

Deakin Research Online

This is the published version:

Blackmore, Jill 2005, Transnational feminism, globalisation, human rights and education, *Educational practice and theory*, vol. 27, no. 2, pp. 59-80.

Available from Deakin Research Online:

<http://hdl.handle.net/10536/DRO/DU:30002921>

Every reasonable effort has been made to ensure that permission has been obtained for items included in Deakin Research Online. If you believe that your rights have been infringed by this repository, please contact drosupport@deakin.edu.au

Copyright : 2005, James Nicholas Publishers

Transnational Feminism, Globalisation, Human Rights and Education

Jill Blackmore

Deakin University

Abstract

The article demonstrates how neo-liberal ideologies and market forces of globalisation have produced new discourses in education, which have created new sites of political action and require a radical rethinking about feminist theorizing concerning gender equity in education. The article, in analysing the transformation of the social relations of gender and social stratification, draws from feminist, poststructuralist and postcolonial theories. The author concludes that there is need for re-defining feminist paradigms in global pedagogies. Such a new paradigm in feminist pedagogy, based on discourses of power, human rights and social justice should provide a foundation for improving the equity for girls and women in education and society globally.

Keywords: globalisation, human rights, education, feminism, social justice

This article considers the way globalisation has produced new discourses, created new sites of political action and requires a rethinking about feminist claims upon the state for gender equity in education. Globalisation is generally associated with both universalising and localising forces. The discussion draws from feminist and postcolonial theories analysing the transformation of the social relations of gender, in particular in terms of new familial patterns and arrangements, and the changed relations of the state to the individual. The article considers how postcolonial discourses and movements are requiring self reflection as national and cultural as well as gender identities are under reformation. The article concludes with consideration of new spaces for feminist activity in education based on discourses of human rights and capabilities as a basis for improving the equity for girls and women in education.

To do so, recent feminist theoretical projects that provide alternative theoretical and practical approaches to the way education femi-

nists may make claims upon the nation state and emergent international polities within the context of globalised economies/societies are considered. It is suggested that feminists, if they are to develop a 'collective imagination' of democratic citizenship transnationally, will need first to better theorise the changing nature of feminism in the context of post colonial / post communist global politics, and second to scrutinise their own localised practices. Any future claims upon national or global polities need to be based upon recognition of the interdependence of the economic and the social that have been disassociated by neo-liberalism. Secondly, the aim should be to utilise the emergence of new international policy fields and global polities and the various dimensions and flows of globalisation to develop ways of embedding the principles of equity into policy discourses.

Universalising and Differentiating Discourses: Issues for 'Transnational' Feminism

Feminism is a set of philosophies, political and social activities, organic and institutionalised, that take on culturally specific forms. Martha Nussbaum suggests that the main issue confronting feminism as a social movement in the 21st century is how to address the tension between universalisation and cultural relativism. Inderpal Grewal argues that:

If 'woman' has been a part of the colonial and nationalist discourse of modernity, it is difficult but necessary to dismantle this construct without recuperating the also problematic discourse of 'role' within the patriarchal family (of wife, mother, sister) and consequently of 'tradition'. Thus, even while it is important to critique an ahistorical category of 'women', it is just as problematic to see authentic versions of women's locations within societies (Grewal, 1994: 5)

With globalisation, the nation state is in tension between unifying around national identity and fragmenting with the recognition of difference. The position of women, immigrants, refugees and the indigenous challenges and highlights this tension. These groups are often only included if 'difference is left outside'; women's sense of difference is usually defined in the political domain as premised on public/private divide; indigenous/immigrants 'othering' is based on a cultural/political divide.

But feminism has also a shared desire to improve the lot of women regardless of place. Feminism is a *societal* movement, in the sense that it is a social action that challenges 'domination that is both particular and general' in any political contestation in which the status quo is criticised and alternatives envisioned. It is more than an interest group or a tool for pressure – 'it challenges the modality of the

social use of resources and cultural models' (Touraine, 2000: 90-91). Feminism is a network of 'collective imaginations' emerging when historical and political circumstances encourage public recognition that many of the norms, institutions and traditions that structure women's personal and social lives, as well as the impact of new developments and social change, are detrimental to women's well being (Narayan, 1997). Feminism is not 'imported' intact, although feminist ideas flow, reconstituted, across national boundaries. Its very hybridity and fluidity means feminism experiences internal conflict, contestation and contradiction over defining 'the problem', the philosophical stance, and the practical politics, but always bearing some 'family resemblances' (Schott, 1999: 4).

But Touraine sees the notion of a 'societal' movement as a collective project disappearing. The lack of an image of a liberated subject, the tendency for struggles to reduce the interests of an emerging new elite, and the ultra liberal conception of society as a market and social actors as competitors has produced a fragmentation of collective action and a tendency towards a form of 'sub politics' and a new sense of 'a Subject'. Even in developed nation states and democracies, 'societal movements have now to take the form of collective actions that directly assert and defend both equality and the rights and freedoms of the Subject' (Touraine, 2000: 93). That is, contemporary *societal* movements are more ethical movements than religious, economic and political movements, with 'changes in the development, organisation, consciousness and mobilisation of civil society' that has led to 'shifts in norms and values and alignment of interests and the growth of formal and informal organisations independent from the state' (Lindberg & Sverissson, 1997: 5).

What does this mean for feminism as a transnational movement? Ong (1999) argues that theorising the global as macro-political and the local as situated, culturally creative and resistant does not capture the 'horizontal' and 'relational' nature of the contemporary economic, social and cultural processes that stream across spaces. 'Transnationality' she suggests is a better term:

Trans denotes both moving through space or across lines as well as changing the nature of something. Besides suggesting new relations between nation states and capital, *transnationality* also alludes to the *transversal*, the *transactional*, the *translational* and the *transgressive* aspects of contemporary behaviour and imagination that are incited, enabled and regulated by the changing logics of states and capitalism...the condition of cultural interconnectedness and mobility across spaces . . . which has intensified under late capitalism (Ong, 1999: 4).

