What big things can they do?
Iqra: They can work in the circus.
Maham: Ok, they can work in the circus…and?
Girl: They work on TV.
(asks Umer)
Umer: They sew clothes.
Maham: Clothes are sewn by boys as well. Have you seen boys sewing clothes? And?
Girl: Wash clothes.
Maham: Boys also wash clothes. Haven't you seen boys washing clothes?
Girl: They can sweep.
Maham: And?
Girl: Cars.
Maham: They can drive.
Girl: They can fly planes
Maham (pleased): Yes, they fly planes.

The persistence of the boys and girls in her classroom in revoking the storyline that Maham was offering frustrated her. She desired a shift in the children, yet all that children afforded was resistance. Both girls as well as boys in her classroom insisted that the work that girls did was sweeping, mopping, cleaning and sewing.

The limited access of subject positions available to women meant that constructing women in any other way except in domestic chores was difficult. Poverty

and lower socio-economic backgrounds were the reasons the teachers ascribed to children constructing womanhood in narrow ways. Teachers felt that belonging to a higher social class meant there were more possibilities to access multiple forms of femininity that were unavailable to children from lower socio-economic backgrounds. For this reason children from less privileged communities could not imagine constructions of gender in any other way than what they had access to in their own communities in the form of traditional roles and professions such as being housewives and teachers.

Maham continued working with stories to offer alternative positionings for women so as to disrupt essentialist discourses. Maham chose the story *Princess Smartypants* by Babette Cole, which she renamed 'Shazadi Sonia'. This story is about a princess who is both rich and beautiful, but does not want to marry. The princess sets tasks for her suitors that are impossible to achieve so that she will not have to marry. All the children in Maham's classroom refused to accept this story line and insisted that they wanted to marry when they grew up implying that Sonia would eventually have to marry. Both the girls and the boys positioned themselves within discourses where heterosexual marriage was essential and proper.

In the discussion at the end of the story, the girls voiced their desire to marry, while boys looked at marriage as something that had to be performed. For the boys, marriage was linked with other material elements such as buying a scooter. One boy talked about buying a scooter and marrying someone, as though both were linked. The feminist elements within the story of women's independence, women making decisions regarding marriage, not being dependent on a man for survival were thus lost. Instead cultural and religious discourses took precedence such as women not having an existence without men and marriage being an important duty. For the children it no longer mattered that Sonia had a voice and could choose/not choose who to marry. The truth that all the children upheld was that marriage was vital and no matter how Maham phrased her question, the answers showed a desire to marry.

In the vignette below we see boys' awareness of the power that circulated, whereby they held a privileged position as opposed to girls. In her discussion with children after the story, Maham asked the children which of them did not want to marry:

Maham: Ok, who does not want to marry?
Children (in chorus): I want to marry. I will also marry.
Umer: Miss, miss, (I) have married three times.
Maham: He has already married three times.
(everyone talking)
Maham: Let's ask Umer who he has married three times.
Umer: Mamu got it done.
Maham: With whom have you been married (thrice)? Tell us their names. You would know the names (of those) you are married to.
(Umer does not respond)
Maham: Do they stay with you at home?
Umer: They stay at Nani's place.
Maham: They don't live in your home? Are they big or small, your brides?
Umer: They are big.

Umer produced an alternate truth to marriage showing his awareness of the power that circulated, whereby men held a privileged position and could assert this privilege in their choice of marriage partners. Therefore, for Umer, not only was marriage a truth but he could be polygamous in marriage. When we reflected on this incident in the debriefing session later, Maham talked about the religious discourses available to children whereby marriage is a *sunnat* (duty) within which heterosexual marriage/s are vital. Hence, children positioned themselves within these religious discourses. There was no place for any alternative positioning outside this discourse within which children could operate. The regime of truth upheld through discourses of heterosexuality systematically regulated the subjects who were not only silenced to any other ways of being, but also sanctioned in the process if they accepted any other truth.

In a context such as Pakistan it would be challenging and risky for Maham to tell children that remaining unmarried, for example was permissible, because current dominant religious discourses in Pakistan uphold marriage as the dominant truth about how good, normal and proper men and women should behave. Maham, therefore had to find spaces within which to manoeuvre around gendered discourses in her stories with the children in her classroom. She did this for example, through opening up with the children the possibilities of women having a career despite marriage, possibilities for women to be thinking subjects rather than passive subordinates of a husband, being inclusive of people who might decide not to marry. Thus, through her stories, she provided alternative gender imaginings, opened gender possibilities of other practices or at least a tolerance in the face of the rigid interpretations available to people that were maintained as truth. Others in the teachers' group also explored gendered discourses with children.

Deconstructing Notions of 'Friends' and 'Friendships'

An example from Naz's classroom demonstrates her attempt to deconstruct notions of heterosexual friendships. Naz's initial lesson on 'friends and friendship' raised many questions for her and challenged her to look at alternatives. Her conviction that boys and girls can be friends irrespective of how society viewed constructs of friendship was evident in her attempt to strip the term 'friend' from sexual overtones. Because she viewed children as innocent, she found it out of bounds for children as young as those in her classrooms to be instilled with ideas relating to sexual connotations of friendships. She attempted to disrupt some of these notions in order to dispel ideas that friendships between the sexes could only have a sexual overture. At the third action research meeting, she reported how her work on forming friendships had fallen to the ground because she had not thought parents would use subtle subversion in their attempt to maintain the gender order and to ensure that children were regulated. She described her first attempt to promote gender equity as follows:

> …when we started gender equity, I was doing an activity on nouns. In that (activity), we were getting them (children) to do birds' names countries' names, and then, at that same time in class I thought, let's ask them their friend's names. So when I asked the boys and the girls, everyone, their friend's names, the boys only told (me) the names of boys and girls took girls' names. Then, I and Ayesha did quite a lot of negotiation with them on this and then we told them the names of our friends, in which some names were of boys and some girls. And then I told them the names of some boys from the class who were friends and some girls' names. With that, the children got motivated a little. They started telling the names that were lacking (missing). Like, that day, I was very happy that children had taken the names (of friends). Then it came to mind that the activity had gone so well and, therefore, let's give it for homework. In class, they had written the names; after doing everything, they got their homework checked the second day.
>
> In that, when we checked the copies, all (emphasis) the names had been changed. We were at once surprised and called the children who speak a lot, like Wasif, Rajab, Kashaf; I called all those children separately and asked them, you had told (me) the names of your friends during the class; why did you not write these in your homework? Then Kashaf told me, 'No, my mother says that boys should not be made friends.'
>
> (Teachers in the background: Yes)
>
> Wasif said, 'My tuition teacher says that it is a bad/wrong thing; you do not make girls a friend; you do not write their names' (Naz).

In the above vignette, Naz pointed out that, within Pakistan, the notion of a friend was negative and implied a *girlfriend* or a *boyfriend*. Because there was segregation at all levels of society based on one's sex, friendships were frowned upon and considering someone from the opposite sex as a friend was not seen positively.[5] Because women were to be protected, to write a girl's name was to invite trouble since the patriarchs in the family were her protectors and could avenge defiling the good name of a girl. In a way this, 'undoing' of gender work pointed to how children were regulated to take up their places within society and to understand the discursive practices of society.

Naz's response to student's subjugation and regulation was to offer children with an alternative way of approaching the scenario:

> Then I thought a lot as to what had happened. Something had gone wrong. Then a thought crossed my mind: we had - in fact, with us too, if we take the name 'girlfriend' in our society, it is not thought to be good. It is not looked upon as good.
>
> In this, I then I psychologically handled the children. From there, I got some boys to stand and some girls to stand. I told them you people are making your teams and you have to give the names of your partners and I told the boys you have to choose from the girls and the girls that you have to choose from the boys (Naz).

The strategy Naz decided to use was of subversion through language; disrupting and challenging how children worked together. She understood how language operated and used it to her advantage, using the term *'partners'* as a neutral word, implying the person sitting beside you or a member of a team. Her strategy met with

[5]While permissible in certain strata of society, friendships are gazed upon by the majority as immoral and impermissible.

success and children worked with their *partners* and overcame the inhibitions that they initially felt. By putting at the core ‘work’, it became permissible for the children to interact. Also children were asked to choose their teams themselves, and this, according to her, was deliberately done to ensure that the children were accountable for their team and team work. She asked the children to name their teams according to flowers or fruit names and this was used to refer to the children throughout. She stated:

> Like, through this thing, I got a very good response. Rajab was the first in my class to write girls’ names and Kashaf, who had said, ‘my mother says you do not make a boy a friend’ and she said that ‘only my brother is my friend’, she, too, chose Rajab. I at once told Rajab, you go and sit with Kashaf. Then there was another girl, Esha in my class; Esha said, ‘I too will take Rajab’ (in my team). So with two girls, I put one boy. There was a girl, she did not allow any boy to sit besides her and used to get angry a lot (with boys) when talk about partners started she too was not taking any boy’s name but when her friend took one of their classmate (in her team) I told her, look you are two girls (in your team) you take one boy and on that she agreed…In this way the teams were made. Now, when I use the term partner the children are not offended (Naz).

Using the term ‘partner’ foregrounded how meanings embedded in language changed for the children and it became acceptable to call each other ‘*partner*’ instead of ‘*girlfriend*’ or ‘*boyfriend*’. Partnerships between the children emerged based on work relationships rather than heterosexual friendships. Children chose partners based on academic excellence. Competition attached to group work and the desire for rewards took precedence; material gains thus dictated partnerships. Naz’s statement that using the word ‘*partner*’ in contrast to the word ‘friend’ had changed the meaning children derived from mixed group settings: ‘they don’t find it offensive’. This raises questions regarding what it meant to work for gender equity in Naz’s class and implies that strategies for gender equity do not work unless they are contextually based and are derived from meanings upheld within society.

Conclusion: Possibilities that Feminist Poststructuralism Can Offer Where Religious Discourses Have Absolute Centrality

For the teachers in this study, disrupting ‘essentialism’ meant that they had to re-read divine discourses that had long been in circulation and that were upheld within the regime of religious patriarchy. This re-reading meant that teachers had to bring under erasure[6] discourses that they had privileged in the past (i.e., of men and women having been created as distinct from each other). As I have discussed, the roots of this discourse were in religious interpretations. Teachers contested that if

[6]The term erasure implies that “a meaning of a specific word/idea/concept is provisional, rather than fixed” (MacNaughton 2005, p. 97).

Allah had placed the same moral responsibilities on men and women, then there must be some elements of similarity between the two which were not necessarily oppositional or polarized.

However, teachers were not willing to totally disrupt 'differences' between the two sexes. This was visible in their active refusal to see constructions of multiple masculinities and femininities and their privileging of hegemonic forms of masculinity. The partial disrupting of essentialism meant that while all children were given equitable opportunities to participate in activities in the classroom irrespective of their sex, there remained boundaries to the positionings of masculinity and femininity made available to them. This meant that alternative and multiple positionings were constrained by these boundaries and, thus, afforded limited subject positions for children, thus limiting the possibilities that feminist poststructuralism could offer in this context.

Further, as quoted by the teachers if the discursive practices of society were to be disrupted, it could not only be through the attempts of one person; rather, there was a need *to change the mentality of everyone to bring this change.* This resonates with Shaheed's (2010) assertion that the struggle for gender equity needs to be waged by the masses instead of "a narrow, numerically small, class-base of the relatively privileged" (p. 856) as has been the practice in Pakistan in the past. The research, thus open avenues on how teachers in the context of Pakistan can challenge discursive practices and work for gender equity from within specific boundaries. It also points to the possibilities of furthering gender research and feminism through offering children and their families multiple ways of understanding and 'doing' gender, thus transcending beyond a '*small, class-base of the relatively privileged*'.

