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Author(s): Audrey Thompson
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Caring in Context: Four Feminist Theories on Gender and Education

AUDREY THOMPSON
University of Utah
Salt Lake City, Utah, USA

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this article is to put the problematic claims made for educational caring in context by indicating how three competing feminist analyses have addressed the question of gender inequity. Neither from the liberal perspective offered by socialization theory nor from the leftist perspectives offered by structural and deconstructive analyses can caring be considered an adequate solution to educational inequity. Indeed, because "caring" as theorized in gender difference theory turns upon specifically Western, white, middle-class, and heterosexual assumptions about gender and femininity, it risks contributing to patterns of educational exclusion. To understand both the promise and the limitations of gender difference theory, it is necessary to evaluate that theory in the context of other influential educational feminist theories.

INTRODUCTION

In the early, heady days of the second wave of feminism, it looked to many as if solutions to gender inequities in advanced-industrial societies were just around the corner. If only we could catch girls early enough, some thought, they could be spared the debilitating indoctrination offered at home and in the schools and would learn that their life possibilities were as wide open as those of boys and men. It has not turned out quite that way, though. While certainly some distinct changes have taken place, many of which look to be for the better, the changes are far from meeting the promise held out in the 1960s and 1970s.[1]

Gendered patterns in the workplace and in political leadership, for example, have not changed as much as might appear at first glance.

Women continue to earn considerably less than men for comparable work. Still overrepresented in service professions and pink-collar work, women are dramatically underrepresented in such areas as math, computer science, engineering, and the "hard" sciences. Although a handful of women in positions of leadership make headlines, men far outnumber women at the most prestigious levels of business and politics and in many of the higher-paying professions. In other respects, the situation for women either has not improved or actually may have worsened. Crimes such as rape, child abuse, spousal abuse, and sexual harassment, overwhelmingly targeting women and girls, remain a serious problem, and the percentage of women in poverty continues to be significantly higher than that of men. Even the sexist imagery connected with femininity and womanhood has changed far less than we might have expected; advertising standards of female beauty may have shifted from voluptuous curves to anorexic gauntness, but the pressure on girls and women to conform to a single cultural ideal—and to judge themselves primarily by their looks—remains unaltered.[2]

Yet from an educational perspective, the outlook for girls and women appears bright indeed. Taken by themselves—as they all too often are— the statistics on girls' and women's educational achievement seem to tell a story of unmistakable progress. Far more active in school sports than they were in the 1960s and 1970s, girls also have raised their grades in math, science, and other courses, and now can boast higher class rankings than they did twenty-five years ago. Many more women, too, are going on to earn college degrees; in the United States, Europe, and elsewhere, women graduating from college often outnumber men. Increasingly, women have also gone on to earn master's degrees—again, often at a rate higher than men.[3] The numbers tell only part of the story, however, and perhaps not the most interesting part. The fact that more women than men are earning master's degrees, for example, does not mean that these women have higher incomes than men, nor does it mean that they enjoy a higher status than men do. Because most of the master's degrees that women earn are in traditionally feminine (and relatively low-paying) fields such as education, nursing, and social work, the high percentage of women pursuing such degrees tells us more about the certification and reward patterns in feminized professions than it does about improved career options for women.[4]

Part of the reason that the glowing statistical measures of educational progress for girls and women are misleading is that they fail to take into account the context in which school-related achievements have meaning. Regardless of how much better a high school girls' basketball team is doing than the boys' team, for example, the attendance at girls' events is usually much lower. (Reflecting this imbalance, high school yearbooks commonly characterize the school's teams in asymmetrical gendered terms that identify the boys' team as simply the "basketball team" or "varsity basketball

team," in contrast to the "girls' basketball" team.) If the workplace, the school culture, and the larger social culture continue to be organized along sexist lines, any achievements associated with girls are likely to be valued less highly than those of boys. Changes for the better are often hard won and by no means secure. Although girls in the United States are much more active in school sports than they were before the passage of Title IX in 1972, advocates for women have found that enforcing "compliance with Title IX is a constant battle." Two and a half decades after the law prohibiting sex discrimination in schools was passed, girls often "have to make do with inferior coaching, equipment, and practice facilities."[5]

Academically, too, the statistics pointing to higher achievement among girls fail to take into account the ways in which a sexist and homophobic culture may undercut the promise of change. For example, although girls' enrollment in math and science courses has increased, sexist behavior on the part of both teachers and students is higher in such courses than it is in other high school courses.[6] To the extent that girls and women who succeed in "male" domains such as math and physics encounter sexist, racist, and homophobic hostility in response to their success, or simply feel isolated as the only girl in the class or the only Chicana, say, they may be discouraged from developing or pursuing an interest in those fields. If high math scores have not encouraged girls to enter math-related fields at anywhere near the same rate as boys, it may be, too, that girls still have trouble imagining themselves outside the social scripts assigned to women. Insofar as they think of themselves primarily in relation to men—as the future Mrs. Somebody—girls and young women may fail to realize the potentially liberatory effects of academic achievement. Given that both the formal social context of the school (female cheerleaders for boys' sports, contests for homecoming queen) and the informal social context (dating patterns, sexual harassment, social cliques)—not to mention the world around them—continue to reflect conventional gender expectations, girls may not see their academic achievements as particularly significant. Indeed, the pressure to achieve high grades may simply add another layer of complexity to the often contradictory situation that girls in school face.[7]

Despite notable progress in a number of areas, the list of new and continuing problems confronting girls in school is not much shorter than the old list.[8] Some girls' academic performance drops once they reach high school or even middle school, and they abandon previous interests in sports or science. Some girls stop speaking up in class. Other girls "have been observed to lose their vitality, their resilience, their immunity to depression, their sense of themselves, and their character."[9] Once they reach adolescence, girls may be "at risk" for pregnancy or drug abuse, and many will drop out of school altogether.[10] Others will develop bulimia or anorexia, risking their health or even their lives.[11] Throughout their schooling, girls and women may encounter discriminatory treatment from teachers and administrators and, from the very earliest grades, will face

sexual harassment from other students. Indeed, even as teachers, women may face sexual harassment from their male students.[12]

The possible educational responses to gender inequity in the schools and in the larger society are many, depending on how the problem of inequity is understood. In what follows, my focus will be on specifically feminist analyses and educational recommendations. (As will become clear, the term "feminist" incorporates a wide range of theoretical positions.) Among the feminist educational interventions that have been proposed are providing students with affirming female role models, mandating equal treatment of girls and boys, segregating boys and girls in particular classes or by school, changing the curriculum to emphasize values associated with the private sphere, and teaching students to critique gendered power relations and deconstruct gendered discourses.

Perhaps the feminist intervention most widely approved for addressing girls' needs in the schools is what has become known as caring.[13] According to gender difference theorists, the schools' focus on masculine, public-sphere values—values such as competition, individual achievement, and rationality—has obscured the importance of the nurturing values connected with femininity and the private sphere. Because difference theorists regard relational, domestic, or otherwise feminine values as indispensable both to individual flourishing and to the well-being of society as a whole, they call for an affirmation of gender difference and a revalorization of the caring work associated with women.[14] Caring, they believe, must be made central to teaching.

Argued for by theorists, implemented by practitioners, and applauded by legislators and media pundits, caring has been said to offer the best and in some cases the only solution to the daunting list of problems that girls encounter. Not incidentally, it is also seen as a solution to a host of other problems. Obviously, one reason for its popularity with noneducators is that caring is a cheap solution, requiring an outlay of energy on the part of teachers rather than an outlay of cash on the part of the general populace. Yet it also appeals to educators, for the caring approach described by gender difference theorists resonates with child-centered educational commitments. Despite its potentially unsettling insistence on feminine values, caring theory appears unthreatening insofar as it underscores the teacher's personal response to individual student needs, rather than demanding that teachers attend to systemic forms of race, class, and gender inequity.

Caring theory has attracted heavy criticism from other feminists. To understand both the limitations and the contributions of gender difference theory, it is important to recognize difference theorists as responding not only to masculinist educational positions but to feminist theorizing of a particular variety. Earlier feminist educators, concerned with ensuring equal educational opportunities, equal access to desirable jobs, and equal pay for equivalent work, tended to emphasize the similarities between men and women and to set aside gender differences as largely the product of

an outdated ideology. From their perspective, the more that women were allowed to act like men and to aspire to achievements and rewards in the public sphere, the more that society as a whole would progress toward true equality and democracy.[15] The unfortunate implication of the socialization theorists' orientation toward equality was that women who were not like men were inferior both to men and to women who *were* like men. (Although liberal feminists today are more likely to emphasize women's informed choice in working either outside or inside the home, the con- tinuing effects of the deficit stance can be seen in the hostilities still being fanned between white, middle-class mothers who work outside the home and white homemakers who work inside the home.)[16] Gender difference theory, by calling attention to the feminine values ignored by supposedly universal but in fact masculinist paradigms, allowed feminists to acknowl- edge women's work without losing sight of the need to challenge andro- centric assumptions regarding women's inferiority to men.

Difference theory itself is problematic, however, insofar as it attempts to revalorize "women's work"—above all, the work of caring—without accounting for the role that that work plays in upholding class hierarchies, nationalism, racism, heterosexism, and patriarchy.[17] Although in some cases gender difference models of caring have been invoked in support of culturally relevant schooling, critics have charged that the cultural partic- ularity of the caring ideal embraced in gender difference theories con- tributes to educational assimilationism. To understand both the strengths and the limitations of the arguments for caring put forth by difference the- orists, it is helpful to place caring theory in the context of the analyses and recommendations offered by three alternative feminist accounts.[18] In what follows, I begin by outlining all four feminist approaches to educational intervention; I then explore in greater detail the theoretical analyses that undergird each approach.[19]

FOUR FEMINIST APPROACHES TO EDUCATIONAL INTERVENTION

The theories described in this article will be referred to as "socialization" theory; "gender difference" (also "difference" or, sometimes, "caring") theory; "structural" theory; and "deconstructive" theory. Socialization accounts were most prevalent in the 1970s through the early 1980s, when gender difference theory began to claim center stage. Both structural and deconstructive analyses began to make an impact on feminist educational theory in the mid to late 1980s and 1990s.

Not intended to supersede other categorizations of feminist theory, these four categories offer a way to acknowledge the liberal debate within feminist educational theory while also bringing to bear feminist challenges to liberalism.[20] For the purposes of this discussion, feminist challenges to

liberal theories are grouped according to type of analysis: structural approaches focus on more or less stable power arrangements, whereas deconstructive approaches focus on constantly shifting cultural practices. Rather than corresponding to any particular theory, the structural and deconstructive categories refer to broad themes within a number of theories. By contrast, socialization and gender difference theories represent specific approaches within the liberal framework. Socialization theory refers to the educational dimension of liberal feminist theory, which demands equal treatment of women and men.[21] Gender difference theory includes the constellation of cultural, educational, and ethical arguments that describe and defend feminine culture and the relational orientation associated with women.[22] Occasionally, one encounters combined approaches—socialization theory may be combined with gender difference theory, for example, or structural and deconstructive accounts may be interwoven. Even in a combined approach, however, one feminist framework usually will take precedence over the other(s).[23]

Liberal Interventions

Feminist interventions that assume a liberal approach work within the system to correct problems. Whereas leftist approaches to feminism consider the social order to be systematically unequal, liberal approaches assume that inequity is a consequence of ignorance or prejudice and thus something that gradually can be modified through enlightened educational programs and corrective policies such as affirmative action. While liberal theorists raise important objections to and criticisms of the prevailing order, they also take many of their values and standards from the dominant social order, recalling society to a more fully realized and more rigorously applied appreciation of some of the values it already holds.

Socialization Theory

Early second-wave feminist analyses sought to discredit the sexist view that because girls tended to perform poorly in "masculine" subjects such as math and science, they were incapable of meeting high intellectual standards. As long as teachers and parents did not treat girls unfairly or missocialize them into thinking they could not do well in difficult subjects, socialization theorists argued, girls could meet the same academic standards as boys. By providing all children with gender-neutral education and eliminating other obstacles to female success, schools would not only ensure fairness but would increase the pool of skilled workers, thereby benefiting society as a whole.[24]

Apart from a few compensatory gestures (such as inviting female role models to visit the classroom or staging occasional math and science workshops for girls), the pedagogical interventions called for by socialization theory are fairly straightforward: if girls are to flourish, teachers, parents, and administrators need to treat girls in the same ways that they treat boys. Of course, the difficulty lies in implementation. Not only do teachers have to *want* to treat boys and girls equally, but they have to overcome their own socialized perceptions of how they treat girls and boys. As Barbara Houston points out, a feminist teacher may fully intend to give as much attention to girls as to boys and yet spend half as much time with them, all the while believing that she is being more than fair.[25] Even if the teacher succeeds in being gender neutral, moreover, she is dependent on a larger support system for her efforts to have any positive effect. Without textbooks and other media that treat women and girls in interesting and significant ways, a teacher's efforts to provide a representative and even-handed curriculum will appear biased and "subjective." Unless parents and other teachers support feminist teachers' initiatives to treat boys and girls equally, the corrective efforts of the solitary gender-neutral teacher may be undermined by the sheer incongruence between the feminist classroom and the world that the students see around them.[26]

Despite the many obstacles to progress, socialization theorists believe that incremental improvements eventually will lead to a more equitable society. Although the actual results of efforts at equal treatment often seem disappointing, socialization feminists point out that we have centuries' worth of sexist socialization to overcome. In addition, the absence of role models and mentors owed to a legacy of sexism and racism continues to force many female students to struggle on their own while their male counterparts enjoy the support of male faculty.[27] Some gender-neutral theorists also blame other feminists for holding back progress through misguided attempts to give girls a separate but equal education. For example, Myra Sadker and David Sadker find Carol Gilligan's emphasis on gender difference troubling. In the Sadkers' view, the feminine characteristics celebrated in the difference literature are tokens of powerlessness that can and should be "altered by education."[28] Like other socialization theorists, the Sadkers have remained hopeful that sustained and vigilant efforts to give girls the same education as boys will "transform our educational institutions into the most powerful levers for equity, where girls are valued as much as boys, . . . and tomorrow's women are prepared to be full partners in all activities."[29]

Gender Difference Theory

Whereas socialization theorists construe girls' differences from boys as a problem—something to be eliminated—gender difference theorists

believe that female/feminine traits should be recognized and celebrated.[30] Rather than socialize girls to be more like boys, difference theorists seek to revalorize the relational characteristics associated with girls. As they see it, the educational problem for girls is the lack of fit between school culture and feminine culture: relational values are jeopardized by the public sphere's commitment to rationalism, competition, conquest, consumerism, and radical individualism.[31] Because caring theorists consider relational knowledge to be both crucial in its own right and central to girls' health and well-being, they are concerned to make schools a place where girls can recognize their own ways of making sense of the world. What girls need, they argue, is not gender-neutral but "gender-sensitive" education attuned to the private-sphere values that, after the elementary years, schools usually leave behind.[32]

Gender difference theorists disagree, however, as to what gender-sensitive education entails. Some difference theorists argue for parallel approaches to gendered education. On this view, "women's ways of knowing" are neither inferior nor superior to men's ways of knowing.[33] Often, men's and women's approaches to the construction of knowledge are simply different ways of arriving at the same outcome.[34] In the masculinist tradition, for example, skeptical reasoning helps to ensure that inquiry does not start and end with one's own assumptions; the same goal, however, may be served by an inclusive and relational "feminine" orientation that takes other people's interests, commitments, and points of view seriously. Since the two approaches have equal merit, both learning styles should be enlisted in the classroom.

