



"The Teachers, They All Had Their Pets": Concepts of Gender, Knowledge, and Power

Author(s): Wendy Luttrell

Reviewed work(s):

Source: *Signs*, Vol. 18, No. 3 (Spring, 1993), pp. 505-546

Published by: [The University of Chicago Press](#)

Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3174856>

Accessed: 28/02/2012 17:11

Your use of the JSTOR archive indicates your acceptance of the Terms & Conditions of Use, available at
<http://www.jstor.org/page/info/about/policies/terms.jsp>

JSTOR is a not-for-profit service that helps scholars, researchers, and students discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content in a trusted digital archive. We use information technology and tools to increase productivity and facilitate new forms of scholarship. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.



The University of Chicago Press is collaborating with JSTOR to digitize, preserve and extend access to *Signs*.

“The Teachers, They All Had Their Pets”: Concepts of Gender, Knowledge, and Power

Wendy Luttrell

Tell me what you remember about being in school.

What I remember most about school was that if you were poor you got no respect and no encouragement. I mean if you didn't have cute ringlets, an ironed new uniform, starched shirts, and a mother and father who gave money to the church, you weren't a teacher's pet and that meant you weren't encouraged.

What I didn't like about school, the teachers they had their own pet. If you were a pet you had it made, but if you weren't they didn't take up no attention with you. Everybody knew that the teachers treated the kids who were dressed nice and all better—the teachers all had their pets.

Introduction

THIS ARTICLE is about what two groups of women remember about being in school and what their stories tell us about the twisted relations of gender, knowledge, and power. It is part of a larger research project that illuminates the ways in which gender, race, and class together shape the knowledge that women define

I would like to acknowledge the women who shared their school memories with me, especially those who read and responded to portions of my manuscript. I am indebted to many others who have read versions of this paper; special thanks to Mary Hawkesworth, Nancy Hewitt, Dorothy Holland, Naomi Quinn, Robert Shreeffer, Jean Stockard, and John Wilson for their insightful and critical comments. Finally, I would like to thank the *Signs* editors and anonymous reviewers for their help revising the manuscript.

[Signs: *Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 1993, vol. 18, no. 3]
© 1993 by The University of Chicago. All rights reserved. 0097-9740/93/1803-0002\$01.00

and claim for themselves. My goal in the project is to draw new boundaries for the by-now familiar discussion of "women's ways of knowing" that will allow us to move between more theoretical discussions about women as knowers and more empirically grounded discussions about how social differences make a difference in women's knowing and, in so doing, to revitalize discussion about how to improve women's education.

Since the pathbreaking work of Nancy Chodorow (1978) and Carol Gilligan (1982), many compelling yet incomplete claims have been made about how women construct and value knowledge in ways that are relational, oriented more toward sustaining connection than achieving autonomy, and governed by interests to attend to others' needs.¹ Similarly, some feminist accounts have invested women with distinctive intuitive and/or emotional capabilities, citing women's exclusion from other ways of acquiring knowledge under patriarchy and locating women's knowledge in the "body," or female sexuality.² Still others have written about women's epistemic advantage in viewing the world more holistically based on their particular "standpoint."³ In contrast, men's ways of knowing have been associated with instrumental reason and abstract rules, oriented toward gaining mastery over nature, and governed by interests in dominating others; by this account, men's social position intrudes on their ability to see the world accurately.⁴ The dangers of this gender symbolism within feminist discussions of epistemology have been noted by several scholars, one of whom warns against claims that unwittingly reproduce "patriarchal stereotypes of men and women—flirting with essentialism, distorting the diverse dimensions of human knowing, and falsifying the historical record of women's manifold uses of reasons in daily life" (Hawkesworth 1989, 547).⁵ These theoretical speculations and debates notwithstanding, however, very little empirical work has been done that either maps out women's diversity as knowers or describes the varied and changing conditions under which different women claim and construct knowledge.⁶

¹ There is an ongoing dialogue about how gender shapes what and how women know. This debate has spanned the disciplines, including philosophy, psychology, sociology, and education (Chodorow 1978; Gilligan 1982, 1988, 1990; McMillan 1982; Harding and Hintikka 1983; Lloyd 1984; Martin 1985; Belenky et al. 1986; Smith 1987; Levesque-Lopman 1988; Bordo and Jaggar 1989; Ruddick 1989; Collins 1990).

² See Daly 1973, 1978; Cixous 1976, 1981; Griffin 1980; Irigaray 1985; Trask 1986.

³ O'Brien 1981; Jaggar 1983; Rose 1983; Hartsock 1985; Smith 1987; and Collins 1990 represent the range of feminist "standpoint" theorists.

⁴ See Gilligan 1982; Keller 1984; Bordo 1986; Harding 1986; Tronto 1989.

⁵ See also Harding and Hintikka 1983; Grant 1987; and Heckman 1987.

⁶ *Women's Ways of Knowing* (Belenky et al. 1986) is a noteworthy example of research that considers the different contexts within which women claim and/or deny knowledge (as children in abusive relationships, as female students in school, as new

My research seeks to fill this gap in the scholarship by juxtaposing the views, values, and schooling experiences of two groups of women who have been underrepresented and misrepresented in the literature: learners in adult basic education classes. I was interested in exploring what skills and knowledge these women learners claimed, dismissed, denied, and minimized in themselves and what skills and knowledge they sought to acquire by returning to school. School was by no means the only site where these women defined, valued, and/or claimed knowledge.⁷ Through their past and present schooling experiences, however, they had developed certain views about themselves and others as authoritative or deficient knowers that I sought to untangle.⁸

I was particularly concerned about how the women saw themselves as knowers, as the literature characterizes them as “dropouts” who had been damaged by or failed at school and as individuals seeking a “second chance” by participating in adult basic education. My experience as an educator of adults made me question this oversimplified characterization. Instead, I had heard adult basic education learners, particularly women, define their relationship to schooling in ambivalent, sometimes oppositional, and often contradictory ways. Moreover, I had heard adult learners talk about the gaps between “schoolwise” and “commonsense” knowledge and knowing, and I wondered about the consequences of these distinctions for adult literacy learning and teaching (Luttrell 1989). Through extensive classroom observation and in-depth interviews, I sought to provide a more complicated and rich account of women’s paradoxical relationship to schooling, knowledge, and power.

Research process

My research can best be described as a comparative ethnography of two adult basic education programs: the first a community-based pro-

mothers raising children, e.g.). The conclusions they draw, however, have more to do with developmental stages of knowing than with the historical, political, or ideological conditions that shape women’s knowing.

⁷ I have been influenced by Mary Hawkesworth’s suggestion that feminist theories of knowledge would be improved if we focused more on the process of knowing than on the knowers themselves. She defines knowledge or a way of knowing as a “convention rooted in the practical judgments of a community of fallible inquirers who struggle to resolve theory-dependent problems under specific historical conditions” (1989, 549). I am interested in how the women came to define themselves as a “community of fallible inquirers” with specific problems and in how these communities and problems are shaped by gender, race, and class.