Transnationalism is about the 'cultural specificities of global processes, tracing the multiplicity of the uses and conceptions of "culture"' (Ong 1999: 4). Particular cultural logics 'inform and structure borders crossings as well as state strategies'. For that reason, feminists need to consider both the economic rationalities of globalisation and cultural dynamics that shape human and political responses' within specific states (Ong, 1999: 5). She argues that the notion of transnationality requires us to understand the 'reciprocal construction of practice, gender, ethnicity, race, class and nation in processes of capital accumulation, the regulatory effects of particular cultural institutions, projects, regimes and markets that shape people's motivations, desires, struggles and make them particular kinds of subjects'. Transnationalism displays the tension between social/political movements and social/political orders . . . and transnational strategies that relate to systems of governmentality.

Transnationalism also challenges how feminists and educators understand community as no longer 'bounded' and how education and democratic theory interlink. The democratic project of Dewey for example, was central to the formation of the nation state. Public education systems were founded during the nineteenth century to develop national citizenship. Transnationalism raises educational questions about educating for global citizenship and what global, translational and transgressive educational narratives around citizenship and education might look like to counter the educational instrumentalism of neo-liberalism. Braidotti argues that we need to understand the local before can work cross nationally.

[But] no discussion of the feminist international perspective is complete unless it rests on a lucid analysis of one's own national roots. Of one's own inscription in the network of power and signification that makes up one's own culture – feminists cannot avoid confrontation with our own national types, our location within a specific national framework. Unless this kind of feminist analysis gets elaborated, women run the risk of waving the international flag as an empty rhetorical gesture, slipping in to a fantasy world, a no(wo)man's land. Proposing an international perspective without critical scrutiny of our roles in our cultural, national contexts would be only a form of supranationalism, that is, ultimately, a form of planetary exile (Braidotti, quoted in Narayan, 1997: 32).

In contrast, Walby cautions feminists about utilising the politics of location because its focus on difference can exaggerate and reify boundaries between social groupings, failing to recognise they are permeable and overlap. The 'politics of location respects the culture values of different social groups and is predicated upon a presumed lack of shared values, upon profound differences . . . differences that

are irreconcilable. It is therefore difficult for people to understand each other' (Walby, 1999: 194). She suggests a 'politics of equality' assumes that we can compare the situation of different groups of women and men against some shared standard, and this standard of justice is the basis for the claims of equality can be understood by variously located social groups. Debates should focus on similarities and not just differences so feminists can determine agreed standards of justice. So can a collective imagination amongst feminists cross the 'defensive boundaries' of nations work? Can feminism work at all in the socio-political networks – local, national, transnational, and global? And what would be the basis of this alliance?

Transversing Defensive Boundaries

Uma Narayan(1997), an Indian postcolonial feminist, deconstructs the relationship between universalising discourses of feminism, often depicted in Third World nations as 'Westernisation', and a 'culturally authentic feminism' that is nationally bound. She argues that as a third world feminist who grew up in India, then Uganda, and who now lives in the USA, her experiences of being an Indian girl and then a woman taught her about gender and what it was to be 'female' and 'Indian'. Her education and experience moved her beyond seeing what she experienced as a personal problem to being a matter of systematic and systemic treatment of women because of the political and social environment of her time and cultural context. That is, she experienced the paradox of most upper class Indian girls of being highly educated, at the same time that she was expected to conform to particular cultural norms of womanhood. Her politicisation arose not from her 'Westernisation' but from various political movements that originated in India about Indian specific issues that were not Western agendas: for example, the anti-dowry movement arose because 'dowry deaths were increasing not decreasing. The issue therefore is not between 'culturally authentic' and 'Westernised' feminism but is a matter of differential experiences (education, life, travel) and generational differences arising from social change. 'Feminist analyses are results of political organising and political mobilisation, initiated and sustained by women within these Third World contexts' (Narayan, 1997: 12-13). Certainly there are commonalities with Western feminists, she suggests, in that Western women:

are no strangers to battering and violence prevalent in their own various forms of marriage and family arrangements. They are no strangers either to the sense of shame that accompanies admitting victimisation, or to a multiplicity of material, social, and cultural structures that pose serious impediments to women seeking assistance (Narayan, 1997: 14).

Furthermore, the perceived cultural colonisation of localised feminism by 'global feminism' (read Western feminism) is not peculiar to Third World countries. Oppositional discourses about Third World and Western feminism are echoed within Western feminism and within national boundaries between white feminism/black or Chicana feminism in the USA and indigenous/non-indigenous feminism in the USA, Canada, Australia and New Zealand. Moreton-Robinson, an Australian indigenous feminist, puts issues of recognition, land rights and self determination based on collective rights of sovereignty as the priorities for Australian indigenous women who:

... deploy a politics of embarrassment which draws on the ideal of equal and human rights for all citizens in our struggle for self determination, in order to expose the legacy of colonisation. In this struggle, Indigenous women are politically and culturally aligned with Indigenous men because, irrespective of gender, we are tied through obligations and reciprocity to our kin and country, and we share a common history of colonisation (Moreton-Robinson, 2000: 163).

By contrast, rather than this sense of the collective, Moreton-Robinson sees 'individual accomplishment, ambition and rights are the essential values of the white feminist movement' (2000: 163). That is, she positions white feminists as propagating the values that many white feminists would see as being highly 'masculinist'. For Indigenous women, family and kinship are privileged over rights. To privilege individual rights over community in order to be in solidarity with white feminists is 'an irrelevant luxury' for indigenous women (2000: 163). Yet privilege is granted to white women merely through their 'whiteness' as the processes of colonisation were gendered as well as racialised and white feminists have been complicit in perpetuating colonialism and racism (Narayan, 1997; Moreton-Robinson, 2000). Arguments for gender equality during the twentieth century were often premised upon white middle class women's positioning of themselves as 'responsible for the poor', for protecting indigenous women, and in colonial societies, as for 'saving' colonised women. This does not mean that Narayan and Moreton-Robinson reject white feminist theory but rather confront it with its own limitations.