For other difference theorists, including Gilligan and her colleagues, the central issue is not so much girls' learning styles as their belief in themselves and in the knowledge they construct. What is at issue, from this point of view, is the conflict between girls' authentic relational orientation and the conventionally feminine expectations imposed upon them. When girls learn that, in order to be valued, they must repress any anger, disagreement, or disapproval they might feel, they begin to lose confidence in their felt responses to relationships. Their own sense of their experience doesn't matter, girls come to realize: they have to be *nice*. As these theorists see it, the problem facing girls is less a curricular than an interpersonal matter. To restore girls' sense of themselves as epistemic agents—as people able to know things for themselves—girls need women role models who will hear and acknowledge them.[35]

Still other analyses suggest that boys, no less than girls, need what a caring orientation has to teach them.[36] Nel Noddings, for example, believes that all schooling must involve "our passions, attitudes, connections, concerns, and experienced responsibilities" if it is to take up experience in a meaningful way.[37] Like Jane Roland Martin, Noddings has moved away from seeing educational caring strictly as a matter of providing girls with what they need and now sees the caring curriculum as a response to the

needs of society at large. If children of either sex are to grow up with a sense of themselves in relationship, Noddings and Martin argue, then the traditional curriculum's emphasis on objective, abstract knowledge must be scrapped in favor of an emphasis on the so-called feminine (but in their view also universal) concerns that are indispensable to society's well-being. In place of the reason-based, disciplinary curriculum, schools should be organized around "centers of caring" that integrate "body, mind, and spirit."[38]

Gender difference theorists thus disagree as to whether schools should endorse conventionally feminine values in the schools. Some difference theorists argue that it is harmful to hold girls accountable to cultural norms of selfless femininity, others that girls' distinctive ways of knowing need to be acknowledged and affirmed, and still others that democratic education requires imbuing the curriculum as a whole with the ideals associated with domesticity. Difference theorists are united, however, in rejecting the argument that successful schooling for girls should be modeled on what has worked for boys. Instead of embracing masculine values as universals, say difference feminists, schools need to acknowledge that the relational values associated with women are at least as important as the rationalistic values associated with men.

Leftist Challenges to Liberal Feminisms

Liberal feminisms either celebrate the values associated with women or universalize those associated with men. Calling into question both masculine and feminine systems of value, leftist feminist theories argue that both play a part in maintaining sexism, racism, heterosexism, class hierarchies, and other forms of inequity. Like other leftists, structural and deconstructive educational theorists do not view formal education as the most important venue for social change, but they do see schools as providing at least some scope for critical inquiry and social transformation. Whether by critiquing the dominant order or destabilizing dominant discourses, structural and deconstructive interventions attempt to raise students' consciousness about their own gendered participation in oppressive practices and relationships.[39]

Structural Theory

Structural analyses focus on the systematic consolidation of power and privilege in the hands of a minority. According to such theories, power is something one group exercises over another; it is a kind of possession or property legitimated by laws, standards, hegemonic practices, and institutional relations. Both gendered and other forms of inequity are organized

and sustained by more or less stable (albeit flexible) power arrangements.[40] In many Western countries, for example, heterosexual unions are materially privileged over gay and lesbian unions in terms of insurance coverage for partners, adoption and fostering policies, the right to marriage, and representation in anti-discrimination laws. Other structural forms of inequity include the concentration of women in low-paying and/or less prestigious jobs (as hotel maids and waitresses, for example, or in pink-collar jobs such as teacher, secretary, or nurse); hiring and promotion practices that favor men; medical research that assumes maleness as normative (as in heart disease and AIDS research); and policies or systems of law that hold women responsible for pregnancy but deny them the right to abortion.

Structural inequity also may characterize systems of knowledge. Socialization and structural theorists alike argue that marginalized groups have been underrepresented in canonical history, literature, science, and art because they have been denied access to education and positions of leadership. To enhance the status of medicine, for example, white men in the United States barred women (including established midwives) from gaining institutional access to "real" medical knowledge; later, for similar reasons, white women barred African-American women from their nursing colleges.[41] More important from a structural perspective, though, are the exclusions built into the very definitions of legitimate knowledge. Because mainstream history focuses on military and political leaders, celebrated artists, and other individuals in the public eye, work associated with the private sphere, with servants or slaves, or with groups usually does not count as the kind of achievement documented as "history." Disciplinary standards thus prevent us from seeing most people of color, most white women, and most members of the working class as having made significant contributions to politics, knowledge, or art. If the definitions do not serve to exclude these groups in advance, they may be revised to exclude them retroactively, for if a domain loses its exclusivity, it loses much of its prestige.[42]

Because we have learned to view gender/sex, race, and class patterns of exclusion as natural and appropriate, they are difficult to recognize. Their exclusionary character becomes apparent only through careful, systematic study guided by theories that enable us to question the adequacy of commonsense explanations. From most structural perspectives, we have to understand oppression before we can attempt to alter it; the primary forms that structural feminist educational intervention takes, therefore, are a liberationist pedagogy and a counterhegemonic curriculum, both intended to provide students with critical leverage on their own and others' situations.[43] Some structural feminists explicitly challenge the ideology that frames existing power relations as natural or meritocratic; others concentrate on exploring alternative frameworks.

Explicit structural analyses document the oppression of particular social groups and demonstrate how that oppression has served the interests of

those in power. Often working in materialist disciplines such as history, sociology, economics, or political theory, feminists who mount explicit structural analyses call attention to objective patterns of gender inequity. Problematizing the explanatory power of meritocratic and essentialized standards connected to the dominant ideology, they show how, when subordinated groups outperform the dominant group, the standards are revised. Thus, when women score higher than men on tests or earn more academic honors, constraints may be adopted to limit women's access to education and the legitimacy of the tests or pedagogy in question may be challenged.[44] If, on the other hand, society benefits from a change in the status of women, the ideology will shift to encompass the change. The idea that woman's natural place is in the home, for example, is a historically and culturally specific notion—one that is easily jettisoned when there is a shortage of workers.[45] In the case of women of color, it has never applied at all. By exposing students to critical theories and tools, explicitly structural educational interventions enable students to analyze gender, sex, race, and class patterns in light of the interests they serve.

Rather than critique the dominant ideology directly, other structural approaches develop countercultural (implicitly critical) frameworks of meaning. Women's studies programs, for example, usually are not meant to *correct* mainstream knowledge. Instead, they immerse students in women-centered texts and analyses that provide them with a richly developed alternative perspective on mainstream power relations.[46] Immersion approaches allow students to set aside the ideological tools that maintain the dominant order and work toward understanding women's different situations by means of tools and texts generated from women's own experience.[47]

Insofar as students form an acquaintance with outside perspectives and alternative theories—which might include Marxist feminist, womanist, radical feminist, critical race theorist, or Chicana feminist theories, among others—they gain tools that they can use to demystify and challenge prevailing power relations. They can then examine the contradictions in their own experience and confront the falsifying relation that the dominant ideology bears to actual experience. Since it is through alternative and/or critical analyses, texts, and syllabi that students gain an awareness of the distorting power of the dominant ideology, texts and theories carry the burden of critique in structural feminist approaches to education.

Deconstructive Theory

Whereas structural analyses regard the interests served by particular power structures as more or less constant (so that it makes sense to refer to patriarchy, whiteness, or the bourgeoisie as coherent categories), deconstructive analyses treat fixed categories with suspicion. Gender, on this account,

is not to be confused with anything "real." Rather than *referring* to a natural fact, "gender" *designates* a category. "A politically pragmatic alternative to the biologically determinist category of 'sex,'" the term gender "emphasiz[es] the socially constructed and hence alterable character of difference."[48] Although we have come to view it as natural, gender as we understand it is a social construction.[49] Such naturalized, commonsense categories are readily turned to exclusionary purposes. Policies devoted to advancing the cause of "gender equity," for example, appear straight/forward and unobjectionable from many feminist perspectives. But because such policies fuse gender with straightness, they "make particular identity-classifications a prerequisite to 'equity'," thereby "function[ing] to *deny* rights more than to *affirm* them."[50] A key project of deconstructive theories is to denormalize and denaturalize commonsense categories, exposing them as socially constructed and maintained.

In undercutting the givenness of received categories, deconstructive approaches tend to emphasize "interrupting" over critiquing power relations.[51] Since our habits and expectations organize what and how we see, interruptions create a momentary—admittedly fragile—space for the development of new possibilities of perception. To disrupt taken-for-granted narratives about sexuality, gender, race. and class, deconstructive theorists use a variety of strategies. They may rename the known to defamiliarize it; invert the expected order of things; import shocking metaphors into respectable discourses; reread the familiar through a seemingly inappropriate lens; fold a text back on itself; or "graft" new meaning onto old words.[52] Other strategies include exploiting ambiguity (as in the use of slashes or parentheses in the middle of words to suggest multiple possible meanings) and constructing "patchwork" narratives that refuse artificial coherence by according equal treatment to "conflicting reactions."[53] Some deconstructive theorists attend to the unsaid or the nearly absent, as when Toni Morrison points to the shadowy use of blacks and blackness in literature to define whiteness.[54] Others, such as Eve Sedgwick, focus on discursive sleights of hand, as in the ritual use of a "woman interest" to deflect attention away from the homosocial relation between the male protagonists.[55] Informed variously by poststructural and other postmodern theories (including performance, postcolonial, and queer theories), cultural studies, whiteness studies, and feminist psychoanalytic theories, such strategies help students to see apparently unconstructed or spontaneous experience as a cultural text to be deconstructed. Rather than accepting meanings readymade, students learn to *make* provisional and provocative multiple meanings, reworking the materials of perception to generate new possible perceptions.

Like structural (and, to some extent, socialization) approaches, deconstructive educational interventions rely heavily on alternative texts and interpretive practices. Deconstructive classroom practices differ from structural and socialization approaches, however, in problematizing appeals to

equity, fairness, and other overarching categories of value. Deconstructive theories also challenge the quasi-essentialist appeals to caring and femininity found in gender difference approaches. Whereas the latter redefine education as a relational enterprise in which feminine/female responsiveness, caring, and women's intuitive knowledge are given central value, deconstructive theories underscore the need to deconstruct assumptions about gender and authenticity—along with the categorical claims that difference theorists make on behalf of intuitive knowledge and caring.[56]

The four approaches to educational intervention outlined above do not exhaust all possible feminist approaches, but they do represent the major frameworks within which most of feminist pedagogy has operated.[57] Having described the main strategies employed in these four different pedagogical approaches, I now turn to their theoretical underpinnings, for it is only through an understanding of their theoretical commitments that the challenges socialization, structural, and deconstructive feminists raise to gender difference theories can be understood.

FOUR FEMINIST THEORIES OF GENDER INEQUITY

For the most part, difference theorists' arguments in favor of educational caring have taken other liberal positions as their foils. In some cases, proponents of feminist caring have taken on feminist socialization theory explicitly; in other cases, they have challenged the masculinist/universal position with which gender-neutral feminism aligns itself. Despite the disagreements between theorists espousing a gender-sensitive approach to equity and theorists arguing for gender neutrality, the two positions have a great deal in common insofar as both subscribe to the principles of liberalism.

Liberal Feminisms

Liberalism is the political ideology that places individual freedom and flourishing at the heart of a just social order. Whether justice is understood in terms of fairness or inclusivity, liberalism holds that the purpose of democracy is to ensure that all individuals are free to pursue self-actualization, provided that in so doing they do not infringe on the rights of others. Individuals should not be faced with socially imposed obstacles that prevent them from achieving whatever their desire, talent, judgment, and effort would otherwise make possible. Since liberalism holds that individuals are to be judged on the basis of achievement and not on ascribed characteristics, it follows that women, like men, should be judged on individual merit. To this extent, socialization and gender difference feminists find themselves in agreement. Their disagreement stems from their under-

standing of femininity as ascribed (in the case of socialization theorists) or either achieved or inherent (in the case of difference theorists). Naturally, if femininity is ascribed to women and not part of their own self-definition, it cannot count toward an understanding of how women should be treated. But if femininity is a valued and distinctive expression of a woman's way of being in the world, it cannot be dismissed.[58]

Both socialization theory and gender difference theory emphasize reform *within* the system rather than radical change *of* the system. Trusting to educated and informed common sense as the basis for political judgment and negotiation, liberalism seeks to promote social change through modifications in policy and practice.[59] But while socialization and difference theorists agree that social progress is necessary if women are to flourish, what *counts* as flourishing or progress is importantly different in the two cases.

Socialization Theory

In effect, socialization theorists adopt the classical liberal view that education should focus on our similarities as rational human beings. Although accepting the equation of femininity with irrationality, theorists such as Myra Sadker, David Sadker, Roberta Hall, and Bernice Sandler argue that femininity is not a natural condition but the result of the inferior education given to women.[60] Taught from babyhood to care about their looks and to see themselves as weak and helpless, girls come to measure their worth in relation to others. From their families, schools, and society at large, girls learn self-abnegating behaviors; media images further reinforce the message that women are ornamental rather than active. Because they are continually interrupted and belittled when they speak, many girls and women end their statements on a deferential, questioning note or issue disclaimers like "This is probably wrong but . . . ." If girls display passivity, hesitancy, and a preoccupation with romance, these critics say, it is as a direct result of how they are treated. If parents were to expect as much from their daughters as from their sons, and if teachers were to ask girls the same complex and challenging questions that they ask boys—not to mention giving them the same help in coming up with the answers—girls' self-effacing behavior would disappear. Treat girls as rational and capable individuals, socialization theorists argue, and girls will prove themselves just as smart, independent, confident, and creative as boys.

For socialization theorists, as for liberal feminists more generally, equality requires the exercise of gender-neutral justice: the same principles must be applied to all persons, regardless of gender. The few exceptions have to do with compensating for historically entrenched sexism through affirmative action policies and acknowledging the extra demands placed on working mothers. For example, liberal feminists have pressed for childcare

provisions and pregnancy/adoption leave for workers so that mothering does not derail women's careers any more than fathering does men's careers. Most of the focus of liberal feminism, though, is on equal access to jobs (based on merit) and equal pay for comparable work. With the elimination of discriminatory policies and other arbitrary obstacles to women's growth and flourishing, liberal feminists believe, men and women will be able to flourish side by side. In socialization theory, as in liberal feminism more generally, key equity issues include eliminating bias in media imagery, classroom dynamics, funding for extracurricular sports programs, and treatment of women and girls in textbooks and the overall curriculum.[61] If justice is to be served, socialization theorists argue, girls must have the same opportunities and classroom experiences as boys.

