

CHAPTER 3

The discovery of sexism in schools: Everyday revolutions in the classroom

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Sexism is a process through which females and males not only progressively learn that different things are required and expected of them because of their sex, but learn these things in an unexamined way. Good education is incompatible with such a process; central to it is the examination of assumptions and the rational consideration of alternatives.¹

Feminism was an influential movement in education in the 1970s, with formal state-based policies developed on equal opportunity and non-sexist education as well as substantial school-based and grassroots activity in Australia and elsewhere. Within teacher unions and curriculum associations, there was an explosion of publications, dedicated committees and high-profile activism. The impact of this work was felt across school programs, in classroom teaching and in heightened attention to 'sexism in education' as a category of policy, pedagogical and scholarly attention. This encompassed sustained attention to the sex role, sexuality education and new approaches to the explicit role of curriculum in teaching for and about 'human relations'. Educational reform was a key theme in the recommendations arising from the 1975 Royal Commission on Human Relationships. The report's first recommendation on education loftily directed that:

1 Commonwealth Schools Commission, *Girls, School and Society* (Canberra: Australian Government Publishing Service, 1975), 17 [2.30].

The government should require the Department of Education to make a major effort to change the policies of all concerned with education so that these policies will be designed and directed to ensure the fullest possible development of the whole person, physically, emotionally, intellectually and socially.²

This chapter examines the ways in which new constructions of the personal were mediated in and by non-sexist and equal opportunity reforms in schooling and argues the personal was not only political but also pedagogical.

Importantly, the 1970s was also the era of de-schooling schools, a time when a raft of radical ideas and alternatives to regular schooling were in the air.³ The language was of ‘de-institutionalisation’, democratic schooling, social transformation. This was also a time when new educational ideas were gaining ground about the child, pedagogy, freedom and the role of schools as places to foster self-discovery. By the early 1970s, a small but influential number of government schools with alternative forms of curriculum, school design and organisational structures were established in Victoria, offering new ways of imagining schooling, of being students and teachers.⁴ New expressions of progressivism began to flourish, alongside radical critiques of conventional schooling and an evident optimism in the critical potential of schooling to disrupt entrenched power inequalities. Student-led curriculum, participatory learning and less hierarchical relations between teachers and students were advocated, along with broader calls for schooling to become more democratic, with the socially transformative potential of education at the forefront.⁵

2 Royal Commission on Human Relationships, *Final Report of the Royal Commission on Human Relationships*, vol. 1, *Introduction, Summary, and Recommendations* (Canberra: Australian Government Publishing Service, 1977), 17 [2.1].

3 Henry Schoenheimer, *Good Australian Schools and Their Communities*, (Melbourne: Victorian Technical Teachers Association, 1973); Anthony Potts, ‘New Education, Progressive Education and the Counter Culture’, *Journal of Educational Administration and History* 39, no. 2 (2007): 145–59, doi.org/10.1080/00220620701342304; Ronald J. Miller, *Free Schools, Free People: Education and Democracy after the 1960s* (Albany: SUNY Press, 2002).

4 *The Educational Magazine*, Special Issue on Free Schools, 30, no. 4 (1973): 1–20; *The Educational Magazine*, Special Feature on Open Education, 31, no. 5 (1974): 38–48; Schoenheimer, *Good Australian Schools and Their Communities*; G. Maslen, ‘Huntingdale Technical School’, *The Educational Magazine* 30, no. 4 (1973): 14–15.

5 Ivan Illich, *Alternatives to Education* (North Melbourne, Vic.: Australian Union of Students, 1972); David Pettit, *Opening Up Schools: School and Community in Australia* (Harmondsworth, UK: Penguin, 1980); Julie McLeod, ‘Experimenting with Education: Spaces of Freedom and Alternative Schooling in the 1970s’, *History of Education Review* 43, no. 2 (2014): 172–89, doi.org/10.1108/HER-03-2014-0019.

The mood of this era, and of education having a crucial role to play in driving social changes, was captured in and by the election of a Labor federal government in 1972, led by Prime Minister Gough Whitlam. Whitlam's government inaugurated a wave of educational reforms designed to redress educational disadvantage, which included establishing in its first year the Australian Schools Commission, with a remit to 'provide policy advice, carry out research and allocate Federal funding to schools'.⁶ The commission's 1973 interim report, *Schools in Australia* (known as the Karmel Report after committee chair Peter Karmel), mapped out an ambitious program of reform to promote greater equality of education, with programs to tackle the effects of poverty and models for the distribution of school funding and the abolition of tertiary education fees.⁷ Importantly, the Karmel Report found that to be a girl was an educational disadvantage, and that the degree of disadvantage was linked to socioeconomic status.⁸

In her early 1970s study of sex differences in educational qualifications, the Australian sociologist Jean Martin found that, despite little available data on sex differences, it was clear:

girls remain at a disadvantage because they leave school earlier and because such qualifications as they acquire are less likely to equip them to move into those areas of tertiary education, particularly science and medicine, which fully utilize their talents and lead eventually to the higher-status and more lucrative occupations.⁹

Martin further argued that the well-established focus in Australia on:

inequalities between government and independent, and metropolitan and urban schools, and between children from different socio-economic backgrounds, has over-shadowed interest in sex differences, and much excellent material on school populations is not broken down by sex.¹⁰

6 Craig Campbell and Helen Proctor, *A History of Australian Schooling* (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 2014), 182.

7 Peter Karmel and Interim Committee, *Schools in Australia: Report of the Interim Committee for the Schools Commission* (Canberra: Australian Government Publishing Service, 1973); John McLaren, 'Karmel Report: Schools in Australia', DEHANZ, 1 February 2014, dehantz.net.au/entries/karmel-report-schools-australia/; Campbell and Proctor, *A History of Australian Schooling*, 182 and 191–95.

8 Karmel et al., *Schools in Australia*.

9 Jean Martin, 'Sex Differences in Educational Qualifications', *Melbourne Studies in Education*, ed. R. J. W. Selleck (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1972), 96–123, 107.

10 *Ibid.*, 104.

From the early 1970s, there was, then, considerable scholarly and policy momentum, infused by the women's movement, to address the systematic inequalities faced by girls in schools, with a clear linking of sex-based differences to the persistent effects of class-based advantage and disadvantage—a matter that continued to shape gender reform discussions well into the following decades.¹¹

The influential 1975 report *Girls, School and Society*, auspiced by the Schools Commission and principally authored by educationalist Jean Blackburn, documented the details of this systematic disadvantage, providing evidence of participation and retention rates, patterns of curriculum choice and career aspirations.¹² The report argued unequivocally that schools and state education departments were responsible for implementing practices and policies that were non-sexist and that sought to improve girls' educational outcomes. Teachers and other commentators observed how pervasive sex-role stereotyping was and identified school practices—the hidden and the overt curriculum, teachers' expectations—as crucial socialising factors.