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Chapter 12
Feminism and Early Childhood Education in Indonesia: Teachers' Reflections

Sri Marpinjun and Patricia G. Ramsey

Abstract This chapter describes how early childhood educators and center directors in Yogyakarta, Indonesia responded to a workshop on gender equity. In particular it analyzes how gender-related cultural and legal contradictions are reflected in participants' personal and professional lives. In the past, Indonesian educators have been resistant to gender equity work because the term "feminism" is seen as a western concept and alien to the Indonesian culture. Some also have found the didactic tone and sweeping assumptions of many trainers to be alienating and contradictory to their experiences. Furthermore, some educators believe that gender does not affect the social dynamics of their classrooms. To address these issues, the first author and her colleagues developed an alternative strategy for the workshops described in this chapter. First, the term "gender equity" was initially used to avoid the negative connotations of "feminism." Second, in contrast to a "political approach," the workshops were based on a "psychological approach". In this model, teachers are encouraged to reflect on their lives and the circumstances that have influenced their gender identity, including experiences that have strengthened their capacities and have enabled them to overcome gender conformity and inequities. As participants in the workshops began to understand their own gender-related history and identity, they became aware of others' unique experiences and views. They also began to recognize gender biased behavior and teaching practices in their classrooms and started to develop teaching strategies to create more gender equitable learning environments.

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Introduction: Contexts of the Workshops

Before describing the workshops, we will provide an overview of Indonesian geography, history, national policies, and educational practices that relate to feminism and early childhood education.

Indonesia is a complex country with 17,000 islands and 300 different ethnic groups and languages. These distances and diversities make any educational innovations challenging. Moreover, as with all nations, contradictions in cultural principles and practices create a complex context for teachers who are interested in feminist practices. Despite these obstacles, Indonesia has a strong national commitment to early childhood education and to human rights.

The intersections between gender, culture, and religion play out through policy and practice in everyday life, including early childhood education. The historical and contemporary policy context is influenced by key Indonesian policies that both support and undermine gender equity, as will be discussed later in this section. This chapter will describe the experiences of early childhood educators that participated in workshops that used a "psychological" approach to explore gender roles and equity in early childhood pedagogy. The workshops were based on the belief that feminism:

> seeks a transformation that would create gender equality within an entirely new social order – one in which both men and women can individually and collectively live as human beings in societies built on social and economic equality, enjoy the full range of rights, live in harmony with the natural world and are liberated from violence, conflict and militarisation (Batliwala and Friedman 2011, p. 61).

During the workshops participants reflected on their own childhood and adulthood experiences and how they have influenced their gender-related views and teaching practices. Many of their memories and current beliefs echoed the contradictions and complexities of Indonesian policies, values, and practices.

Indonesia became independent from the Netherlands and Japan on 17 August 1945. In preparation for this change, the founding leaders developed Pancasila, 5 Common Principles to guide the nation during its formation as a nation. These principles included:

1. Belief in the one and only God, (in Indonesian, *Ketuhanan Yang Maha Esa*).
2. Just and civilized humanity, (in Indonesian, *Kemanusiaan Yang Adil dan Beradab*).
3. The unity of Indonesia, (in Indonesian, *Persatuan Indonesia*).
4. Democracy guided by the inner wisdom in the unanimity arising out of deliberations among representatives; to ensure a fair process to reach consensus, (in

Indonesian, *Kerakyatan Yang Dipimpin oleh Hikmat Kebijaksanaan, Dalam Permusyawaratan dan Perwakilan*).
5. Social justice for all of the people of Indonesia, (in Indonesian, *Keadilan Sosial bagi seluruh Rakyat Indonesia*) (Pancasila n.d.).

The Indonesian constitution Undang-undang Dasar (UUD1945) elaborates these principles and stipulates the rights of Indonesian citizens and residents. Chapter X of the UUD1945 states that all citizens and residents are equal before the law and are guaranteed a wide range of human rights, including: the right of children to grow up free of violence and discrimination; freedom of thought, conscience, religion, expression, and association; freedom to choose education, work, and place of residence; freedom from discrimination and coercion on any grounds whatsoever (Constitution of Indonesia n.d.).

Since the time of Independence, Indonesia has joined several international efforts to support women's and children's rights. In 1984, Indonesia ratified the United Nations Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW 1979). This action committed the country to incorporate the principle of equality of men and women in their legal system and to establish tribunals and other public institutions to protect women against discrimination by persons, organizations, or enterprises.

In 1990 Indonesia ratified, and in 2002 accepted into law, the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) that stipulates, among other principles, that nations work to ensure children's healthy development regardless of race, gender, culture, and disability. Indonesia also ratified the UNESCO Dakar Declaration in 2000 on Education for All (EFA). The first of the six goals of the EFA include: "Expanding and improving comprehensive early childhood care and education, especially for the most vulnerable and disadvantaged children"; and "Ensuring that by 2015 all children, particularly girls, children in difficult circumstances and those belonging to ethnic minorities, have access to, and complete, free and compulsory primary education of good quality." Together these goals emphasized the importance of early childhood education and gender equity at all levels of schooling. The ratification of EFA led the Indonesian government to create a directorate of early childhood education (ECE) in the Education Ministry and a special section on ECE in the National Education System law in 2003.

At the same time Indonesia, as evident in the first of the five common Principles, is a religious (not a secular) nation, and Indonesians use their religion (any religion, not only Islam) to define their way of life individually and collectively. The wording "The one and only God" was politically contested in 1945. It refers to Islam, which is the religion of the majority. However, Islamic lobbyists wanted to have "Shariah law" be the Indonesian law. Therefore, the wording which alludes to Islam but also potentially embraces other religions was a compromise. Officially, the state of Indonesia encourages the religious life of all people by providing facilities of each religion, and resolving religion-based conflicts.

Because Indonesia is a religious state, the customs and social life of all citizens are highly regulated by the Marriage Act of 1974 that is based on Islamic and other

religious and cultural principles. It stipulates separate and unequal roles for men and women, particularly when they are married. In Chapter VI, Sect. 31:3 and Chapter VI, Sect. 34 of the Marriage Act. The husband is the head of the household and is obliged to protect his wife and provide every necessity of home life according to his ability. The wife is required to manage the affairs of the household as well as possible. If the husband or wife neglects his/her obligations each can file a lawsuit to the court.

Over the past decades, many women's rights activists have proposed judicial reviews to make changes in this marriage law, but these efforts have mostly failed. For example, recently the High Court of Constitution refused a judicial review to change the minimum marriage age for women from 16 to 18 years (Putri 2015). In their deliberations, the judges in the court based most of their arguments and decisions on religious interpretations. Because most religions espouse the division of roles between husband and wife, these divisions are maintained, and most Indonesians still accept these distinctions. For example, women expect men will be the breadwinner, and men expect women will do all the domestic work.

Thus, like most countries, Indonesian policies embody many contradictions related to gender roles and equity. Indonesia has adopted and actively supported many national and international principles that respect the rights of all human beings, including those of women and children. On the other hand, the nation still upholds traditional laws that maintain gender role divisions of husband and wife through the stipulations of Marriage Law in 1974.

As a result, children growing up in Indonesia and teachers working in schools are pressured by two conflicting principles related to gender equity: first, the expectation that gender roles are distinct and divided, and second, the belief that all people should enjoy equal rights and freedom from discrimination in all spheres of life.

These contradictions were evident in a two workshops on gender equity that the first author and her colleagues conducted in 2015 with early childhood teachers. The following sections describe the workshops and then themes that emerged as teachers reflected on their own lives and their work with children in classrooms.

Description of the Workshops

The first author Sri who has worked in early childhood education in Indonesia for several decades developed the workshops described in this chapter. As we discuss later, she had participated in previous feminist trainings but felt that they had not been effective because they did not engage teachers actively. After Sri designed and facilitated the workshops, she had the transcripts translated into English. Then she and Patricia, the second author, analyzed the data and wrote this chapter. Throughout this process, we had many email "conversations" about the workshops and participants' responses, and Sri wrote several reflections about the contexts of

the workshop and the responses of the participants. We have included a few of them in this chapter.

The workshops were conducted in the spring of 2015 in Yogyakarta, Indonesia. Each one lasted for 5 h and followed a similar format. The participants in the first workshop consisted of ten women who were all early childhood teachers or teaching assistants. The second workshop had ten participants (nine women and one man) that included early childhood teachers, center directors or managers, and instructors in early childhood education. Both workshops were facilitated by the same five facilitators who had been trained by the first author and were all highly experienced early childhood educators who had previously participated in training of trainer programs.

The workshops were developed around a process of self-reflection. This psychological approach is an alternative to the "political approach" that has been used in the past to introduce gender equity. The political approach is more didactic and starts with the assumption that women are oppressed by a patriarchal system (e.g., showing statistics that there are fewer women in the government, that women receive lower wages, and that women are victims of domestic and public violence). This approach works for women who have experienced injustice in their family or work place as they feel understood and protected. However, this approach does not take into consideration the complexities of Indonesian history, laws, and values. Moreover, it rests on the erroneous assumption that all women are in the same situation. Many women have experienced different realities. Despite the constraints of the Marriage Law, they have been able to access and control resources equally with men. Moreover, many men are poor, oppressed and living with very limited access and control. Thus, starting workshops with sweeping statements such as "all women are oppressed" has often led both women and men, to resist the trainers and principles and terms related to gender and feminism.

Sri experienced and observed this political approach many times since the 1980s and noted how it placed participants in subordinate roles, emphasized their histories as victims of gender discrimination, and, in some cases, undermined their confidence and led to less rather than more equitable work relationships. While writing this chapter, she reflected on these experiences in the following statement.

> I think we were using this [political] approach… to convince the participants of our trainings to agree with the gender issues (imbalanced power relations between men and women). That's why the trainers provided information with the expectation that it would be simply accepted, not to reviewed or critiqued. So it was like a brain washing process! The impact of this approach was terrible. Even though they did not really understand gender issues, some participants became afraid of being labeled as "gender biased." This label was particularly detrimental if they were working with women's organizations.

To illustrate these problems, Sri described a particular program in Makassar in the early 2000s that used the political approach. In the first session the facilitator used statistics to demonstrate persistence of the "culture of patriarchy" in Indonesia. She illustrated the ongoing gender discrimination with the example that women were not allowed to put their legs on the table in front of others. The participants felt that these statistics and examples did not make any sense to them and were so

negative that the training almost ended. These negative reactions actually were not really connected with the gender issue promoted by the facilitator, rather, they did not like the way the facilitator was directing them (Mergaert and Lombardo 2014). Sri intervened by using a "psychological" approach and was able to redirect the session. When the participants were encouraged to view gender from their individual perspectives, they were able to see that everyone wants self-development and how homogenizing people along gender lines are harmful to individuals.

In her reflections on these experiences, Sri noted that many trainers are activists and are comfortable with concepts such as the "culture of patriarchy". However, this type of analysis is not meaningful to many teachers who primarily care about their individual/family/work life. So any gender equity work needs to start from that perspective rather than from unfamiliar and abstract concepts such as patriarchy.

In response to these experiences and insights Sri and her colleagues developed workshops based on the psychological approach that encouraged participants to reflect on their experiences and views and to touch their heart feelings. Usually, adults like to talk and share and be respected as resources rather than simply persons who need to be taught. Thus, the workshops we are describing in this chapter were organized to first, encourage participants to share their personal and professional experiences in a nonjudgmental environment; and second, through self-reflection and group discussions to critically reflect on their histories, views about gender roles, and teaching practices. This approach also reflects the principles of a participatory and experiential learning approach: "Gender training will have the most impact and relevance when it is designed for the professional, social and cultural context where it is being conducted… It should also take into account the background and needs of those being trained. Where possible practical examples from participants' own experiences should be used, and there must be enough time to discuss any questions that arise" (EIGE 2012, n.p.). This reflective approach to gender equity is also consistent with current teacher education approaches in other countries such as the United States, Ireland, and Australia (Aina and Cameron 2011; Erden and Wolfgang 2004; Fulmer 2010; MacNaughton 2000; MacNaughton and Williams 2009; Ramsey 2015; Zaman 2008; Murray and Urban 2012).