For the most part, research undertaken by socialization feminists has focused on white, middle-class girls and women, on the assumption that the experience of sexism is the same regardless of race, class, or ethnicity, and that it is best studied in isolation from the added complications of other forms of discrimination. Not only in the heyday of socialization theory but years later, according to reports for the Association of American Colleges' Project on the Status and Education of Women, research on the educational experiences of African-American and Hispanic women was almost nonexistent.[62] Ironically, the Project's own report on "Black Women in Academe" stresses that its "recommendations are tailored for the needs of Black women specifically but can be adapted to address the concerns of all women."[63] While recognizing some of the specific threats and forms of exclusion that minority women in academia have encountered, both this report and the Project's report on Hispanic women tend to share white socialization theorists' framing of sexism as a generic woman's problem, with discrimination as its primary expression. Such analyses consider the experience of women of color largely in additive terms. They assume that the issues women of color face stem from sexism (generically conceived) *plus* racism or ethnocentrism, rather than from sex/culture/race/class/sexuality as interlocking oppressions.[64] Thus, they fail to recognize how the *kind* of sexism that women of color, working-class women, and/or lesbians experience differs from that experienced by more privileged women.

That analyses grounded in socialization theory seldom address differences among women is not surprising. Colorblindness, like gender blindness, is a hallmark of socialization theory. Because socialization theory regards femininity and other forms of difference as artificial—as a product of different and inherently unequal treatment—justice requires that we overlook these differences and treat people as if they were the same. Because the issue is unequal treatment, socialization theory focuses almost exclusively on what women lack vis à vis the most privileged men.[65] As a result, it has no framework for recognizing and building upon the strengths that women in different situations may develop.

Concealed in the liberal feminist insistence on sameness is an implicit deficit account. Women who deviate from the norm set by privileged men are seen as lesser. The deficit reading of girls and women is compounded in the case of women of color. As Marta Cotera pointed out in 1972, liberal feminism "assume[s] that the minority woman's plight is worse" than that of privileged women.[66] Often, white analyses ascribe the problems facing girls and women of color not to racism or poverty but to their culture. In England, for example, Asian girls are likely to be seen as being held back by traditional cultural mores. The Asian family, rather than institutionalized racism, sexism, and class bias, is "constructed as the source of the problem."[67] Similarly, white liberal feminist analyses in the United States tend to construe the source of the problems facing Latinas as Latino *machismo*, and not the intersection of sexism with racism and class oppression.[68]

In effect, liberal feminism and socialization theory focus on women as victims, regarding each added category of oppression as a further burden to be overcome. But although, in terms of economic status and civic freedom, women of color face greater obstacles than do white, middle-class women, they also may enjoy certain distinctive strengths. Because the situation of women of color demands exceptional survival skills and lends itself to oppositional knowledge, it may promote a type of authoritative agency incompatible with white ideals of femininity. Womanist Katie Cannon argues that "the real-lived texture of Black life requires moral agency" of a kind unknown or even antithetical to dominant ideals.[69] Moreover, "in terms of personal status," says Cotera, "the minority woman is usually ahead; she is more likely to be head of household or a working woman with plenty of experience as to 'what is in life.' "[70]

Despite the unfortunate deficit readings produced by the insistence on interpreting difference as deviance, socialization theory offers three important advantages. First, by problematizing the naturalness of girls' affinity for particular activities, it undermines claims that if girls and women are not interested in math, science, or sports, for example, then they do not need education in those areas. Not wanting to study physics, whether it is because girls are intimidated by its "masculine" character or because they do not believe that as homemakers they will need to know physics, is not a reason to allow girls to opt out of a complete education, on the gender-neutral analysis.

Second, policy reforms resulting from socialization arguments have helped redress longstanding institutional inequities. For example, before Title IX was passed into law in the United States in 1972, funding for extracurricular school sports had been designated as funding for boys, on the assumption that girls were not (or ought not to be) athletic.[71] Equal access and equal funding policies set in place by laws such as Title IX presumably have helped to encourage more sports involvement on the part of schoolgirls and may be partly responsible for higher female achievement

in sports.[72] In general, socialization theorists' focus on issues of institutional bias—including questions of inclusion and access, the availability of role models, the fostering of a supportive educational climate for girls and women, and the construction of a representative curriculum—frames gender inequity as the result of something more systematic than merely individual preferences and capabilities.

Finally, by insisting on gender-neutral standards, socialization theory poses a serious challenge to sentimental treatment of women's contributions to society. If treating women differently from men on the job, on the playing field, in the classroom, in politics, or in the literary canon is sexist by definition, educators cannot simply put women on a pedestal and then walk off and leave them there.

Gender Difference Theory

For gender difference theorists, it is much harder to mount an argument against catering to students' socially constructed desires; it is also more difficult to argue against sentimentalizing treatments of womanhood that bracket women from the public sphere. At times, indeed, difference theory itself has put forward arguments that fall into these traps.[73] On the other hand, difference theorists avoid the tokenism that usually follows from applying men's standards to women's accomplishments. If, for example, the standard for inclusion in the history curriculum is political or military leadership, all but a very few women are automatically disqualified. If the standards themselves are revised to acknowledge women's historical contributions, however, then a representative balance can be achieved.

Informed by modern rather than by classical liberal ideology, gender difference theorists do not assume rationality or public-sphere achievement as the measure of identity. Nor do they understand equality in terms of sameness. Women can be equal to men, they point out, without being identical to men. The project of gender difference theorists is to celebrate gender diversity, reclaiming and revalorizing women's values as a parallel or even independent sphere of accomplishment, identity, and morality.

Although difference theorists agree with socialization theorists that women should not be discriminated against in the public sphere, in their view this does not mean that women must be treated as honorary men. Rather, it means that women's differences from men should not serve as a basis for discrimination. From the perspective of gender difference theory, the marginalization of private-sphere skills and knowledge is a form of discrimination, for women bring to the workplace relational skills and other talents distinct from but no less valuable than those of men.[74] Whether at home or in the workplace, they argue, the *distinctive* contributions of women must be appreciated if women are to be acknowledged on their own terms. Women's ways of thinking and acting are at least as

morally and intellectually defensible as men's, argue difference theorists; in the view of some theorists, they are superior.[75]

Whatever value masculine and public-sphere norms may have, gender difference theorists argue that their designation as universal standards is inappropriate and places women in a double bind. When the generic ideal of the educated person emphasizes cool dispassion, for example, and that quality is associated with masculinity, educated men qualify as both educated *and* masculine; women are forced to choose between being seen as either uneducated-but-feminine or educated-but-unfeminine.[76] What follows from the abandonment of a generic set of standards is that men lose the automatic privilege that had accrued to them through the equation of masculinity with universality. It then becomes possible to appreciate and value women's achievements based on a standard referenced *to* women.

While gender difference theories tend to sound essentialistic, and may even fall into the assumption or declaration that gender differences are more or less natural, there is no necessary connection between difference theories and assumptions about women's biological nature. For the most part, gender difference theorists identify caring less with women *per se* than with the private sphere—with which women are commonly associated. Thus, it is perfectly possible for difference theorists to claim both that caring is a feminine orientation that needs to be acknowledged and valued and that it is simply *another* moral orientation, one that *some* women and girls—and even a few boys—adopt.[77]

The point, in other words, is not to defend "feminine" values as intrinsically female but to recognize the importance of values that have been ignored or disparaged *because* they are associated with women. It does not particularly matter, therefore, how natural caring is or how many girls and women can be found who enact that orientation. Indeed, some difference theorists ignore questions of data altogether, since it is not as if whatever girls and women happen to do in the name of caring is good. Instead, they seek acknowledgment for caring as a defensible *ideal.* "Not all homes are safe and loving," Martin observes, and since actual nurturing practices may be inadequate or even dangerous, she believes that education should be referenced to an idealized version of the kind of nurturing associated with the home.[78] Similarly, what organizes and informs Nel Noddings's version of caring schools is caring patterned after the *ideal* mother/child relation.[79]

The objection that other feminists raise to this ideal is not so much that it is stereotypically feminine—although this objection is certainly raised—as that it refers to a culturally specific and politically problematic ideal of femininity. Characterized by a service-oriented stance in which the child's interests organize the relationship, caring as described by difference theory tends to be reified as the type of attention and support that white, middle-class, heterosexual women are expected to give their husbands and chil-

dren.[80] While particular women of color and working-class women certainly may share the ideal set forth in the caring literature, the theoretical mistake is in assuming that there is only one possible ideal and that that ideal corresponds to the cultural beliefs and values of white, middle-class (and, for the most part, straight) feminists. Cultural patterns characteristic of other classes and ethnic groups may reflect quite different assumptions, concerns, and aspirations.

Whereas gender difference theorists usually identify caring with the private sphere, other cultural perspectives may identify caring to an important degree with tradition, religion, or the public sphere. The white, mainstream ideal of caring fits poorly with African-American feminist, womanist, and other African-American frameworks of value, for example, in which commitments to collective mothering, communal kin networks, social activism, and "race uplift" are likely to be seen as defining characteristics of caring.[81] Judged by the white, middle-class, child-centered standard, African-American mothers or teachers who make authoritative demands geared to the interests of the family, mother, group, or task at hand may seem to fall short of the caring ideal.[82] But of course there is nothing inherently nonnurturing in stressing communal concerns or including attention to the mother's needs in a relationship with a child; it is only when the nondirective, individualized model of student-centered education is taken as the ideal that alternative models are cast in a deficit light.[83]

Insofar as the gender difference approach to caring reproduces the private sphere's service relation to the public sphere, that model of caring itself may fall short of the ethical ideals held by other cultural groups. On the Navajo reservation, for example, tradition and religion play a far more identifiable role than do domestic values in adults' caring for youth.[84] The family is the center of both individual and communal life, not a service sphere in which children are prepared for individual achievement in the public sphere. As one Navajo woman explains, "We don't kick our kids out of the house, like the *biliganna* [white people] do."[85] In Latino communities, nurturing relations may be as much about the community as about individuals. Extended community networks and the church perform indispensable functions not only in helping to address health and spiritual needs but in helping preserve the language of the community.[86]

Framing caring in more generic terms might seem to be one way to solve the problem of ethnocentrism, and indeed some theorists have described the ethics of care in such vague, sweeping terms that the model's cultural specificity is disguised. Specificity, however, is indispensable to the purposes of the caring theorists' program. Almost any teacher could say and believe that she is being caring, but not just any well-meaning response can be considered caring. No matter how friendly or concerned a teacher might be, if she fails to acknowledge and respond to her students' needs—or the needs of the families and communities involved—then, in the view of most caring theorists, her response could not be considered caring. Yet what

counts as responding to the needs of students, families, and communities is likely to vary from one culture or situation to another.

Embracing a pluralistic approach to caring would be a far better solution to the problem of ethnocentrism, but it would mean forfeiting the coherence of an argument based on recognizing and revalorizing "women's work" and women's culture. The chief contribution of gender difference theory has been that it sets forth a distinctive, alternative ideal—a positive program for change—grounded in a supposedly universal (albeit suppressed) set of values. The difficulty with developing a more pluralistic view of caring is that, when considered in any degree of specificity, women's work and women's culture may yield systems of value that cannot readily be reconciled with one another.[87] As a result, it may be much more difficult to point to a single ideal or program for change. That gender difference theorists have wanted to hold onto some universal framework of value is clear from the relatively unchanging character of their analyses and recommendations. Although women of color have long warned white, middle-class feminists against universalizing gender discourses, pointing out that neither women's interests nor women's experiences are identical across racial, ethnic, class, or national lines, the predominantly white research on caring has not been much affected by these arguments.[88] While references to and in some cases studies of girls and women of color have increased in this literature, the actual theorization of caring remains unaltered.

For all its limitations, gender difference theory has made a number of vital contributions to our understanding of gender inequity. Perhaps most importantly, difference theorists have challenged the equation of masculine values with universal values, pointing out that universal-but-male-referenced standards either ignore or suppress the distinctive values associated with women. Indeed, the most salient factor in society's failure to value the relational labor that women perform seems to be simply that it is work associated with women. By providing a systematic account of caring (at least as it is understood in the dominant white, middle-class culture), gender difference theorists remind us not only that relational work *is* work, but that it is indispensable work representing a distinctive framework of value. Finally, in focusing on frameworks of meaning other than those formally recognized by the schools, gender difference theorists have called our attention to other ways of knowing and other things worth knowing. The kind of relational knowledge that teachers have, for example, can now be seen as *knowledge* and not just a knack.[89]

Challenges to Feminist Liberalism

Whereas liberal feminisms work within the system to bring about change, leftist feminisms hold that the obstacles to equity and freedom facing

women are inherent in liberalism. Structural and deconstructive theories argue that the devaluation of women's work and of values associated with women is not a matter of ignorance or simple bias but a result of the social organization of power and privilege. Neither socialization feminists' demand for equal pay based on comparable work nor gender difference feminists' attempt to revalorize women's work is likely to result in significant change, structural theorists argue, for no work identified *as* women's work *will* be recognized (except sentimentally) as comparable to the productive and/or rational labor considered to be men's work.[90] Because the cultural, economic, and institutional devaluation of what women do serves the status quo, it is not likely to be changed by appeals to principles or ideas that already have currency. As Audre Lorde famously observed, "the master's tools will never dismantle the master's house. They may allow us temporarily to beat him at his own game, but they will never enable us to bring about genuine change."[91]

From the perspective of the "master" class, genuine change would mean a loss of the power and privilege that members of the dominant groups enjoy. On the structural account, power is a relational concept: it *means* power over others. For women as a group to gain power, men as a group would have to lose power. Although individual women may gain access to power, women as a group will not be able to achieve parity with men without fundamentally changing the system. Making a parallel but different point, deconstructive theorists argue that calling into question the discourses shaping social constructions of gender and merit (for example, the viability of women as political leaders) would jeopardize men's privileged position. Men have every reason to resist changes that would threaten their own power and privilege.

In addition to challenging liberal accounts of gradual social progress, structural and deconstructive theorists problematize liberal assumptions about agency, common sense, and self-actualization. For leftists, the "universal" values upheld in white, middle-class culture look suspiciously like values that legitimate white, middle-class authority; however benign and appealing they may seem, they need to be interrogated in terms of their exclusions (for example, of gays or single-parent households) and service expectations (of women, the working class, or other subordinated groups) before we can know whether they could or should be universalized. Deconstructive theories focus on the ways that "discourses"—language, imagery, cultural practices, and "master narratives"—organize our perceptions of the good and the natural. Structural theories emphasize the ways in which material, institutional, and other power relations consolidate social goods (property, health, leisure, scholarly recognition, cultural authority, or industrial control, for example) in the hands of a few; their primary concern is with objective conditions, and only secondarily with the perception of those conditions.