Feminist reforms in education were thus part of a wider questioning of the social purposes of schooling and associated concerns with schooling's potential to realise democratic and equality agendas. In turn, these were underpinned by a view of schools as predominantly socialisation agents that had the capacity both to reproduce and to challenge sexist views and practices. Schools were thus identified as key sites for feminist interventions—everyday places for the realisation and enactment of new ways of being girls and boys, women and men, and for countering sexism. As such, schools played a crucial role in mediating the social and political hopes of feminism.

Histories of feminism and schooling are a vital if often muted voice in histories of feminism more generally, and this is particularly pressing in relation to reassessments of the character and legacy of second-wave feminism. In her *Getting Equal: The History of Australian Feminism* (1999), Marilyn Lake argued that one of the defining characteristics of post-1960s feminism (compared to interwar feminism, for example) was its attention to the personal and to re-education of the self.¹³ In such

11 Cherry Collins, Jane Kenway and Julie McLeod, *Factors Influencing the Educational Performance of Males and Females at School and Their Initial Destinations after Leaving School* (Canberra: Department of Education, Training and Youth Affairs, 2000).

12 Commonwealth Schools Commission, *Girls, School and Society*.

13 Marilyn Lake, *Getting Equal: The History of Australian Feminism* (St Leonards, NSW: Allen & Unwin, 1999).

formulations, education in its broadest sense is ever-present, often as part of the background, with schools implicitly the source of problems (sexist attitudes) and of possible solutions (resocialisation), with little elaboration of the level of work involved in schools to achieve such feminist goals. Moreover, education and specifically schools have less often been examined as themselves complex and dynamic sites of feminist activism, politics and theory, and are more likely to be treated as a sideline or niche thread within the history of feminism.¹⁴ Equally, histories of progressive and alternative education often tell a somewhat introspective account of their own genesis and legacies, with limited acknowledgement of contemporaneous feminist activists or of the parallel critiques of social relations, inequalities and the project of schooling as freedom that, at some levels, their respective projects implicitly shared.

The larger project on which this chapter is based seeks to entangle these histories, proposing a reappraisal of feminist education that gives proper recognition to its central role in both histories of feminism and histories of progressive and alternative education. The personalisation of education and the political played out visibly in the alternative school movement, evident, for example, in the creation of purpose-built or found environments that reflected the promise of open plan, student-centred and deinstitutionalised schooling in which student voice, choice and preference were given elevated attention.¹⁵ Feminist interventions were integral to a related process of personalisation, such that the interrogation of identity—who am I? what are my values?—was a prominent pedagogic strategy, oriented to reforming

14 Gisela Kaplan, *The Meagre Harvest* (St Leonards, NSW: Allen & Unwin, 1996); Lake, *Getting Equal*; Chilla Bulbeck, *Living Feminism: The Impact of the Women's Movement on Three Generations of Australian Women* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997); Megan Jones, 'Historicising Feminist Knowledge: Notes Towards a Genealogy of Academic Feminism', *Australian Feminist Studies* 13, no. 27 (1998): 117–28, doi.org/10.1080/08164649.1998.9994895; Jean Curthoys, *Feminist Amnesia: The Wake of Women's Liberation* (London: Routledge, 1997); Ann Curthoys, 'Doing It for Themselves: The Women's Movement since 1970', in *Gender Relations in Australia: Domination and Negotiation*, ed. Kay Saunders and Raymond Evans (Sydney: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1992): 425–29; Joyce Goodman, 'The Gendered Politics of Historical Writing in History of Education', *History of Education* 41, no. 1 (January 2012): 9–24; Michelle Arrow and Mary Spongberg, 'Editorial', *Australian Feminist Studies* 22, no. 53 (1 July 2007): 159–61, doi.org/10.1080/08164640701378570. See also 'Second Wave Feminism', 13 October 2013, Radio National, ABC, www.abc.net.au/radionational/programs/rearvision/second-wave-feminism/4983136; and Chen Yan and Karen Offen, 'Women's History at the Cutting Edge: A Joint Paper in Two Voices', *Women's History Review* 27, no. 1 (2018): 6–28, doi.org/10.1080/09612025.2016.1250531.

15 'The Swinburne Community School', *Farrago*, 5 May 1972; Julie McLeod, Philip Goad, Julie Willis and Kate Darian-Smith, 'Reading Images of School Buildings and Spaces: An Interdisciplinary Dialogue on Visual Research in Histories of Progressive Education', in *Visual Research Methods in Educational Research*, ed. Julianne Moss and Barbara Pini (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016), 15–35, doi.org/10.1057/9781137447357_2.

teacher and student sensibilities and habits of conduct. For the purposes of this chapter, I map key feminist reforms in schooling that sought to reconfigure the personal and analyse the pedagogic interventions that troubled conceptions of the sex role and subjectivity, linking these to broader aspirations for democratic education and the paradoxes at the heart of the governmental administration of freedom. The chapter concludes with reflections on the rise and fall narratives that characterise cultural and policy memories of second-wave feminism and education. I begin by considering the significant pedagogical and conceptual claims of the sex-role construct in second-wave feminist educational reforms.

Feminism and the sex role

A strong motif in feminist writing in the 1970s was the process of ‘sex role socialisation’, which placed itself against any form of identity determinism. As Kate Millett argued, ‘[s]exual politics obtains consent through the “socialization” of both sexes to basic patriarchal politics with regard to temperament, role and status’.¹⁶ The operation and effects of sex-role stereotyping were identified by feminist educators in the 1970s as major causes of inequality between the sexes. Changing the values, attitudes and practices that constituted identity was judged to be the most effective way to eliminate sexism. Schools were thus positioned as prime socialising agents and accorded major roles in making possible—giving form, effect and setting—the remaking of persons and the enculturation of feminist, anti-sexist principles.

During the 1960s and 1970s, accounts of sex-role socialisation were widespread in the social sciences as well as in popular discourse.¹⁷ They were drawn upon by social psychologists, sociologists and educationalists to explain the perceived and measurable differences between males and females in occupations, educational qualifications, aspirations, behaviours, life patterns and so on.¹⁸ Silcock, for example, undertook a study of the ‘sex role of Brisbane youth’ in order to compare it with the

16 Kate Millett, *Sexual Politics* (London: Abacus, published by Sphere Books, 1972).

17 The publication of the journal the *Sex Role* began in 1975. Sociology journals from this time (such as the *Australian and New Zealand Journal of Sociology*) show an increasing mention of the sex role concept, e.g. Anne Edwards, ‘Sex Roles: A Problem for Sociology and for Women’, *Australian and New Zealand Journal of Sociology* 19, no. 3 (1983): 385–412, doi.org/10.1177/144078338301900302.