⁸ Indeed, as several black feminist scholars have noted, school may not be the best site for exploring African-American women’s claims to knowledge. Instead, black churches and/or black community organizations serve as more informative contexts for how African-American women develop their authority and knowledge. See Grant 1982; Giddings 1984; Gilkes 1985, 1988; Collins 1990.

gram in Philadelphia and the second a workplace literacy program at a North Carolina state university. I interviewed three hundred women about their reasons for returning to school, observed several classes in each program, and selected fifteen women from each program to interview in depth about their school, family, and work lives.

In 1980 I began collecting data from the community-based program in Philadelphia that I had helped organize in 1976 as part of a larger program serving the needs of local women as they faced changes in the community. Once stable and vibrant, this historically white, ethnic (mostly Irish and Polish), and working-class neighborhood had lost its industrial base, suffering economic decline and rising unemployment. In addition, the community had long been ignored by public institutions. Local residents complained about poor health services, nonexistent child-care facilities, a lack of recreational facilities, increased rates of drug and alcohol abuse, environmental hazards, and a rising crime rate. In the face of city, state, and federal cutbacks, neighborhood women were taking on new or additional burdens to make ends meet. Some women were entering the labor force for the first time, while others were seeking more lucrative employment so they could support their families. For everyone, the integrity and quality of community life was being called into question. This questioning included a profound shift in what had traditionally been expected from women residents. In response to these changes, the Women's Program offered a wide range of educational opportunities, counseling services, on-site child care, vocational training, and a battered women's hotline.

In developing new adult education curriculum materials for the program, during 1980–83 I interviewed 180 women who had grown up in the neighborhood and had participated in the program. These interviews were loosely structured to elicit discussion about the women's views about community needs and why they had returned to school.⁹ At the same time I observed several classes noting student-student and teacher-student interactions and student responses to the coursework and its demands. After a year of observation I conducted three in-depth interviews over a year's time with selected women in their homes. In the course of these interviews, I met family members and friends, observing the women in an environment outside of school that enabled me to better elicit and

⁹ The purpose of these interviews was to develop a curriculum guide for adult basic learners that identified certain "generative" themes. The concept of generative theme is drawn from the work of Brazilian educator and political activist Paulo Freire 1970, 1973, 1987. The two most talked-about concerns that emerged in these interviews were parenting and unemployment. The curriculum guides that I wrote based on these generative themes are titled *Women in the Community: A Curriculum Guide for Students and Teachers* (Luttrell 1981) and *Building Multi-Cultural Awareness: A Teaching Approach for Learner-centered Education* (Luttrell 1982).

contextualize the women’s educational experiences, views, and values. I tape-recorded and then transcribed each interview.¹⁰

My stratified, selective sample represented the basic demographic profile of women in the community, including marital status, occupation, income, educational level, religion, and race. The sample also reflected the basic profile of program participants in terms of age, family situation, past attendance and type of school, academic achievement, and level of participation in the classroom, program, or community. In addition to these sampling guidelines, all the women I interviewed were mothers with children still living at home. This decision was based on the results of the unstructured interviews with program participants and/or graduates in which the overwhelming response to the question, “why are you returning to school,” was the general statement, “to better myself.” Upon further probing about what it meant to “better” oneself, 80 percent of the women volunteered that they were returning to school to become “better mothers.” Less than half of these same women explained that they were in school to secure “better jobs” and roughly a third mentioned that a high school diploma would increase their willingness and confidence to converse with family members, particularly husbands. I wanted to explore these findings more fully in the in-depth interviews.¹¹

The Philadelphia interviewees were all white and had been raised in the neighborhood. Most still lived within blocks of where they had been born and where extended family members still resided. They had all attended neighborhood schools during the 1940s, 1950s, and early 1960s. One-third had gone to parochial school, and two-thirds had gone to public school.¹² Five of the fifteen women had graduated from high school, and the rest had dropped out either before or during their sophomore year of high school. They had all moved in and out of the work force as factory hands, clerical workers, waitresses, or hospital or teachers’ aides. Two-thirds of the women were married at the time of the

¹⁰ The focus of each in-depth interview was loosely defined and depended on how each woman responded to the opening question. In the first interview I asked the women to tell me what they remembered about being in school; in the second interview I asked them to describe themselves as learners; and in the third interview I asked about why they were returning to school. As we talked about their schooling experiences, the women offered detailed accounts of their work and family histories as well.

¹¹ I elaborate elsewhere on the range and thematic content of the reasons that the women gave for returning to school (Luttrell 1992). Briefly stated, my argument is that the women’s shared reasons for attending adult basic education programs illuminate the hidden structure of schools that are organized around women’s work as mothers and the ideology of maternal omnipotence.

¹² The Philadelphia women’s school careers varied. While a third had at one point attended Catholic coeducational grammar school, only two of these had attended Catholic all-girl high schools. Of the women who had attended public coeducational grammar and high schools, two had attended the public girls’ high school before it had become coed.

interviews, although over the course of the study half of these became divorced single mothers. (Of the unmarried women, only two had never been married.)

In 1985, I began the second case study in which I followed the same research protocol as in the first. Again I entered the field as a teacher, curriculum-development specialist, and researcher. The second program was considerably smaller than the first and offered only literacy and high school equivalency classes to selected members of the university's maintenance staff. This program had served approximately two hundred people over a ten-year period, including janitors, housekeepers, painters, electricians, landscapers, and members of the motor pool. The majority, however, were black female housekeepers. I interviewed fifty women participants, and a year later selected fifteen women to interview in depth.

The North Carolina women were all black and had been raised in southern rural communities, although they now resided in communities close to the university. Most had grown up on tenant farms, and all but two had tended tobacco and picked cotton in their youths. All had attended segregated rural grammar schools, often in one-room school-houses, and reported sporadic school attendance for reasons I will discuss later. All were employed as housekeepers at the university and shared similar work histories that included domestic work in white people's homes. Throughout the interviews they offered accounts of the tremendous social and political changes in the South that had fundamentally challenged their expectations and roles as black women.

In responding to the question about why they were returning to school, the North Carolina women also replied that school would help them to "better themselves." Upon further inquiry, 85 percent of them mentioned their desire to become "better mothers"; half explained that while it was unlikely, perhaps a high school diploma would translate into a better job; and slightly more than half said they had always meant to finish school but that extenuating circumstances had made this impossible. To elaborate on these findings, my sample included only women who were mothers with at least one child living at home.

There were significant differences in the two samples of women. While equal numbers had gotten pregnant as teenagers, a higher proportion of the Philadelphia women had gotten married as a result. Whereas two-thirds of the Philadelphia women were or had been married, two-thirds of the North Carolina women had been single heads of households for most of their lives. Because of life cycle differences, several of the North Carolina women but none of the Philadelphia women were grandmothers raising school-age grandchildren.

While the two groups of women attended school during the same historical period, their schooling experiences were quite different, as I

will elaborate later in the article. While a third of the North Carolina women had changed grammar schools several times during their childhood, only one Philadelphia woman had experienced such transitions. Although most of the North Carolina women had attended rural high schools, there were three who had attended small city public high schools, with two of them graduating. One of these women had attended an all-black college for one year. None of the Philadelphia women had attended college. Worth noting is that the educational skills of both groups of women ranged from roughly third grade to ninth grade level.