Structural Theory

Whereas socialization theorists' incremental approach to progress tends to assume that each victory for a woman is a victory for womankind, structural theorists argue that giving individual women access to power does nothing to alter prevailing power relations between men and women. Token forms of inclusion, sentimental acknowledgments of influence, and exceptional cases may give the impression that the system is open, but they do not change the system. Indeed, the appearance of inclusiveness may help to rationalize the status quo. Patriarchal relations of power may allow a small percentage of women to enjoy positions of power or privilege, but they do so on men's terms and as exceptions to the rule. Whatever concessions patriarchal capitalism may make to individual working women, moreover, it still assumes that most women will continue to provide free or undervalued forms of service labor: even women who work outside the home are likely to work a second, unpaid shift at home.[92]

Insofar as liberal solutions to gender inequity make it possible for at least a few girls and women to become exceptions to the rules governing patriarchal society, they do offer some immediate relief to victims of discrimination. In the view of structural theorists, however, liberal analyses and solutions to women's oppression are shortsighted, for they represent the mistreatment of women as an aberration in the system rather than as a function of the system.

While portraying poor women as innocent victims of men's irresponsibility may win more sympathy for the plight of poor women, it does so at the cost of failing to challenge deeply held notions about feminine dependence on a male breadwinner and distinctions between the deserving and the non-deserving poor—in particular, between the "good" woman who is poor because her husband refuses support and the "bad" woman who is poor because she has had a child outside of marriage or has married a poor man who cannot provide.[93]

Resisting portrayals of individual women as victims of individual men, structural feminists focus on how the system itself organizes power relations—whether between men and women or between women and other women. Regardless of whether an individual man *chooses* to exert his power, he has certain powers that he may invoke at any time.[94] The same is true of women who are privileged vis à vis other women. The idealistic feminist belief that "sisterhood" offers a "benevolent and harmonious" alternative to institutionalized pressures to be competitive and self-seeking confuses good intentions with substantive changes in power. In a study of relations among academic women, Evelyn Fox Keller and Helene Moglen found that "even when refusing their new authority, . . . senior faculty cannot deny their institutional power."[95] The attempt to do so may actually obscure power relations by suggesting that what power is *about* is simply a matter of personal choice in exercising the option of power.

No less problematic than socialization theorists' analyses of inequality are the analyses and solutions urged by gender difference theorists. From a structural feminist perspective, there are at least two problems with the notion that women should carve out their own power by reclaiming the private sphere and revalorizing relational knowledge. First, the appeal to "women's" interests assumes that all women share the same interests and therefore enjoy a kind of natural solidarity. But despite the seeming coherence of the category "women," women's values and politics regarding even such "women's issues" as rape, abortion, sexual harassment, or childbirth may differ.[96] Often, moreover, women align themselves with men rather than with other women. Certainly on questions having to do with family finances or schools for their children, women typically will be more concerned with their families' interests than with those of women with whom they are not intimate. In dealing with the politics of bilingual education in a largely Spanish-speaking neighborhood, for example, Latina mothers' and teachers' interests are more likely to coincide with those of Latino fathers and teachers than with those of an Anglo principal who is a woman.

The second critique that structuralist feminists levy against difference theory is that the appeal to caring as a corrective or complement to the public sphere recycles liberal patriarchy's assumption that the function of the private sphere is to redeem and/or compensate for the shortcomings of the public sphere. Because liberal society is organized around the idea of individual self-determination—a public-sphere value—it leaves untheorized the question as to who will look after the young, the old, and the infirm (not to mention healthy adult men, who are less self-sufficient than is supposed). Under patriarchy, women have been designated to fulfill this service role on the grounds that it is their nature to do so. Gender difference theory offers to *theorize* this role, but it does not problematize either the role or its "natural" identification with women. Still less does it acknowledge the role of the private sphere in upholding privilege. Gender difference arguments commonly are framed in terms that suggest that caring practices can be entirely de-coupled from other social practices; yet the practices recognized and idealized as caring are closely intertwined with the reproduction and maintenance of the dominant social order. Liberalism's investments in racism, heterosexism, class oppression, and sexism have been reproduced in part by the domestic values and socialization practices of the white, heterosexual middle class.

Locating gender relations in the larger political, economic, and institutional framework, structural analyses argue that the values and expectations associated with the private sphere are not independent of the public sphere but "coordered" with it.[97] Not only are private-sphere values organized in relation to the needs, requirements, values, and privileges identified with the public sphere, but to some extent they are a *function* of these. Under liberalism, structuralist feminists argue, the private sphere serves as a resource for the public sphere—and if the private sphere is specifically

organized to service and supplement the public sphere, then no amount of revalorizing can affect the private sphere's subordinate status. Regardless of whether domestic caring is proclaimed as natural or as stemming from an independent ethical paradigm, the association of domestic caring with *womanly* virtue is part of how women are designated as "for" men.[98] As Ann Oakley explains, it is because men's role in the workplace is assumed that women's consignment to the home becomes necessary.

The essence of the gender-role pattern which sociologists claim is essential to the survival of society in its present form is the economic exploitation of women as unpaid labourers, childrearers, housewives, and servants of men's physical, emotional, and occupational needs.[99]

Although sentimentally the private sphere might be granted "equal" status—or even supremacy, for that matter—actual social policies and practices will continue to use the private sphere to service and subsidize the public sphere.

One increasingly problematic case of this functional relation can be found in the profile of the ideal worker. To the extent that business and industry can assume that workers have wives who work in the home, they can rely on workers who will work a minimum of eight hours a day; who need not interrupt their work in order to attend to childcare responsibilities or domestic emergencies; who can work as late as needed; and who are professionally ambitious and committed to their work. All these assumptions become problematic, however, when male workers have wives or partners who are themselves working outside the home, when workers *are* wives or mothers, or when workers are single parents, for then it becomes apparent that the expected level of commitment is predicated on workers having wives—wives who perform *their* labor for free.[100] In the case of some traditionally feminized professions, such as teaching, workers' responsibilities as mothers and wives have at least been recognized and accommodated, but increasingly schools too are being pressured to hire "committed" workers of the workers-with-wives description.[101]

Since in theory liberalism promotes individual freedom, the service role played by women in domestic life becomes theoretically problematic; liberalism cannot do without the role women play in maintaining family life, but it cannot theorize that role without undercutting the claim that liberalism promotes individual self-determination. If no individual is to become the means to another's end, it is difficult to explain why women need to be selflessly devoted to the care of others. The solution to this problem has been to suppress recognition of the contribution that the private sphere makes to the public sphere by naturalizing women's role—treating it as part of the nature of women rather than as part of the theoretical structure of liberalism.[102] Structural theories specifically challenge this naturalization of politically expedient assignments of identity. If women were not

"naturally" caring, they point out, caring women would have had to have been invented.[103] In effect, structural theory says, this is exactly what has happened: the category of woman is an invented category that serves a variety of purposes on behalf of those in power.

This argument extends beyond the immediacy of the home to include relational labor performed in the public sphere. A case in point is the exploitation of women's emotional labor for commercial profit and/or bureaucratic efficiency.[104] Airlines cut costs by cutting back on the number of flights or the kind of food served, and then make up the difference to the customer by intensifying the service provided by the flight attendants: more magazines offered, more greetings, more smiles per minute.[105] In a similar vein, social services, school districts, and hospitals attempt to rationalize social workers', teachers', and nurses' labor by subjecting it to bureaucratic procedures meant to hold workers accountable to administration—but since the procedures implemented are often coun- terproductive to the needs of their clients, nurses and teachers and social workers have to bridge the gap with personal attention in the form of caring.[106] Ironically, when teachers, social workers, and nurses agitate for higher pay, they are told that the sort of person who does the job just for the pay is ill suited to a profession that calls for genuine caring. Emotional labor is expected to be "voluntary"—and free.

Patriarchy allows privileged women as well as men to take advantage of the unpaid or underpaid labor of other women.[107] As isolated rebels against patriarchy, white, middle-class women in pursuit of individual freedom are encouraged to exploit other women rather than to rethink and refuse their gendered assignments in the private sphere. For example, relatively privi- leged women may buy themselves a certain release from domestic labor by hiring working-class women (often women of color, particularly immigrant women) to do "their" work. As Judith Rollins points out in a discussion of the relations between white housewives and predominantly African- American domestic workers, hiring (and underpaying) other women to do domestic work means that relatively privileged women need not challenge male entitlement within their own homes; instead, they pass the costs of male privilege on to other women. Rather than "pressuring [their] husband[s] to take more household responsibility," well-to-do women have the option of taking "advantage of the class and racial inequities generated by this social system to mitigate . . . their gender disadvantage."[108]

Given that relatively privileged women may play a significant role in the oppression of other women, women's oppression cannot be understood simply in terms of men's exploitation of women. Because gender oppres- sion is part of a network of inequity that includes class oppression, racism, homophobia, xenophobia, and ethnocentrism, as well as sexism, progress for women cannot be considered apart from progress for gays and lesbians, people of color, differently abled men and women, the working class, or other marginalized groups. When examined in the context of these sys-

temic relations—relations that it plays a role in alleviating and maintaining—the idea of caring as a simple universal good loses its self-evidence. Far from being a self-contained ideal, caring as it is understood in gender difference theory is made up of a variety of practices and values that are necessary to the status quo but unacceptable to privileged men as part of their own identity. What needs to be studied, say structural theorists, is how those caring practices and values are articulated to or coordered with the interests of the dominant order. In many ways, caring is indispensable to the maintenance of the status quo; caring cannot, therefore, be treated as an antidote to racism, nationalism, sexism, heterosexism, or capitalism, for these are all organizing features of the social order that caring helps to reproduce.[109]

Although structural feminists do not agree on any single program for change (the very category of structuralism as I have described it being too broad to allow for a common vision), they share a commitment to the pursuit of equity between women as well as between women and men. Among the important educational contributions of structural theory are its attention to value systems that lie outside liberal ideology; its recognition of achievements and epistemologies suppressed or ignored by the official canons; its critique of the institutionalized exploitation of "women's work" and of the interests served by women's emotional labor; its attention to the diverse situations of women; and its analysis of the possible costs to other women when privileged women offer their own ideals of flourishing and self-expression as universal ideals. If education is not merely to reproduce existing inequities in a kinder, gentler fashion, argue structural theorists, it will need to address the ways feminine as well as masculine value systems help to maintain oppressive relations.

Deconstructive Theory

Structural and deconstructive theorists both understand power in relational terms, but their analyses of power differ significantly. Whereas for structural theorists the operations of power can be understood as conforming to fairly regular patterns that maintain a particular balance (or rather, imbalance) between dominant and subordinate groups, for deconstructive theorists the permutations of oppressive power relations are endlessly variable, and therefore all the more difficult to challenge or change. Deconstructive theorists view power neither as a possession nor as something that one group or person wields unilaterally over another but as a characteristic of interaction itself. In Michel Foucault's words, power "circulates." Power is "never in anybody's hands, never appropriated as a commodity or piece of wealth." Individuals, says Foucault, "are the vehicles of power, not its points of application," and thus "are always in the position of simultaneously undergoing and exercising" power.[110] Because power is

always in the making and remaking, pre-existing histories of power relations do not preclude the possibility of new workings of power.

Concerned primarily with the ways perception is organized, deconstructive theory views reality claims as strategic moves intended to institute and regulate specific relations of power and privilege. Rather than representing particular moves as *false* knowledge claims, deconstructive theories call into question the very regimes of truth that purport to identify truth and falsehood. Because deconstructive theorists see all knowledge as discursively and textually mediated, their focus is not on the ostensible referent for knowledge—what knowledge purports to be about—but on the texts and discourses that help to organize knowledge. Thus, the question they ask is how language naturalizes that which we call truth: how we are led to accept certain identities, situations, and relationships as natural or normal. What role do particular explanatory frameworks play in constructing other ways of being in the world as deviant and unnatural—as "other"? Why is it necessary to explain how homosexuality arises, for example, when it is not necessary to explain how heterosexuality comes about? From a deconstructive perspective, both "nature" and "nurture" accounts of homosexuality are linked to "essentially gay-genocidal nexuses of thought," for it is only if homosexuality is assumed to be a problem that the issue of nature versus nurture becomes significant.[111] Neither argument is "about" some fixed, underlying truth; both are referenced to the implicit question, "Can homosexuality be eradicated?"

Seemingly positive claims about identity and authenticity thus are regarded not as statements for which there is supporting evidence but as claims made intelligible by a network of references to what something is not: whiteness is specifically not blackness, masculinity is necessarily the opposite of femininity, and heterosexuality is naturalized as the antithesis of homosexuality.[112] From a deconstructive, as from a structural, perspective, the assumed coherence of the category "woman" tends to serve straight, privileged women at the expense of lesbians, women of color, and working-class women. But whereas structuralists might emphasize the ways in which the idea of "woman" as caring and selfless favors white, well-to-do women who can rely on working-class women to do the dirty work—a materialist claim—deconstructive feminists point out how "feminine" ideals of purity, benevolence, and innocence are predicated on implied contrasts to *images* of nonprivileged women. Stereotypes of African-American women as sexual, for example, allow white women to appear sexually pure or "innocent"; images of African-American women as in need of charity allow white women to appear benevolent.[113] Because the ideal achieves its coherence specifically through what it excludes, namely, "other" women, it is impossible to speak of a feminine ideal as potentially applicable to all women.

Trying to strip these ideals of their oppressive implications is a sentimental undertaking: ideals cannot be treated as freestanding, ahistorical

goods but must be understood in terms of their connections to other values.[114] Rather than being significant in themselves, race and gender *become* significant through the play of representation in language and other forms of communication. Their meaning and value do not inhere in them "naturally" but are achieved through the play of contrasts—through a kind of performance of what the ideal is *not*. In other words, there is no primary referent for identity claims. Not only gender but many of the other things that we take to be definitional or identifying in some primary sense—race, ethnicity, sexual identity—are performances of something that does not exist apart from its performance. Like Disneyland's reconstructions of an imaginary past, they are simulacra, imitations for which there is no original.[115]

Since, according to deconstructive theory, meaning can never be considered determinate or unproblematic, the focus of the theory is on the meaning-making functions of various symbol systems. Dichotomies that frame what we take to be obvious and inescapable ways of describing experience and value can be shown to be not the *result* of inquiry but the *basis* for our "knowledge" about gender or racial or sexual difference. The male/female dichotomy, for instance, is not a description based on experience but the discursive starting point for any inquiry into gender. While a tempting response to this analysis might be that we ought to rid ourselves of such false framings, deconstructive theorists argue that it is not possible to get behind representations and performances to "reality." In effect agnostic with regard to truth, deconstructive theory does not seek to replace false knowledge claims with true claims: all that is possible is to offer alternative performances, constructions, or discourses.

Deconstructive theories thus move us away from the essentialist questions that prevailed in the earlier stages of the feminist movement.