18 For example, Donald Edgar, ‘Competence for Girls?’, *Secondary Teacher* (July 1972): 9–12; Shirley Sampson, ‘Sex Stereotypes: Some Evidence from Australian Schools’, *Australian Journal of Education* 23, no. 2 (1979): 132–40, doi.org/10.1177/000494417902300204.

different models of sex role advanced by US sociologist Talcott Parsons and psychologist Daniel Brown.¹⁹ Other educators and teachers might have taken a less scholarly approach but nevertheless insisted that the acquisition, operation and effects of the sex role were vital factors and these matters increasingly became the object of educational attention. It was for a time the dominant way in which subjectivity was conceptualised in educational discussions in Australia and provided the basis for much pedagogical activity and curriculum reform. Australian feminist reforms in education from the 1960s through to at least the late 1980s were strongly influenced by these ideas.

When, in the decades preceding the 1960s, sex-based differences in young people's education, their curriculum and career choices, or their futures and values, were acknowledged, it was as matters to be noted and accommodated rather than challenged or seen as signalling educational or social problems. The shift in the 1960s and 1970s to regard such matters as worthy of investigation was in large part a result of feminist intervention, and its recasting of differentiation as inequality. Schools were identified as social institutions with special responsibilities for preparing young people for futures that were not constrained by the traditional ideas of sex-appropriate conduct.

The sex-role concept articulated with, and gave expression to, the task of shaping autonomous, rational, unconstrained (by sex, by tradition, by nature) future citizens. Its influence was felt in pedagogy and curriculum design, as well as in common parlance. Sex-role theory has met with sustained critique and is now seen to be an explanation that feminism has left behind. There are valid and well-rehearsed reasons for repudiating both cognitive-developmental and behaviourist models of role theory: for example, they presuppose a prior organising agent to sort out roles, they are unable to explain why some behaviours are sanctioned and others not, or to explain socially anomalous behaviour, and they have a normative vision of gender identity development, one which offers an inadequate account of the formation of identity and sexual difference, establishes a simplistic relationship between the social and the self, and fosters a reductive opposition between mind and body and so forth.²⁰

19 Anne Silcock, 'The Social Sex Roles of Brisbane Youth', *Australian Journal of Education* 10, no. 2 (1966): 170–85, doi.org/10.1177/000494416601000212.

20 Julian Henriques, Wendy Hollway, Cathy Urwin, Couze Venn and Valerie Walkerdine, *Changing the Subject: Psychology, Social Regulation and Subjectivity* (London: Routledge, 1998 [1984]).

While criticisms of role theory's conceptual shortcomings are thus well-founded, they have tended to obscure its (historical) effects as a set of influential ideas about subjectivity and gender and education. Defining and then examining the sex role, and even conceiving of identity as composed of multiple roles, opened a space for simultaneously freeing oneself from tradition and establishing practices for scrutinising habit and inclination—these can be examined as powerful practices of self-government and crucial in remaking the self in non-traditional ways. The concept of role also had a more conventional normative aspect, in that assimilation to certain roles was regarded as not only socially functional but as a measure of psychological and emotional adjustment. Even so, the reasoning of role theory can be understood as part of a systematic undoing of natural gender and inscription of gender as social, as portable, as contingent, as an independent variable of identity.²¹

Role theory underlined the work and responsibility of the individual in making their own identity and futures. In discussions about schooling and sexism, self-making is represented as an explicit activity, an ethical practice, both an artefact of and requirement for equality and the elimination of sexism. In this way, concepts such as the sex role and socialisation can be examined as not only flawed but also as productive. This gives rise to a number of questions that are important for understanding the form and legacy of second-wave feminism in schools: What kind of effects did these constructs have on educational practices? What was the impact of educational policies and pedagogies informed by these concepts? And, what gender norms did they help affirm as part of emergent cultural common sense?

21 The emphasis upon the radically social form of the 'sex role' chimes in some respects with ideas concerning the 'performance' of gender—noting that these emerge from different theoretical-political traditions. Judith Butler writes that 'if gender is a kind of a doing, an incessant activity performed, in part, without one's knowing and without one's willing, it is not for that reason automatic or mechanical. On the contrary it is a practice of improvisation within a scene of constraint ... the terms that make up one's own gender are, from the start, outside oneself, beyond oneself in a sociality that has no single author'. Judith Butler, *Giving an Account of Oneself* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2004), 1.

Utopian moments and bureaucratic reforms

Desires to transform student subjectivities as well as the work of schooling, to make it variously more democratic, less sexist, more student-centred and less hierarchical or factory-like, were manifested and put into practice in ways that were at once technical, organisational and aspirational. The larger purposes of formal education are usually allied to questions of prevailing social values and notions of social progress, even if it is in terms of how schooling might be hindering or complicating such ambitions. In this sense, formal education can be understood as having utopian elements, with high hopes projected onto its mission as well as onto its more mundane and everyday functions. While this can be expressed quite instrumentally in terms of schooling's role in preparing young people for future work, more expansive, normative and hopeful questions also arise. Ruth Levitas's work on 'utopia as a method' is helpful here, as it gives nuance to the different temporalities and purposes of such endeavours as expressed in social and political programs—in this case, formal schooling and systems of education. She proposes that 'utopia has three modes':

The first is an archaeological mode: piecing together the images of the good society that are embedded in political programmes and social and economic policies. The second is an ontological mode which addresses the question of what kind of *people* particular societies develop and encourage ... The third is an architectural mode—that is, the imagination of potential alternative scenarios for the future, acknowledging the assumptions about and consequences for the people who might inhabit them.²²

Feminist reforms in schooling traversed these three intersecting modes. However, identifying the different registers helps to give not only greater analytic clarity but also a sharper account of the ambitions of their pedagogical and political projects. The following discussion attends primarily to the ontological mode, with some underlying reference to the architectural mode, the imagination of other possible worlds. In characterising the ontological mode, Levitas further describes this as entailing a focus on:

22 Ruth Levitas, *Utopia as Method: The Imaginary Reconstitution of Society* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), doi.org/10.1057/9781137314253.

what is understood as human flourishing, what capabilities are valued, encouraged and genuinely enabled, or blocked and suppressed, by specific existing or potential social arrangements: we are concerned here with the historical and social determination of human nature.²³

Second-wave feminism in education was directly concerned with how gendered—or, in the language of the day, sex-typed—capabilities were either enabled or constrained by ‘specific existing or potential social arrangements’. A central plank was identifying the opportunities for, and indeed obligations of, schools to consider these matters as part of their social and cultural remit and as fundamental to their future-oriented educational mission to prepare young people for worlds beyond the school walls.