Finally, whereas none of the North Carolina women had spent any time out of the labor force since becoming mothers, roughly half of the Philadelphia women had been out of the paid labor force when raising children under school age. The North Carolina women on average earned less than the Philadelphia women, but all the women's family incomes had fluctuated considerably over the past fifteen years.

Interpretive methodology

My intention in contrasting the accounts of both groups of women is to shed light on the problem of interpretation rather than to generalize about either group. I share Gilligan's interest in “the interaction of experience and thought, in different voices and the dialogues to which they give rise” rather than in the “origins of the differences described or their distribution in a wider population, across cultures, or through time” (1982, 2). Indeed, there are many layers of contrast in the life experiences of the women I interviewed, including race, region, ethnicity, religion, schooling, levels of economic deprivation, and political participation, to name just a few, and all of these variations give rise to the different voices and dialogues.

Documenting, describing, and analyzing these variations has demanded tedious and systematic coding procedures that treat each woman's interview as its own text while also looking for themes and patterns that emerge across all the women's interviews. The coding procedure I developed to address inter- and intragroup patterns was two-pronged. First I examined *what* the women said—specifically, what they identified as difficult or problematic in their schooling and how they had sought to resolve these problems. Second, I examined *how* they narrated their recollections of the past—specifically, who they identified as primary actors and the events that defined for them the problems they encountered in school, how they ordered their stories, and what themes tied the stories together.

To interpret what I have come to call the women's schooling narratives, I have drawn on the traditions of cultural studies and narrative

analysis.¹³ My analytical task has been to discern both the meanings and the conditions that shaped the stories that the women told (Johnson 1986/87). I have tried to write about their stories in ways that the women would recognize, but also in ways that reveal underlying assumptions or structural relations that they may not recognize or agree with.¹⁴

Deciding how to label the two groups of women has been yet another problem of interpretation. Worth noting is that there was no single way that each group of women referred to themselves and their family backgrounds. For example, while the North Carolina women consistently referred to themselves and their family members as "black," the Philadelphia women never once referred to themselves as "white." The North Carolina women most often referred to their families as having been "poor" and/or having "country ways." Most of the Philadelphia women described their family background in religious (Catholic), ethnic (Irish or Polish), and/or class (such as "working class," "blue collar," or "union") terms, yet some simply referred to themselves as being "working" or "neighborhood" women.

Critics warn us that labels such as any of those mentioned above can fix our understandings of how gender, race, and class shape our identities, perspectives, and histories.¹⁵ With this in mind, I have chosen to refer to the groups by locality, as the Philadelphia women and the North Carolina women, and to focus on the similarities and differences in how they made sense of and negotiated gender, race, and class relations. Having said all this, I also want to emphasize that these schooling narratives should not be understood as static. The women's stories are reconstructed and retrospective—a way that each woman has made sense of her past in light of the present. Also, what each woman wanted me to know about herself and her schooling influenced what she said and how she organized her narrative. Thus, the narratives are dependent on numerous personal, social, and political factors, not the least of these being

¹³ By cultural studies I am referring to the work of the Birmingham Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies such as that of Willis 1977, Hebdige 1979, and Hall 1986; historians Williams 1961, 1965, 1976 and Thompson 1963; Connell 1982, 1985 and the feminist critics of or contributors to cultural studies, including McRobbie 1978, 1984, 1991; McCabe 1981; Radway 1984; Long 1986; Roman 1987, 1988; and Holland and Eisenhart 1990, to name a few. The narrative analysts include Labov 1972; Mishler 1986; and Personal Narratives Group 1989.

¹⁴ See Smith 1987 for a discussion of her collaborative research project with Alison Griffith on women's work as mothers in relation to schooling. She refers to her attempt to bridge between women's experiences and social organizations of power as "institutional ethnography" and warns feminists against establishing a feminist version of reality that supersedes those whose experiences are being investigated. I have tried to be sensitive to this warning by making it clear when I am presenting the women's experiences and interpretations and when I am presenting my own.

¹⁵ Such critical works include, but are not limited to Hall 1986; Flax 1987; Steedman 1987; Alcoff 1988; hooks 1990; Williams 1991; and Higginbotham 1992.

how they viewed me as an educated, white, middle-class woman who had been their teacher.¹⁶ Moreover, my request for a history of schooling and my underlying assumption that there must be a story as to why these women who had perceived themselves as school failures decided to pursue education as adults also shaped both the telling of the stories and my own interpretation.¹⁷ This, coupled with the women's own desire to tell their life stories (made most evident by the frequent comment “I could write a book about my life”), converged to produce the schooling narratives on which this article is built.

In reviewing the literature I found very little research documenting how adult literacy learners reflected on their past schooling experiences, a curious gap given the conventional wisdom that says past schooling experiences are determining factors in current educational pursuits.¹⁸ Most relevant for interpreting the schooling narratives was the work of sociolinguist Charlotte Linde in which she observes that people “seem to take enormous zest in discussing their experiences in school, however horrific the stories they tell about it” (n.d., chap. 2, p. 4). She attributes this to the fact that American culture places little emphasis on class as a legitimate explanation for why people end up in the particular social position that they do; instead, there seems to be an unspoken assumption that important life decisions are made in schools, decisions for which people feel compelled to account. Richard Sennett and Jonathan Cobb (1972) echo this viewpoint in their discussion of white working-class men's “defensive” accounts about school that the authors attribute to the hidden injury of class. Lillian Rubin (1976) refers to this phenomenon in

¹⁶ I have been influenced by the work of several feminist scholars writing about the problems and possibilities of feminist research methods, including McRobbie 1982; Stanley and Wise 1983; Strathern 1987; Stacey 1988; and Devault 1990. For an excellent discussion of the theoretical and political underpinnings of this issue of self-reflexivity in ethnographic research and writing, see Mascia-Lees, Sharpe, and Cohen 1989.

¹⁷ In her paper “Interpreting Women's Narratives: Towards an Alternative Methodology,” Susan Chase makes a similar point about her interviews with women about their career histories. “The request for a career history is essentially this: in a world in which so few women have highly paid, prestigious, leadership positions, there must be a story about how you acquired one of those jobs. The nature of the interaction surrounding the request and the telling—the smoothness of both the asking and the response, the ease with which the career history is formulated and told—show that women shared this assumption with us” (1991, 17).

¹⁸ There are no studies of how adult literacy learners view their skills, knowledge, or competencies except for the work of Arlene Fingeret 1983a, 1983b, which ignores the issue of how social differences affect these views. With the notable exception of Kathleen Rockhill's 1987 study of Hispanic women literacy learners, there are no ethnographies of adult basic education programs and/or classrooms. Nor are there any studies of school culture or student resistance like those of Ogbu 1974; Willis 1977; McRobbie 1978, 1991; Weis 1985, 1988; Holland and Eisenhart 1990; or Fine 1991 that examine adult basic education learners and their compliance and/or resistance to school.

her discussion of the "ambivalent" educational views and values of white working-class respondents. Although my research confirms such observations, I will suggest that class is not the only unspoken or unrecognized explanation as to why people end up in the social positions they do. Indeed, the women's stories reveal a much more complicated web of gender, race, and class relations for which they feel compelled to account.