Colonisation produced discourses about the 'exotic women', but also changed the nature of the social relations of gender within colonised cultures. Cultures as 'others' are historically constructed, with permeable boundaries; more 'sources of control or of abandonment, of recollection and forgetting, of force or of dependence, of exclusiveness or of sharing', where the boundaries are more about 'defensive politics' (Said, 1998, 225). Hegemonic colonising masculinities 'feminised', 'infantalised' or rendered as 'primitive', local colonial masculinities

through, for example, the use of 'boy' to 'other' local masculinities, similar to the way dominant masculinist Western discourses 'othered' and infantilised women. In the same way hegemonic local colonial discourses informed by particular 'traditional' religious and cultural beliefs were mobilised by men to position women as 'other' and 'less-er' (Connell, 1998).

Equally, within Western feminism, despite the historical trans-Atlantic dynamic between English and American feminism, each has taken different cultural forms in terms of issues, political strategies and forms of organization. In the same way, there are significant differences between Australian, UK and English feminism, with 'celebrity feminism' and legislative approaches more dominant in the USA, and the significant role of Australian 'femocrats' (feminist bureaucrats) more aligned with state feminism in Scandinavia (Blackmore, 1999). The US strategic imperative emphasised non-government and legal approaches as was trend in the USA on equity. The woman's movement in Australia worked through a temporary alliance with the state, a strategy not possible in the UK due to the absence of femocrats (Pringle & Watson, 1996). Differences exist between Scandinavian feminists and other European feminisms, for example the French, in terms of their theoretical and political trajectories (Schott, 1999). At the same time, Western 'export' feminism is, on the one hand, commodified, privatised and depoliticised within global capitalist discourses that market feminism, such as Madonna 'pop feminism' and, on the other, feminism's achievements are used to justify the rolling back of affirmative action policies.

Feminism is about social change, and changing the social/power relations of gender in particular. Discourses about the inevitability of change have travelled along with discourses of globalisation. On the one hand, Western feminism is itself on the defensive after decades of socially conservative and radical market oriented reforms. Feminists promoting gender equity in the Anglophone states realised that progress is not developmental – what is gained over time, is often quickly lost. Battles continue in Australia as in the USA over the rights for abortion. Lingard and Douglas (1999) see the feminist backlash meant gains made through state policies have been eroded since the 1990s. A socially conservative federal government has reduced the role of the femocrats by restructuring government based on new public administration principles, femocrats have been expected to deal with all equity policy issues, and gender equity units have been integrated into human resource management. Such moves put feminists on the defensive. Social policies have favoured middle class families and victimised single parent families, weakening women's capacity to

earn at the same time that the reduction of public expenditure in education, health and welfare and their privatisation has increased the burden on families (and therefore women) for care of the aged, the young and sick. Equity infrastructures built up by the 'baby boomer' generation of feminists, presumed as a right by the current generation, are fast depleting.

On the other hand, in Third World nation states, opponents to feminism and progressive social change often use notions of globalisation/Westernisation/Americanisation interchangeably. Feminism is seen to be just another aspect of Westernisation (Narayan, 1997). Opponents to national feminism in Third World countries have mobilised discourses against local feminists as being part of a wider trend of Westernisation, a 'two cultures' perspective, leading to a valorisation of indigenous culture and the denigrating of the values of the West and idealising local cultures. The two cultures (Western and non-Western) are treated as totalisations that often 'cast the values and practices of specific privileged groups within the community's values of the culture as a whole' (Narayan, 1997: 15). Western culture has also been simplistically characterised as progressive and non-Western cultures as traditional and resistant to change. Western values based on human rights are said by some to be antithetical to 'Asian values', and that Asian values are not averse to more authoritarian regimes that produce economic benefits, a link challenged by Sen, who suggests that neither the West nor Asia are monolithic socially, economically or politically. Current discourses about 'Asian values' are a way of working through market rationality as 'Asian tiger economies are liberal formations dedicated to the most efficient way of achieving maximal economic performance' (Ong, 1999: 195). Thus the 'Asian values discourses' are deployed by the state in order to normalise social structures that are conducive to global capitalism while utilising the traditional disciplinary discourses of Confucianism and Islam. This capitalist friendly Confucianism and Islamism is no different to the American's capitalist friendly Judeo-Christian tradition, and each brings with it legacies that shape institutions and practices in highly gendered ways.

Translating Gender Formations: Neo-liberalism and Globalisation

Post communism and globalisation has, Connell argues, produced a new gender order premised upon neo-liberal politics and economics that have largely informed the world polity:

Neo liberal politics has little to say, explicitly, about gender. It speaks a gender-neutral language of 'markets', 'individuals', and 'choice'. New

Right politicians and journalists denounce 'political correctness' and 'feminazis', and new-right governments have abolished or downgraded equal opportunity programs and women's policy units (Connell, 2000: 51).

Implicitly, neo-liberal economics and politics are highly gendered, racialised and classed, propagating as the ideal as the entrepreneurial 'independent' male mobilised by choice, not association, affiliation or commitment to others or to nation. There is little sense of responsibility to others or of loyalty and commitment amongst the emerging globally mobile workforce of largely white males. The 'patriarchal dividend' these men receive is 'accumulated by impersonal institutional means' (Connell, 2000: 52), for example, the gross payouts to inefficient CEO's because of contractual arrangements.

Neo-liberalism has produced a deterministic sense of system convergence that has become embedded in global economic policy. Macro economic restructuring in response to the various local manifestations of globalisation has had profound effects on most nation states. But within international, national and local policy regimes there is little recognition of the gender nature of the processes and its gender effects: the notion of institutional reformation has been treated as gender neutral and the means of restructuring as inevitable (Bakker, 1994). Structural policies are formulated on a gender-neutral individual who is mobile, flexible and has the individual freedom to choose and a failure to recognise that there are asymmetrical relations of power within institutions and nation states.