If the 1970s feminists had, in an effort to establish a feminist voice and a feminist stronghold, largely been seeking a "true" or positive image of Woman, by the early 1980s artists were able to declare that the Woman they sought was a cultural construct, a strategic moment, and could move to the more materialist notion that identity is produced through the machinations of representation.[116]

Julia Kristeva describes the move away from essentialism as taking place in three stages: first, the liberal feminist demand for equal access; second, the radical feminist initiative to revalorize femininity; and third, the rejection of the masculine/feminine dichotomy as "metaphysical."[117] According to Toril Moi, the key contribution of the third position is its avoidance of "an inverted form of sexism," for the danger in celebrating femininity as an alternative to patriarchy is that one may fail to interrogate the "metaphysical categories set up by patriarchy in order to keep women in their places."[118] "Self-confessedly parasitic upon the metaphysical discourses it is out to subvert," deconstruction is not so much a theory, Jacques Derrida

says, as it is an activity.[119] It cannot provide a positive account to take the place of that which it undercuts, for there is no way to know "truth." All that can be done is to bring to light the mechanisms of gender oppression found in patterns of discourse. Accordingly, deconstruction relies on irony, mimicry, indirection, paradox, contradiction, and exaggeration to promote readings between the lines of the discourses that organize oppressive institutions and traditions.

In a twist on Sadker and Sadker's observation that there appear to be relatively few documented differences between men and women and that "the interpretation of these differences seems to be in the eye of the researcher,"[120] deconstructionists argue that perception itself is the key to power. If what matters is not whether men and women *are* different but whether they are *seen* as different, then socialization theorists' argument that such differences as do exist between men and women are not significant begs the question. It is no use saying that gender differences do not matter if one of the most basic ways we make sense of our worlds is to organize them in terms of gender differences.

Generations of scientists have selected and interpreted the "relevant" and "significant" data regarding gender, discarding any data that did not fit preconceived notions about gender difference.[121] From an early age, children learn to do likewise. Some years ago, a newspaper article reported that a teacher had taken her young students to a hospital for a field trip and, in the interests of nonsexist education, introduced the children to a female doctor and a male nurse. Asked about their experience afterward, the children drew one of two conclusions. Either they insisted that all the doctors they had seen had been men and that all the nurses were women or they concluded that the nonstereotypical doctor and nurse they had met were imposters. Faced with an incoherent narrative, the children simply reinterpreted their experience to fit a story that made sense to them. Similarly, Bronwyn Davies found that when she read kindergartners a feminist fairy tale in which conventional gender roles were reversed, the children responded *as if* the story had followed entirely traditional lines.[122] Just as these attempts at educational enlightenment failed, deconstructive theorists argue that other liberal educational interventions intended to overturn patriarchy are destined to fail. If they are not read as incoherent or biased, they will be misread in such a way as to reinscribe patriarchal coherence. One cannot work within the patriarchal system and expect to change it, for any moves one makes are inevitably co-opted. Yet neither is it possible to get outside the system. To challenge the sense-making apparatus of patriarchy, one must interrupt it. Only then will it be possible to create spaces—however momentary—for the construction of new meanings.

On the deconstructive analysis, then, socialization theory's attempt to use the rationalistic language of patriarchy to disprove sexist assumptions is doomed to failure because the terms of patriarchal discourse are such

that the claim to equality between the sexes is incoherent. Gender difference theory is similarly trapped by the discourse it invokes, for the very designation of gender difference recognizes an inextricable link between the two halves of a dichotomy: *this* construction of femininity is produced only through reference to *this* masculinity. Masculinity having already been posited as that which specifically claims for itself superiority to women, the claim that femininity is either equal or superior to masculinity is unintelligible.

Deconstructive theorists have come in for considerable criticism from other feminist theorists. Gender difference and socialization theorists, in particular, have been inclined to dismiss deconstructive theorists' work as abstruse, esoteric, and "academic," while structuralists have argued that deconstructive theorists' preoccupation with how we *perceive* experience obscures the actual material conditions with which oppressed groups have to cope. Poverty, starvation, and ill health are embodied conditions, not simply matters of perception. Deconstructive theorists do not deny that pain and poverty are lived, experienced problems, but they see experience as so thoroughly mediated by discourses that there is no helpful way to separate the two. When deconstructionists say "discourse," they often *mean* the ways in which experience is infused with and organized by particular narratives. Like structural theorists, deconstructive theorists believe that we come to accept or at least tolerate inequities in part because an authoritative ideology teaches us that those inequities are natural, appropriate, or inevitable. Although structuralists do not find this a wholly satisfactory answer to their objections, it does go some way toward answering the question of whether what is at stake is "merely" a matter of perception. To challenge the status quo, structural and deconstructive theorists agree, we have to call into question the lies and/or myths upheld by common sense and conventional wisdom.[123]

Deconstructive theory does not and indeed cannot offer any definite program for change—change being, by definition, situational, provisional, and emergent—but it does offer several important tools for educators concerned with promoting gendered equity. Among these tools are analyses regarding why educational enlightenment and improved classroom experiences cannot eliminate sexism; tools for problematizing gendered constructs without reinvoking the dominant discourse (as happens when sexist discourses are explicitly critiqued); and analyses that tie gendered values to other symbolic economies, including those of ethnicity, sexuality, race, and class. Finally, deconstructive theory offers the possibility that meaningful (which is to say, productive and provocative) change can be accomplished in the here and now. Such change must be emergent rather than revolutionary: if we can engage in shifts that trouble and reconfigure what we now assume to be normal, natural, or inevitable relations, say deconstructive theorists, we may be able to enter into new kinds of gender relations that, at present, we cannot imagine.

CONCLUSION

Whereas socialization theory extends existing, masculine goals and stan-dards to include girls and women, and feminist structural and decon-structive theories focus on bringing gendered and other inequalities to light so as to avoid reproducing or playing into them, difference theory is concerned with enacting a new and independent ethic in the schools. Its most important contribution to educational change is its emphasis on an alternative vision that yields positive goals for schools. The problem is that the ethic on which that vision is based is not in fact independent but pred-icated on the very system of values it is meant to challenge.

Despite the profoundly different analyses offered by socialization, struc-tural, and deconstructive feminist theories, the objections they raise to gender difference theory are not dissimilar. All three positions argue that the idealized "feminist" character claimed for caring and for "women's ways of knowing" is, in the final analysis, pretty much indistinguishable from the conventionally and contingently *feminine* character of the values and habits that women in advanced-industrial societies are supposed to enact. And if the feminist character of caring and women's ways of knowing is simply borrowed from what patriarchy assigns to women anyway, then, however much women try to claim those values and make them their own, they still derive much of their character from patriarchy and function *for* patriarchy.

The simplest form of this analysis is offered by socialization theorists, who argue that "femininity" is by definition a form of second-class citizen-ship and therefore not something to be reclaimed. Since in all except sentimental cases femininity is subordinate to masculinity, socialization theorists favor jettisoning femininity as a value system and giving women the opportunity to rise to the same standards that have served men so well. The difficulty with this recommendation is that men are well served by so-called universal standards only so long as women are excluded from participation. If women were to be equal to men in every way, then the universal standards that have worked for men for so long would no longer work at all, for masculinist "universal" values are unworkable without the invisible supporting role played by their feminine counterparts.

From the perspective of feminist structural theory, domestic values are inescapably *service* values: their function is to provide support to men and families and to the public sphere. Although the ethic of caring is not exhausted by its service function, caring does help to reproduce public-sphere values (including racism and sexism). Caring therefore cannot be valorized in such a way as to parallel, let alone supersede, the values asso-ciated with masculinity. While certainly the culture at large may accord some respect and recognition to caring and other private-sphere values, their very status as service values precludes their being accorded merit equivalent to that of public-sphere values. On the structural account, caring is at best a compensatory value that may help to mitigate the worst

effects of patriarchal capitalism. In so doing, however, it may also disguise the systemic character of the problems it helps to allay. To the extent that caring does gain a place in the schools, it may mislead students into the oversimplified assumption that caring can eradicate racism, sexism, or other forms of inequity.

From the perspective of feminist deconstructive theory, caring is inseparable from the discourses it is meant to challenge. Although caring is offered as a counter to the rampant self-interest associated with market relations and an individualistic ideology, what appears to be an oppositional or alternative value is in fact conceptually tied to its foil. Construed *specifically* as an antidote to the problems posed by individualism, caring cannot be an independent source of value. Even were caring foregrounded in the schools, the values that caring was meant to crowd out—competitiveness, self-servingness, and relational fraudulence, for example—would reenter by the revolving door. No alternative value system can be found within the discourse. Because we do not have access to anything "outside" the discourse, however, our only recourse is to denaturalize the values of the dominant order and experiment with as-yet-untried constructions of value.

Each of these analyses represents only one set of tools for understanding the enormously complex issues that face all of us in trying to bring about an egalitarian society; it is doubtful that any of one them holds all the answers. Together, though, they make a powerful point. If feminists who appeal to caring as an educational panacea borrow their framework of analysis from prevailing, mainstream constructions of womanhood, they allow feminism to take its cue from patriarchy. This is not to say that gender difference theory's revalorization of caring has no oppositional or counterhegemonic value; insofar as difference theorists reject the hegemony of public-sphere values, they call into question the universality claimed for masculinity and thereby undercut its claims to objectivity, neutrality, and self-sufficiency. This in itself is an important contribution. But insofar as gender difference theory posits caring as an "answer" to the problems of patriarchy, it buys into patriarchal configurations of gender and sexuality.

The critique of gender difference theory offered by feminists in other Western traditions is that the caring ideals that have served many women in the past—and that still resonate for many—have lost their usefulness as visionary possibilities because they fail to problematize received values. Just as the ideal of democracy is dangerous if it is merely a codification of "the way 'we' have always done things in this country"—ignoring the costs of that way of life for those forced to live without the benefits it offers—the notion of caring is problematic if it invokes a nostalgic ideal referenced to an imaginary past in which children enjoyed all the blessings of the perfect home. Since there has never been a time when all children did, we cannot simply insist that they should, but need to ask *why* they have not.

In pursuing immediate and long-term changes, we cannot assume the values and relationships that at present define who we are; otherwise, we will simply reproduce the inequities that we meant to redress. If we are to begin to change the conditions that girls and women face, both within educational institutions and outside them, we will need an at once emergent and critical approach to gender-based educational interventions. Only by changing current conditions and beginning to envision and realize new possibilities of relationship can we cease defining the good and the desirable in terms of what at present seems reasonable. Although the task thus set for feminists and other progressive educators is enormous, there is reason to hope that educational change is possible. In the West, schools are among the few spaces set aside for people to convene for purposes of intellectual and critical inquiry, on the one hand, and for the purpose of building relationships outside of immediate communities of identification, on the other. If there is a place to start to change how we think of ourselves in relation to one another, the public schools—however hostile to change themselves—may yet be that place.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

NOTES

1. Some changes are decidedly for the worse—for example, girls and women now smoke as much as boys and men and face the same risk for lung cancer. See Jean Kilbourne, *Deadly Persuasion: Why Women and Girls Must Fight the Addictive Power of Advertising* (New York: The Free Press, 1999); and Debra Viadero, "For Better or Worse, Girls Catching Up to Boys," *Education Week* 17, no. 41 (June 24, 1998): 5.

2. See Susan Faludi, *Backlash: The Undeclared War Against American Women* (New York: Crown Publishers, 1991); Deborah L. Rhode, *Speaking of Sex: The Denial of Gender Inequality* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1997); Katha Pollitt, "Feminism's Unfinished Business," *Atlantic Monthly* (November 1997): 160–64; Viadero, "For Better or Worse"; Patricia B. Campbell and Beatriz Chu Clewell, "Science, Math, and Girls . . . Still a Long Way to Go," *Education Week* 19, no. 2 (September 15, 1999): 50, 53; and Kilbourne, *Deadly Persuasion*.

3. See Viadero, "For Better or Worse," 5; Julie Blair, "Colleges Urged to Meet Women's Changing Needs," *Education Week* 18, no. 40 (June 16, 1999): 7; and Cornelius Riordan, "The Silent Gender Gap: Reading, Writing, and Other

Problems for Boys," *Education Week* 19, no. 12 (November 17, 1999): 46, 49. Not all the measures of progress for girls and women represent simple improvements in performance; in some cases—as in women's increased enrollment in colleges of engineering, for example—the higher figures also reflect a falling-off in men's enrollment or performance. See Campbell and Clewell, "Science, Math, and Girls," 53.

4. The interesting question is why "feminine" fields are demanding master's degrees at such a high rate when "masculine" fields such as economics and computer science do not. A master's degree in a feminized field does not ensure a high salary; a teacher or social worker with a master's degree is likely to earn less than an engineer without one.

5. Kerry A. White, "Girls' Sports: 'The Best of Times, the Worst of Times,'" *Education Week* 19, no. 7 (October 13, 1999): 16. Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972 is a U.S. law prohibiting sex discrimination in federally funded school programs (including, but not limited to, sex discrimination in extracurricular sports).

6. The American Association of University Women, *Gender Gaps: Where Schools Still Fail Our Children* (New York: Marlowe & Co., 1999). Despite girls' improved grades in math and science, "high stakes tests magnify the gender gap in performance" (p. 46). Standardized college entrance and AP test scores continue to represent boys as doing better than girls in these areas, although their grades are no better than girls'. Noting the continuing gender bias found in standardized test instruments, the AAUW asks, "If boys test better than girls because they have a better mastery of the material, why don't their grades reflect this?" (pp. 33–34). Also see Rosalind Y. Mau, "Barriers to Higher Education for Asian/Pacific-American Females," in *The Asian American Educational Experience: A Source Book for Teachers and Students*, ed. Don T. Nakanishi and Tina Yamano Nishida (New York: Routledge, 1995), 235–45.

7. On the pressure for girls and women to meet the demands both of conventional femininity and public-sphere success, see Jane Roland Martin, "The Ideal of the Educated Person," *Educational Theory* 31, no. 2 (Spring, 1981): 97–109; Dorothy C. Holland and Margaret A. Eisenhart, *Educated in Romance: Women, Achievement, and College Culture* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990); Melba J. T. Vasquez, "Confronting Barriers to the Participation of Mexican American Women in Higher Education," in *Latinos and Education: A Critical Reader*, ed. Antonia Darder, Rodolfo D. Torres, and Henry Gutiérrez (New York: Routledge, 1997), 456, 464; and Lisa C. Dietrich, *Chicana Adolescents: Bitches, 'Ho's, and Schoolgirls* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 1998), especially 92–94. Some girls may fear that they will be forced to choose between intimate relationships and professional success. See Ruth E. Zambrana, "Toward Understanding the Educational Trajectory and Socialization of Latina Women," in *The Broken Web: The Educational Experience of Hispanic American Women*, ed. Teresa McKenna and Flora Ida Ortiz (Claremont and Berkeley, CA: The Tomás Rivera Center/Floricanto Press, 1988), 61–77; and Lyn Mikel Brown and Carol Gilligan, *Meeting at the Crossroads: Women's Psychology and Girls' Development* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1992).