One of the themes around which the women narrated their schooling experiences is that of teachers' pets. In the following sections I discuss the teacher's pet theme as an illustration of the women's shared view of schooling as a struggle over identities, values, and the acquisition of schoolwise knowledge. This struggle pits middle-class teachers against working-class students, "good" girls against "bad" girls, and light-skinned blacks against dark-skinned blacks as symbolic antagonists in the struggle for knowledge and power. I then examine how each group of women differently identified the problems and conditions of this struggle, leading to distinct versions of the teacher's pet theme. The Philadelphia women consistently framed their schooling struggles around issues of discipline and resistance; the North Carolina women framed theirs around issues of access and ability. In both cases, however, the women's understanding of teachers' pets ultimately served to undermine their claims to knowledge and power. The article concludes by considering the pedagogical implications of this embattled view of schooling.

Teachers' pets: How social differences make a difference in school

While each woman had her own unique story to tell, none of the women interviewed had felt comfortable in school. This shared discomfort, while expressed differently by the two groups of women, was attributed primarily to the fact that there were important differences between teachers and students and among certain students. Indeed, the women's feelings and thoughts about teachers' pets crystallized in story form how the women understood and acted on these social differences.¹⁹ In these stories the women describe who and how teachers chose certain students as pets; what the women thought about these "pets"; how they felt about having or not having been chosen as a pet; and how this had affected their success and failure in school.

For both groups of women the most frequent difference that characterized uncomfortable teacher-student relationships was class. Cora, one of the North Carolina women, began her schooling narrative with the following remark, which might be called the "abstract" of her experience

¹⁹ The concept of teacher's pet parallels the concept of common sense that I discuss in Luttrell 1989.

in school:²⁰ “Back a long time ago when I was going to school, and I can remember just as good as elementary school—if your parents wasn’t a doctor, a lawyer, or a teacher, or someone you know, high, then the teachers would look down on you. That’s right. And they wouldn’t, they just wouldn’t, you know, well, they would class you as nobody.” Being “classed as nobody,” “looked down upon,” treated with “no respect and no encouragement” because of class differences figured prominently in all the women’s narratives. These class differences not only were related to what their parents’ did for a living but also served to distinguish students from each other and from their teachers in terms of knowledge and power. Mary’s discussion was typical of the conversations I had with the Philadelphia women about their teachers (which sometimes included me and my difference as well):

The teachers were always different from us. They lived in different neighborhoods—they just weren’t like the rest of us.

How would you describe how the teachers were different?

I don’t know, as my superiors I guess. I always saw them as more intelligent. I never saw them as equal.

You said that they lived in different neighborhoods. Where did your teachers live?

They didn’t live in our neighborhood, but then there were a couple who did in grade school. That surprised me when I found out.

Why?

Because I always thought of them (I guess I should say you) as being real rich. I just didn’t think they were like us. They were from a higher class and must have been real smart to go to college in the first place. I just never felt very comfortable with them.

Regardless of whether the women liked or disliked a particular teacher, they viewed them as different from themselves, which (as Mary’s words above illustrate) was often expressed in geographic terms. The Philadelphia women most often explained that teachers were not like students or parents because teachers came from other neighborhoods, most specifically from the suburbs.

The Philadelphia women believed that the suburbs fostered different kinds of relationships between people, particularly family members and neighbors. As Eileen remarked, the suburbs produced people who “just

²⁰ “Abstract” is Labov’s term (1972, 363).

don't know about certain things. You know, when I grew up everybody in the neighborhood knew everything about me, who my mother was, what my father did, what we were doing on a Friday night. I had relatives everywhere and they kept me and my sisters in line; we couldn't do anything without everybody knowing about it. The teachers, they didn't know. I guess you could say I liked that about them, but then again, they didn't care to know much about us." The Philadelphia women viewed their teachers as outsiders to their communities. Moreover, teachers had different concerns, life-styles, activities, and opportunities, not all of which the women thought were beneficial to family or community life. Doris characterized teachers' concerns in the following way: "You know teachers are married to lawyers and doctors. They're worried about different things, things like nice clothes and what country club they're going to belong to. They have children, it isn't like they didn't know about children, but their children are different, like they assume their children are going to college, but they don't expect our kids are going to college. Then again, there's a lot that goes on in college that isn't so great for kids."²¹

While the Philadelphia women drew suburban-urban distinctions, the North Carolina women drew urban-rural distinctions to talk about class. Thirteen of the fifteen North Carolina women interviewed recalled that their teachers were different because they "came from the city." More than half told stories about how their parents were reluctant to deal with teachers or take part in school activities because of their own "country ways" or an inability to read or write. Cora gave the following account of a childhood incident that she continues to have strong feelings about as an adult:

Cause I was going to say that my parents, they was well, decent people. But they couldn't read and write, you know what I mean. And they was clean peoples, they never got in no trouble. They never did nobody no harm or nothing. But they just couldn't read and write and they was honest and hard working. And when they would go to PTA meetings, well naturally I would have to go along to try to explain to them what's going on so they could, you know, and they tried their best to do whatever was right. And them teachers said things that, but just because they had no profession they looked down on them and they looked down on me too. You know and then back then wearing home-made dresses and things, I wasn't

²¹ Rubin 1976 notes that the working-class parents she interviewed expressed concern that by attending college their children might be exposed not only to views that conflict with their family and community values but also to views that devalue and dismiss a working-class way of life that these parents have worked hard to achieve.

dirty or raggedy but I just wore home-made clothes that my mother would make for me because they only made but so much you know. And like if I want to participate in a play the teacher would pick all over me and get somebody else.

How did the teachers do that exactly?

Well, you see we would be sitting in the classroom in elementary school and the teacher would say, “We’re going to have a play.” And she would read out the parts. If you raised your hand and somebody else behind you or either on the other side of the classroom that’s mother or father was in professional business, well they got the part that they raised their hand for. If you were the only person that raised your hand, in fact I was the only person to raise my hand for a part, then the teacher would probably give it to me. But then she would tell me after school, “Be sure you get that, learn this part, be sure to get the right costume.” And you know, everything like that. She would tell me so much so that I would be hating that I raised my hand for the part. And I’d have to go home and talk to my momma and see if they can squeeze out enough money for the costume. And then one time my momma went to ask the teacher for if she could kind of describe a little bit the way that the costume she wanted me to have so she could make it. And the teacher was kind of rude to her, so much so that it kind of hurt my feelings. Then my momma told me, “If you really want to be in that play okay, but I wouldn’t even bother.” But I didn’t really understand. I was only in the third or fourth grade. I didn’t quite understand what my momma said, “If you really wants to be then I will go back to her again and get some understanding about it.” It gave me sort of an inferiority complex cause I saw how the teacher was talking to my momma. I loved her and I just didn’t want nobody to be hurting her feelings.