Feminist teaching required a commitment to challenging entrenched sexist beliefs and to a range of pedagogical techniques that enabled one to bring students to an awareness of the debilitating effects—for them personally and society generally—of sex-role stereotyping. The goal of feminist pedagogy, then, was to uncover the impediments to an idealised state of gender freedom and to institute a rational program of personal and educational reform whereby sexism would be eliminated and sex roles remade. These feminist educational reforms had clear utopian elements in the sense characterised by Levitas as the ‘ontological mode’; they promised gender freedom, and also worked towards their own persuasive norms of feminist conduct and gendered identity.

As with the alternative school movements of the same period, an important aspect of feminist reforms is that they were undertaken within and supported by state departments of education, often resting on bureaucratic endorsement and infrastructure to implement what could be characterised as oppositional ideas, or at least ideas and practices that challenged the social and educational status quo. Feminism thus had a double-edged role in the administration of education. Across a wide range of public sector activism, and with education no exception, feminist politics became part of bureaucratic and policy structures as a result of deliberate initiatives from feminists to work from within the state, not only to critique it. This phenomenon was captured by the Australian neologism ‘femocrats’ to describe feminists working in the heart of government and state bureaucracies to achieve reformist ends.²⁴

23 Ibid.

24 Anna Yeatman, *Bureaucrats, Technocrats, Femocrats: Essays on the Contemporary Australian State* (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 1990).

Femocrats were certainly important in achieving feminist aims in schools, from Elizabeth Reid as Women's Advisor to the Prime Minister (1973) to leading figures in state departments of education such as Deborah Towns, first co-ordinator of the Equal Opportunity in Education Unit in Victoria (1977), or Denise Bradley, women's advisor to the Education Department of South Australia (1977); women leaders in teacher unions were also prominent in advocating against sexism in schools and initiating curriculum change, such as Helen Clarke from the Technical Teachers Union of Victoria and Claire Henderson from the Victorian Secondary Teachers Association.²⁵ There were indeed many influential and relatively well-known feminist actors during this period, undertaking vital work in governmental bureaucracies. The point I want to make here, though, is a slightly different one from that afforded by focusing on feminist leadership and the phenomenon of femocrats.

My interest here is in the everyday, but far from ordinary, work of classroom teachers in bringing feminist aims to life and in many respects making possible the changes in gender relations and identity envisaged by feminism. Of course, the two realms of activity were often interconnected, with, for example, teachers understanding themselves as part of the grassroots feminist movement, or classroom teachers moving to roles in the departments of education, and femocrats not necessarily seen as remote from the 'chalkface'. However, the regular labour of teaching—managing classrooms, designing lessons, inventing pedagogies, revising curriculums that might support feminist agendas—is too often overlooked or undervalued. Yet it is precisely this work that carried feminist dreams, and which commonly looked towards education—vaguely, expansively—to solve problems of sexism, socialisation and sex-role stereotyping. In the following sections, I offer a close-up look at the intended labour of teachers and the responsibilities they bore in helping to materialise the ambitions of second-wave feminism.

25 Deborah Towns, 'Government Schools', *The Encyclopedia of Women and Leadership in Twentieth-Century Australia*, www.womenaustralia.info/leaders/biogs/WLE0638b.htm; *Equal Opportunity Newsletter* (Victorian Equal Opportunity Resource Centre, 1982–92); Julie McLeod, 'A Decade of Changes: The Equal Opportunity Unit and Resource Centre', *Equal Opportunity Newsletter* 7, no. 1 (1988): 3–6; Julie McLeod, 'Regulating Gender: Feminist Truths and Educational Reform in Victoria since 1975' (PhD thesis, La Trobe University, 1996).

Importantly, in the decades preceding the 1970s, the teaching service had grown dramatically to match the expansion of secondary schooling from the late 1950s onwards.²⁶ One consequence of this significant growth was the influx of a new generation of teachers entering the teaching profession,²⁷ with many younger women and men, influenced by the social movements of the 1960s and 1970s, embracing a new sense of the possibilities of schooling and its wider social functions. Questions of equality and the role of teachers in striving for social change was at the forefront in numerous school-based reforms, such as the alternative schools noted above, as well as the anti-sexism work examined here.²⁸ For the new generation of women teachers, the feminist educational messages had a more personal resonance as well, with many coming of age at the burgeoning of second-wave feminism and with the social mobility afforded by more equitable access to higher education represented by the Whitlam era.

The history of feminism in education is approached here in terms of how it was administered in formal education and through bureaucratic and comparatively mundane and technical ways. This is not to deny the liberatory, at times utopian or even grandly romantic aspirations and rhetoric accompanying these practices. Rather, it is also to bring a close and critical focus to acts of translating such feminist ideals into administrative and educational strategies and techniques that could be put to work in everyday ways in schools and classrooms.

‘Removing the last vestiges of sexism’

During the 1970s, numerous state and national reports on schooling found that schools discriminated against girls, that ‘to be a girl was an educational disadvantage’.²⁹ Absence, lack, limitation, disadvantage were the terms commonly employed to characterise girls’ formal engagement with schooling. Considerable evidence was found of, for example, girls’ under-representation in the science and mathematics areas, their relative

26 L. J. Blake (general editor), *Vision and Realisation: A Centenary History of State Education in Victoria*, vol. 1, (Melbourne: Education Department of Victoria, Government Printer, 1973), 547.

27 Campbell and Proctor, *A History of Australian Schooling*, 191–92.

28 Julie McLeod, ‘Experimenting with Education’, 172–89.

29 Karmel et al., *Schools in Australia*; see also Commonwealth Schools Commission, *Girls, School and Society*.

poor retention rates and their narrow range of career options.³⁰ Schooling practices, including the hidden curriculum, teachers' attitudes and textbooks, were identified as reproducing dominant social beliefs and expectations.³¹ Schools were presented as almost irredeemable institutions, inevitably reproducing dominant values and power relations.³² Yet, at the same time, these critiques provided a rationale for attempting to do something new with schools, to offer different pedagogies and curricula.