The guiding principles of the workshops were:

- Gender identity already exists in every person because it was learned and internalized when the person was very young. However, the process of identity building is not realized by all persons. Through self-reflection of what they do, feel, and think participants will know who they are as women and men and why.
- Gender equity is one aspect of human rights and the universal desire to be treated respectfully as an individual. Through self-reflection and discussion of their experiences of having to conform to gender roles and expectations, participants will begin to see that every individual should have the right to be herself/himself and to recognize the connection between gender rights and other human rights.
- Through self-reflection and conversation, participants will gain some insights into their early experiences of being respected and accepted or targeted by

discrimination and rejected by their families, peers, and institutions such as schools. Through this process they will begin to see how children need to develop self-confidence in order to cope with experiences of discrimination and to face the future with optimism. They will also recognize the critical role of early childhood educators in supporting this development.

- When teachers understand from their own experience how gender equity is central to the best interests of children, they will view it as a moral principle, essential to their teaching practice. They will understand that children need to (1) build their own identities; (2) accept that they are okay being a girl or a boy that they are neither inferior nor superior but equal to others; and (3) have strong self-esteem so that they are confident to reach out into the future.
- Through these reflections, participants will learn that anyone, regardless of gender, race, ethnicity, and religion can embrace feminist principles (e.g., the beliefs that personal is political and biology is not destiny; and goals to promote equality, inclusion, and diversity; peace and security; bodily integrity and freedom from violence of any kind) (Batliwala and Friedman 2011). Participants will see how these feminist principles are already part of their lives and find their own reasons and political positions for their teaching practice. They will see that "feminist" is not a term restricted to individuals "out there" (i.e., Christian, Western) but a term that everyone—Indonesians, Javanese, Muslims—can embrace.

Both workshops included a range of activities that encouraged participants to reflect on their own identities, histories, and values and to share their experiences and views with others. After these self-reflection activities, participants then discussed teaching practices and peer interactions in their classrooms and whether and how they reflected gender-related assumptions and roles. At the end of the workshop they developed possible strategies to challenge gender bias in their classrooms.

Participants' Responses to the Self-reflection Activities

Transcripts of the participants' responses to the self-reflection activities were read numerous times by the first and second author and another colleague from the United States. Together they identified several themes that emerged in the responses to different activities. We do not have the space to describe all of the responses but will highlight ones that were particularly interesting. Although each participant had a unique history and perspective, many of the comments reflected the contradictions between the gender roles and divisions that are codified in the Marriage Laws and the emphasis on gender equality that underlies the Indonesian commitment to human rights.

In their responses to the "Who Am I?" activity, during which participants drew pictures of their life journeys and shared them with group members, many described

difficult, painful, and circuitous life paths. Some used the word "mountains" to describe the hardships that they had encountered. One person repeatedly used the word "sorrow" in her story. Many accounts described families being separated by death and distance; some parents had such busy work schedules they sent their children away to foster families or relatives. (Note: At the end of the following quotes, pseudonyms of the participant speaking are provided in parentheses.)

> I am the youngest child with two brothers… My parents were busy as my father was in the army and my mother was active in wife organization. Me and my brothers were looked after by foster parents. I had problem in controlling my emotion. When I was in secondary school I was living in a boarding room in Madura, my family were separated out. My father moved to Yogyakarta, my mother lived in Kalimantan, and my first brother was graduated from high school and then moved to Madiun. My second brother then moved to Semarang lived with his foster parent (Parti).

Often being raised by relatives meant that children, especially girls, were strictly disciplined and pressured to conform to gender roles:

> My life is up and down. My origin is Lampung, I am the oldest child, and I was feeling that my mother did not love me because she was getting pregnant again. [It was difficult for me to attend high school because it was far away so] my father sent me to my grandparents' house in Yogyakarta [to attend high school]. I thought my sorrow would be over. But it was like being trapped in the cage of a crocodile. I was given a lot of work to do by my grandmother; cooking, and helping her such as harvesting morning glories to be sold. I really wanted to play with my peers. When I graduated from high school, I thought I was going to end my sorrow. But… [I] was wrong. I was sent in a [very strict] boarding school [to study health]. They said that staying in a boarding school was better for me because I was [used to] living under strict rules… (Lisa).

Many described early experiences that pressured them to conform to societal expectations, especially around gender. In their descriptions of their families of origin, several participants described strict upbringings in which their roles were very confined. As noted in the quotation above, one participant vividly described being raised by her grandmother as being like living in a "crocodile cage." Some also noted that their access to school had not been equal to that of male family members. Furthermore, teachers were often harsh and did not encourage girls to fully engage in the school programs. Several grew up in isolated communities where there were few resources to broaden their experiences.

Unfortunately for some, marriage had not been an escape from these rigid expectations. Some participants told of having abusive or demanding husbands and controlling in-laws who expected wives to be obedient and subservient. One participant described the picture she drew of her struggles to first live with and then leave her abusive husband and then survive as a single parent:

> I draw a tangled thread here in red and a road in yellow. There is a cross road with 3 people standing there. The tangled thread describes my life in the past with 2 children and husband who is not with us anymore. I was not yet an EC educator. I was producing foods and selling them to stores. I could not rely on my husband. My husband would not talk about our problems with me. I was thinking that I needed to be respected, but he would …hurt me and our children too. I draw many red marks as he did [this] many times. I tried to stay because my children needed [their] father. Therefore, I stayed till something happened; we

were arguing and he hurt us again. I said to myself that it was enough. It's ok to hurt me but not the children. I asked myself why I stayed. I decided to leave him. It was hard because I have to do everything. I lived in suburb, and my children's school was in down town. I had to go to work and provide pickups for children every day. It was so tiring (Farah).

Finally, a few described their decisions to be good obedient Muslim wives as illustrated by the following quote. Interestingly, the speaker indicates that this decision was made willingly and did not require rigid gender conformity as she works outside of the home.

I draw a woman with a head scarf. While I was in secondary school, I did not know about responsibility. I had a gang, but it was positive; we played basketball, music, but my academic performance was bad. I was aware that I must study seriously at school. I met an Islamic teacher who taught me about being a Muslim woman and suggested [that I] wear a head scarf or cover the 'aurat' [parts of women's body which are considered as private] and pray 5 times [a day]. Not so long after graduation from the university I got married… Two-three years back I just understood how to be a good Muslim woman wearing a head scarf and becoming a wife as well as a teacher (Cantika).

In contrast to stories about parents and other relatives enforcing strict gender roles, others had different experiences growing up. Their parents had told them that they could do anything they wanted. They encouraged their daughters to be independent and to pursue their interests and bought them "boys' toys" to encourage them to explore wider gender roles. Interestingly, when their daughters had started to wear head scarves as part of their Muslim practice, these parents were very resistant to this shift toward more traditional attire.

Some participants noted that school had offered them a chance to develop broader gender roles. They described developing confidence both in their academic pursuits and in their participation in student organizations. Furthermore, learning about psychology and early childhood education had given them a focus for their future work:

I went to university to study psychology. I learned much about the cycle of life. I remember that my lecturer said that the life will be not always straight and smooth. It will be zig-zag. At the university my activity was joining student organization, and we had some projects which gave me a lot of many experiences (Anti).

Many participants, regardless of their earlier experiences, said that they had found a sense of purpose, confidence, and a "family" by working in early childhood education. Even those who had had many discouraging experiences as children and young adults, now felt that they had goals, and some aspired to become lead teachers or directors. Working in early childhood had given them an opportunity to feel competent and to explore different roles:

Then I met my relative that was also studying psychology. I felt this was my way. I was studying while working. When [I was doing an assignment on research methodology], I found that I was so interested in children. When I observed Taman Pintar center, I was interested to work in an EC center. Then I applied to Kirana center, and was accepted. I was grateful because my way was smooth… My dream now is to have my own center (Gusti).

Some also found that working in early childhood gave them the opportunity to learn to be themselves and to be more assertive in contrast to the constraint that they felt in their marriages:

> I totally left my husband… my husband liked to limit my right to speak up. Now I am more relaxed. No one pushes me to work again every morning like my husband did to me because he wanted me to achieve the target [for harvesting produce] (Farah).

Although most participants recognized how gender inequity and rigid roles had limited their lives and been the source of considerable pain, they still had contradictory feelings about gender roles and feminism as evident in their responses to other self-reflection activities. When asked to respond to various statements that reflected gender-related values, almost all of the participants agreed that economic independence for women was preferable, but in response to a question about feminism, most said that they knew little about feminism, and several confused the term "feminism" with "femininity." Nevertheless, when one of the facilitators described the six pillars of feminism, all the participants indicated that they agreed with them.

These pro-feminist views also emerged in responses to a subsequent activity when participants were asked to estimate what percent they were masculine and feminine. Almost all of the participants said that they were 50–50 masculine and feminine—recognizing that they had attributes and roles that are commonly associated with both men and women. One woman, who said that she works a lot with her husband, said that she was 95% masculine. Interestingly, the one male participant noted that he does many jobs commonly considered feminine, but he said that he considers himself 95% masculine. This last comment fits with studies that show that most societies are more accepting of girls and women taking on masculine attire and jobs (e.g., wearing pants, working on construction sites) than the reverse (e.g., men wearing dresses and working as early childhood teachers) (Ramsey 2015).

Despite the fact that most participants showed some critical awareness of the limitations of rigid gender roles in the first few activities, a subsequent activity illustrated the persistence of traditional assumptions. Working in groups, participants drew pictures of a man and a woman and described their attributes and activities. In almost all of the depictions, men were described as strong, brave, responsible, active, and being good leaders. Whereas women were portrayed as beautiful, soft, calm, friendly, patient, and obedient. Men's activities included different types of jobs and sports. Women's activities included only domestic chores, such as cleaning, cooking, sewing, washing, and shopping. These stereotyped depictions were surprising given the participants' life stories of overcoming many adversities, including rigidly enforced gender roles; their agreement with the pillars of feminism; and the fact that all of them, at the time of the workshops, were working outside of the home. These responses illustrate how traditional values persist even in the face of contradictory evidence. One participant attributed this discrepancy to economic considerations:

> It's more about responsibility in building family, and man's responsibility in the family is providing livelihood. It's said in the religion. Otherwise, we will be economically dependent on others (Dinda).

Drawing on Sri's own experiences as an Indonesian, she explains below that many in the Indonesian community often embrace these contradictory principles:

> The Marriage Law reflects the strong influence of the tradition of gender-based labor division. And from the time they are very young, people are socialized by the community to follow this tradition. But now young Indonesians also have been learning about other principles including human rights. So they actually are learning both traditional and modern principles. Many Indonesians may understand this ambiguity, but they might not yet have made a decision to choose which principles they are going to adopt. In fact, being "consistent" might not be a good choice for them; being able to apply both principles and to move flexibly between them according to their own complex and changing situations may be more adaptive. For example, women agree with the right to work, but they still look for partners who are economically independent because the man is expected to be the bread winner, and women want to ensure their economic security.