Cora’s story captures how social differences between teachers, parents, and students were lived out, felt, and interpreted. Cora’s perception that the teacher was anxious that she might not learn her lines or that her mother would not provide the right costume confirmed not only her sense of difference but also her sense of deficiency as a learner and performer. For Cora, school—but particularly the teacher—had actively undermined the efficacy, dignity, mastery, and cultural inheritance of her background.

It is notable that while the Philadelphia women most often described their teachers as outsiders with different concerns and values, the North Carolina women described themselves and their parents as being the

outsiders. As outsiders, they had "come up with country ways" of living for which they were made to feel ashamed and rejected. I will return to this point and its significance later. At this point, my emphasis is on how the theme of teachers' pets illustrated the women's shared awareness of class divisions and struggles through which they learned to view their place in school and to project their futures. As Jeanne, a Philadelphia woman remembers, "I wasn't encouraged much in school, mostly the teachers didn't think much of me. They didn't think much of my background, I guess you could say. I wasn't the teacher's pet type, you know the kind that got picked to stand in front of the line or to pass out paper or pencils. I suppose the teachers didn't think I had promise or was going anywhere."

Being a "teacher's pet type" also referred to how different students understood and acted on their femininities. Both groups of women offered examples of how teachers favored girls over boys in school, yet through this preference the women noted that traditional constraints were being put on girls to be "pretty," "cute," and "good." Said one, "The teachers liked the girls better. But then I think it was easier for my brothers in school because nobody expected them to be quiet. But I couldn't keep my mouth shut, talking all the time and I was loud too, so the teacher, she didn't care too much for me." In the words of another, "I was Miss 'Tough Girl.' I was a real bully and a troublemaker. A lot of us played tough, but you couldn't be too tough or you would stand out in class. The teachers didn't treat the girls as rough as the boys—I guess because girls aren't supposed to be as bad as boys—but anyway I was pretty bad."

To be chosen as a female pet, girls had to comply to traditional, middle-class femininity, which for some women was either unrealistic or simply impossible: "Life was rough on the streets. You couldn't go around being Miss Priss and stay alive. So I got tough and the teachers didn't like me." "I didn't have no frilly dresses with lace and skirts and all. I was worried about soles on my shoes. There were lots of days I didn't go to school because I was just too ashamed of my clothes." Both groups of women believed that teachers preferred not only smart but *good* girls as well. As Sallie, a Philadelphia woman, explained, "I remember Miss Fulton and her sister. They lived in this really beautiful house and would invite all their goodies to their house. The goodies were smart kids—they liked smart girls. But you also had to behave and act like a lady if you were going to get invited to their place."

Considerable research documents teachers' differential behaviors toward boys and girls and its negative effect on girls' school achievement.²²

²² For examples, see Martin 1972; Serbin et al. 1973; Brophy and Goode 1974; Stacey, Bereaud, and Daniels 1974; Dweck et al. 1978; Best 1983; Stockard 1985; Sadker and Sadker 1986; Jones 1989.

While this research confirms the women’s perceptions that teachers behaved differently toward boys and girls, it simplifies the social learning that goes on in the classroom. Despite the fact that most education theory and practice implicitly assumes that teachers direct gender socialization in the classroom, we know little about how teachers react to boys and girls who do not fit into expected gender roles. Moreover, we know little about how students interpret teachers’ different attitudes and behaviors toward boys and girls or what students do to get teachers to respond to them in specific ways. More important in this case, we do not know how girls from different classes, races, or ethnic backgrounds interpret their interactions with teachers.

What we learn from these women’s schooling narratives is that girls do not all have the same opportunities to look, act, and be treated as “feminine” or as “teachers’ pets.” Indeed, the women’s stories illustrate the complexities of gender relations in the classroom—how female socialization is problematic rather than given. Most important, these narratives illustrate that the two groups of women differed in how they perceived these complexities and problems and as a result developed different views about the connection between gender, knowledge, and power.

There were striking similarities within each group of women as they recalled their roles in and responses to teachers’ pets. The Philadelphia women described themselves as having made choices about whether they would pursue being a teacher’s pet. As Debra explained, “I remember one girl used to act in a real cutsie way and the teacher would be so impressed. I didn’t like the teacher and I didn’t like the girls who acted like that. I just wouldn’t be cutsie like that—not even if it did impress the teacher.” Debra reasoned that if the teacher chose you to be a pet, you risked losing friends; other kids would be jealous. And even if you did choose to act “cutsie” and “sit like a lady,” you knew it was an “act” rather than the real thing. Helen talked about this dilemma:

I was a teacher’s pet so I got by pretty well. [Laughing.]

A couple of other women have laughed just like you when they describe themselves as teacher’s pet, can you explain this?

Because you know you are and it’s uncomfortable. I mean either they like you or they don’t, but when I was a kid I guess I was a smooth talker. I was real cute and learned how to bat my eyes, look cute, sit like a lady, and boy the teachers really ate that stuff up. I guess I felt bad because I felt like I had conned them.

The choice to become a teacher’s pet, to represent oneself falsely in order to win the teacher’s approval, was not a happy one. Those Philadelphia

women who did get chosen as pets and were successful in school described their achievements with guilt or discomfort. As Helen continued, "I used to feel so bad for my sister. I mean, I didn't even have to study and I got A's. The teachers liked me cause I knew how to win them over with my smile. But my sister, she worked so hard and didn't get anywhere. I couldn't feel too good about how I was doing when she was having such a hard time." At the same time, others who did not get chosen or saw themselves rejecting the opportunity to be teacher's pet also suffered (eleven of the fifteen Philadelphia women interviewed).

The North Carolina women, however, did not talk about their choices about being teacher's pets. These women, who were all dark-skinned, saw themselves as noncontenders in the contest to win the teacher's approval. They did, however, observe lighter-skinned students making this choice. As Gloria explained, there were always some girls "putting on the dog" in order to attract the teacher's attention. Integrally woven into the North Carolina women's accounts of school was the persistent memory that teachers favored light-skinned children over dark-skinned children. Bessie recalled: "What I didn't like about school, the teachers they had their own pets. Like if you were light skinned, you had it made. But if you were *Black*, they didn't take up no attention with you." Not just one, but all the North Carolina women referred to the role of skin color, emphasizing that teachers' pets were cute, good, smart, higher class, and "what we used to call 'yeller,' back then." They described how teachers "passed right over," "looked straight through," or "looked over the top of" darker-skinned children. As Gladys added, "I suspect it was 'cause them teachers were yeller too."