8. For discussions of some of the issues girls face in school, see Avtar Brah and Rahana Minhas, "Structural Racism or Cultural Difference: Schooling for Asian Girls," in *Just a Bunch of Girls: Feminist Approaches to Schooling*, ed. Gaby

Weiner (Milton Keynes, England: Open University Press, 1985), 14–25; June Larkin, *Sexual Harassment: High School Girls Speak Out* (Toronto, Ontario: Second Story Press, 1994); The American Association of University Women and the Wellesley College Center for Research on Women, *How Schools Short-change Girls: The A.A.U.W. Report: A Study of Major Findings on Girls and Education* (Washington, DC: The A.A.U.W. Educational Foundation and National Education Association, 1992); The American Association of University Women, *Hostile Hallways: The AAUW Survey on Sexual Harassment in America's Schools* (Washington, DC: The A.A.U.W. Educational Foundation and Harris/Scholastic Research, 1993); American Association of University Women, *Gender Gaps*; and Peggy Orenstein, in association with the American Association of University Women, *Schoolgirls: Young Women, Self-Esteem, and the Confidence Gap* (New York: Doubleday, 1994).

9. Brown and Gilligan, *Meeting at the Crossroads*, 2. Also see Riordan, "The Silent Gender Gap," 46; and Viadero, "For Better or Worse," 5. As Viadero notes, however, the claims Gilligan has made here and elsewhere about girls' loss of self-esteem in adolescence may be specific to particular groups. African-American girls, for example, may not experience this loss of self-esteem.

10. It should be noted that the popular equation of early pregnancy with being "at risk" assumes the perspective of the dominant order. See Donna Deyhle and Frank Margonis, "Navajo Mothers and Daughters: Schools, Jobs, and the Family," *Anthropology and Education Quarterly* 26, no. 2 (June 1995): 135–67.

11. Although some commentators see bulimia and anorexia strictly as white or white-identified phenomena, this view assumes that eating disorders are to be understood as a response to the white ideal of feminine beauty. Not only do women of color suffer from anorexia nervosa and bulimia, but these eating disorders are linked to a variety of oppressions (for example, poverty, racism, and heterosexism). See Tomas Silber, "Anorexia Nervosa in Blacks and Hispanics," *International Journal of Eating Disorders* 5 (1986): 121–28; and Becky Thompson, "'A Way Outa No Way': Eating Problems Among African American, Latina, and White Women," in *Race, Class, and Gender: Common Bonds, Different Voices*, ed. Esther Ngan-Ling Chow, Doris Wilkinson, and Maxine Baca Zinn (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 1996), 52–69.

12. On this last point, see Valerie Walkerdine, *Schoolgirl Fictions* (London: Verso, 1990), 4–5; and Karen Jones, "'We Are Chauvinists': Sexual Entitlement and Sexual Harassment in a High School," in *Inclusive Education: A Casebook and Readings for Prospective and Practicing Teachers*, ed. Suzanne Wade (Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 2000), 159–66.

13. See, for example, Carol Gilligan, Nona P. Lyons, and Trudy J. Hanmer, eds., *Making Connections: The Relational Worlds of Adolescent Girls at Emma Willard School* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1990); Carol Gilligan, Janie Victoria Ward, and Jill McLean Taylor, with Betty Bardige, eds., *Mapping the Moral Domain: A Contribution of Women's Thinking to Psychological Theory and Education* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1988); Jane Roland Martin, *Reclaiming a Conversation: The Ideal of the Educated Woman* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985); and Nel Noddings, *Caring: A Feminine Approach to Ethics and Moral Education* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984).

14. I will often use "difference" as an abbreviation for "gender difference" in this discussion; the abbreviation "difference theory" should not be confused with postmodern "identity" feminisms, sometimes referred to as "difference" feminisms.

15. Implicitly, the women in question were white. As bell hooks points out, "the notion 'work liberates women'" assumed a kind of work that *would* be fulfilling and liberating. Most women of color, already working outside their homes in low-paying and unrewarding jobs, were more likely to want to *quit* work. bell hooks, *Feminist Theory: From Margin to Center* (Boston: South End Press, 1984), 96.

16. To a large degree the continuing hostilities between homemakers and women in the workplace are a function of patriarchal society's discounting of domestic labor: since work inside the home is not socially acknowledged as work, many homemakers feel undervalued. But since patriarchal ideology accords domesticity at least a sentimental value, women who work in the home are encouraged to regard feminists and women who work outside the home as undermining their status. The perceived antagonism between "feminists" and "homemakers" is regularly fueled by the mainstream media's sensationalizing of the supposed conflict between the two groups, and by the continued framing of childcare as a "women's issue."

17. In this respect, difference theorists' "feminine" conception of caring should be contrasted with the women-centered, women-identified, and "gynocratic" approaches to caring found in Paula Gunn Allen, "Who Is Your Mother? Red Roots of White Feminism," in *The Sacred Hoop: Recovering the Feminine in American Indian Traditions* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1986/1992), 209–21; Janice G. Raymond, *A Passion for Friends: Toward a Philosophy of Female Affection* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1986); and Sarah Lucia Hoagland, *Lesbian Ethics: Toward New Values* (Palo Alto, CA: Institute of Lesbian Studies, 1988). Whereas feminine forms of caring are framed in relation to existing power relations, radical feminist approaches to caring specifically challenge oppressive relations, seeking to reshape and reimagine caring as politically as well as ethically liberatory. The same is true of womanist approaches to caring, such as that described in Katie G. Cannon, *Black Womanist Ethics* (Atlanta: Scholar's Press, 1988).

18. Many educators unconnected with gender difference theory, including a number of black feminists, also use the language of caring in their descriptions of and recommendations for desirable approaches to education. The present analysis is concerned only with those theories of caring advanced by theorists whose project is to celebrate gender difference. Some of the ways black feminist discussions of caring differ from the discussions found in the gender difference literature are described in Audrey Thompson, "Not the Color Purple: Black Feminist Lessons for Educational Caring," *Harvard Educational Review* 68, no. 4 (Winter 1998): 522–54.

19. There is considerable disagreement among feminists as to who gets to be called a feminist. Some in-the-streets activists disqualify all academics; radical and socialist feminists have been known to disqualify postmodern feminists; politically oriented feminists have tended to regard "feminine" theorists such as Carol Gilligan, Nel Noddings, and Jane Roland Martin as lying outside of feminism proper; and some liberal academic theorists intimate that leftist aca-

demic feminists have abandoned women's issues. My own preference is for an inclusive use of the term "feminist" that recognizes a variety of approaches to the shared project of affirming women's needs, rights, and contributions, on the one hand, and exploring new possibilities for women's ways of being in the world, on the other. Unfortunately, many socialization and gender difference theorists, rather than actually addressing the powerful arguments that younger feminists have raised, simply dismiss such arguments as academic and "not about gender," meaning not about gender as they have defined it. What is at issue, however, is whether liberal academics *can* define gender in generic terms without taking power and positionality into account.

20. "Liberalism" in popular usage is typically contrasted with "conservatism"; in political theory, however, "liberalism" encompasses a wide range of political sympathies (including conservative values) referenced to an ideology organized around ideals of individual flourishing and self-determination—in short, liberty. Liberalism thus understood is often (although not invariably) associated with meritocratic values. In this article, the term "liberalism" is used in the theoretical rather than the popular sense; usually, it will be considered in contrast to leftist political positions. Whereas leftists view prevailing social relations as *organized* to serve the interests of a privileged few, liberals see inequities in the social order either as legitimate (the product of merit or of other natural differences) or, when illegitimate, as the product of ignorance, outdated ideologies, and prejudice. Accordingly, liberals pursue social change (such as greater equity between races or sexes) either through individual change (including education) or through incremental adjustments in the existing social order. For the most part, interventions such as affirmative action are intended to compensate for the lingering effects of past forms of discrimination; with a few such adjustments, it is assumed, members of marginalized social groups will be able to perform and be judged on their own merits. Useful discussions of liberalism can be found in Michael Sandel, ed., *Liberalism and Its Critics* (New York: New York University Press, 1984); and Linda J. Nicholson, *Gender and History: The Limits of Social Theory in the Age of the Family* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1986).

21. A technical term, "liberal feminism" indicates a particular strand in feminist theory and practice that includes the educational theory I call socialization feminism. Liberal feminists seek to extend the same rights and opportunities to both sexes. When I use the terms "liberal feminism" and "liberal feminist(s)," they refer to this specific strand in feminism; by contrast, I use "feminist liberalism" and the plural term "liberal feminism*s*" to indicate the *range* of approaches to feminism that accept a liberal, as opposed to a leftist, framework.

22. Although not all gender difference theorists focus on caring, even those who do not do so identify a gendered difference between relational and rationalistic orientations—a distinction that parallels that between care and justice. See, for example, Deborah Tannen, *You Just Don't Understand: Women and Men in Conversation* (New York: William Morrow, 1990).

23. Both Theresa Mickey McCormick, *Creating the Nonsexist Classroom: A Multicultural Approach* (New York: Teachers College Press, 1994) and Florence H. Davidson and Miriam M. Davidson, *Changing Childhood Prejudice: The Caring Work of the Schools* (Westport, CT: Bergin & Garvey, 1994) borrow some of the

insights of caring theory but subordinate these to the goals and values of a justice framework. For an approach that draws on but subordinates socialization and difference perspectives to a structural framework, see Sheila Parvyn Wamahiu, "The Pedagogy of Difference: An African Perspective," in *Equity in the Classroom: Towards Effective Pedagogy for Girls and Boys*, ed. Patricia F. Murphy and Caroline V. Gipps (London: Falmer Press/UNESCO, 1996), 46–58.

24. See Judith Stacey, Susan Béreaud, and Joan Daniels, eds., *And Jill Came Tumbling After: Sexism in American Education* (New York: Laurel/Dell, 1974); and Elizabeth Steiner Maccia, with Martha Ann Coleman, Myrna Estep, and Trudy Miller Shiel, eds., *Women and Education* (Springfield, IL: Charles C. Thomas Pub., 1975). The essays in these collections were originally published in the mid to late 1960s and the very early 1970s.

25. Barbara Houston, "Gender Freedom and the Subtleties of Sexist Education," *Educational Theory* 35, no. 4 (Fall 1985): 359–69.

26. For discussions of the points summarized in this paragraph, see Association of American Colleges, "Selected Activities: Using *The Classroom Climate: A Chilly One for Women?*" (Washington, DC: A.A.C., 1984); Raphaela Best, *We've All Got Scars: What Boys and Girls Learn in Elementary School* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1983); and Annie Campbell and Nicola Brooker, "Tom, Dick, and/or Harriet: Some Interventionist Strategies against Boys' Sexist Behaviour," in *Dolls and Dungarees: Gender Issues in the Primary School Curriculum*, ed. Eva Tutchell (Milton Keynes, UK: Open University Press, 1990), 71–79. As Elizabeth Higginbotham points out in "Designing an Inclusive Curriculum: Bringing All Women into the Core," *Women's Studies Quarterly* 18 (Spring/Summer 1990): 7–23, the principle of curricular consistency needs to be extended to the inclusion of women of color.

27. Shirley Hune, "Higher Education as Gendered Space: Asian-American Women and Everyday Inequities," in *Everyday Sexism in the Third Millennium*, ed. Carol Rambo Ronai, Barbara A. Zsembik, and Joe R. Feagin (New York: Routledge, 1997), 181–96.

28. Myra Sadker and David Sadker, *Failing at Fairness: How America's Schools Cheat Girls* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1994), 229. In a rather more sophisticated analysis, Susan Faludi has suggested that while gender difference theorists' work was problematic in "seem[ing] to forget the force of socialization altogether," what was more problematic was that, given the ideological context, difference theories could be used to legitimate and reinstate old-fashioned sexism. "Under the backlash, it became easy to appropriate Gilligan's theories on behalf of discriminatory arguments that could cause real harm to women." *Backlash*, 326, 331.

29. Sadker and Sadker, *Failing at Fairness*, 280. Myra Sadker is now deceased.

30. Although most gender difference theorists specifically state that they do not mean to essentialize the characteristics they associate with girls and women, the distinction between female (more or less inherent) and feminine (culturally acquired) traits is not always made clear in the actual theorization of their positions.

31. Jane Roland Martin, *The Schoolhome: Rethinking Schools for Changing Families* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1992); Nel Noddings, *The Challenge to Care in Schools: An Alternative Approach to Education* (New York: Teachers College Press, 1992); and Patricia F. Murphy and Caroline V. Gipps, ed., *Equity in the Classroom: Towards Effective Pedagogy for Girls and Boys* (London: Falmer Press/UNESCO, 1996).

32. See Martin, "Ideal of the Educated Person," and Houston, "Gender Freedom."

33. See Mary Field Belenky, Blythe McVicker Clinchy, Nancy Rule Goldberger, and Jill Mattuck Tarrule, *Women's Ways of Knowing: The Development of Self, Voice, and Mind* (New York: Basic Books, 1986). Not all women's ways of knowing are equally sound, according to this analysis, although the authors try to show the value of all the ways of knowing that they describe.

34. This is the position taken, for example, in Sherry Turkle and Seymour Papert, "Epistemological Pluralism: Styles and Voices within the Computer Culture," *Signs* 16, no. 1 (Autumn 1990): 128–57.

35. See Brown and Gilligan, *Meeting at the Crossroads*; and Jill McLean Taylor, Carol Gilligan, and Amy M. Sullivan, *Between Voice and Silence: Women and Girls, Race and Relationship* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1995).

36. This does not necessarily mean that caring is to *displace* justice as an ethical and educational framework in the classroom, although in many cases this is indeed caring theorists' recommendation. Some theorists, however, suggest only that caring must balance justice. See, for example, Betty Bardige, "Things so Finely Human: Moral Sensibilities at Risk in Adolescence," in *Mapping the Moral Domain*, ed. Gilligan et al., 87–110; and Janie V. Ward, "Cultivating a Morality of Care in African American Adolescents: A Culture-Based Model of Violence Prevention," *Harvard Educational Review* 63, no. 2 (Summer 1995): 175–88.

37. Noddings, *Challenge to Care*, 47.

38. Noddings, *Challenge to Care*, 47. Examples of such "centers" include caring for self, for intimate others, for strangers, for animals, plants, and the earth, and for ideas.

39. As a way to rethink both epistemological assumptions and institutional relations, some feminist educators draw on the deconstructive and structural traditions simultaneously. For a discussion of positionality drawing on both postmodern theory and critical pedagogy, for example, see Angela Calabrese Barton, "Liberatory Science Education: Weaving Connections Between Feminist Theory and Science Education," *Curriculum Inquiry* 27, no. 2 (Summer 1997): 141–63 (see especially 149–55).

40. This is not to say that structural theorists view human beings as having no agency with respect to structures of power. On the contrary, individuals and groups may both accommodate to and resist prevailing structures of power. Learning how to cope in various ways, they may find possibilities for claiming a little extra space for themselves or may even gain a privileged, exceptional status (as when a woman becomes the "power behind the throne"). According to structural analyses, though, individual forms of agency—as opposed to

organized, group resistance—have little reconstructive effect on overall struc-tures of power; indeed, they may help reproduce existing structures of power by accepting them as more or less given. Because material arrangements constrain what individuals see as reasonable, possible, or worth pursuing, individual agency usually works within the system rather than working to undermine the system. In a study of 17 and 18 year olds in Vancouver, for example, Jane Gaskell found that "even though these young women did not accept the whole ideology of domesticity," that ideology helped to limit what they saw as possible, while the available jobs and childcare accommodations shaped what they saw as realistic. Her study speaks to "both the active part the young women themselves play in reproduction, and the role of ideological hegemony and social structure in reproducing forms of domestic organiza-tion that privilege men's paid labor." *Gender Matters from School to Work* (Milton Keynes, UK: Open University Press, 1992), 78.