Participants' Views of the Role of Gender in Early Childhood Classrooms

After completing the self-reflection activities, the participants then talked about their work with children. The contradictory gendered beliefs noted in the previous section also emerged in participants' descriptions of pedagogy and peer relationships in early childhood classrooms. As participants talked, they began to recognize that many classroom rules, peer comments, and teachers' questions and instructions reinforced gender segregation and rigid roles. When children did challenge gender roles and expectations, teachers and peers often made comments, especially to boys who were enacting "female" roles. For example, boys were criticized for wearing any clothing that could be seen as feminine, having long hair, or wearing or playing with anything colored pink. They also were teased for playing with dolls and cooking utensils or for crying. The girls were limited by teachers' instructions such as being told that they could not use the climbing structure or must sit politely. Teachers sometimes reinforced gender stereotypes by telling girls that they were cute or pretty. Peers were more likely to tease girls if they wore "male" clothing such as a cowboy hat or if they played with guns or trucks. This reinforcement of gender roles on the part of peers is similar to behaviors observed in preschools in other countries, such as Australia, South Africa, and the United States (Aina and Cameron 2011; Bhana 2007; Cunningham and Macrae 2011; MacNaughton 2000).

As the workshop participants reflected on these situations, they realized that they often unconsciously reinforced gendered behavior and expectations. They talked about "kok" questions that refer to questions that adults and peers ask that imply criticism and serve to reinforce conformity to societal expectations. For example, when a 2-year-old boy brings a doll into the classroom, a teacher might say, "You

are a boy, but you play doll?" The color of children clothes may also invoke a "kok" question. When an adult sees a boy wearing pink, s/he may ask, "You are a boy, but you wear girl's clothes?". One participant described how a boy with longer hair was teased by his peers, "You are a boy, but your hair is longer? Are you a boy or a girl?" Although most of the reported "kok" questions were directed at boys, the teachers also mentioned similar questions to women and girls. When women have to work late, they are often asked, "You are a woman, but you get home late?" The assumption underlying this question is that the woman is a prostitute. One example a participant heard in a classroom was "Ah, you are a girl, but you playing cars?". Sometimes the criticism was more direct, and not couched in a "kok" question. In one case a girl had a short haircut, and her teachers said that the haircut was too short. They also noted that if a girl wears masculine clothes, teachers might say that she looks like "tomboy".

In discussions about these classroom situations, the workshop leaders and participants made the following points: First, they agreed that children get gender messages from many sources including, but not limited to, adults (parents and teachers), peers, and books. Second, limited gender roles marginalize some children and constrain their freedom of expression and cumulatively lead children to conform. In particular, the emphasis for girls to be polite may discourage them from being assertive and making choices. Third, adults often use words such as "appropriate" to describe gender-typical behavior and "strange" to allude to individuals who push gender boundaries. These words and other types of criticisms such as the "kok" questions may discourage children from developing more open and flexible gender roles.

To encourage children to develop more flexible gender roles and expectations, workshop participants discussed how teachers might first learn about children's gender-related ideas by asking questions to find out what children think and believe. With that knowledge, teachers can challenge gender stereotyped assumptions with books, pictures, classroom visitors, etc. For example, they might highlight the contrast between the common belief that girls cannot (or should not) use the climbing structures with the highly skilled *penebas*, Indonesian women who climb high trees to pick fruit. Or when they hear children saying that boys should not play in the cooking corner, teachers can talk about famous male chefs and male family members who cook. Participants discussed ways to support flexible gender roles in all activities and instructions and the importance of recognizing that gender roles vary across cultures (e.g., boys with long hair may be more acceptable in some cultures than others).

Participants' Reflections on the Workshops

In the final reflections part of the workshops, participants described how much they had learned about themselves, their views, and their practice with young children. Although the societal contradictions about gender are still very much a part of their

world views, they had begun to question their assumptions and to reconsider how they interact with children. In terms of their own thinking and lives, the participants said that they had become more open-minded and had a greater understanding of gender issues. One person said that she had moved from not caring about gender issues to understanding the need for gender equity. They also noted that they were more aware of gender in their own identity and that this was enriching:

> When I arrived here I thought gender is the same as sex (genital). [From] this workshop… I understand that gender is not only about sex. It opened my eyes that men and women are equal. I did distribute blue crayons for boys and pink crayons for girls, [but] I didn't realize that it [gender-typical colors] is related with gender identity development of children. In the future I will be more open to understanding gender issues (Hanim).

> I knew a little bit about gender before this meeting, and now I know more. Gender is not only about sex (genital). In the future I will practice [this awareness] in my work. I will communicate with parents to learn how their children understand gender (Lina).

> I understand about gender more. Next step is self-introspection. I found that I still did what we identified as [gendered teaching practices]. I still divide and label children on the basis of their gender… this meeting is so good because we can share with each other (Asmi).

Participants also said that they now had more knowledge about feminism and realized that it was part of fighting for all human rights. One person, who originally had confused the terms "feminism" and "femininity," stated, "I am a feminist."

When teachers talked about the impact of the workshop, they made several commitments to change their practice including watching their language with children (e.g., avoiding "kok" questions), monitoring, and controlling their reactions to children, and avoiding being judgmental. They also mentioned exploring children's thinking and knowledge about gender and providing more visual materials to support gender equity. Several talked about communicating with parents and colleagues about the need to develop practices that support gender equity.

Although these workshops were only 5 h long, they were effective in getting participants to think about their lives and to see how feminism, which has been considered by many Indonesians to be a foreign Western concept, is relevant to their personal lives and to their work with children. By having teachers reflect on their lives and share their experiences, the facilitators encouraged them to consider new perspectives, unlike the political training about feminism that often alienated participants by making sweeping assumptions about their lives.

Obviously these workshops are only a beginning and need to be followed with longer sessions (ideally 3 days) that would provide more opportunities for participants to explore their experiences and the cultural contexts of their personal and professional lives and to critique their perspectives and practices. As teachers become clearer about their views and the influence of societal values, they can refine their pedagogy. As part of this process, they might develop action research programs that would enable them to scrutinize the classroom and analyze gender bias in their own practice; in classroom materials such as books, television/video, and posters; and in children's indoor and outdoor play. Then they can try out, evaluate, and critique strategies to promote gender equitable learning environments.

Conclusion

Although Indonesia has a unique history and culture related to gender discrimination and equity, many of the issues that participants discussed about their lives and their work with young children are similar to those in other countries. For example, in the United States, many movements have pushed for gender equity for decades, and now there are laws that protect people from gender discrimination. However, men still earn more than women, and when men and women violate typical gender roles, they often have to deal with questions, skepticism, and even violence. Moreover, while there is no explicit "Marriage Law" in the United States, recent studies show that, despite many changes over the past decades, American women still spend twice as much time caring for children and close to twice as much time doing housework than their husbands/partners do (Parker and Wang 2013, n.p.).

Furthermore, American children are still being raised in highly gendered environments. Educational efforts to challenge gender stereotypes and to encourage children to develop more flexible roles are undermined by the commercial products for children (movies, toys, clothing) that relentlessly promote highly gendered images (e.g., action figures and violent video games for boys and Disney princesses and make-up and gowns for girls) (Aina and Cameron 2011; Cunningham and Macrae 2011; Freeman 2007). When the second author read the Indonesian teachers' descriptions of gender issues in the classroom, she noted that they are very similar to situations she has observed in many classrooms in the United States (e.g., boys criticized for wearing pink or playing with dolls; girls teased for playing with trucks or dressing in more masculine clothes).

Thus, we need to recognize that, while Indonesia has a unique historical and cultural context for gender equity work, the underlying pressures are similar to those in many countries. As this project in gender equity in Indonesia moves forward, it has the potential to contribute to the understanding and innovative practices of early childhood educators all over the world.

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Chapter 13
Gender Identities in the Australian Early Years Learning Framework

Rebecca Simpson-Dal Santo

Abstract This chapter draws on Masters research examining the exclusion of gender identities within the context of governmental reform in Australian early childhood education and care services. The implementation of the Early Years Learning Framework introduced 'identity' as a Learning Outcome. Within the National Quality Rating and Assessment Process, educators are now accountable for documenting children's 'identity', with the quality of the service rated in part on this documentation. This chapter explores the neoliberal assumptions underpinning accountability to these reforms both in terms of how children's 'identity' is conceptualised and in the expectations of how educators will commit to these new accountabilities. The implications of excluding gender identities from the Early Years Learning Framework are explored and the chapter concludes with suggestions for documentation to take up queer and anarchist possibilities to work for activism and social justice in early childhood education and care services.

Keywords Governmental reform · Teaching documentation · Identities · Early Years Learning Framework · Early childhood education

Introduction

This chapter draws from Masters research exploring the impact of new accountabilities for early childhood educators in a time of Australian governmental reform, specifically focusing on the introduction of the Early Years Learning Framework (EYLF) (DEEWR 2009) and the National Quality Rating and Assessment Process (NQRAP). Analysis of the EYLF and research data shows how accountability to reforms is shaped by neoliberal agendas and excludes gender identities from the

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official way 'identity' is represented in the EYLF. The chapter concludes with anarchist and queer possibilities for disrupting this silencing of gender identities and for working for gender equity with young children.

Governmental Reform in Australian Early Childhood Education and Care

The EYLF, Australia's first national curriculum for children aged 0–5 years in early childhood education and care (ECEC) services, was introduced as part of the then Prime Minister Kevin Rudd's 'Education Revolution' (Rudd and Macklin 2007). The EYLF, written by a consortium of ECEC academics, is part of the National Quality Framework which is designed to improve the standards of care and education for young children (DEEWR 2009). Released in 2009, the EYLF was officially implemented by all Australian ECEC services from 2012.

The EYLF has five Learning Outcomes, the first of which is 'Identity' and is the focus of my research and this chapter. There are four points of importance within this Learning Outcome.

Identity, Children have a strong sense of identity:

- Children feel safe, secure and supported.
- Children develop their emerging autonomy, inter-dependence, resilience and sense of agency.
- Children develop knowledgeable and confident self-identities.
- Children learn to interact in relation to others with care, empathy and respect (DEEWR 2009, p. 21).

Working as an early childhood educator, I was required to write Transition for Learning and Development Statements (TLDS) for each child I taught. The TLDSs summarise each child's progress against the five Learning Outcomes of the EYLF and, prior to the child's commencement, are passed to their primary school in order to support the child's transition to school. Finding that I could not summarise a child's 'identity' in the required 200 words or less, I became frustrated and questioned my abilities as a 'good teacher' if I could not comply with this new accountability. In discussion with the parent of a child I was teaching, whom I trusted enough to share my perceived failings, I described my inability to summarise her son's 'identity'. 'His identity as whom?' she asked, shattering the professional knowledge of 'identity' I had absorbed from the EYLF. Emboldened to question the theoretical framework of 'identity' in the EYLF, I began my Masters research of examining what it meant to be accountable for documenting a child's 'identity'.

The Political Terrain of the EYLF

The political terrain from which the EYLF was birthed must be understood in order to problematise how 'identity' is written about in the EYLF. Although it is often understood as an objective document about 'best practice', which informs ECEC teaching, the writing process was shaped through subjective political discourses. This is evident in the differences between the draft and final EYLF. The release of the draft EYLF in 2008 prompted significant pressure from the media and politicians to omit the explicit focus on social justice and equity (Sumsion et al. 2009). The EYLF writers later explained how the final EYLF was written in strategic ways to avoid the 'political risk detectors' which had censored the draft version (Sumsion et al. 2009, p. 8). While it was suggested that a national ECEC curriculum could be an 'ideological or theoretical platform' (Barnes 2008, p. 57), Rudd's reason to fund and implement the EYLF was to eliminate perceived international competition in business and education by 'lift[ing] Australia's rate of productivity growth' (Rudd and Macklin 2007, p. 3) through producing children who will be better equipped to contribute to the future economy.