Mary Helen Washington (1982, 208–17) claims that this "intimidation of color" surfaces as a recurring theme in the lives and literature of black women. In the introduction to her anthology *Black-Eyed Susans* she writes: "In almost every novel or autobiography written by a black woman, there is at least one incident [of] the dark-skinned girl who wishes to be either white or light-skinned with 'good hair' " (1975, xv). One such example, *Lemon Swamps and Other Places*, the life history of Mamie Garvin Fields (1983), highlights the complexities of the color line. Her story suggests that distinctions made on the basis of color cannot be explained simply as class differences. She describes how members of the same family with lighter skin color were awarded greater recognition, resources, and success in school. Growing up in a middle-class black community in Charleston, South Carolina, in the early 1900s, she recalls:

When I was a little girl, I recognized that there was a difference, because my brother Herbert used to tease me and call me black—"blakymo"—although he was as black as I was. It used to make me

so mad I would almost fight him. He would say, “Well, we are the black ones and they [their siblings] are the light ones. They can do this and that.” We used to joke this way, but it wasn’t all joke either. One reason why I didn’t go to our private school for Negroes in Charleston was that, back then, honors were always given to mulatto children, light-skinned half-sisters and brothers, grands and great-grands of white people. It didn’t matter what you did if you were dark. Used to leading my class up through elementary school, I hated this idea, so I began to say I wanted to go somewhere else. [Fields 1983, 47]

For the North Carolina women interviewed, lighter skin meant having more opportunities to learn because the teachers would “take up more attention with the lighter-skinned kids.” Bessie remembered Dorothy, a light-skinned girl, who Bessie resents to this day:

You know, if you come to school dressed real nice, you know with one of them ruffle dresses, little bows and stuff on your hair, looking real neat, the teacher would take up time with you. Something that she would tell her, she probably wouldn’t tell me. Like this girl, her name was Dorothy. She was the teacher’s pet. She had light skin, pretty black hair, she came from a wealthy family, you know.

What was it that made her the teacher’s pet?

I believe it was her lighter skin. And then the clothes she would wear. And the teacher would have PTA meetings, and my mom she never went to no PTA meeting or nothing like that. I reckon that showed the teacher you wasn’t interested in your child. So that was that and the teacher wouldn’t take up no time. But she took up time with Dorothy with her light skin and pretty black hair.

These differences did not exist simply in the realm of attitudes within the black community or in the society at large, but got lived out daily in the lives of black students as part of acquiring school knowledge and basic skills. Embedded in the North Carolina women’s perceptions of themselves as learners was a legacy of being ignored by their black teachers who reinforced the message of dominant white society—that black children need not be educated.²³

Both groups of women organized their schooling narratives around the theme of teachers’ pets as a cautionary tale about how social differ-

²³ It would be important, of course, to know how the “Dorothys” felt about their approval from the teacher in order to fill out the picture of black students’ experiences and interpretations of power relations in the classroom.

ence makes a difference in school. The moral of their tale is that school divides students against each other and against themselves along the fault lines of gender, race, and class in the struggle for schoolwise knowledge. Yet the two groups of women negotiated these divisions differently, and thus each presented a distinct version of what was at stake.

Discipline, resistance, and the struggle to be heard

The Philadelphia women most often framed their struggles in school around the issue of discipline and resistance.²⁴ This emphasis emerged most clearly as they described school as "boring," "routine," or a "farce." They attributed their problems in school to teachers who were more interested in order and discipline than in teaching anything of interest: "Everything was just like routine. Everyday we did the same thing over and over. The teachers weren't interested in teaching us; they were there to keep order."

The Philadelphia women's version of school is linked to their view of authority relations, specifically their memories of the arbitrary rules and harsh disciplinary behavior of nuns and teachers. Without any prompting, all fifteen provided detailed examples of what they considered to be unfair or unnecessary restrictions on both their person and their learning. Their frustration was captured by the repeated phrase that teachers had "treated us like children, to be seen but not heard." They saw teachers being overattentive and/or restrictive in terms of student behavior and personal style (clothing, hairdo, makeup) while at the same time "ignoring" students needs or concerns, as explained by the following two women:

Well, I was used to making money, being on my own. But they treated me like a child. The rules were ridiculous. You had to read what they wanted you to read. Your dress couldn't be too short, you couldn't wear too much makeup, your bangs couldn't be too long—there were rules for everything. Things were very regimented and rigid—they treated us like children.

²⁴ This same observation is made by Lois Weis (1983, 235–61) in her comparative study of black community college students in a large northeastern U.S. city with students in two other accounts (Willis 1977; London 1978). These authors identified distinctly negative attitudes toward authority and school knowledge among white, working-class students, which they argue is based on a working-class rejection of mental labor. In contrast, I will argue that the women's attitude toward authority stems from what they perceive is the school's dismissal of working-class women's labor. Paralleling my findings, Weis observed that black students did not reject the authority of teachers or question the legitimacy of their knowledge. Instead, they resented teachers for what they perceived were racist motives in ignoring or dismissing black students (1983, 244).

I like going to school as an adult. In my classes you can talk person to person, not child to adult like in school. When I went to school you wouldn't have dreamed of telling a teacher how to do something or making a suggestion about anything. The teachers just didn't respect kids and their ideas. They bothered you about talking in class or being a problem in class, but they couldn't be bothered if you had a problem, like you didn't understand something or you couldn't concentrate.

The importance of order and discipline extended beyond the classroom, as Peggy and Doreen described:

What the nun said was rule. If a nun hit you, then you deserved it. In some families if you told your parents that a nun hit you, then you got hit at home because obviously the nuns were always right. But in my family if I told them a nun hit me they could understand why I was upset, but they would never challenge it.

I had an attitude towards authority even when I knew I would get in trouble in school and then again at home. In those days the teacher called your parents and you got it twice—once at school and then again at home. Parents didn't think to challenge the teachers. There was no discussion about why you were in trouble, if the teacher said it was so, it was so.

Teachers' authority and discipline was a backdrop against which the Philadelphia women either claimed a voice or were silenced. Indeed, the metaphor of voice persisted throughout their schooling narratives as they told stories about their struggles to “control my mouth,” “speak my mind,” and “tell the teacher off.”²⁵ This struggle, or “attitude towards authority” as twelve of the fifteen Philadelphia women called it, was described as a character trait that had interfered with their school success. It explained why they were not chosen as or had rejected being teachers' pets and why they were not the “teacher's pet type” or “suited” for school. Those women who described themselves as good students dealt with what they considered arbitrary or unnecessary discipline through silence: “I learned at a young age to button my lip. You couldn't win with the teachers; they hated fresh mouthed kids, so . . . [long pause].

²⁵ I also found that in response to the question about why they were returning to school, two-thirds of the Philadelphia women surveyed gave examples that drew on their desire to be able to “speak up” and “voice” their opinions and be heard by family members, social service agents, and school or city officials. See also Belenky et al. 1986 for their observations about women's silence and voice in the educational process.

My sister couldn't put up with it and she didn't do well, I guess you could say it was more my style to take it, so I did real well in school."

There are several ways to interpret the Philadelphia women's discussion of teacher's authority and discipline. On one level, it could be argued that their preoccupation with discipline and resistance was based on unresolved childhood images and expectations of what power and authority should be. Perhaps their resentment about being "treated like children" and about others being teachers' pets is a projection of their feelings about parent-child and sibling relations onto teacher-student relations in the classroom.²⁶ But on another level, their complaints about "being treated like children" and their quest for a voice reveals their implicit critique of schooling. Sounding much like the low-income high school girls (white, black, and Hispanic) in Michelle Fine's study (1991), the Philadelphia women felt at best muted and at worst silenced by schooling practices that ignored the exigencies of poor and working-class families and communities, particularly for young women in their roles as caretakers. Teachers' middle-class conceptions of childhood simply did not correspond to the demands placed on working-class girls, as the following quotations illuminate:

I had a lot of responsibility for my younger brothers and sisters. I accepted it at the time. I used to babysit at the age of ten, but now that I think of it, I was really young to be doing all that. In the first grade I had to wake my mother up to let her know I was ready to go to school. Everyone I knew came from big families—we were all used to a lot of responsibility.