Discovering, or rather uncovering, and eliminating sexism was a central preoccupation of feminist educators in the 1970s. This task was tackled with remarkable optimism and clarity of purpose. Upon exposure, sexism was to be rationally debunked and eliminated from the daily practices of both teachers and pupils. Such was the confident mood of the times that the then Victorian Minister for Education Lindsay Thompson could declare that the appointment in 1977 of an Equal Opportunity Co-ordinator would lead to 'the removal of the last vestiges of sexism' within state schooling.³³ So confident was he that this goal would be met, and in response to some 'complaints of the male sex', he predicted that 'it may be necessary to establish an organization to protect the interests of the male sex because they feel they are being victimized in certain areas'.³⁴ In the early stages of their development, the bureaucracies established by the Victorian (and other states) Department of Education and teachers' unions to 'eliminate sexism' emphasised the importance of 'raising awareness' about sexism and the roles people, often unwittingly, played in endorsing sex-stereotyped behaviour and attitudes. Despite the documentation of girls' entrenched educational disadvantage, there was enormous official optimism that schools could and should do something to ameliorate these inequalities. Departments of education, schools and teachers' organisations responded to calls for such ambitious changes through a range of officially sanctioned strategies and recommendations for implementing non-sexist schooling within a state education bureaucracy.

30 For example, *ibid.*

31 For example, Victorian Committee on Equal Opportunity in Victorian Schools, *Victorian Committee on Equal Opportunity in Victorian Schools: Report to the Premier* (Melbourne: the Committee, July 1977).

32 For an example of how practising teachers took up and interpreted these critiques, see Bill Cleland, 'Deficient, Disadvantaged or Different', *Secondary Teacher*, no. 3 (1975): 9–10; Bill Cleland, 'Ivan Illich in Melbourne', *Secondary Teacher*, no. 15 (1978): 12.

33 Victoria, Legislative Assembly, *Parliamentary Debates*, vol. 334, 20 October 1977, 10598.

34 *Ibid.*

Through professional magazines, such as teachers' union journals or curriculum association newsletters, and memoranda from departments of education, teachers were regularly alerted to the dangers of sex-role stereotyping and reminded that qualities and ambitions once thought of as sex-specific were now to be understood as potentially common to both sexes. The 1975 Commonwealth Schools Commission report, *Girls, School and Society*, advised that:

The Committee believes that, to the extent that schools operate on unexamined assumptions about differences between the sexes or fail to confront with analysis sex stereotypes through the media, they limit the options of both boys and girls and assist the processes through which messages of dependence are passed to girls because they are female.³⁵

The *Girls, School and Society* report recommended that states establish their own committees to investigate the status of girls' education and to develop appropriate policies.³⁶ The Victorian Committee on the Status of Women (1975) also urged the Victorian Government to establish such a committee and a Victorian Committee on Equal Opportunity in Schools was established in November 1975, meeting regularly and receiving submissions from the public throughout 1976.³⁷

'We recognise that schools alone cannot bring about a state of perfect social equality, where only genetic differences exist between the sexes', observed the authors of the report on equal opportunity in Victorian schools (1977). But, they believed, 'the experience of schooling should not be such that it directly contributes to a lowered self-esteem, motivation or achievement for either sex, as has been reported to us from evidence gathered in this State'.³⁸ Like the earlier Commonwealth report

35 Commonwealth Schools Commission, *Girls, School and Society*, 157 [14.4].

36 *Ibid.*, 159–60 [14.8–14.10].

37 The terms of reference for the Victorian Committee included investigations of sex-typed language and images in textbooks; sex-based differences in school rules, punishments and rewards, dress codes and behavioural expectations; absence of female role models in senior positions; 'time tabling arrangements and psychological pressures which effectively deny or inhibit participation in areas in which members of a particular sex have not traditionally participated'. The committee was asked to make recommendations on: 'i) What positive measures could be implemented to encourage girls to study a wider range of subjects and aspire to a wider range of occupations, to higher education, and to positions of authority; ii) Whether vocational guidance is biased, and how such guidance can be given so that the whole range of opportunities is presented to members of both sexes without assumptions as to what is suitable for either sex; iii) What alterations could be made to the structure of education to keep career options open for as long as possible'.

38 Victorian Committee on Equal Opportunity in Victorian Schools, *Report to the Premier*, v.

Girls, School and Society, the authors of the Victorian report emphasised the need for pupils to recognise the importance of making informed choices, and that their education, career and personal happiness were not to be constrained by any sex-specific characteristics:

It is important for children to understand that the full range of human characteristics and abilities is present in each sex and that it is the aptitudes or feelings of each individual which are important.³⁹

The opposition between ‘human’ and sex-specific qualities was a common theme in the equal opportunity literature, with the final promise one of escape from the impediments afforded by sexual difference. The reference to ‘human’ invokes an ideal of androgynous, class-free, culturally anonymous personhood, constituted by the full complement of human potentialities. And ‘human’ also denotes the sum of masculine and feminine attributes and roles—as if they too could be distributed equally and fairly across the population. ‘[E]ducation should be about human rather than sex-specific development’, argued the authors of *Girls, School and Society*. ‘There should be no distinction made between girls and boys in school curriculum or organisation, nor any sex-related expectations about behaviour, interests, capacities, personality traits or life patterns.’⁴⁰ Erasing the evidence and expectations of difference was, then, a central feature of these reforms. Pupils, and especially girls, were to be freed from the burdens of their confining sex roles and transported to a realm where they could simply blossom and emerge as asexually ‘human’.⁴¹ Traditional sex roles were, in this somewhat confusing ontological hierarchy, inferior to the abstract ideal of ‘humanness’. The dreams of feminist reformers in education were to create gender freedom and an androgynous subject whose identity was social and therefore not indelibly fixed by tradition or by nature.

39 Ibid., vi.

40 Commonwealth Schools Commission, *Girls, School and Society*, 158 [14.7(a)].

41 Lesley Johnson argued that much work at that time on the education of girls located gender as a burden for women but not for men, and that one of the aims of reforms was to free girls from their gender in order for their individuality to emerge. Lesley Johnson, ‘On Becoming an Individual: A Reassessment of the Issue of Gender and Schooling’, *Discourse* 8, no. 2 (1988): 97–109.