The focus on increased economic benefits and productivity can be read in the statements about 'identity' in the EYLF and National Quality Standards (NQS) which place value on educators developing the child's 'identity' as a learner in order to promise and protect their abilities for future learning and consequent economic opportunities (DEEWR 2009; ACECQA 2011). This 'heavy emphasis on good social order and self-regulation' (Badger 2015, para. 9) constructs the child's 'identity' as an autonomous, agentic, responsible, rational and logical person; preparing children to become future neoliberal citizens. 'Identity' becomes an auditable commodity as the NQRAP checks educators' documentation to see if educators have conformed their teaching and assessment of children in ways that support the positioning of children as human capital.

Understanding the political terrain of the EYLF reveals it to be a governmentally sanctioned and controlled document, which does not necessarily represent all that is known about and valued in ECEC by educators and researchers, while also expecting educators to comply with a myriad of new accountabilities to support the economic development of the country.

Instructing Educators in New Accountabilities

How ECEC services implement the EYLF is assessed through the NQRAP (ACECQA 2011), with authorised officers using documentation created by educators and observing their teaching within the service to determine the service's quality rating, as marked against the seven quality areas within the National Quality Standard Assessment and Rating Instrument (ACECQA 2012), with the rating of each quality area contributing to the overall quality rating the service will receive.

The ratings are ranked as such: Significant Improvement Required, Working Towards National Quality Standard, Meeting National Quality Standard, Exceeding National Quality Standard and Excellent. The Excellent rating must be applied for from the Australian Children's Education and Care Quality Authority (ACECQA) once the service has already received an Exceeding rating. The rating received by a service must be displayed within the service and are also publically available online. As the rating the service is awarded depends, in part, on documentation educators create about their implementation of the Learning Outcomes, educators are therefore expected to document children's 'identity' and produce this documentation during the rating and assessment process. The mandated documentation of 'identity', and assessment of this, is unprecedented in Australian ECEC services.

The introduction of the EYLF and NQRAP has spawned numerous publications, consultants, apps and social media groups designed to instruct educators on how to meet their new accountabilities. Many of these people and documents position that 'identity' is 'achievable' and that documentation should act as 'proof' of this. Popular publications advise that 'learning outcomes that have been successfully addressed by the children can be noted' (Raban et al. 2010, p. 33) and 'we will have done our job if every child leaves our care with a strong sense of identity' (Community Child Care Co-operative Ltd, n.d, p. 8)—the latter publication was sent in 2012 to every Australian ECEC service. Many consultants capitalise on the anxieties of educators by promising that buying their workshops or services will achieve the 'Exceeding' rating (Alina Dan Consultancy 2013; Be Inspired Solutions 2013) and documentation apps promise to 'achieve EYLF outcomes' (PLACE 2012). The dominant discourse within these EYLF-related products is that the documentation of 'identity' is a technical matter that the educator can achieve by purchasing the right publications, the right professional development and the right apps in order to improve their documentation, and consequently, improve the rating their service receives through the NQRAP. 'Identity' consequently becomes the property of educators to determine and transmit to children via teaching strategies and is documented as something true and knowable. This discourse is further enhanced by the proliferation of social media groups which publicise and support these products, further tightening the hold on how 'identity' is understood and documented, in particular through user-generated posts about what products a service has used in order to achieve a desirable outcome through the NQRAP. This dominant discourse implies that there is a singular and correct way to document 'identity' in the EYLF. This 'right way' to document 'identity', circulates through these EYLF-related products, and presumes a singular, static, knowable and true 'identity' of the child. The 'right way' of documenting 'identity' assumes that educators can construct objectively informative descriptions of children's 'identity', that the quality of their teaching is visible through this documentation and works to exclude feminist, anarchist and other alternate understandings of 'identity'.

Throughout my research data, my teaching experiences, professional development I attended, use of social media and networking with other educators, I saw how this pursuit of 'Exceeding' had an all-consuming grip over educators' perceptions of themselves as professionals. It is difficult to challenge the desire for

'Exceeding' as the concept of improving the quality of ECEC services seems unquestionable. Using Dahlberg et al. (2007) work permits the problematisation of standardising and rating quality, yet their work has not appeared to influence the EYLF, NQRAP or the discussions around these documents and hence, their work becomes silent within the marketing and pursuit of the 'Exceeding' rating.

Neoliberal Feminism and Ontological Insecurity, a Gendered Relationship

Although female educators represent 95% of the Australian ECEC services workforce (Productivity Commission 2014), I did not specifically address the relationship of gender and reform within my research (Simpson-Dal Santo 2014). Having subsequently discovered neoliberal feminist theories, I now return to this research data to find unasked questions and possible relationships between gender, governmental reforms and new accountabilities. Rottenberg (2014) explains that the neoliberal feminist is 'mobilized to convert continued gender inequality from a structural problem into an individual affair' (p. 420). This speaks to me as my research questions emerged from trying to understand my perceived inadequacies as indicative of my personal incompetency or as a reaction to the theoretical and structural problems of assessment and accountability. My concerns were replicated through my research participants' worries about being 'good enough', questioning whether they were 'doing the right thing', not wanting to 'make any mistakes' (Simpson-Dal Santo 2014, p. 51). Ball's (2003) description of 'ontological insecurity' as 'doing enough, doing the right thing, doing as much as others, or as well as others, constantly looking to improve, to be better, to be excellent' (p. 220) helped illuminate that these concerns were not merely the desires of educators wanting to improve their teaching skills, but a reaction to the impact of governmental reforms and the standardisation of 'quality' on professional identity.

The marketing, pursuit and desirability of the 'Exceeding' rating has possibly created an 'entrepreneurial subject who is encouraged to take her own personal initiative in order to improve her career prospects' (Rottenberg 2014, p. 427). The ontological insecurity from my research data underpins both the consultants capitalising on the demand for answers and the educators taking up these services to improve themselves and, consequently, their ability to attain a desirable rating for their workplace. I cannot escape the irony that this 'entrepreneurial subject' must also extend to postgraduate students, like myself, researching the EYLF. hooks (2013) critiques how neoliberal feminism privileges white, middle class, professional women. There is further research needed, specific to reforms in ECEC, examining which educators are privileged by the implication that being successful is simply a matter of personal initiative and which research is privileged in the official, governmentally sanctioned discourses of ECEC and who benefits from this.

Within a female-dominated workforce, the relationship between gender and neoliberalism cannot be excluded from the examination of reform and accountability.

Gender Identities in the EYLF

Within my research, I analysed the statements about 'identity' in the EYLF and EYLF-related publications. Surprisingly, I did not notice the absence of gender identities in the EYLF until I began analysing the interview transcripts and wanted to compare the gender-related data to what the EYLF stated. The EYLF only uses the word gender to define inclusion and to describe 'being' as 'children developing an awareness of their social and cultural heritage, of gender and their significance in their world' (DEEWR 2009, p. 20).

My shock that I had not noticed this lack of gender prompted me to scrutinise the works referenced in the EYLF. While the EYLF writers often reference social justice and equity works in their other publications, these same works are not referenced within the EYLF. Remembering the political terrain of the EYLF's construction, it is possible that referencing gender research was simply too risky or impossible in this situation. As gender equity has historically been silenced in curriculum documents (Mac Naughton 2000), its exclusion in the EYLF is perhaps not that surprising.

The draft EYLF suggested that play 'can be cruel, unfair and unjust—a space for politics and power relations, where children are excluded on the basis of gender, age, size, skin colour, proficiency with English, class, ethnicity, sexuality and more' (DEEWR 2008, p. 8). Derision that the draft EYLF was 'infested with politically correct jargon and philosophical gobbledygook' (Bita 2008) saw this quote excluded from the final version. Sumsion and Wong (2011) write that 'footholds' in the EYLF 'kept alive the vision that the EYLF should offer possibilities for sustained intellectual and political work of the kind advocated by critical curriculum theorists' (p. 30). So while this quote about cruel and unfair play is deracinated from the final EYLF, the places in which 'gender' is written simplistically are possibly acting as 'footholds' for educators and researchers to take up.

Gender Identities and Interest-Based Planning

Gender was represented in my research data through the examples two research participants, Ria and Parvesh, gave of how they explored gender with the children they taught, using the children's interests as a stimulus for this (Simpson-Dal Santo 2014). Using children's interests to plan the curriculum is a pedagogical strategy that is currently positioned as 'best practice' in Australia (ACECQA 2011; Rosback and Wilson 2012), with the EYLF suggesting that children 'develop interests and

construct their own identities' (DEEWR 2009, p. 7) and the NQS stating that 'interests are the foundation of the program' (ACECQA 2011 p. 19). However, while the EYLF and EYLF-related publications endorse interest-based planning, they rarely interrogate how this can perpetuate gender-based marketing and stereotypes, as if children's consumption of what is marketed to them therefore represents their interests, and in turn, their identities. The interests of children appear apolitical when there is no suggestion of how power and desire operate to normalise why children display particular interests, how they display these and to whom they display them to.

When children are positioned by curriculum documents and by educators implementing these documents to apolitically take up or dismiss interests, then the connections between interests, identities and politics are not challenged through the curriculum offered. Interest-based planning depends largely on a child's desire and ability to express their interests, yet their silence about a topic is 'not necessarily a reflection of irrelevance, but rather can signal the child's negotiation of a topic they perceive to be taboo' (Davies and Robinson 2010, p. 253). There are also issues around the ableism inherent in this assumption that children can display and speak their interests, which are beyond the scope of this chapter, but worth noting as problematic. Ria was dedicated to rupturing the dominant discourse of prettiness and passivity she felt girls in her ECEC group were limited to or by and because of this actively challenged the concept of interest-based planning, as well as the interests the children she taught expressed to her:

> I like challenging children… even this morning, someone bought a Lego book, pictures of Lego and he's showing me pirates and super stars or whatever and this girl says 'oh, there's girl Lego' and because on the front page there was a girl with the home Lego, with the pinks and purples… and I started talking to the boy and the girl- why do you think it's girl Lego? (Ria).

Ria and Parvesh both used activities and conversations to explore alternate expressions of gender within their ECEC groups. For example, they encouraged boys to disrupt their masculine appearances through using nail polish and 'female' dress ups and encouraged girls to use 'masculine' activities and dress ups. It took some hard thinking to realise that encouraging children to adopt the gendered stereotype of the opposite gender was rupturing gender binaries while simultaneously reinforcing them as the stereotypical gender binary must still exist in order to prove the transgression. This assumes that gender equity is achieved through this transgression and that dominant discourses of gender identities can be muted by privileging the previously marginalised discourse.

During my research, I was also working as an early childhood educator and I found Ria and Parvesh's deliberate ruptures of gender expression similar to my own teaching ideas. This made analysis of the data difficult and personal. I began the data collection convinced that identities cannot be observable and measurable, yet the data analysis showed that, like the research participants, I assessed how gender equitable my ECEC group was by whether the children were transgressing stereotypical gender binaries. Despite my supposed intentions, my work was based

on two assumptions. First, that the appearance and activities of a person were the manifestation of my non-biased teaching and second, that through observing the children's play and friendships, I could observe and document the children's gender identities—and plan for their improvement.

Transgender Equity

My research data also presented the opportunity to consider how transgender equity was conceptualised within ECEC settings. Gender equity work often positions the notion that children have a singular and static gender identity. For example, if a boy rejects wearing a dress because 'it's for girls', the educator assures them that anyone can wear it, implying that the child's gender is not 'at risk' because gender identity is seen as unchangeable through appearances and activities. This approach to gender equity positions activities and appearances as apolitical objects and is problematised by Ria's data in which she explains how a transgender girl she taught invested power into 'feminine' activities and appearances in order to disrupt her birth-assigned sex.