Gender relations can be defined in terms of the interplay between historical practices that are distinguished according to masculine and feminine (theories and ideologies, including religious ideas), institutional practices (such as state and market), and material conditions (the nature and distribution of material capabilities along gender lines). Gender relations are social constructions (social forces and historical structures) that differentiate and circumscribe material outcomes for women and men. This definition of gender relations recognises that the interplay of race, class and sexuality underpins the form and structure of actual gender relations (Bakker, 1994: 3)

Brodie argues that restructuring has not only transformed relations between state and market but also shifted boundaries between public and private spheres, and this is a realignment that significantly impacts on gender relations within families and workplaces. In Anglo nation states this has led to an erosion of the public and a revalorisation of the private, with the dismantling of the welfare state. So on the one hand we have current structural adjustment policies

and conservative politics seeking to 'roll back the state', but in practice the conservative state has been highly interventionist in areas of conservative family policy and cutting away at the labour market and social protections for women.

International trade and global markets 'are arenas of gender formation and gender politics' (Connell, 2000: 41). Emerging international and regional polities and markets form re-cycled versions of the gender order, that defines different masculinities in relation to a range of femininities that are socially constructed within specific cultural contexts but in which particular masculinities are the dominant norm. Post-colonial notions of gender take on new discursive forms in specific locations within global contexts. This requires a better understanding of the nature of the state, and the way masculinities and femininities are constructed by and through the state within specific contexts. Implicit rather than explicit in this discussion is how the position of women is often central to these characterisations of Western and Asian values, with the image of the subjugated woman of Muslim countries. These debates are highly gendered in their construction and the ways in which they are mobilised locally and internationally. Male dominated Third World elites construct particular practices that protect that dominance by arguing they are traditional. Hegemonic masculinities in globalised post colonial cultures therefore rest uneasily between local and global cultures (Connell, 2000). Similarly, what counts as progress in Western cultures is often that propagated by elite Anglo males in various multinational organisations who have little sense of loyalty to country or group. Yet their location is premised upon particular social relations of gender and power. The mobility of transnational elite Anglo masculinities exemplifying the autonomous self-maximising individual is reliant upon particular domestic arrangements, that require partners and children's subjugation of rights to that of the father or the equally mobile, childless partner.

De-industrialisation in Western nation states has produced a crisis for working class 'blue collar' masculinities, no longer the primary breadwinners, at the same time as women are entering an increasingly casualised labour market, transforming familial gender relations. There has been an evacuation of the centralised approaches to gender equity and industrial relations, together with deregulation of school provision and the educational labour markets that have impacted on a feminised profession (Blackmore & Angwin). This emerging ambivalence and uncertainty about the 'masculine self' played out in the current debates in many Anglo nation states about the underachievement of boys (and crisis in masculinity generally)

foregrounded in education policy (Lingard & Douglas, 1999; Arnot et al., 1998). This totalising discourse about the underachievement of boys has produced a form of 'recuperative masculinity', mobilised through policy, that has produced a redistribution of resources back to boys without recognising how class, location, ethnicity and indigeneity produce greater differences amongst boys than between boys and girls (Lingard, 2003; Collins, et al., 2001; Arnot et al., 1998). Despite shifting social, political and economic relations of gender and gender identity that have produced more independent feminine selves, collectively, masculinity continues to be at the forefront of 'the culture remaking of gender meanings' and the 'reshaping of institutional contexts of practice' (Connell, 2000: 44).

Similarly, Ong sees gender permeating through notions of transnationalism, globalism and cosmopolitanism with all its connotations of statelessness and 'at home throughout the world'. Flexible citizenship, as conceptualised in cosmopolitanism, is only an option for particular classes and ignores the difference between 'the power of mobile and non-mobile subjects' (Ong, 1999: 11). Non-materialist analysis of cultural perspectives on globalisation produces 'an innocent concept of the essential diasporan subject, one that celebrates hybridity, 'cultural' border crossing and the production of difference (Ong, 1999: 13). She illustrates how Confucianism as a discourse is mobilised to normalise market restructuring as a positive, and how the economic capital of the overseas Chinese business elite cannot be so readily transferred into social capital in a racialised American culture: that is, wealthy Chinese immigrants are at the top of the economic ladder and not the bottom as is expected of recent immigrants. Yet embedded in the notion of the 'overseas Chinese' are core 'Chinese' values that control women and the poor: that is, a 'structure of limits and inequality for the many of flexibility and mobility for the few' (Ong, 1999: 117). The Chinese immigrant business family, as that of Anglo 'transnational masculinities, is premised upon a particular set of gender arrangements within the family and work: the family remains located in one place, thus exerting a 'fraternal tribal capitalism', in which national boundaries and government rules are bypassed by 'doing business man to man'. Flexibility is thus a 'masculine property' (Ong, 1999: 143-5). Local colonial capacities also disrupt Western cultural colonisations. Colonising masculinities work with/against colonial masculinities, leading to new gender formations as cultural hybrids of Western forms of bureaucracy and institutions mixed with local traditional forms and norms of bureaucratic life as in, for example, China and India. There are numerous accounts of how traditional patriarchies have linked to new institutional practices to recover ascen-

dancy, such as Hollway's depiction of the Tanzanian state bureaucracy and Wolpe et al.'s analysis of the sidelining of feminists in the reformed South Africa. The conditions of globalisation, which involve the interaction of many local gender orders, multiply the forms of masculinity on the global gender order.