41. See Gerda Lerner, "The Lady and the Mill Girl: Changes in the Status of Women in the Age of Jackson, 1800–1840," in *A Heritage of Her Own: Toward a New Social History of American Women,* ed. Nancy F. Cott and Elizabeth H. Peck (New York: Touchstone/Simon & Schuster, 1979), 182–96; and Darlene Clark Hine, *Black Women in White: Racial Conflict and Cooperation in the Nursing Pro-fession, 1890–1950* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1989).

42. Dale Spender, *Mothers of the Novel: 100 Good Women Writers before Jane Austen* (London: Pandora Press, 1986); Londa Schiebinger, *The Mind Has No Sex? Women in the Origins of Modern Science* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1989); and Lorraine Code, *What Can She Know? Feminist Theory and the Con-struction of Knowledge* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1991).

43. Examples include Dale M. Bauer, "The Other 'F' Word: The Feminist in the Classroom," *College English* 52, no. 4 (April 1990): 385–96; Kathleen Weiler, *Women Teaching for Change: Gender, Class and Power* (New York: Bergin & Garvey, 1988); Gloria Joseph, "Black Feminist Pedagogy and Schooling in Capitalist White America," in *Words of Fire: An Anthology of African-American Feminist Thought,* ed. Beverly Guy-Sheftall (New York: The New Press, 1995), 462–71; and Joyce E. King, "Dysconscious Racism: Ideology, Identity, and the Miseduc-ation of Teachers," *The Journal of Negro Education* 60, no. 2 (Spring 1991): 133–46.

44. David Tyack and Elisabeth Hansot, *Learning Together: A History of Coeducation in American Public Schools* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990), 138, 142; Barbara Miller Solomon, *In the Company of Educated Women: A History of Women and Higher Education in America* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985), 58–59; Victoria Bissell Brown, "The Fear of Feminization: Los Angeles High Schools in the Progressive Era," *Feminist Studies* 16, no. 3 (Fall 1990): 493–518.

45. For example, during WW II, "Rosie the Riveter" (the press name given to women factory workers in the United States) was welcomed and celebrated as contributing to the war effort. After the war, however, a media campaign was mounted to "remind" white women that their place was in the home.

46. See Janice Raymond, "Women's Studies: A Knowledge of One's Own," in *Gen-dered Subjects: The Dynamics of Feminist Teaching,* ed. Margo Culley and Cather-ine Portuges (Boston: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1985), 49–63. See also the argument for refusing to engage patriarchy in Hoagland, *Lesbian Ethics.* In an

attempt to focus on developing an alternative feminist perspective, rather than having to correct or answer to the dominant perspective, feminist teachers occasionally have been known to refuse to admit men to their classes. The fear, in such cases, is that men will insist on starting from mainstream accounts of gender rather than starting from a women-centered account. Although some structural feminists prefer women-only classes, it is rare for feminist teachers to actively exclude men.

47. See Dorothy E. Smith, *The Everyday World as Problematic: A Feminist Sociology* (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1987). Smith is a socialist feminist/standpoint theorist; lesbian and/or black feminist theorists, among others, also may adopt the strategy of setting aside the dominant ideology in favor of immersing students in an alternative framework of ideas and values.

48. Mary Bryson and Suzanne de Castell, "En/Gendering Equity: On Some Paradoxical Consequences of Institutionalized Programs of Emancipation," *Educational Theory* 43, no. 3 (Summer 1993): 342.

49. This point has also been made by anthropologists studying American Indian women. Among the Blackfoot Indians of Saskatchewan, Montana, and Alberta, Alice Kehoe notes, gender and power describe an entirely different orientation toward experience than among Anglos. Neither gender nor power among North American Indian tribes, she says, can be understood in terms of the "static categories" favored in conventional "gender" theorizing. "Blackfoot Persons," in Laura F. Klein and Lillian A. Ackerman, eds., *Women and Power in Native North America* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1995), 124. Although otherwise unrelated to the theoretical position of deconstructive feminists, Kehoe's argument lends support to their problematizing of "universal" categories.

50. Bryson and de Castell, "En/Gendering Equity," 344.

51. See, for example, bell hooks, *Teaching to Transgress: Education as the Practice of Freedom* (New York: Routledge, 1994); Patti Lather, *Getting Smart: Feminist Research and Pedagogy With/in the Postmodern* (New York: Routledge, 1991); Carmen Luke and Jennifer Gore, eds., *Feminisms and Critical Pedagogy* (New York: Routledge, 1992); and Jane Gallop, ed., *Pedagogy: The Question of Impersonation* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1995).

52. See Jonathon Culler, *On Deconstruction: Theory and Criticism after Structuralism* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1982).

53. Valerie Smith discusses the value of such patchwork narratives in *Not Just Race, Not Just Gender: Black Feminist Readings* (New York: Routledge, 1998), 19. In deconstructive interpretations, as in pluralist and radically relativist approaches, multiplicity is emphasized. Deconstructive "patchwork" approaches differ from more traditional relativist analyses, however, in insisting upon the fragmentariness of experience itself. Whereas other radically relativist approaches argue for the incommensurability of different individuals' or groups' experiences but assume that different experiences can be grasped and understood on their own terms, deconstructive analyses see experience itself as contradictory, fragmentary, and only artificially coherent. Rather than seeing conflict as arising from differences between irreducibly different kinds

of experience, deconstructive theorists refuse the notion that experience is ever elemental or unitary. Conflict resides within experience itself.

54. Toni Morrison, *Playing in the Dark: Whiteness and the Literary Imagination* (New York: Vintage: Random House, 1992).

55. Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, *Epistemology of the Closet* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990).

56. While difference approaches give attention to both pedagogy and the curriculum, schooling is likely to be understood less as a cognitive than as an ethical and relational enterprise. (Exceptions include Belenky et al., *Women's Ways of Knowing*, and Turkle and Papert, "Epistemological Pluralism.") Noddings and Martin, among others, do discuss ways in which a relational moral orientation may be tied to specifically intellectual undertakings.

57. Because these categories are not exhaustive, feminist educators will not necessarily be able to locate themselves unproblematically in one or more of the categories. For example, although my own pedagogy and research draw from both the structural and the deconstructive frameworks to a fair extent, and occasionally from the two liberal frameworks as well, my actual theoretical stance is not represented in the four positions I describe. (I would call myself a leftist pragmatist.) My purpose here, however, is not to describe all possible feminist approaches to addressing gender inequity in the schools but rather to describe the three most influential theoretical challenges to the gender difference paradigm.

58. Although a more sophisticated approach would avoid the dichotomous assumption that feminine traits are either inauthentic and imposed *or* authentically expressive, most feminists in the liberal camp have tended to gravitate to one side or the other. An exception is Charlene Haddock Seigfried, who seeks to negotiate between the two positions. In addressing questions about the ethics of care, she says that it is "possible and desirable to be sensitive" both to the concerns of "feminists who are working for equal treatment" and those who seek to "'valorize' the feminine." "Pragmatism, Feminism, and Sensitivity to Context," in *Who Cares? Theory, Research, and Educational Implications of the Ethic of Care*, ed. Mary M. Brabeck (New York: Praeger, 1989), 65. The way to do so, she argues, is to recognize values as tied to *situations*, so that we may analyse the values of caring in relation to the historical and cultural situations in which they have arisen. This contextual form of analysis belongs to the cultural tradition of pragmatism associated with John Dewey and William James.

59. Because they believe that most people in a democracy share similar goals, interests, and values, liberals are basically optimistic about the possibilities for social equity—provided that certain safeguards are instituted to ensure either greater procedural fairness (as in the case of gender- or race-neutral approaches) or greater inclusivity (as in the case of gender sensitive or culturally sensitive approaches). By contrast, leftists see the social order itself as profoundly invested in racist, sexist, and otherwise oppressive power arrangements. Leftists regard slavery in the United States, for example, not as a "tragic flaw" in the social order but as something that most whites countenanced because it served the interests of the dominant society—even though it clearly flew in the face of democratic principles. Because serious and sustained con-

flict is likely to be a reality in most social arrangements, conflict cannot be treated as an aberration but must be addressed as an organizing principle of political relationships.

60. See Nancy Frazier and Myra Sadker, *Sexism in School and Society* (New York: Harper & Row, 1973); Myra Pollack Sadker and David Miller Sadker, *Sex Equity Handbook for Schools* (New York: Longman, 1982); Sandra Lipsitz Bem, "Gender Schema Theory and Its Implications for Child Development: Raising Gender-Aschematic Children in a Gender-Schematic Society, *Signs* 8, no. 4 (Summer 1983): 598–616; Roberta M. Hall and Bernice R. Sandler, *The Classroom Climate: A Chilly One for Women?* (Washington, DC: Association of American Colleges, 1982); and Roberta M. Hall and Bernice R. Sandler, *Out of the Classroom: A Chilly Campus Climate for Women?* (Washington, DC: Association of American Colleges, 1984).

61. Just as liberal feminism often assumes that "women workers" share the same needs and interests, regardless of class, race, ethnicity, or sexuality, socialization theory tends to subsume differences under the banner "women." Many feminist texts that promise to tell "herstory," for example, only reflect the achievements of white women. See Marta Cotera, "Among the Feminists: Racist Classist Issues—1976," reprinted in *Chicana Feminist Thought: The Basic Historical Writings*, ed. Alma M. García (New York: Routledge, 1997), 215 [orig. 1976]. For feminists of color, the emphasis on sexism seems beside the point, since, for the most part, it is racism that has "determined what our daughters could do." See Beverly Bryan, Stella Dadzie, and Suzanne Scafe, *The Heart of the Race* (London: Virago, 1985), 59.

62. Yolanda T. Moses, *Black Women in Academe: Issues and Strategies* (Washington, DC: Association of American Colleges, 1989); and Sarah Nieves-Squires, *Hispanic Women: Making Their Presence on Campus Less Tenuous* (Washington, DC: Association of American Colleges, 1991).

63. Moses, *Black Women in Academe*, 1. The two reports' focus on higher education may have helped to obscure the differences between white women and women of color by concentrating on upwardly mobile women. Quite a few of the college-educated women of color whose writing appeared in the groundbreaking *This Bridge Called My Back* note that in their college years they tended to identify with the dominant culture and/or with feminism and only later came to recognize the suppression of their cultural identities. Not surprisingly, the option of feminist assimilation seems to have been more available to light-skinned Latina and Asian-American women than to darker-skinned women. See Cherríe Moraga and Gloria Anzaldúa, eds., *This Bridge Called My Back: Writings by Radical Women of Color* (New York: Kitchen Table/Women of Color Press, 1981/1983).

64. This problem persists even in more up-to-date feminist socialization approaches to education, such as McCormick's *Creating the Nonsexist Classroom.* Although billed as "a multicultural approach," for the most part the text considers gender issues involving students of color only as special cases—cases in which race or ethnicity is *also* involved. As is usual in such approaches, the author does not question the whiteness of her characterizations of sexism.

65. That this stance is undergoing modification among some leading socialization feminists is suggested by the American Association of University Women's

1999 *Gender Gaps*. Whereas for many years the AAUW emphasized girls' failure to measure up to boys' successes, this report abandons both the deficit stance and the exclusive focus on how girls are doing. Instead, it sees gender issues as involving boys as well as girls, and emphasizes equity (or fairness) over equality (or sameness).

66. Marta Cotera, "Feminism as We See It," reprinted in *Chicana Feminist Thought*, ed. García, 202 [orig. 1972].

67. Brah and Minhas, "Structural Racism or Cultural Difference," 16.

68. See Zambrana's critique of this assumption in "Educational Trajectory and Socialization of Latina Women," 66.

69. Cannon, *Black Womanist Ethics*, 2.

70. Cotera, "Feminism as We See It," 202.

71. According to Susan McGee Bailey, only 4 percent of high school girls were involved in school sports at the time the law was passed; twenty years later, the percentage was up to one-third. "The Current Status of Gender Equity Research in American Schools," *Educational Psychologist* 28, no. 4 (Fall 1993): 321–39. However, Faludi notes that a 1989 study found that "three-fourths of all high schools still violate the federal law banning sex discrimination in education." She also observes that by the late 1980s only seven out of fifty states "had anti-discrimination regulations that covered all education levels." *Back-lash*, xiv. Ironically, the implementation of Title IX has in some cases privileged men. In *Creating the Nonsexist Classroom*, McCormick notes that "the lucrative new field of intercollegiate women's athletics—including budgets, recruiting, and public relations"—lured male coaches to an occupation previously dominated by women. Because of their "more extensive background as coaches," stereotypes about male and female coaches, and "the established 'old boys' network'," men's involvement in coaching women increased dramatically during the 1970s and 1980s, while women's involvement declined from 92 percent to 53 percent (p. 30).

72. Questions regarding girls' and women's "progress" are often difficult to answer, since so many of the measures available are not only competitive but comparative. If the measure of girls' improved math performance is referenced to a percentile score on standardized tests, for example, then girls not only have to do better than previous groups of girls but have to do better than a lot of the boys taking the test in the same year. One likely consequence of girls doing better than boys would be parental outrage that boys' performance has "slipped" because of the attention given to girls.

73. Audrey Thompson, "Surrogate Family Values: The Refeminization of Teaching," *Educational Theory* 47, no. 3 (Summer 1997): 315–39.

74. For example, much has been made of the management style said to be distinctive of women: since this style privileges group consensus over hierarchical decision making, it provides an important fit with the new workplace emphasis on collaboration.

75. Difference theory does not take a consistent stand regarding whether feminine, private-sphere values are simply parallel to or in fact superior to mas-

culine, public-sphere values. Gilligan's early work seemed to endorse a kind of parallelism, for example, whereas some of her later work with colleagues seems to raise the question as to whether public-sphere values might not actually be destructive. See Brown and Gilligan, *Meeting at the Crossroads*; and Taylor, Gilligan, and Sullivan, *Between Voice and Silence*. Nel Noddings's work more explicitly raises criticisms of values associated with the public sphere: in addition to *Caring*, see *Challenge to Care*.

76. Martin, "Ideal of the Educated Person."

77. See, for example, Gilligan, *In a Different Voice*.

78. Martin, *The Schoolhome*, 12.

79. On caring's status as an ideal, see Noddings, *Caring*, 42 and 48–51.

80. Among those who have challenged the assumed equation between white, middle-class mothering and caring are Valerie Walkerdine and Helen Lucey in *Democracy in the Kitchen: Regulating Mothers and Socialising Daughters* (London: Virago, 1989). Also see Barbara Ehrenreich and Deirdre English, *For Her Own Good: 150 Years of the Experts' Advice to Women* (Garden City, NY: Anchor/ Doubleday, 1979); and Thompson, "Not the Color Purple."