Rethinking my notions of gender equity while analysing the data Ria offered reminded me of a transgender child I taught many years prior to my research. On enrolment, his mother explained 'she knows she is a girl but she really wants to be a boy and prefers boy toys and to look like a boy'. Informed by the anti-bias curriculum, I put up posters of girls using tools and said things like 'girls can do building if they want'. That was my conception of inclusion for this child's gender identity, despite his parent specifically telling me her child named themselves as a boy. When analysing the research data, I realised that I had reinforced the static gender identity of a girl and maintained that using 'boy toys' could not shift or disrupt birth-assigned sex (Simpson-Dal Santo 2014). My knowledge of gender equity and gender identities failed this transgender boy. I had not understood the ways in which he was investing power and desirability within appearances and activities to support himself to become known as a boy.

At this time, I was studying the anti-bias curriculum as part of my undergraduate teaching degree. The sad irony of silencing a child's transgender identity while studying inclusion is obvious. While I want to blame myself for my lack of knowledge, this returns to the ideas of neoliberal feminism in which the fault of not knowing enough rests with the individual rather than understanding this as a structural problem in which particular gender identities are excluded from the official discourses of ECEC. These official discourses must be interrogated by educators and researchers for how they operate to silence transgender narratives in ECEC research, textbooks and university subjects on inclusion and diversity. The lack of transgender narratives cannot be taken as indicative that this is irrelevant or inappropriate research for ECEC, but rather as a product of structural inequalities within our society that silence and ignore gender diversity.

There is very little written about transgender identities and ECEC, however Brill and Pepper (2008) suggest that transgender children are often understood as being developmentally confused about their gender and that transgender discrimination is commonly experienced from 3 years old, presenting important gender equity and research considerations for ECEC. There is a desperate need for research and resources about how to work respectfully and equitably with transgender children. Without the narratives and perspectives of transgender people in the ways gender equity is commonly conceptualised, this can then be positioned as cisgender equity that silences the experiences, desires and identities of transgender people. While I do not presume that I can speak for transgender people nor conceptualise what transgender equity might look like, I can recognise that my gender equity knowledge fails to support transgender children and I recognise how power operates through conservative governmental discourses to limit what the EYLF can say about gender identities and how this may also inhibit how educators document their teaching around gender identities.

Documenting Gender Identities

While some of the research participants were committed to supporting children's gender identities, no-one talked about how they documented this or what they would use this documentation for if they did.

Performativity and Documentation

In the data from my research, the participants and I relied on socialisation theories, which presume that children will adopt non-biased attitudes towards gender identities because their educators endorse this (Blaise 2005). However, Butler's (1999) gender performativity suggests that children will enact multiple and partial gender identities as it presents as a choice invested with power or desirability that privileges them including the desirability of being seen as transgressing gender binaries in order to please the feminist educator. If children are performing their gender identities in contextual and multiple ways as it privileges them, then this completely destroys the idea of being able to 'know' children's gender identities through observation and documentation.

Gender performativity shattered any remaining belief I had that documentation could ever act as 'proof' of identities. The accountability of knowing children's 'identity' and proving this through documentation became a farce, an impossible fantasy. Being accountable to observe and document identities which are always changing, multiple, partial, in flux and contextual becomes an impossibility which cannot be understood as the individual educator lacking the ability to document identities effectively. The educator cannot be 'fixed' through reading particular

publications, accessing professional development or using documentation apps. Yet, the NQRAP mandates that educators must document children's 'identity' (ACECQA 2011) and although I resist the politics and theoretical assumptions of the NQRAP structure, all educators, including myself, must still comply with this as a requirement of ECEC teaching. This presents a difficult paradox of being accountable for observing and documenting children's identities when identities are always changing, multiple and partial. So how can I, and other, educators negotiate this paradox?

Activist Possibilities for Documentation

As educators we can become political and strategic with how we fulfill our legal requirements within the NQRAP to create documentation and simultaneously resist the political and theoretical assumptions of the NQRAP. The purpose of documentation could be used to disrupt the tightly held developmental discourses which constrain how children's identities are understood. We can use documentation to explore the multiple, contradictory and partial identities that children perform while also acknowledging that what documentation captures can never be considered 'the truth' about gender identities. We can make sure that gender identities, roles and expectations are part of our ECEC dialogues and use documentation of this to speak explicitly about gender with children and families.

Examples from My Toolbox for Activist Early Childhood Educators

Queer and anarchist theories offered me exciting possibilities for understanding documentation as a site of activism. Influenced by these theories, I introduced to my ECEC group of children what I called 'gender-jamming stories'. Gender-jamming is the deliberate interference and interruption of gender norms and stereotypes (Brook 2014). Throughout the session, we would discuss an idea for a story to be told at the end of the day. The children would contribute ideas to this story which I would then start to gender-jam. Initially, the children gave the 'right' answers to my gender-jamming provocations, the ones I suspected they thought I wanted to hear. After a while, they realised that the purpose of these stories was to play with gender. At this point, our stories became about the gender 'rules' the children both adhered to and broke in different situations and about finding sanctions to perform gender in certain ways. For me, understanding how and where children seek sanctions and possibilities to perform identities led to important considerations for gender equity work. Within this I recognise Robinson's (2013) suggestion that ECEC services hold the potential for 'building a society that is more critically reflective about gendered and sexual relationships, and that contributes to new cultural norms' (p. 131).

I created these stories using well-known pop-culture characters and storylines. Their familiarity made them powerful mediums for theorising with children about gender identities. In gender-jamming and queering these characters and their storylines, I found opportunities with children to destabilise how pop-culture storytellers normalise the possibilities for gender identities. Queer theory is an 'alternative perspective that is helpful for challenging generally accepted notions of gender' (Blaise 2005, p. 184) and within these stories queer theory presented opportunities to subvert the power and desirability invested within gender norms.

Within the gender-jammed stories, with no aspiration to reach the 'truth' about the children's identities, this created the space to play with documentation in messy and rhizomatic ways as the children and myself created and recreated stories of identities and desire (Simpson-Dal Santo 2014). Using rhizoanalysis supported me to consider how the gender-jammed stories could 'disrupt and challenge the politics of the initial text' (Davis et al. 2009, p. 50) as understanding the stories as rhizomes offered unending multiplicity in thinking about children's identities and consequently unsettled the 'right way' discourse by rendering the question moot. If identities can be seen as endless, multiple and always in flux then the idea of understanding documentation of identities as 'right' or 'wrong' is divested of its power.

Rather than understanding children's 'identity' in ways that supported the neoliberal and developmental discourses of the governmentally sanctioned EYLF, these stories provided a rupture to these discourses which empowered my anarchist and feminist understandings of 'identity' to emerge within the ways I wrote and used my documentation and supported me 'to think and to practice politics autonomously from the state' (Newman 2010, p. 272).

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have challenged the apolitical understandings of the EYLF by exposing it as a subjectively written document. While gender has been silenced within the EYLF, it is obviously important to many researchers and educators, including the participants in my research. Goldman (1908) suggested that government legislation 'never induced man to do anything he could and would not do by virtue of his intellect or temperament, nor prevented anything that man was not impelled to do by the same dictates' (p. 2). This anarchist statement made me realise that educators who were committed to teaching for gender equity will not wait until a curriculum tells them to and educators who do not think gender equity is important or appropriate will not teach it when a curriculum does tell them to. While including gender in any future re-write of the EYLF will give it the official acknowledgement it requires, this may not have an impact on commitments to teaching for gender equity. Rather than being influenced by curriculum documents, Ria and Parvesh explained how their commitments to gender equity developed from their personal and teaching experiences, with Parvesh detailing:

> And if you're not confronted with things that you haven't experienced… I went into placement and one of the little boys had a necklace and a Barbie and I just assumed that he was using one of the girls' and he's like, no it's mine and I was like, oh okay. But I had never come across that in any of my prior placements… that was one moment for me when I was like… 'cause I just said it without even thinking and when you haven't come across that before, it's not really your fault, it's just something that you have to experience… and that one moment really taught me a lot now working with the children and hearing those types of things (Parvesh).

Drawing from Goldman's anarchist ideas early childhood educators cannot assume that commitments to social justice and equity will emerge from this being included in the EYLF. Equity work cannot be positioned as an apolitical choice that educators will take up upon being instructed to. This ignores the power and desirability invested within these extremely political choices. There is further research needed to understand how educators develop and sustain commitments to gender diversity, feminism and equity in the context of governmental reforms in early childhood education and care.

Acknowledgments This chapter was written on the lands of the Wurundjeri peoples. I pay my respects to Elders past, present and future.

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Chapter 14
Are We There Yet? Gender Equity Journeys in Early Childhood Practice

Sheralyn Campbell, Kate Alexander and Kylie Smith

Abstract The importance of gender in the early childhood field has long been researched and written about by early childhood scholars (e.g., MacNaughton 1997, 2000; Blaise 2005). In 2015, we conducted a small-scale pilot research project with early childhood scholars and educators entitled *Gender Identity in Early Childhood* the findings of which will be discussed in this chapter. We asked how these two groups drew on feminist theories to support their work, how they understood gender-identity and gendering and how gender equity was part of their pedagogy in early childhood classrooms. This chapter will focus on thef personal and lived experiences of 18 early childhood educators as they talked about their daily teaching focusing in particular on the place of feminism(s) in their work, how they think about gender-identity in their classrooms and how their pedagogical practices responded to issues of gendering.

Keywords Feminism · Early childhood · Gender-identity · Gender equity · Pedagogy

Introduction

In 2000, bell hooks wrote *Feminism is for everybody* and advocated for feminist politics to disrupt power relationships within a patriarchal world to strive for gender equity (p. 1). In current Australian early childhood classrooms, feminism(s) and feminist theories are operating in a postfeminist context with neoliberal education

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policies that argue equality is at the site of the individual. In this context, there is a social narrative that everyone has the opportunity to reach their goals or a 'good life' if they work hard enough irrespective of gender, culture, ethnicity, class or religion. Yet statistics show that gender inequities are woven throughout the fabric of Australian society, for example, with gender gaps in working conditions and gender-based violence increasing at a national level (VicHealth 2004, 2007; FAHCSIA 2009). With these issues at the foreground of our thinking about the Australian early childhood context we ask: *How might feminism(s), early childhood education and the pedagogical practices of educators work together for gender equity?* In 2015, we explored these questions in a small-scale pilot research project with early childhood researchers and educators entitled *Gender-Identity in Early Childhood.*

This chapter will explore the personal and lived experiences of 18 early childhood educators through the completion of an online survey where they talked about their daily teaching. A total of 32 surveys were submitted; however, 14 were considered incomplete. All educators were female and all except two of the educators were from Australia. The chapter specifically looks at only a selection of the online survey questions which focused on exploring the place of feminism(s) in their work, how they think about gender-identity in their classrooms and how their pedagogical practices responded to issues of gendering. We use the responses of educators to trace how their work intersects with feminism(s) and their early childhood knowledge and practices. We use multiple feminist discourses to highlight how these intersections frame what is possible and what is not, and ask how we might work together to explore new ways of researching and practicing feminism(s).

Reflecting on the Presence of Feminism and Gender in Early Childhood Education in the Australian Context

All feminism has at its heart a desire to challenge and change how gendered knowledge, systems and practices distribute power and privilege and produce sexist effects. Until the late 1980s and early 1990s in Australian early childhood education, feminism(s) were chiefly focused on the work-related opportunities that early childhood services offered to women. Little was being done within the early childhood field around how gender-identity and gendering were part of differences in children's learning and relationships. Goldstein (1998) wrote that "a puzzling chasm exists between feminist writing on education and early childhood education" (p. 51) and that "[t]he separation of education feminism and early childhood education feels artificial, awkward. The two fields seem like logical and natural partners" (p. 51). Goldstein's (1998) reflections about feminism(s), education and early childhood in the USA paralleled a shift in focus led by feminist scholars researching within the Australian early childhood arena.