Practical politics in the classroom

‘I would encourage you to examine seriously your own teaching and the operation of your school for sexist implications’, advised the Victorian Director-General of Education in 1980. He reminded teachers that ‘[b]ecoming aware of the subtle ways in which ... prejudice [based on a person’s sex] is perpetrated requires individual commitment’:

As educationists, we are concerned that girls and boys develop their potential to the full. We must take some care that we are not blinkered by sex-role stereotypes or expectations, so that we direct boys and girls differently, irrespective of the talents they have. We all know about self-fulfilling prophecies!⁴²

The exhortations to perpetual vigilance are somewhat tempered by the avuncular tone, hailing everyone as potentially susceptible to a kind of ethical carelessness. The responsibility, nevertheless, lay with teachers and their willingness to reform their own attitudes and habitual practices. This required the development of techniques for interrogating personal beliefs, and this was a central part of feminist strategies. Values, attitudes and hidden, secret and unconscious desires—of both teachers and students—all became the object of scrutiny and target of reform. Non-sexist curriculum programs, teachers’ in-service and professional development texts and policies invoked the ideal of a self-governing student and teacher, one able to be freed from prior personal and social identities and remade into a non-sexist self, unimpeded by sexual difference and sexist attitudes. This remaking of the self, however, could only happen through an endless and vigilant process of self-regulation. Consequently, teachers were to interrupt the socialisation process and no longer to base their actions ‘on unexamined assumptions about sex differences’. To continue to do so, advised a national report and two Victorian Directors-General of Education, would be to ‘limit the freedom of both boys and girls’ and to be ‘acting against sex equality’.⁴³

42 L. W. Shears to School Principals, memorandum, 9 May 1980, Office of the Director-General of Education, ‘Towards Non-Sexist Education’.

43 Commonwealth Schools Commission, *Girls, School and Society*, 17 [2.29]; reprinted in L. W. Shears to School Principals, memorandum; reprinted in N. G. Curry to School Principals, memorandum, 14 February 1983, Office of the Victorian Director-General of Education.

The ideal feminist teacher was to become an exemplar, in terms of both the ethical beliefs she held and in the way in which she exposed herself to self-examination. Numerous checklists were circulated during this time with advice on establishing a non-sexist classroom or questions to give teachers a sexist or non-sexist rating. Committed teachers were to ask themselves such questions as: ‘Have you told a boy “Big boys don’t cry”?’; ‘Do you expect girls to do as well in spelling, reading, language arts and boys to excel in science, mechanical skills and mathematics?’ ‘Do you usually analyze material to see if female characters are represented in a non-stereotyped manner?’⁴⁴ The correct answers were, of course, well-known. Boys do have feelings and girls can be tough and mechanically minded. Like confessional exercises, the purpose lay not in the discovery of new answers, but in the attendant processes of self-reflection and the ritualistic knowing of the right answers. The difficulty was in translating this knowledge into everyday teaching practices. In this task, ‘The most important “teaching method” is the teacher’s attitude’, exhorted one guide for non-sexist teaching. ‘The support, encouragement and education of teachers who are prepared to question their own conditioning and classroom practice must be the first priority of the programme.’⁴⁵ Such weighty responsibilities called for the exercising of considerable self-regulation, adding to an already extensive catalogue of appropriate professional protocols.

- Yourself as a role model: as a person not bound by stereotypes, and with no guilt about this; as a person who cares for people, is assertive, supportive, respectful, strong, considerate, sharing and listening ...
- Be aware of the behaviours you are reinforcing by your attitudes, actions and words ...
- As teachers we must be seen by children as performing a wide variety of roles ...

44 From a ‘Checklist for Teachers’ distributed in the late 1970s and early 1980s by the Equal Opportunity Resource Centre to interested teachers and to schools on in-service days. Checklist reproduced from the work of Dr M. Sadker, College of Science and Society, University of Wisconsin. For other examples of such checklists, see ‘How sexist are you?’, extract from ‘Sexism in the Primary School’, produced by the Three Union Elimination of Sexism Project, *Ms. Muffet*, no. 15 (June 1982): 3; ‘Non-Sexist Teaching: Some Practical Hints’, originally produced by the Women’s Adviser to the South Australian Institute of Teachers, 1979, reproduced and amended by the New South Wales Teachers Federation [n.d. 1980?] and circulated by the Equal Opportunity Unit and Resource Centre in Victoria.

45 Anne Jones, Transition Education Girls’ Project (Vic.) and Victoria Education Department Equal Opportunity Unit, *A Lucky Dip of Resources and Ideas for Non-Sexist Education* (Melbourne: The Project, 1982), 4.

- Send up sexism: point out how absurd it is. Laughter with a serious intent ...
- Value everyone's ideas equally ...
- Don't introduce counter sexism in a contrived, artificial way. Make it as natural and as close to the child's experience as possible ...
- [C]onstantly monitor yourself for impartiality and the unconscious reactions which are the result of your own conditioning. (e.g. the feeling that 'girls are good at reading, boys are good at maths') ...
- Encourage children to reflect on and analyse their own behaviour; to ask 'what's happening?' 'why?' 'what worked?' 'what alternative ways are there of doing/saying things?'⁴⁶

This is a revealing list of professional demands, making clear the extent to which teachers had to scrutinise themselves, and to position themselves as non-sexist, moral exemplars. In many ways, they were impossible demands, asking teachers to have a self-awareness and reflexivity that transcended cultural norms. They were also contradictory: sexism was seen as everywhere, but somehow teachers were to make counter-sexism 'as natural and as close to the child's experience as possible'. Teaching thus explicitly required teachers to make endless ethical decisions about what was or was not appropriate conduct, and to display an ability to bring pupils also to see the need for such judgements. In this way, the teacher was to regard herself as a prototypical new person, at all times conscious of the gaze of others, and scrupulously embodying the desired attributes of non-sexist, non-stereotypical people. Teaching in a non-sexist manner was about instituting equal and fairer educational practices leading to improved outcomes for girls. It also involved a journey of self-discovery and empowerment for the female teacher.

'Be reasonable, be rational', advised feminist educators:

- Operate a non-sexist classroom; this will generate support for non-sexist ideas.
- Explain the concept of sexism. Have students question the relevance of the concept to their own lives and those of people they know.

46 Helen Menzies, *Non-Sexist Teaching: Some Practical Hints* (Adelaide: South Australian Institute of Teachers, 1979), 6–8.

- Have a child-centred approach to learning: group work, and the teacher as a non-authoritarian figure.
- Help break down rigid thinking by techniques like brainstorming and lateral thinking.⁴⁷

In contradicting pupils' everyday (sexist) perceptions, the teacher was to call into question the validity of these perceptions and, at the same time, to affirm the pupils—and especially girl pupils—as 'real learners'. Most of this reforming work was directed at changing girls' attitudes and aspirations: the problem was girls' reluctance to be, for example, assertive or leaders or to follow non-traditional paths. There was, though, at this stage, little acknowledgement that such an orientation devalued and exposed as irrational the existing beliefs and behaviours of girls and young women. It was not, however, that girls were being expected simply to become like boys, but that femininity, being a girl, continued to be positioned as problematic, and as at odds with rationality. There was little regard here of the deep emotional investment children (and teachers) might have had in the personal identities and social relations formed by 'sexist values'. Having identified the systematic operation of sexism, there was little consideration of the reasons for any reluctance and difficulty involved in relinquishing these formative beliefs. Pupils were to be led to adopt the same kind of processes of self-reflection and monitoring that the ideal teacher practised. The teacher thus became a role model from whom students learnt not only certain non-sexist curriculum content, but also appropriate habits and dispositions.