81. Although several African-American feminists have adopted the caring paradigm, explicitly connecting it with such black cultural patterns as "other-mothering" and "call and response," it is not clear that the ideal of caring found in the work of white theorists of care can be collapsed with the caring values either assumed or articulated in the work of black caring theorists. Among black feminists who have raised concerns about the false parallels between white and black patterns of mothering, see Patricia Hill Collins, "The Meaning of Motherhood in Black Culture and Black Mother-Daughter Relationships," 42–60; Gloria I. Joseph, "Black Mothers and Daughters: Traditional and New Perspectives," 94–106, both in *Double Stitch*, ed. Bell-Scott et al.; and E. Frances White, "Africa on My Mind: Gender, Counterdiscourse, and African American Nationalism," *Journal of Women's History* 2, no. 1 (Spring 1990): 73–97.

82. For discussions of black patterns of caring and/or mothering, see La Frances Rodgers-Rose, ed., *The Black Woman* (Beverly Hills, CA: Sage Publications, 1980); Kesho Yvonne Scott, *The Habit of Surviving: Black Women's Strategies for Life* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1991); Patricia Bell-Scott, Beverly Guy-Sheftall, Jacqueline Jones Royster, Janet Sims-Wood, Miriam DeCosta-Willis, and Lucie Fultz, eds., *Double Stitch: Black Women Write about Mothers and Daughters* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1991); bell hooks, *Yearning: Race, Gender, and Cultural Politics* (Boston: South End Press, 1990); and Barbara Omolade, *The Rising Song of African American Women* (New York: Routledge, 1994).

83. As implemented in the classroom, moreover, child-centered approaches may have a number of limitations as far as race and culture are concerned. Often colorblind, such approaches may ignore the political and cultural situations of children of color or, alternatively, may rely on simplistic cultural generalizations regarding black or American Indian or other minority cultures. For discussions of these issues, see Lisa Delpit, "The Silenced Dialogue: Power and

Pedagogy in Educating Other People's Children," *Harvard Educational Review* 58, no. 3 (August 1988): 280–98; and Greg Sarris, "Keeping Slug Woman Alive: The Challenge of Reading in a Reservation Classroom," in *The Ethnography of Reading*, ed. Jonathon Boyarin (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), 238–69.

84. Here, then, the public/private distinction is largely irrelevant. Regarding the kinds of support and caring given to young people among the Navajo, see Donna Deyhle, "Navajo Youth and Anglo Racism: Cultural Integrity and Resistance," *Harvard Educational Review* 65, no. 3 (Fall 1995): 403–44.

85. Quoted in Deyhle and Margonis, "Navajo Mothers and Daughters," 143. Regarding some of the tensions American Indian mothers face in urban settings, see Jennie R. Joe and Dorothy Lonewolf Miller, "Cultural Survival and Contemporary American Indian Women in the City," in *Women of Color in U.S. Society*, ed. Zinn and Dill, 185–202.

86. Melvin Delgado and Denise Humm-Delgado, "Natural Support Systems: A Source of Strength in Hispanic Communities," *Social Work* 27 (1982): 81–89; Ruth E. Zambrana, "Puerto Rican Families and Social Well-Being," in *Women of Color in U.S. Society*, ed. Maxine Baca Zinn and Bonnie Thornton Dill (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1994), 133–46; and Bonnie Thornton Dill, "Fictive Kin, Paper Sons, and *Compadrazgo*: Women of Color and the Struggle for Family Survival," in *Women of Color in U.S. Society*, ed. Zinn and Dill, 149–69.

87. Actually, it is not clear that even the theorists whose work has been most central to gender difference theory would accept one another's characterizations of the ethics of care. Gilligan's repudiation of the conventional norms of femininity, for example, seems to indicate that she might not accept Martin's appeal to domesticity as a feminist ideal. As Gilligan, Martin, and Noddings have not engaged one another's positions in any systematic way, however (and indeed seldom refer to one another's work in print), readers must draw their own conclusions as to continuities and discontinuities across their different positions.

88. Important critiques include María C. Lugones and Elizabeth V. Spelman, "Have We Got a Theory for You! Feminist Theory, Cultural Imperialism and the Demand for 'the Woman's Voice,'" *Women's Studies International Forum* 6 (1983): 573–81; Moraga and Anzaldúa, *This Bridge Called My Back*; Gloria T. Hull, Patricia Bell Scott, and Barbara Smith, eds., *All the Women Are White, All the Blacks Are Men, But Some of Us Are Brave: Black Women's Studies* (New York: The Feminist Press at the City University of New York, 1982); and Annette Henry, "'Missing!' Black Self-Representation in Canadian Education Research," *Canadian Journal of Education* 18, no. 3 (1993): 206–22.

89. See Tamara P. Lindsey, "Responding to the Call to Care with Preservice Teachers," *Reflective Practice* 1, no. 2 (June/July 2000): 269–82.

90. In the 1970s, for example, the government's *Dictionary of Occupational Titles* classified "nursery school teachers and child care attendants as equal to parking lot attendants." Quoted in Dolores Hayden, *The Grand Domestic Revolution: A History of Feminist Designs for American Homes, Neighborhoods, and Cities* (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1981), 293. Hayden adds that "these jobs are now

being reclassified" (p. 343). It is doubtful, however, that they are being reclassified in ways that will treat women's emotional labor as equal to, say, men's administrative labor.

91. Audre Lorde, *Sister Outsider: Essays and Speeches* (Freedom, CA: The Crossing Press, 1984), 112. (In the original, the first sentence is italicized.)

92. Socialization theorists (and liberal feminists in general) often simply ignore the private sphere, evidently on the assumption that the home can take care of itself. But since the home cannot take care of itself, women usually still end up doing the domestic work. See Arlie Hochschild, with Anne Machung, *The Second Shift: Working Parents and the Revolution at Home* (New York: Viking, 1989).

93. Johanna Brenner, "Feminist Political Discourses: Radical versus Liberal Approaches to the Feminization of Poverty and Comparable Worth," in *Women, Class, and the Feminist Imagination*, ed. Hansen and Philipson, 495.

94. See Carole Pateman, *The Sexual Contract* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1988), 158–59, see also 119 and 165.

95. Evelyn Fox Keller and Helene Moglen, "Competition: A Problem for Academic Women," in *Competition: A Feminist Taboo?*, ed. Valerie Miner and Helen E. Longino (New York: The Feminist Press at the City University of New York, 1987), 32, 24.

96. For example, Chicana feminist Alicia Sandoval argues that the right to abortion is far more an issue for white, Anglo feminists than it is for many Mexican-American women or for black nationalists. "Chicana Liberation," reprinted in *Chicana Feminist Thought*, ed. García, 205 [orig. 1973]. Of course, there is no full consensus on this question among Chicanas or most other groups, either: see Beverly Padilla, "Chicanas and Abortion," reprinted in *Chicana Feminist Thought*, ed. García, 120–21 [orig. 1972].

97. See Dale Spender, "Education: The Patriarchal Paradigm and the Response to Feminism," in *Men's Studies Modified: The Impact of Feminism on the Academic Disciplines*, ed. Dale Spender (Oxford, England: Pergamon Press, 1981), 155–73; Jean Anyon, "Intersections of Gender and Class: Accommodation and Resistance by Working-Class and Affluent Females to Contradictory Sex-Role Ideologies," in *Gender, Class and Education*, ed. Stephen Walker and Len Barton (Barcombe, England: The Falmer Press, 1983), 19–37; Smith, *The Everyday World as Problematic*; and Linda Valli, *Becoming Clerical Workers* (Boston: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1986). The term "coordered" is Dorothy Smith's (see 123–24, 141, and 212, for example).

98. See Carole Pateman, "'The Disorder of Women': Women, Love, and the Sense of Justice," in *The Disorder of Women: Democracy, Feminism and Political Theory* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1989), 17–32; Adrienne Rich, "Compulsory Heterosexuality and Lesbian Existence," *Signs* 5, no. 4 (Summer 1980): 631–60; and Raymond, *A Passion for Friends*.

99. Ann Oakley, *Woman's Work: The Housewife, Past and Present* (New York: Pantheon/Random House, 1974), 184.

100. Joan Williams, *Unbending Gender: Why Family and Work Conflict and What to Do about It* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000).

101. See Mary S. Leach, "Teacher Education and Reform: 'What's Sex Got to Do with It?'" in *Philosophy of Education 1988*, ed. James M. Giarelli (Normal, IL: Philosophy of Education Society, 1989), 275–83.

102. Hence the fierce backlash against women who refuse their "biological nature" as mothers and housewives. If women's work ceases to count as "natural," it might have to be acknowledged and paid for in proportion to its actual value to society—a cost that would be intolerable to capitalism, liberalism, and patriarchy. See Katha Pollitt, *Reasonable Creatures: Essays on Women and Feminism* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1994). Although the backlash against feminism is *framed* in terms of feminists having gone too far—having demanded more than is reasonable—the impetus for the backlash is the belief that *any* bid for gender equity that threatens to undercut male privilege is by definition unreasonable and extremist. See Ann Oakley and Juliet Mitchell, eds., *Who's Afraid of Feminism? Seeing Through the Backlash* (New York: The New Press, 1997).

103. See Pateman, "The Disorder of Women."

104. "Emotional labor" as I use the term in this article refers in part to "the management of *others'* emotions" and in part to the "psychological labor" involved in attending to and anticipating others' needs. It also refers to the management and performance of one's own emotions in the service of others, as in the case of flight attendants and store clerks who are expected to act pleased to be of service even to rude customers. On the first point, see Cheshire Calhoun, "Emotional Work," in *Explorations in Feminist Ethics: Theory and Practice*, ed. Eve Browning Cole and Susan Coultrap McQuin (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1992), 118. On the second point, see Diane Ehrensaft, "When Women and Men Mother," in *Women, Class, and the Feminist Imagination: A Socialist-Feminist Reader*, ed. Karen V. Hansen and Ilene J. Philipson (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1990), 411. On the last point, see Arlie Hochschild, *The Managed Heart: Commercialization of Human Feeling* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1983). Hochschild originally coined the terms "emotional work" and "emotional labor" to refer to an "*instrumental stance toward our native capacity to play . . . upon a range of feelings*" (p. 20), and while this is part of what I mean by "emotional labor," I also wish to incorporate the meanings pointed to in Calhoun's and Ehrensaft's analyses.

105. Hochschild, *Managed Heart*.

106. See Margaret Adams, "The Compassion Trap," in *Woman in Sexist Society: Studies in Power and Powerlessness*, ed. Vivian Gornick and Barbara K. Moran (New York: New American Library, 1971), 555–75; and Robert V. Bullough, Jr. and Andrew D. Gitlin, "Schooling and Change: A View from the Lower Rung," *Teachers College Record* 87 (Winter 1985): 219–37.

107. This argument applies both to class and race relations between women of the same nationality and to international relations—for example, relations between privileged women in Canada, the United States, Italy, Singapore, Britain, or the United Arab Emirates, on the one hand, and impoverished women from the Philippines, Mexico, Sri Lanka, or Jamaica, on the other hand. See Grace Chang, "The Global Trade in Filipina Workers," in *Dragon*

Ladies: Asian American Feminists Breathe Fire, ed. Sonia Shah (Boston: South End Press, 1997), 132–52; and Cynthia Enloe, *Bananas, Beaches and Bases: Making Feminist Sense of International Politics* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990).

108. Judith Rollins, *Between Women: Domestics and Their Employers* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1985), 185.

109. Because caring involves voluntary attention to others' well-being, and thus is a form of choice, it may seem to escape institutional relations. In fact, structural feminists argue, the more unequal relations are, the more problematic caring and empathy may become. Although a caring relation between a white housewife and an African-American domestic worker, for example, may be valued by both parties, the implicit maternalism of the relation may actually "reinforce the inequality of the relationship" insofar as benevolence on the part of the employer emphasizes the degree to which her employee is dependent upon her goodwill or approval. Rollins, *Between Women*, 193.

110. Michel Foucault, *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings 1972–1977*, ed. Colin Gordon, trans. Colin Gordon, Leo Marshall, John Mepham, and Kate Soper (New York: Pantheon Books, 1980), 98.

111. Sedgwick, *Epistemology of the Closet*, 40.

112. See Morrison, *Playing in the Dark*; Walkerdine, *Schoolgirl Fictions*; and Judith Butler, "Imitation and Gender Insubordination," in *Inside/Out: Lesbian Theories, Gay Theories*, ed. Diana Fuss (New York: Routledge, 1991), 13–31.

113. See Morrison, *Playing in the Dark*.

114. The idealization of white women's sexual innocence and vulnerability, for example, is not really "about" these women either as individuals or as a group so much as it is about protecting the families of well-to-do white men. Smith, *Not Just Race, Not Just Gender*.

115. See Butler, "Imitation and Gender Insubordination"; and Judith Butler, "Endangered/Endangering: Schematic Racism and White Paranoia," in *Reading Rodney King, Reading Urban Uprising*, ed. Robert Gooding-Williams (New York: Routledge, 1993), 15–22. Jean Baudrillard uses Disneyland as an example of a simulacrum in *Simulacra and Simulation*, trans. Sheila Faria Glaser (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan, 1994), 12–14. Baudrillard's point in using the example, however, is different from the point being made here, which is closer to Butler's.

116. Rebecca Schneider, "After Us the Savage Goddess: Feminist Performance Art of the Explicit Body Staged, Uneasily, Across Modernist Dreamscapes," in *Performance and Cultural Politics*, ed. Elin Diamond (London: Routledge, 1996), 166.

117. Summarized in Toril Moi, *Sexual/Textual Politics: Feminist Literary Theory* (London: Routledge, 1985), 12. Rather than characterizing the radical feminist contribution strictly in terms of a revalorization of femininity, however, it would be more accurate to speak of radical feminists' revalorization of women, women's culture, and women's relationships with other women.

118. Moi, *Sexual/Textual Politics*, 12.

119. Moi, *Sexual/Textual Politics*, 139.

120. Sadker and Sadker, *Failing at Fairness*, 229.

121. Carol Tavris, *The Mismeasure of Woman* (New York: Touchstone, 1992). See 43–56, for example.

122. Bronwyn Davies, *Frogs, Snails and Feminist Tales: Preschool Children and Gender* (Sydney, Australia: Allen & Unwin, 1989), 43–69.

123. In referring to the metanarratives that organize experience as "myths," deconstructionists intend to call attention to the quasi-sacred status and unquestioned authority granted to our organizing assumptions about ourselves and the world. Since they do not believe that we can know reality (or "truth"), they avoid characterizing anything as a "lie." Structuralists, on the other hand, are quite prepared to speak of "lies" and "truth." Because they distrust commonsense renderings of experience, however, structuralists rely on critical methods (as in the case of standpoint theorists) or critical theories (as in the case of socialist feminists) to provide leverage on experience and yield objective knowledge. Liberal theorists tend to dismiss both kinds of approaches as "ideological" because they violate common sense.

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