Affirmative Postmodernists

How can progressive feminist and profeminist educators produce a non-nationalist framework of public education for democracy transnationally? Feminists need to take the position of being 'affirmative post modernists' rather than 'sceptical post modernist' (i.e. critical of modernity but open to new ways of change) without rejecting or affirming an ethic, making normative choices and striving to build issue specific policy coalitions' (Rosenau, 1992: 15-16). Now there is a new global politics, a new 'field' of policy within a global politic. In this context, Anglo-feminist policy activists have argued, first, that the focus of policy needs to be redirected to become active in a range of policy fields, local and transnational, reducing reliance on the national field of policy, to use the notion of *trans* and play out the relational aspects and how nations relate to each other. Second, feminists need to shift from claims based on rights and not just needs. Third, women's movements as transnational movements must work strategically in alliance with other transnational movements (e.g. environmentalism). There are already examples of how global movements can work from above and below such as the Education for All Movement (Brighouse & Unterhalter, 2002).

To do so requires us to understand and continue to work locally and nationally. How Anglo feminists have made claims upon the liberal nation state has been reliant upon specific historical cultural, economic and political formations. Barbara Hobson (1996) indicates how in the 1990s Western women's dependency on the male wage varied according the level of 'welfarism' of the state – the average contribution of husbands to family income ranging from 67 to 80 percent in order of Sweden, the United States, Australia, Canada, Germany and the United Kingdom – reflecting the level of traditional division of labour with husbands in the labour market and women providing child care and domestic work. Australian feminists focused on the power resources of the state and formal institutions, such as the strong national unions, to be mobilised in terms of a political constituency to produce change through policy. American feminists focused on legislative social rights to reduce the power of the markets and conservative social policy. Australian and American approaches were liberal oriented and women depended more on the state for income, which had significant consequences with the structural

adjustment policies reducing state welfare, thus making women and children the 'new poor' in the 1990s. Australian women are more likely than American women to work part time or be more dependent on husband's income and therefore the state. Australia has stratified social welfare, with different indigenous and non indigenous welfare systems. Historically, males' claim have been on the basis of being worker citizens and for compensation for failure in the labour market, while women's claims have been as members of families and for 'family failures'. Even in countries of greatest social provision of women, when claims are made on basis of motherhood or marriage, women receive lower benefits than when claimed as a worker-citizen. The struggle over recognition that caring work demands equal political-citizenship rights and the economic right to paid work has yet to be won in many Anglo nation states (Orloff, 1996).

Bacchi, like others, has put a considerable case against the notion of equality as the aim, because then men are the norm against which women's equality is measured. Furthermore, they argue that feminists should move away from rights based claims typical of Anglophone national contexts. Fraser comments:

In welfare states needs talk has been institutionalised as the major vocabulary of political discourse. It coexists uncomfortably, with talk about rights and interests at the very centre of political life. Indeed this peculiar juxtaposition of discourses of needs with discourses about rights and interests is one of the distinctive marks of late capitalist political culture (Fraser, 1997: 162)

Pringle and Watson argue that feminists have made claims on the basis of needs and rights rather than interests. Discourses about needs are decidedly feminine, and discourses of interests masculine: they are associated with conservative American political theory. Rights and are still too closely tied to the universal humanistic Enlightenment project and its assumptions about the gender neutral (but implicitly male) autonomous individual. Indeed, New Right discourses have used the discourse of 'interests' against the claims of various groups as being particularistic, connoting selfishness, materialism, and essentialism. Theoretically, many have argued that pluralist interest-group politics denies inequality in the distribution in power. Interests, needs and rights have both universalising/essentialising tendencies. Feminists struggle with a needs based approach as it usually reduces to a sense of a universalised human (gender neutral) notion of basic needs or the essentialist notion of particular needs of a group against some masculinist norm. Women's needs, Pringle and Watson argue, were based on private needs different from men's and once these were met women could then be equal in the labour market.

The question is what it means in terms of social practices. Needs discourses construct particular subject positions eg single mother, youth at risk. The state or the transnational polity then sets up social practices which often reduce to surveillance, making these identities 'fixed' and therefore insolvable, and fail to ask, as Bacchi (2000) argues, "what is the problem here?".

Feminist strategies have to deal not only without relation to the categories man/woman but our relation to the difference among women and our relation toward democratic politics. It is clear that feminism can no longer ground itself on an essentialist conception of woman or an understanding of 'gender identity; or 'interest' shared by all women' (Pringle & Watson, 1996: 74). The issue is which gives better political mileage in the current context of the changing nature of the state and the emergent global policy field. Needs implies a form of marginalisation to be redressed by the state, rights suggests a form of possessive individualism and freedom from the state. Both require a common appeal to humanity. Feminists are arguing that, in recognition of the state, and the new regionalised states (e.g., the EU), and an emerging world polity, as not unitary things but as interlocking webs of political, economic and social relations (processes, structures and policies) a re-constructed notion of interests could be better. Such a re-constructed notion of interests would get beyond the masculinist notion of self interested group politics where interests represent pre-existing groups and identities of the twentieth century, but where interests represent social agents constituted in a multiplicity of relations, whose identities are complex and precarious. Interests is constantly redefined within a plurality of subject positions. Interests therefore take on a far more fluid and collective sense of difference (and therefore cultural difference) than that of rights and needs ie cultural relativist position. Drawing on Laclau and Mouffe, Pringle and Watson argue that if the symbolic order or network/web of the social is seen to be constructed, in which there is no 'fixed' identity, difference is produced more through the practices of the social relations that construct those identities inflected by race, class, ethnicity and gender. At any moment, identity can become fixed at a nodal point, a point of agreement, that may privilege some aspect, for example gender, but only temporarily. There are no 'objective' interests eg of women as a group, as individuals are themselves constituted through a range of often contradictory subject positions. The issue is therefore about how to see across this range of discourses how women are constituted as subordinate, balancing between universalist and cultural relativism in terms of framing policy.