The assessment of sex-role stereotypes held by students, especially in relation to career choice, often provided a focus for feminist work in the classroom. Testing before and after counter-sexist interventions demonstrated the pervasiveness of sexism as well as the possibilities for making some personal changes within the classroom.⁴⁸ Many of these assessments focused on students identifying occupations, styles of activity, attitudes and so on, according to whether they believed them to be sex-specific. Commonly, pupils would be asked to classify a list of occupations as male or female or as able to be performed by both sexes. There were few surprises in the results. From the following list of occupations, 'hairstylist, doctor, dentist, teacher, T.V. repair, watchmaker, truck driver,

47 Ibid., 15, 7.

48 Education Department of South Australia, *Careers and Girls Project Report: Intervention in Sex Role Stereotyping* (Adelaide: Education Department of South Australia, 1978), 1–22.

building houses, nurse, typist, prep teacher, cook, butcher, factory worker, judge', it is not difficult to imagine the occupations likely to be identified as male or female.⁴⁹ Yet the purpose of the lesson was to encourage pupils to reveal their true beliefs and observations, and then, through a process of rational examination, point out their folly and the unacknowledged sexism of their understandings.

There were numerous variations on this type of lesson—identifying characteristics that embody and reproduced gender binarisms, emotion/reason, caring/detachment, etc.—but the common theme was to encourage students to question their taken-for-granted assumptions about sex roles and to revise these values in the light of new, non-sexist information. Their perceptions of sex roles and of their own sexed identity were expected to be transformed by the acquisition of this new knowledge. Unfettered by irrational beliefs and expectations, boys and girls were to discover that:

[A] successful *person* probably lies between the two stereotypes—for example a person who is independent and supportive, and a person who is brave and kind will probably be more successful in any job and in life than either the tough dominant aggressive male or the passive dependent emotional female.⁵⁰

We have here the ideal of the person constituted by the full complement of human characteristics, a person able to transcend sexual difference by embodying all the qualities once differentially allocated to the sexes. This was the ideal identity to which all students were intended to aspire and to which good non-sexist teaching would lead. In seeking to question the validity of sex stereotypes, however, such curriculum programs (paradoxically) can be seen now to entrench impoverished possibilities for expressions of femininity and masculinity. The female sex role becomes equated with a pathological inadequacy and the male is characterised by a surfeit of energy, repeating those familiar themes of lack and virility. The alternative to this dichotomy was to disavow sexual specificity and to embrace an ideal of equality in which such debilitating differences were erased. This resolution can be seen as representing a kind of fantasy of harmonious completeness, of a balance between male and female.

49 Ibid., Appendix 4, 1.

50 Curriculum Development Centre, *SENSE: Studies to Encourage Non-Sexist Education* (Canberra: Curriculum Development Centre, 1981), 20.

This fantasy represented not only a desire to overcome women's lack. It also represented a desire to have a more complete (because less repressed and one-dimensional) masculinity.

Pedagogical practices, such as these aptly named values-clarification exercises, or role playing, focused on techniques that privileged processes of self-reflection and self-monitoring. As a pedagogical technique, role-playing was said to encourage pupils to 'be other than they are—both positively and negatively',⁵¹ but it also, perhaps paradoxically, encouraged them to perform roles in tightly sanctioned and normative ways. That is, while the emphasis was on the freedom to engage and learn through 'experimental behaviour', the range of acceptable behaviours and responses was quite circumscribed.⁵² One was either explicitly sexist or non-sexist. In one set of lesson guidelines, for instance, the personnel manager is to be presented as an old-fashioned adherent to silly old stereotypes, and in the next game he is to be played out as the new, rational, open-minded, non-sexist manager (the personnel manager remains a man!).⁵³ After these sorts of exercises, students are to reflect on the issues raised and the 'participants [are to] tell the class about their feelings in the two roles'.⁵⁴ Through the experience of 'being' someone else, students were expected to have gained a keener insight into the complexity of an imagined issue, and to have developed a more reflexive attitude about their own sex-role behaviour. From acting out being 'other than they are', students are to learn new ways of becoming in their everyday lives. And, of course, these new ways are intended to involve giving up the familiar sexist ways and embracing a fantasised new self. Here girls would be empowered to be non-traditional, would have a greater sense of their options in life, and boys would be able to experience a wider range of emotional responses and realise that they too had, say, domestic responsibilities.

The securing of this fantasy and of new forms of gender identity, however, required vigilance by self-governing individuals, pupils and teachers alike, who, through the effects of the sorts of pedagogical techniques I have been discussing, learnt new ways of knowing and reforming themselves.

51 Ibid., 12.

52 Ibid.

53 Ibid., 52–55.

54 Ibid., 51.

The ungendered self and freedom

I have been discussing some of the ways in which feminism entered the classroom and was constituted as a pedagogical imperative. Carolyn Steedman and others have pointed to the ways in which women teachers, and especially primary school teachers, have been persuaded to occupy the position of mother, so that the classroom replicated a kind of maternal and nurturant space.⁵⁵ The feminist classroom of the 1970s was still to provide a therapeutic space for students to realise their inner potential and to be guided in their discoveries. But it was also to become more like a social laboratory in which emotions were tested, responses assessed and behaviours modified. Careful self-reflection, it seemed, was the only way to counter the possible eruption of deeply, if reluctantly, held beliefs and the only way to limit the risk of unconscious desires, unreconstructed sexist values, entering the field of the rationally ordered classroom. Non-sexist behaviour was equated with clear-headedness and counterposed to the irrationality of traditional and everyday beliefs.

The classroom became a kind of antidote to social wrongs as well as a microcosm of those practices, a small world where pupils could rebuild identities and attitudes in a controlled and safe environment. It was not, despite the progressive and child-centred rhetoric of the day, simply a space where pupils could freely express their attitudes in a relaxed atmosphere. These non-sexist reforms had definite and precise strategies that suggested a quasi-scientific resolution to the problem of undesirable thoughts.⁵⁶ This resolution also revealed the psychosocial heritage of feminism's then foundational ideas—the sex role, socialisation—about personal formation and transformation.