The importance of gender in the early childhood field has long been researched and written about by early childhood scholars (e.g., Davies 2003a; MacNaughton 1997, 2000; Blaise 2005). Researchers have argued that as children learn about gender they learn sexist values, beliefs and attitudes and relationships (Blaise 2005; Davies 2003a, b; MacNaughton 1997, 2000, 2001, 2005; Robinson and Jones Diaz 2006; Seckold and Campbell 2003). Feminist researchers found ways to make gender-identity, gendering and sexist effects part of the educational agenda for early childhood classrooms. As MacNaughton (1997) said:

> If we are successfully to work through the challenges of reconstructing the pedagogic gaze with feminist intent then we must be vigilant to the limits and the possibilities of the differing feminist ways we make sense of children. If we are then maybe, in another 20 years from now, it will not be as possible to find early childhood educators who fail to 'see' gender (p. 325).

So, we ask: *Are we there yet?* How do educators use feminism(s) today to construct their pedagogic gaze and make sense of children?

Australia has recently undergone many reforms to legislation, policy, training and workforce requirements in early childhood education. Significantly, in 2009 a national curriculum called *Belonging, Being and Becoming: The Early Years Learning Framework for Australia* (EYLF) (DEEWR 2009) was introduced for all early years services working with children birth to five years of age. In 2011, national quality standards were introduced to monitor how the EYLF framework and new regulatory requirements were being implemented (ACECQA 2011).

These reforms adopted an approach in which gender equity work was subsumed by an overarching commitment to equity as the product of inclusive early childhood pedagogy. Illustrative of this is one of the key learning outcomes in the EYLF framework. The learning outcome requires "children to have a strong sense of identity" (DEEWR 2009, p. 20). However, examination of EYLF documents and guidelines shows the word identity is used to encompass all aspects of diversity for each child. There is no focus on how powerful social forces including dominant understandings of culture, gender, race, sexuality and ability intersect at the site of the individual to produce advantage and disadvantage. Rather than ensuring gender is part of the pedagogic gaze used by educators to make sense of children, it seems gender is rarely mentioned except when it forms part of a definition of 'inclusion' (Smith et al. 2014, p. 135). Similarly, in the *National Quality Standard* (NQS) gender is rendered invisible (Smith et al. 2014, p. 135). Educators are required to report on children's participation within programs "regardless" of gender (ACECQA 2011, p. 32). The EYLF document notes that educators draw from diverse theoretical positions and provides a variety of examples; however, feminism is not listed (DEEWR 2009). Hauser and Marrero (1998) advise:

> it is clear that if gender equity or feminist theory is absent from the curriculum, children receive the message that gender is also absent as an organizing principle in their construction of knowledge. This message provides an inaccurate and incomplete foundation for making meaning of the world (p. 165).

While the new Victorian Early Years Learning and Development Framework (VEYLDF) (DET 2016) has recognized the curriculum gaps around gender at a state level, we argue absences of gender and feminism(s) continue more broadly in Australian curriculum documents and quality standards. This sends a message that gender and feminism(s) are unimportant to children and to educators.

Our reflections at this point generated three key questions: Are the concepts of gender-identity, gendering and sexism still important to the work of early childhood educators? If so, how do educators and others understand and practice work for gender equity and what do feminism(s) have to offer to early childhood educators? To understand how we made sense of the responses of educators to our questions, we begin by tracing the influence of more recent second wave, third wave and postfeminist discourses in early childhood classrooms.

Tracing the Presence of Feminism(s) in Early Childhood Education

There are many varied and contested understandings of feminism(s) (St. Pierre 2010; Butler 1990; Davies 2003a; Flax 1990). Within this contested space, feminism(s) take a critical stance that disrupts or decentres the taken for granted norms or assumptions that place the masculine bias of mainstream Western thinking at the centre of society and women on the rim or periphery (Beasley 2005). hooks (2000) notes:

> Everything we do in life is rooted in theory. Whether we consciously explore the reasons we have a particular perspective or take a particular action there is also an underlying system shaping thought and practice. In its earliest inception feminist theory had as its primary goal explaining to women and men how sexist thinking worked and how we could challenge and change it (p. 19).

To examine feminist discourses within this research data we will discuss 'waves' of feminism(s). We note that describing feminist theories as discursive waves is problematic. First, it provides an illusion that feminism(s) have 'evolved' in a linear and fixed progression over time, rather than understanding feminist discourses as multiple, fluid and intersecting (Evans and Chamberlain 2014). Second, there are limitations in any data system that attempts to neatly categorize participant responses. In our survey, we saw how participants shifted between our categories as they spoke about different aspects of their pedagogical thinking and practice. However, the waves of feminism(s) were useful as a way of tracing and exploring the possibilities and limitations of feminist discourses in operation within participants' responses. In a Western context, 'first wave' feminism(s) (late nineteenth and early twentieth century) and early liberal feminists argued that women should be part of universal standards for social and political rights and 'selfhood' (Beasley 2005, p. 18). Some feminists working in this space drew on Marxist/socialist theories, to advocate for women to have equal (full) access to adult citizenship

within liberal capitalist society. 'Second wave' feminism(s) (1960s and 1970s) continued the work of earlier feminists exploring liberal and Marxist/social feminism. Second wave feminism(s) began to critique ideas of universal standards, exploring 'power' and oppression particularly in relation to "men's systematic power as a group over women as a group" (Beasley 2005, p. 19) to overthrow power and particularly men's authority over women. In the late 1970s and 1980s, Western feminists began examining identity politics and sexual difference. In this context, gender is not considered from the perspective of characteristics of male and female creating a dualistic male/female category but identity is perceived "as more than singular and not universally the same" (Beasley 2005, p. 22).

In Australia, second wave feminism(s) focused on creating long-term parity in education and employment for men and women. Educators in early childhood services were encouraged to see and respond to the differences between how boys and girls were accessing learning. The source of these differences was understood as both biological and experiential. This meant gender-identity was primarily constituted within developmental psychology, maturational and socialization theories. These theories suggested that children built their gender-identity, gendered understandings and gendered practices as they matured through structured and natural stages of development and/or absorbed these understandings and practices from significant models and messages in the world around them.

For early childhood educators, this meant they observed developmental stages of gender-identity, modelled non-stereotypical gender roles and responded to issues of sexism with teaching strategies that challenged a child's 'misunderstandings' of gender (e.g., Derman-Sparks and The A.B.C. Task Force 1989). With a redefined essential self, children could progress successfully towards an equitable and productive adulthood.

In the 1990s and 2000s, third wave feminism(s) explored alternative constructions of identity, knowledge and power. Poststructural feminism(s) in particular highlighted the operation of gender in and through institutionally and personally supported relations of power/knowledge, the multiplicity of identity and refuted the notion that identity is essential, fixed or inherent. Within this context, power is seen as neither positive nor negative but in what Foucault describes as operating as a capillary through relationships (Foucault 1977). Poststructural feminism(s) enabled educators to question and challenge established early childhood knowledge and practices and unpack how the operation of relations of power impacted their work for gender equity. This is illustrated by the early childhood feminist poststructualist writer MacNaughton (2000) drawing on Michel Foucault's work:

> …educational institutions such as early childhood centres survive and thrive through creating and maintaining a set of truths about how we should think, act, and feel towards ourselves as early childhood professionals and towards children, parents, and colleagues. These truths are woven together into a regime (or system of management) that governs what are seen to be normal and desirable ways of thinking, acting and feeling in all early childhood institutions. In doing so, they create and maintain a system of morality that says what is a 'good', 'true' way to be an early childhood professional and what is not (p. 164).

In the spaces created by third wave feminism(s), educators were able to think differently about themselves as educators and engage differently with their pedagogy.

Judith Butler's work in *Gender Trouble* (1990), also offered early childhood educators another way of understanding and exploring gender-identity. For Butler, gender-identity could best be described as performance that comes into existence through action. Connell (2009) commented that "in Butler's treatment, gender radicalism consists not of mobilization around an identity (such as 'women'), but of actions that subvert identity, disrupt gender dichotomy and displace gender norms" (p. 42).

Third wave feminism(s) enabled educators to acknowledge the increasingly complex politics of identity emerging in the intersections between race, class, sexuality and ability that were layered into children's learning and relationships in early childhood classrooms. Poststructural feminism(s) enabled educators to talk about how webs of power circulated in and through multiple possible identities (subjectivities), knowledge and practices that were in circulation. Children were constituted as agentic and complex with the capacity to construct, resist and reconstruct their gendered learning and identity from a multitude of desirable and competing possibilities in the social world (Walkerdine 1990; Davies 2003a). This focus on power in its operation throughout the daily life of being a girl or a boy in classrooms created a dynamic and shifting form of pedagogy. Educators were able to ask how political effects were both possible and held in place by personal and institutional investments in dominant discourses. This redirected pedagogy to engaging children and adults with the issues of advantage, disadvantage, voice, multiplicity and diversity.

Concurrent with and in opposition to third wave feminist politics, postfeminist discourses claim feminism(s) are made redundant by successful gender equality achievements citing educational progress and advances in how women are represented in economics and business (Budgeon 2011). Postfeminist discourses hold with neoliberal ideologies where responsibility for life outcomes is at the site of the individual. This means women/girls and men/boys are equal and have the same freedoms and choices to use education and hardwork to prosper and be successful (Crofts and Coffey 2016; McRobbie 2007). The notion that gender equity exists for all and that each individual woman and man can choose to equally and fully participate in society, dismisses the need for feminist politics (Crofts and Coffey 2016). It is important to note that postfeminist discourses are not necessarily anti-feminist as there is still a desire for equality for women. However, equity is connected with each individual's freedom, agency and personal responsibility enshrined in the rights and freedoms afforded by a neoliberal society to all citizens rather than a structural and societal condition. Postfeminist discourses respond to the complexity of gender-identity by merging equity into the self-actualized, individualized and privatized child. In Australian early childhood education this can be seen in the integration of identity within the EYLF. Gender no longer requires particular recognition by educators because new social meanings of being human encompass gender-identity and produce equity. The neoliberal policy that drives the

National Quality Framework (Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations 2009) supports this blurring of the politics of gender leaving educators to define and measure each individual child's learning against universal outcomes.

Mapping and Remapping Feminism(s) and Gender Issues in Early Childhood

So what do educators think about feminism(s) and gender issues in early childhood classrooms? Multiple feminist discourses were traced in the survey responses as early childhood educators talked about themselves undertaking gender-identity work. Interestingly in the Australian context, whilst feminism and feminist theories are not emphasized in the EYLF or NQS documents, this did not seem to deter 70% of the educators from exploring and engaging in feminism(s) and using feminist ideas in their daily work with children. The most common themes that educators used to talk about the place of feminism in their work were equality/equal rights, equity, challenging stereotypes and undertaking advocacy work. For 78% of educators this meant they focused particularly on curriculum that considered gender-identity. Themes that emerged from their descriptions of their pedagogical practices were the importance of identity, challenging stereotypes/discrimination, power, social justice and supporting diversity. These themes connected with the goals of second wave feminism(s) and with third wave feminism(s) as they continued the goals of second wave feminism(s) with an emphasis on intersectionality, difference and identity.

Tracing Second Wave Feminism(s)

First and second wave early childhood feminism(s) worked for equal rights, equity and equality, often within developmental constructions of a child's singular potential or innate identity. Educators who identified themselves as feminists captured the threads of these ideas as they talked about the place of feminism in their work to educate children about equity as part of gender-identity:

> I think it is extremely important that young children grow up with an understanding that they are not hindered by their gender (R29).

> …because I want them to know and understand that women are equal to men (R23).

In educators' responses, we saw how the influence of second wave feminism(s) emerged within the developmental and socialization theories they used to understand gender-identity, shape their pedagogical gaze and make sense of children:

> Because it recognises that gender identity influences development (R11).