Transgressive Feminist Strategies in the New 'Transnational' Polity: Possibilities and Problems

Walby raises significant questions for trans-national feminist practical politics: claims to citizenship arise from knowledge about, and political vocabulary of, other countries. In that sense, suffrage claims are hybrid – they draw on local circumstances and knowledge of victories elsewhere. To reject this global or universal knowledge is to forget about the power of the local to hybridise. It is equally dangerous to reject the universal. We should not abandon rationality but should 'seek evidence and assess theories' (Walby, 2002: 202). What might be the philosophical position upon which a feminist trans-national politics might be constituted? How can such a project that works on a notion of feminism as a societal movement translate into a transnational politics? In this article I suggest that a feminist transnational politics needs to:

- address the tension between universalism and cultural relativism evident in debates of the politics of difference
- move beyond the dichotomy between redistribution, recognition and transformation that has emerged in the debates between Habermasian, Foucauldian and feminist standpoint theorisations of difference
- realise areas of contestation within the transnational policy field and develop a framework for the basis of different claims.

There are a number of feminist political and theoretical projects underway that are seeking to take up these challenges. At an international level, feminists are working to fill the conceptual gap of gender and equity in policies that impact on nation states. Development policy has largely been informed by economic theories that too easily equate quality of life to GNP per capita and maximisation of wealth as a measure of satisfaction in public policy. Feminist economists and philosophers such as Martha Nussbaum have sought to point to the gendered nature of economic policy, to make gender visible and to develop more sophisticated approaches to economic measures eg. 'quality of life' (Aslaksen, et al., 1999). The development of the gender development indicators in the UNESCO reports demonstrate how feminists and pro-feminists have argued strategically for why gender is important for all nations. Since 1991, countries have been ranked on Human Development Indexes based on longevity, knowledge (education level) and income, adjusted for gender disparity and income distribution and supplemented by Gender Related Development Index and more recently the Gender Empowerment Measure (economic, political and professional participation). This step is of strategic importance as these are becoming measures of a nation states 'development' and 'modernisation', and the state's capacity for sus-

tained economic growth that is often seen to attract national investors. This is more valued than the GNP that does not 'measure the distribution of wealth and income, far less about elements of people's lives that are important but not perfectly correlated with GNP, such as infant mortality, life expectancy, educational opportunities, the quality of race and gender relations, the presence or absence of political or religious liberty' (Nussbaum, 1998: 770). That is, notions of quality of life are supplanting the narrow utilitarian traditions as 'utilitarianism as a normative framework for public choice' is inadequate (Nussbaum, 1998: 770).

Nussbaum is working to replace the bargaining models of the family and the economist's fetish with choice, preference and desire with alternative measures of quality of life, that include, for example, human dignity and emotional capacities. Her aim is to develop a set of principles based on the notion of capabilities that can 'advance some universal cross-cultural norms that should guide public policy' (Nussbaum, 1998: 770). She adopts Sen's position that discourses of universal human rights are not just 'Western' and that notions of personal freedom, contestation, questioning of authority and the state can be found in the older traditions of Buddhism and Confucianism and Indian religious traditions of tolerance. All have clear notions of the role of the individual, the state and citizenship that are not localised rights – they are the entitlements of every human being. They do differ in terms of how they are nationally constituted. In that sense, anyone can promote civil rights with equal vigour. The capabilities approach is premised upon the notion of 'truly human functioning', but leaves room for plural specification of the major capabilities that are context specific. The goal is capability (sets of conditions) not actual functioning, thus leaving individuals free to choose which functions they actually perform. The central capabilities are 'a core of basic good about which citizens agree, although they differ about their more comprehensive conceptions of the good'. This form of universalism derives from 'a complex understanding of cultures as sites of resistance and internal critique' (Nussbaum: 1998: 770). Three kinds of capabilities need to be guaranteed in Nussbaum's approach:

- *Basic capabilities*: innate equipment of human beings that enables them with sufficient support and care to attain higher level capabilities
- *Internal capabilities*: state that is sufficient for the exercise of relevant functioning
- *Combined capabilities*: internal state combined with suitable external circumstances prove sufficient to exercise that functioning' (Nussbaum, 1998: 775)

Thus a woman with education and training who is threatened if she seeks to leave house and go work elsewhere has internal but not external capabilities. This is the case of upper class women in countries with fundamentalist rule.

A feminist politics according to Nussbaum should aim at production of combined capabilities. A policy that aims at a single desired mode of functioning will be different from one that aims at providing opportunities for citizens to choose or not choose that function. For example, a policy aiming at urging all women to seek employment outside the home, is different from the policy that gives women choice between working in home or outside, or a policy that only provides financial support for women in the home. The first requires child care provision and focus on gender discriminatory practices in the workplace; the second, requires a wider range of funding to facilitate movement from work to home; and the last requires discussions about the social meaning of domestic labour, making traditional roles worthwhile. In Australia the conservative federal government has focused on supporting women staying at home, thus reducing their future access to the labour market and making them more dependent on their husbands and the state. By contrast, the welfare states in Scandinavia have long recognised that women require economic independence first, and that this has meant they have moved back into work without loss of earning power in the workforce.

Similarly, you can have a policy that allows people to function well but this differs from a policy that actually shapes the material and social environment that allow choices to be made that require redistribution. Thus the former would only mean training women to work in home, the latter requires *conditions* that are women friendly in the workplace e.g., free from sexual harassment. These principles would take on different connotations and meaning in different cultural contexts. The move towards a 'basic income' based on the 'decoupling of the foundation of individual entitlements from employment, making the foundations of individual livelihood independent of the vagaries of the market and insured against risk infected *means* of technology-led change' (Bauman, 2001: 56). Citizenship could therefore include the basic right to education.