Feminist reformers dreamt of creating new persons, and I have documented here some of the ways in which these ideals and norms were produced by and in pedagogical techniques. On the one hand, these can be usefully understood in Foucauldian terms as 'technologies of the self' and, following Nikolas Rose, seen as techniques that were engaged in practical,

55 Carolyn Steedman, "'The Mother Made Conscious': The Historical Development of a Primary School Pedagogy", *History Workshop Journal* 20, no. 1 (1985): 149–63, doi.org/10.1093/hwj/20.1.149; Jennifer Laurence, 'Re-membering that Special Someone: On the Question of Articulating a Genuine Feminine Presence in the Classroom', *History of Education Review* 20, no. 2 (1991): 53–65.

56 Valerie Walkerdine, 'Progressive Pedagogy and Political Struggle', in *Feminisms and Critical Pedagogy*, ed. C. Luke and J. Gore (New York: Routledge, 1992), 15–24.

pedagogical and everyday ways to organise and govern the self.⁵⁷ On the other hand, however useful this approach might be, it nevertheless tends to eviscerate the animating optimism of the time and to step back from the urgent sense of a new political project, regardless of how mistaken or overblown that might now appear.

Levitas's framework for understanding practices infused by utopian aspirations offers an alternative angle, but one that I regard as generating crucial and complementary insights into grasping the contradictory and pragmatic imbrication of transformative agendas within technical and bureaucratic apparatuses. Feminist agendas were also in keeping with wider calls for democratic education and de-schooling in which freedom similarly figured as an organising trope for policymakers and activist educators alike. Openness was the catch-cry of the day but it always referred to more than a type of classroom space. It was a gesture to open-mindedness, to freeing the mind of old habits and ways of being a teacher and student, and it was a metaphor for more open, egalitarian social relations. There was a growing sense of schools breaking with tradition, and of instituting new practices that would allow the flourishing of new types of (non-sexist) children and young people that also heralded transformations in social relations.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have examined some of the ways in which the daily work of teachers contributed to realising the hopes and strategies of second-wave feminism. In doing so, I have argued that the work of schooling was crucial to feminist cultural and political projects, even if it has had a minor place in subsequent historical accounts of the reach of 1970s feminism. This speaks to a broader question regarding how the history of second-wave feminism and education is remembered within and across different fields of activism, practice and scholarship. Among educational researchers and practitioners there are arguably three common representations of second-wave feminism and schooling. The first is that it serves as a kind of anchor or beginning point in a progressive narrative about policy movements to reform the education of girls. The second is that the 1970s was a time of important and relatively successful reform but one based

57 Nikolas Rose, *Governing the Soul: The Shaping of the Private Self* (London: Routledge, 1990), 218.

upon theories and concepts—the sex role, socialisation—which we now understand to be ‘superficial’, ‘problematic’, ‘mistaken’ and so forth. The third is that feminist reforms have waxed and waned, sometimes reflecting generational dynamics and sometimes changing preoccupations in feminist theory; from the radical social constructionism of the sex role, to a celebration of sexual difference and girls’ (women’s) ways of knowing in the 1980s, then to poststructural attention to the discursive construction of gender succeeded by a ‘backlash’ encapsulated in the ‘what about the boys?’ questions matched with declining policy urgency for gender equity, to a more recent resurgence of feminist activism and reforms galvanized by issues of sexual harassment and gender-based violence, sexuality and the experiences of LGBTIQ lives.⁵⁸

Clare Hemmings’s analysis of the ‘political grammar feminist theory’ seeks to ‘identify the techniques through which dominant stories are secured, through which their status as “common sense” is reproduced’ and in doing so to ‘offer a rigorous point of intervention through which Western feminist stories might be transformed’.⁵⁹ She characterises the repeating tropes in histories of feminist theory as structured according to narratives of progress, loss and return.⁶⁰ The ‘progress’ narrative tells a story of the move from essentialism to difference, of a shift away from thinking of the unified subject of feminism to a celebration of difference and diversity, evident in the rise of identity politics and epistemologies and methodologies framed as postmodern. The ‘loss’ narrative depicts the end of the feminist political project, fragmented by the postmodern proliferation of difference, uncertainty and abstraction. It signals the loss of the radical political promise of feminism and a turning away from naming and reforming inequalities. The ‘return’ narrative represents an acknowledgement that feminism might have lost its way, but a new

58 Julie McLeod, ‘The Administration of Feminism in Education: Revisiting and Remembering Narratives of Gender Equity and Identity’, *Journal of Educational Administration and History* 49, no. 4 (2017): 283–300, doi.org/10.1080/00220620.2017.1343289; Susanne Gannon, ‘Kairos and the Time of Gender Equity Policy in Australian Schooling’, *Gender and Education* 28, no. 3 (15 April 2016): 330–42; Debbie Ollis and Lyn Harrison, ‘Lessons in Building Capacity in Sexuality Education Using the Health Promoting School Framework: From Planning to Implementation’, *Health Education* 116, no. 2 (2016): 138–53, doi.org/10.1108/HE-08-2014-0084; Vanita Sundaram and Helen Sauntson, eds, *Global Perspectives and Key Debates in Sex and Relationships Education: Addressing Issues of Gender, Sexuality, Plurality and Power* (London: Palgrave Macmillan UK, 2016).

59 Clare Hemmings, *Why Stories Matter: The Political Grammar of Feminist Theory* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2011), 20.

60 *Ibid.*, 132.

path forward is identified that offers of kind of resolution, a compromise that sees elements combined from the ‘difference’ turn and a return to questions about the body and social-structural relations.

In many respects, Hemmings’s account is a remarkably introspective one—feminist theorist examining the tics and nuances of high feminist theory, plotting tropes and typologies in a very particular meaning system. Yet, it nevertheless alerts us to the rhetorical patterns and emotional investments of (generational) memory that can structure how feminism is told and why that matters in the present. As such, it offers a route into understanding the rise and fall narratives that can beset histories of radical reform, including feminism, in education. In part the generational dynamics that structure histories of feminist theory also resonate with the movement of feminism in education.⁶¹ This is not to suggest, however, that second-wave feminism in schools simply mirrored a kind of ‘real’ or ‘mainstream’ feminism happening elsewhere. The experience and practices of feminism in schools also speak back to broader histories of feminism—be they social, cultural, intellectual—and to histories of radical and alternative education, not simply as niche activities, but as fundamental to the embodied work of feminist and progressive movements. I have shown some of the ways in which the politics of the personal was also pedagogical, and how second-wave ambitions in education traversed the utopian and the bureaucratic, the practical, the technical and the aspirational. In doing so, the work of feminism in schools did not simply reflect the mood of the times, but was instrumental in creating and sustaining that time of reform through everyday practices in classrooms that were materially forming the next generation and helping to make possible the very changes and legacies to which feminism lays claim.

61 McLeod, ‘The Administration of Feminism in Education’, 283–300.

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