I remember going shopping for clothes for my brother and sister when I was twelve. My mother just didn't have the time 'cause she was working hard to support all of us by herself.

The Philadelphia women had worked hard to keep themselves and often their families together, taking care of siblings, preparing meals, shopping, cleaning, and often managing a job after school as well. Yet, despite its centrality and importance in their everyday lives, school undermined the knowledge, value, and authority invested in caretaking. Joanne explained that she never expected school to encourage or validate her, but had her own views about the value of caretaking when she dropped out of school at sixteen: "My mother worked as a waitress for sixty-five cents an hour and raised three children without any assistance.

²⁶ This kind of interpretation follows from the Frankfurt school, specifically Adorno et. al's 1950 study of the authoritarian personality. See Waller 1932 and Sennett 1980 for discussion of the fear and illusion of authority.

She just really didn't have any time to encourage us much. But I also worked since I was fifteen—I was very independent and I didn't expect to get any encouragement, especially from the teachers. I had to be very responsible, not like a child in school. When my mother died my sister was only thirteen and I took care of her. I'm very proud that she made it through school and graduated, even if I didn't." Joanne's story was not uncommon in that she took pride in and valued her mother's and her own ability to independently support themselves and others. Yet she didn't expect to get validated for her caretaking skills or knowledge in school. Instead, school penalized working-class girls for their commitments and responsibilities at home and rewarded "good girl" behavior and traditional middle-class femininity, an image of women as domestic, tranquil, attractive, and dependent on others for economic support.²⁷ School denied the reality and legitimacy of working-class femininity, an image of women as hardworking, responsible caregivers.

There was much at stake in the Philadelphia women's view of their schooling as embattled, especially in light of the school "choices" for which they felt compelled to account. Debra described herself weighing the following choices:

I didn't really want to be a smart kid in school. I don't know—maybe it was the friends I hung with. If I did something too good, they would look at me funny. They thought why are you doing that? You don't have to do that to get through.

So you didn't want to look like you were trying?

Mostly I didn't want to try too hard for the teachers.²⁸

Debra's distinguishing between the demands of "the girls she hung with" and the demands of teachers or school is similar to Ann's distinguishing between school and work in her account of why she chose the "commercial" rather than the "academic" track:

I wasn't interested in the academic track. I didn't know why I needed to study history and all. I was interested in learning what I

²⁷ This dominant image of femininity or the "cult of true womanhood," a term coined by Welter 1978, emerged during the mid-nineteenth century as part of the consolidation of the American middle class. Polite and proper middle-class manners, styles, and values were associated with "feminized" traits and were important for class mobility.

²⁸ Debra's reference to "the friends I hung with" emerges in contrast to the "teacher's pet" types. The contrast between these two groups of girls is notable throughout the Philadelphia women's narratives as a set of embattled relationships that characterized school.

needed for a job like typing, bookkeeping, and the commercial courses. I couldn't wait to get out of school where I could be on my own, where I could be myself and do what I wanted to do. Some of it was to have my own money so I could buy what I wanted for myself, but we all, all the girls I hung with, all of us were in commercial and we knew what we wanted. We knew what we needed to do to, you know, about life, we knew about life even if we didn't know what they were teaching us about in school.

These accounts are reminiscent of Helen's pondering the pros and cons of being the "teacher's pet" and Peggy's concerns about the costs and benefits of her "mouthing off" toward teachers. Such inner dialogues about "choice" persisted throughout the Philadelphia women's narratives as they accounted for not only their school decisions but also their claims to "schoolwise" knowledge that they posed in opposition to their own "streetwise" or "commonsense" knowledge.²⁹ As Debra explained:

It was crazy the way they treated us as if we were children. We did everything adults do and we had a lot of experience under our belts. It was as if we were supposed to pretend like we had nothing to do except come to school everyday and be good little girls. I guess we also thought we knew more than they did so we didn't have to do the school work. The girls I hung with, we all thought we had one up on the teachers.

What did you know more about?

Getting by in life. We knew how to get over on the teachers. We all thought we were so smart. Now that I look back at it, we were all wrong.

Tina's account of having dropped out of school serves as a good example of the Philadelphia women's antagonistic and paradoxical relationship to school:

I didn't even consider going back to school when I found out I was pregnant. All those restrictions and all those hang-ups, I thought I'm having a baby and I'm going to not go to school and be a kid anymore. It was like my adult statement.

So you wanted the baby?

Well, the baby wasn't planned. But I wasn't going back to school. No way. I took the books and dumped them in a corner some place.

²⁹ See Luttrell 1989 for elaboration of this point.

Tina resisted the discipline of school and asserted her autonomy and independence by making what she calls her “adult statement.” While she admits that her pregnancy was not intended, her decision to drop out of school was, and thus served as a way for Tina simultaneously to oppose school authorities and to stake a claim to her own values, interests, and knowledge. From Tina’s perspective, her pregnancy was not the problem; school was. Pregnancy and motherhood offered her an opportunity to escape the disciplining force of school (as does Ann’s view of work as a way to escape from the disciplinary force of school). Nevertheless, Tina’s resistance to school had its own cost in that it drew on dominant gender ideologies, including the familiar but false dichotomy between “good” and “bad” girls that characterizes female sexuality and power. On the one hand, Tina’s “problem with authority,” her “mouth,” and ultimately her sexual activity defined her as a “bad” girl. Yet, at the same time, her impending marriage and motherhood defined her not only as a “good” girl but also as the envy of the “girls she hung with”:³⁰ “I remember in the beginning that my friends used to come visit after school and talk about how much fun it must be, taking care of the baby, buying cute clothes and all. We lived with his mother then and it wasn’t so easy, but they didn’t know about that part of it. Still, it was better than being in school.”

Ironically, Tina’s decision to drop out of school was a “statement” (again the metaphor of voice) in which she resisted one “regime” of discipline and authority (school and teachers) only to accept a different “regime” (family, husband, mother-in-law).³¹ It is not that Tina would have made a different choice if she were to do it again but, rather, as she explains regarding her current participation in school, that “I don’t want my daughters making the same mistake I did. Part of why I’m in school now is to show them that they have options and that they need to finish school before they decide to get married and have kids.”