Nancy Fraser and Martha Nussbaum argue that theories of justice have tended to ignore the difficult questions of redistribution of resources and opportunities, a point relevant to more equitable access to and participation in education. Fraser argues that recognition of difference and diversity must go hand in hand with a redistribution of resources, as the former otherwise becomes more symbolic without

changing the conditions under which people live. Mobilising education on the basis of parental choice, therefore, can exacerbate social and educational inequality if not matched by policies of redistribution of resources more fairly. The principles of recognition and redistribution which focus on group identity together with the more individualistic orientation of the capabilities approach, together provide a sound policy framework for transnational feminism that addresses the universalism/cultural relativist tension. Thus:

A more international focus will not require feminist philosophy to turn away from its traditional themes, such as employment discrimination, domestic violence, sexual harassment and the reform of rape law, which are all as central to women in developing countries as to Western women. But feminism will have to add new topics to its agenda to approach the developing world in a productive way. Among these topics are hunger and nutrition, literacy, land rights, the right to seek employment outside the home, child marriage and child labour (Nussbaum, 1998: 788-9).

In turn, property and employment rights link to self-respect. Thus issues of self sufficiency are critical as a norm so that one's survival is not dependent on another's good will. What is not mentioned is a sense of how these principles merge into the notion of transnational or global 'publics'.

Brighouse and Unterhalter (2002) argue that Nussbaum needs to develop the capabilities approach further, as a theory based on basic needs, rights and capabilities without a theory of justice, lacks a normative dimension, and therefore does not address the distributional questions raised by Rawls (and Fraser). The United Nations Girls and Education Initiative policy indicates a shift to education as a foundational right. But these policies stress the institutional location of rights, for example, political representation rather than quality of life. Also there have been a modification of simplistic human capital views that recognise the building of social capital e.g. women's networks, NGOs and organizations (Gender and Development theorists) based on the notion of the empowered citizen, as opposed to the right oriented social capital theorists such as Putnam, who see community as being about social control and responsibility. But human capital theories have tended to dominate official policy organizations like World Bank and the NGOs. In both accounts, 'rights' slips to that of 'voice', thus allowing policymakers not to address issues of women's autonomy and issues of re-distribution (Brighouse & Unterhalter, 2002).

Second, Brighouse and Unterhalter (2002: 11) believe that there are arguments for greater empowerment of women by recognition of process and arenas but not a normative dimension. A normative

dimension would have an account both of the 'capacities for a sense of justice (as fairness) and for a conception of the good'. The Sen/Nussbaum capabilities and Rawls's capacities approaches agree that all measures should be judged on the basis of a moral good for the individual, and second that someone's productive capacities should be developed for their own sake.

A just society is obliged to ensure that individuals can be productive, not so that the economy will grow and the society will be rich, but so that the individual herself has more command over her own circumstances (Brighouse & Unterhalter, 2002: 11).

Third, they are all committed to personal autonomy – freedom of expression, religion and conscience and do not wish to tell people what particular goods they need (functioning), but require that 'they be equipped to make judgements about what is good for them and act on those judgements' (Brighouse & Unterhalter, 2002: 11). Fourth, they must have the external conditions of freedom to mobilise their capabilities. The key problem of this approach is that, in indexing the capabilities, there can be considerable dispute over weightings of each, the capacity of individuals to equally mobilise each and also whether these are adequate.

Despite this, Brighouse and Unterhalter argue that this approach provides us with possibilities beyond current liberal notions of human and social capital, within a more liberal framework of liberalism that recognises that the liberal individual cannot pursue her interests independent of her responsibilities to others while her interests are still legitimate as a basis of claims. While human capital theory sees education of all as an investment in economic and therefore social growth, it has no distributive element: that is, it does not provide more resources to the disadvantaged. Thus one can encourage women to gain human capital by training and entrance into labour markets. But if the labour markets are casualised, insecure, lowly paid and women's domestic labour is not reduced, then there is little redistribution of the benefits. Indeed the family may benefit but not the woman. Human capital can be developed only to the extent that it meets the conditions of social justice. Social capital arguments that link social networks to human capital, also have difficulties with mobility or ethnic diversity which actually reduce social capital. Such is the case of market based schooling premised upon principles of individual choice. This works against community building as individuals are mobile choosers and it encourages social fragmentation. Women's empowerment theorists similarly see voice and political representation, but also lack a theory of social justice. Brighouse and

Unterhalter conclude that the problem is that there is a need for an individualistic theory of justice along the capacities or justice as fairness approach. Justice, they argue, is the 'first virtue of social institutions. Any proposal must take a theory of justice as its starting point' (Brighouse & Unterhalter, 2002: 15). Currently, when such a theory of justice is mentioned, it is generally between developed and developing countries. Here feminist activism on the ground has sought to make justice an issue internally, as exemplified in Beijing and Dakar:

But we suspect the terminology that they have use – freedom, rights, entitlements and even capabilities – lends itself to misuses. By emphasising the *stuff* of justice rather than how it should be distributed the declarations have allowed politicians and policy makers to couch policies in terms of promoting a loose notion of rights, without forcing the to address how the policies will benefit the least advantaged, and how they will improve their condition relative to the more advantaged (Brighouse & Unterhalter, 2002: 20).

There are emerging understandings, a collective imaginary, about what basic human rights are inalienable transnationally, and how theories of social justice may be mobilised in different policy networks. This does not negate the notion that in any policy debate 'It is important to notice differences of social position, structures power and cultural affiliation in political discussions and decision making that aims to promote justice' (Young 2000:83). Politically, there is a network of meta-national institutions through which such a discourse can be mobilised. Rizvi argues that:

Resources of hope are thus to be found in developing new perspectives on cultural and democratic change . . . democratic aspirations exists in all cultural traditions, even if they are expressed in radically different ways. The challenge is to create trans-national democratic institutions in which these aspirations can be explored and enacted in which dialogue, understanding and bridge building take place at all of the interpersonal, intercultural and international levels (Rizvi, 2003: 27)

References

- Arnot, M., David, M. & Weiner, G. (1998) *Closing the Gender Gap. Post War Education and Social Change*. Cambridge: Polity.
- Aslaksen, J., Flaatten, A. & Koren, C. (1999) "Quality of Life Indicators' *Feminist Economics* 5, 2: <<http://www-au.ebsco.com/online/Article.asp>> (Accessed June 5, 2003).
- Bacchi, C. (2000) Policy as discourse: What does it mean? Where does it get us? *Discourse* 21, 1: 45-57.
- Bakker, I. (ed) (1994) *The Strategic Silence. Gender and Economic Policy*. North South Institute: Zed Books.
- Bauman, Z. (2001) *The Individualised Society*. Oxford: Polity Press.