> One of the outcomes of the VEYLDF [Victorian Early Years Learning Developmental Framework] is that of 'identity". Identity is formed by one's cultural background, gender, sex, religion and personality. In order to promote a strong sense of identity, we must document and acknowledge a child's exploration of the social constructs of gender and promote gender equity (R14).

When educators drew on second wave feminism(s) to challenge patriarchal stereotypes and systems with children, they were able to provide opportunities for children to explore non-stereotypical learning, educational materials and gender roles:

> To ensure that each individual child has the opportunity to participate in and explore experiences relevant to specific gender roles. In saying that, I actually don't want it to sound too sexist. If there is a little girl that has an interest in trucks, th[e]n I would be supporting that interest, not pushing her to play with dolls, and vice versa with boys (R09).

> I use photographs of children in various play experiences which tells children it is okay for boys to play with dolls or girls playing with Lego (R25).

> Children need to experience all aspects of development and life, not just typical gender roles. Children also need to be c[h]alleged on this e.g. "boys can't play with that" should warrant a discussion, not be dismissed or ignored (R03).

The theoretical origins of second wave feminism(s) emerging from educator responses show how they both enable and constrain the ways in which educators can work for gender equity. When educators use second wave feminism(s) they must observe and correctly interpret a child who is rational, innocent, misinformed or immature. Their toolbox for change is limited to techniques that include modelling, questioning and creating environmental cues and opportunities for children to learn when they are ready. However, nothing prepares educators for the many ways that children reconstruct and resist gender equity.

Tracing Third Wave Feminism(s)

The influence of third wave feminist discourses was less evident in how educators talked about their gender-identity work. However, several educators talked about multiple and shifting gendered identities and gendered binaries. The connections to how relations of power were implicated in children's lives or in their teaching were not explored by educators in detail.

> I believe that being able to acknowledge gender as complex and shifting is an important aspect of promoting education that is equitable and socially just. It also positions children as citizens who are capable of exploring and expressing their gender identity in a range of ways. This challenges the commonly held belief that children are too young to understand gender identity and experience discrimination or marginalisation if they don't fit a societal 'norm' or expectation (R08).

> Gender issues are associated with the social practices and relationships and are also associated with power plays and social justice issues (R05).

Terms like 'identity' that were used to frame the survey questions may have sat at odds with educators working within third wave feminist discourses. 'Identity' is a problematic term because it suggests a singular and innate characteristic of the individual, rather than discursively constituted, multiple and shifting subject positions. When educators used third wave feminism(s) they reflected on the restrictive effects for their pedagogy of thinking about gender as a constant element of identity or part of a simple binary.

> In short because I find the narrow and often binary gender identities often presented to children extremely frustrating and sexist. Any way in which this can be challenged and possibilities for ways of 'being' expanded, I'm for it (R29).

> Gender development in early childhood is a constantly evolving thing. Children are exploring the social rules of gender to figure out where they fit in and how they want to express themselves. Children who feel as though they aren't their prescribed sex can often feel alienated without understanding why, which may lead to social emotional or other stresses which can be damaging long-term (R30).

When educators drew on third wave feminism(s) to construct their teaching practices, they identified both the importance and the complexity of challenging stereotypes and socially constituted boundaries of identity:

> Gender concepts and gender bias is something that children are exposed to in their daily lives every day (with all sorts of mixed concepts about gender, such as pink for girls & blue for boys/construction is for boys & home corner for girls, as well as tricky questions about who they are and why differences exist etc.). This can be confronting at times for educators, confusing for children & bias around gender can be as damaging for children as cultural bias or social bias or any other sort of bias. I think as early childhood educators we have a responsibility to address gender issues within children's play, learning and lives, and support children to develop healthy gender concepts (R10).

When educators drew on third wave feminism(s), they saw children engaged in complex struggles for gender-identity and began planning their responses from a place of uncertainty. Educators questioned both what was happening between and for children and the gaps and silences within their theoretical framework. Third wave feminism(s) enabled educators to use responses that engaged with children, families and institutions that frame early childhood practices.

Tracing Postfeminist Discourses

The influence of current education policy contexts in Australia and internationally is most evident in how educator responses reflected postfeminist discourses. In this arena, educators did not focus on gender-identity, gendering or sexisms but rather adopted a human rights approach to how their feminism(s) influenced their work with children. When educators drew on postfeminism(s) and neoliberal politics, they showed that opportunities and success were available to all girls/women and boys/men equally. Learning choices and successes were managed and driven by the individual child rather than constituted within and through a gendered classroom.

The ways that dominant hegemonic masculinities were performed, the location of patriarchal structures and the operations of relations of power were not critiqued when postfeminism(s) were used by educators. Gender and gendering disappeared from their vocabulary and was no longer signified or implicated in learning and relationships (Crofts and Coffey 2016; McRobbie 2007).

> We constantly talk about the idea that we are all humans worthy of respect and although your voice may be different to another person's, your ideas are worthy of attention (R14).

> It is a child/human rights issue and we as early childhood educators are advocates for all children (R05).

The postfeminism merging of identity appears to have profoundly influenced how and whether educators observed gender-identity and gendering issues in operation in their classrooms. While 78% of the educators believed it is important to observe gender and develop curriculum that considers gender-identity, only 22% of educators did so frequently (often/weekly 5.56% or constantly/daily 16.67%). This silencing of gender as a specific issue within educators' practices sits within a postfeminist frame. When educators used postfeminist discourse to talk about their work, they spoke in gender-neutral terms about equity between children, and their focus became centred on the individual child:

> I think it is important to be aware of students and all of their needs. I think it's important to create a classroom environment where all students are welcomed and valued (R23).

> Children are exploring their role as human, they are still developing the skills to live in our society. They don't need this complicated with adult gender perceptions (R20).

In this postfeminist construction of the child, the politics of gender were situated as an adult perception that complicates the child's innocent journey towards becoming a productive citizen. When educators drew on postfeminist discourses, their practices were centred on the individual child whose unique and integrated identity distinguished her from others.

> It is individual to each child and thus an important part of understanding the individual (R31).

Within postfeminist discourses, educators focused on child-centred curriculum and teaching techniques that drew on their expert knowledge and reading of children's cues to empower children with the freedom to choose and pursue their own appropriate learning:

> Gender does not define a person, you should observe, document and develop curriculum on the child's ability, learning and interest (R07).

> Our curriculum is based on children's current & ongoing interests & needs… Sometimes learning happens spontaneously because a child asks a direct question, sometimes it's because a group of children are exploring a particular concept/idea… Generally children dictate the what, when, where & why and curriculum is developed from observations to extend children's understanding or misunderstanding (R10).

Educators who drew on postfeminst discourses used a child-centred focus that limited their gaze to their assessment of individual skills, needs and interests and prevented their critical gaze from posing questions about how their pedagogy is constituted within the political context or the operation of power within and through discourses.

When educators drew on postfeminist policy and practice in the neoliberal context of early childhood education, gender politics were no longer foregrounded unless they posed a disruption that the educator deemed to be unfair:

> Gender is something I observe, but would probably only consciously document/ponder if I felt there was some form of discrimination occurring (R28).

When educators used postfeminist discourses to speak about their work, rather than producing more complex responses to the effects of diverse identities as noted in the Australian EYLF approach to inclusion, they appeared to conceal identity politics and misdirected their gaze away from how gender-identity and gendering are at work. Instead educators using postfeminist discourses attempted to bring together diversity at the site of the individual to produce a cohesive picture and drew on a child-centred curriculum to address generalized and universalized learning outcomes.

It is important to note that participants responses shifted between and across our categories of feminism(s) as they searched for ways to speak about their work. For some educators, this led to internal pedagogical struggles as they attempted to speak about the politics of identity invited by third wave feminism(s) and the gender-neutral classroom of a post-feminist world:

> Gender identity is very fluid at this age. I baulk at drawing attention to the boy who chooses to wear a dress, or the girl who chooses to play in the mud, as we have many many children who choose to play in these ways, and a family group which largely doesn't gender this type of play either (R17).

> We challenge when we hear children say 'only for girls' or 'only for boys' and then we use shared sustained thinking to question assumptions, but my programming and documentation aims to support each child in a gender-neutral way (R17).

The responses given by educators when they spoke within postfeminist discourses raises an important question: How is it possible to undertake a political struggle against patriarchy and sexisms when they are no longer visible because equity has been merged/blended within individual 'identity'? Educators themselves when constructed within the neoliberal postfeminist discourses of early childhood, find their responsibilities for documenting and delivering learning outcomes which include the individual child's inclusive, successful and productive identity overwhelming. For some educators, exploring gender issues may become yet another thing to work on in an already complex, complicated world:

> [I]ts not something I have especially thought about. I daresay it is important but unfortunately I am human and cannot do everything perfectly (R28).

Conclusion

We began this chapter by asking the question *Are we there yet?* We posed this question for educators and for ourselves from the perspective of wanting to understand the place of feminism(s) in early childhood education. Our framing of educator responses using feminism(s) as they intersect with early childhood education theory and practice has enabled us to focus on questions about what each offers to Australian and international early childhood education today. We believe this is important if we are to continue the work of disrupting boundaries in early childhood settings, forming alliances across differences and continuing to seek unexpected possibilities for understanding and performing ourselves and others.

Along the way, we have seen how recurring elements of early childhood pedagogy in a neoliberal postfeminist world both constrain and make possible the different ways that educators are able to engage with the gendered politics of their classrooms. Although our Australian policy context describes a knowable, assessable and measurable individual child who operates in a gender-neutral classroom, educators have shown they are both interested in and concerned about how gender-identity and gendering play out in their classrooms. Each educator's approach to feminism(s) has offered something to the conversation about what constitutes gender equity, how sexisms can be confronted and what changes are necessary to the landscape of gender-identity and gendering in early childhood curriculum. Educators are finding ways to speak about their teaching, their struggles and their political intent. The responses from educators mirror the words of bell hooks (2000):

> Most people have no understanding of the myriad ways feminism has positively changed all our lives. Sharing feminist thought and practice sustains feminist movement. Feminist knowledge is for everybody (p. 24).

With this in mind, when we ask 'are we there yet' we do not see 'there' as a finite or linear destination. Rather we speak of 'there' as a space between the centre and margins in which new possibilities for performing theory, practices and pedagogy can be spoken into existence by educators with others. As hooks (2000) said:

> feminist theory must be constantly made and re-made so that it addresses us where we live, in our present (p. 117).

A remaking of early childhood educational theories to embrace feminist theory requires us to find ways to engage with what our current theories and practices enable us to think and say and do at the micro-level of their effects—that is, in our classrooms. If we are to acknowledge the diversity and multiplicity of how gender-identity and gendering produce effects, we have to engage in different conversations that include the effects of constructing an apolitical and innocent child as the subject of our classroom teaching, the narrowness of the theoretical origins of our early childhood knowledge and the place of child-centred curriculum as a response to issues of gender equity. Hartsock (1987) invited us to undertake

just this sort of questioning in her critique of the place of the ‘Other’ within third wave feminism:

> out of this concrete multiplicity, [we need to] build an account of the world as seen from the margins, an account which can transform these margins into centres. The point is to develop an account of the world which treats our perspectives not as subjugated knowledges, but as primary (pp. 204–205).

This engagement with theory, practice and relations of power within early childhood education requires us to enter a space between the narrow binaries of ‘us’ and ‘them’ where we do not simply trace and retrace relations of power, but instead are open to new possibilities. This is the space where we are authorized to think and say and do ‘otherwise’ (MacNaughton 2005). In the third space we can draw on different theories, different experiences, different voices and look within and without to find what is both surprising and what is possible.

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