- Blackmore, J. (1999a) Globalisation/localisation: Strategic dilemmas for state feminism and gender equity policy. Special Issue on Globalisation and Education, *Journal of Education Policy*, 14, 1: 33-54.
- Brighouse, H. & Unterhalter, E. (2002) Primary goods, capabilities and the millennium development target for gender equity education. *Promoting Women's Capabilities: Examining Nussbaum's Capabilities Approach Conference*, Cambridge, Sept 22.
- Brodie, J. (1994) Shifting the boundaries, gender and the politics of restructuring. In Bakker, I. (ed) *The Strategic Silence. Gender and Economic Policy*. North South Institute: Zed Books. 135-78
- Collins, C., Kenway, J. & McLeod, J. (2000) *Factors Influencing the Educational Performance of Males and Females in School and their Initial Destinations after leaving School*. Canberra: DETYA,
- Connell, R. W. (1998) Masculinities and globalisation. *Men and Masculinities* 1, 1: 3-23.
- Connell, R. W. (2000) *The Men and the Boys*. Sydney: Allen and Unwin.
- Fraser, N. (1997) *Justice Interruptus: Critical Reflections on the 'Postsocialist' Condition*. London: Routledge.
- Freeman, E. (1999) Community as incentive in the formation of charter schools. Paper presented to AERA, Montreal,
- Grewal, I. (1994) Autobiographic subjects and diasporic locations: Meatless days and borderlands, in I. Grewal and C. Kaplan (eds) *Scattered Hegemonies: Postmodernity and Transnational Feminist Practices*, Minneapolis, Minnesota Press
- Hobson, B. (ed) (2000) *Gender and Citizenship in Transition*. Basingstoke: Macmillan Press.
- Lindberg, S. & Sverrisson, A. (eds) (1997) *Social Movements in Development. The Challenge of Globalisation and Democratisation*. Basingstoke: Macmillan Press.
- Lingard, B. (2003) Where to in gender policy in education after recuperative masculinity politics? *International Journal of Inclusive Education*. 7, 1: 33-56.
- Lingard, B. & Douglas, P. (1999) *Men Engaging Feminisms*. Buckingham: Open University Press.
- Magalhaes, A. M. & Stoer, S. (2003) Performance, citizenship and the knowledge society, *Globalisation, Societies and Education*. 1, 1: 41-66.
- Moreton-Robinson, A. (2000) *Talkin' Up to the White Woman : Indigenous women and feminism*, St Lucia: University of Queensland Press.
- Narayan, U. (1997) *Dislocating Cultures: Identities, Traditions and Third World Feminism*. London: Routledge.
- Nussbaum, M. (1997) Capabilities and human rights. *Fordham Law Review*, 66: 273-300.
- Nussbaum, M. (1998) Public philosophy and international feminism. *Ethics*, 108: 770-804.
- Nussbaum, M. (2000) *Women and Human Development* Cambridge Cambridge University Press.
- Ong, A. (1999) *Flexible Citizenship., The Cultural Logics of Transnationality*. Durham: Duke Press.
- Orloff, A. S. (1996) Gendering the analysis of welfare states, In B. Sullivan and G. Whitehouse (eds) *Gender, Politics and Citizenship in the 1990s*. Sydney: University of New South Wales Press.
- Power, S. Edwards, T. Whitty, G. & Wigfall, V. (2003) *Education and the Middle Class*. Buckingham: Open University Press.

- Pringle, R. & Watson, S. (1996) Feminist theory and the state: Needs, rights and interests. In B. Sullivan and G. Whitehouse (eds) *Gender, Politics and Citizenship in the 1990s*. Sydney: University of New South Wales Press.
- Rawls, J. (2001) *Justice as Fairness: A Restatement* Cambridge: Harvard University Press.
- Rizvi, F. (2003) Democracy and Education after September 11. *Globalisation, Societies and Education*. 1, 1: 25-40
- Rosenau, P. M. (1992) *Post-Modernism and the Social Sciences: insights, inroads and intrusions*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Said E. (1998) Representing the colonised: Anthropologies interlocation, *Critical Inquiry*. 15, 2 : 225
- Schott, R. (1999) Is there a Nordic feminism? Review. *Forum for Gender and Culture KVINFO* [<http://www.forum.kvinfo.dk/English/article.epl?id=337552>. Accessed 18/7/03]
- Sen, A. (1997) Human rights and Asian values. *The New Republic*, July 14, 21: 33-41
- Stromquist, N. & Monkman, K. (eds) (2000) *Women, Education and Globalisation*. Maryland: Rowman and Littlefield.
- Touraine, A. (2000) *Can We Live Together? Equality and Difference*. Oxford: Polity Press.
- UNESCO, (2000) *World Education Report. The Right to Education: Towards Education for All Throughout Life*. <http://www.unesco.org/education/information/wer/index.htm>
- UNIFEM (2000) Targets and Indicators. Selections from Progress of the World's Women United Nations Development Fund for Women. <http://www.unifem.undf.org/public/progressbl.pdf> Accessed 9.8.00
- Unterhalter, E. (2001) The capabilities approach and gendered education: An examination of South African complexities. Paper delivered at the conference *Justice and Poverty: Examining Sen's Capabilities Approach*, St. Edmunds College, Cambridge.
- Walby, S. (2000) Beyond the politics of location. *Feminist Theory*. 1, 2: 190-210
- Wolpe, A. M, Quinlan, O & Martinez, A. (1997) *Gender Equity in Education: Report of the Gender Equity Task Force Team*. Pretoria, Department of Education.
- Young, I. M. (2000) *Inclusion and Democracy*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.