In the end, the Philadelphia women’s view of schooling kept them from acknowledging the full range of their abilities. The false yet clear division of what they “knew” from what school wanted them to know ultimately served to limit their claims to knowledge and power. Regrettably, in order to resist the discipline of school and class-based ideologies

³⁰ McRobbie 1978 argues that fashion, beauty, and female sexuality all contribute to working-class feminine antischool culture, which paradoxically pushes girls into compliance with stereotypical female roles. McRobbie observed that working-class girls asserted their sexualities within the classroom as part of their counterschool culture. The girls’ corollary fascination with marriage (partly because it was the only legitimate means through which their sexualities could be expressed) was also part of their counterschool culture that ultimately worked to insure their complicity in dominant gender and class relations.

³¹ This notion of regimes of discipline and authority is borrowed from Foucault 1977, 1979.

about knowledge and the value of upward mobility, the Philadelphia women were forced to borrow on gender-based ideologies that located their source of knowledge, power, and resistance in traditionally defined female domains and concerns such as marriage, motherhood, and female sexuality. Thus, as part of a "choice" to assert their female working-class interests, concerns, and knowledge, the Philadelphia women's abilities and desires for intellectual or academic mastery were minimized, denied, or repressed.

Access, ability, and the struggle to be seen

The North Carolina women framed their struggles in school around the issues of access and ability. This emphasis emerged most clearly through their stories about difficulties attending school, inequities in school resources, and their anxieties about "falling behind" that persisted throughout their narratives. In contrast to the Philadelphia women's characterization of school as routine or boring, the North Carolina women most often described it as a luxury, something they enjoyed when able to attend. As Ola explained, "We loved going to school. We enjoyed it, it was all we had to enjoy sometimes." Or as Lois emphasized, school was reserved for rainy days when they were not needed on the farm: "Most times we were working on the farm and we wouldn't go to school nothing but rainy days, no way. Sometimes daddy would let my younger brothers and sisters go, but not me, I was the oldest."

The North Carolina women's narratives focused on the problems encountered by both teachers and children in rural segregated schools. Their stories highlighted the difficulties black teachers faced in one-room schoolhouses with little or no heat or supplies where they were expected to manage forty to fifty children ranging in age and grade level. Similarly, the North Carolina women offered accounts of long and sometimes dangerous walks to school, bad weather, and irregular attendance that made it hard to keep up with the demands of school. For example, Ella started school at nine years of age when her younger brother was old enough to walk the five miles to school with her. Louise explained that she didn't attend school until she was eight years old when her teacher offered to pick her up in the mornings. And Jackie remembered that by the time she and her siblings got to school their hands were so cold that it took them half the morning to warm up. Lilly explained that she and her sister were required to help their mother with the wash in the morning and most days "we just never made it."

Unlike the Philadelphia women, these women never mentioned being "treated like children." If anything, they saw school as a welcomed op-

portunity to get out of adult responsibilities at home, such as taking care of siblings, farming, or washing. Moreover, they did not focus on the discipline or demands of school but rather on the demands of rural poverty. Louise illuminates this recurring concern among the North Carolina women: “What I remember most was being tired. By the time we got to school, there was no bus long and then for black childrens, the morning was half over. We be missing how the teacher told us to do the work, or were just too tired to think.”

Teacher-student relationships were profoundly affected by rural poverty as well. Perhaps most striking were the North Carolina women’s descriptions of teachers that focused more on their caretaking rather than on their disciplining characteristics. They recalled with great fondness the “good” teachers who “took special care,” fixed hot food, bought them clothes, and acknowledged their particular family/work responsibilities and demands. Not surprisingly, these descriptions echo the writings of black teachers of the time who found ways to pass on schoolwise knowledge despite untenable conditions.³² School practices could not so easily separate out the daily survival needs of black children from their intellectual needs. Teachers who showed concern about poverty, lack of transportation, and the harshness of farm work inspired students to persist despite overwhelming odds.³³

Linked to the issue of poverty was the all-pervasive reality of racism that shaped schooling practices. Throughout their narratives, the North Carolina women drew on metaphors of vision rather than voice to narrate their experiences in school.³⁴ Their narratives were charged with memories of painful events that had made them feel invisible both within the classroom as darker-skinned children and outside the classroom as

³² See Fields 1983; Giddings 1984; Stuckey 1988; and Collins 1990.

³³ I learned firsthand about what was at stake for the North Carolina women when they placed themselves into a teacher’s “care” and immersed themselves in the traditions of schooling. It has always been my practice to call students at home if they miss several classes. During the first month of teaching in the workplace literacy program I called one student who had been absent to find out what was keeping her out of class and to offer my assistance if needed. As it happened, she was waiting until payday so that she could buy a new pair of glasses. She was getting headaches from reading and had not yet been able to afford the new prescription. I offered to loan her the money so that she would not have to miss two more weeks of class. She did not take me up on the offer, but she returned to class the next day. Later, during the end-of-the-year evaluation meeting, she commented on her motivation for continuing in the program: “I figured if you cared enough to call me at home then you must really think that I can do the work. Then too if you cared enough to call me and to loan me the money, then I should care enough about myself to be in class everyday and not give up on myself. I just never had a teacher to call me like that.”

³⁴ See Williams 1988, where the author starts out her essay “on being invisible” as a way to narrate her own place in history.

blacks attending segregated schools. Ola's story is but one example of being "passed by" by white society in both literal and symbolic terms:

When we were little there was no bus for black children. Everyday we be walking to school and watch that big yellow bus drive by. It would stop right up in front of us to pick up the white childrens. And when we were little, this is the truth. A white person, if you were riding on the road, you know down the highway, and you was in front of them, that white person would run you off of that road to get in front of you. They didn't care. And then one time daddy had all his little childrens in the car, I don't know where we was going. Anyway, a white man come up, and daddy had to pull over and if he hadn't a went like that, the white man probably a killed us all. My daddy just pulled over to the side and let him go right on by. I remember we used to stand over on the side and watch all the white childrens pass right on by to school.

Lilly described how the teachers "looked over the top" of dark-skinned children:

We really had a hard time in school cause if we know something, like if I go home and do my homework and really learn something and really get into it, we go back to school the next day. Then the teacher start asking about the lesson, getting us to go to the board and asking questions, we sitting and raising our hands and they would just look over the top of us. Now, all the little dark-skinned childrens, the teachers didn't take up no time with them. All the little light-skinned kids, teachers would take up time with them. And I got, [pause] I had went so far I just got tired. I had got to the place where I didn't care if I learned anything or not.

And Geraldine talked about black students' invisibility within the entire system of education: "Long and then nobody cared if black children went to school. There were no officers coming around to see if you was in school." Struggling to make themselves "seen" was draining and left the North Carolina women with little if any energy for their own creative, intellectual, and emotional development in schools.

Coupled with their sense of having been rejected was a sense of humiliation and shame. Repeatedly, the North Carolina women said they had felt "ashamed" because of their clothes or appearance, their size in relation to the other children, their inability to keep up in class, or their parents who had "country ways." (All fifteen of the women interviewed described an event in which they had been shamed in school.) Most often,

they recounted that children “picked” on them and that teachers added flame to the fires.³⁵

The kids picked at us so much about our clothes, they picked about me carrying a brown bag and eating biscuits for lunch. I got to where I would go behind the gym or go behind the building or go to a classroom where nobody else was around and eat my lunch. It would never have gotten out except for my biology teacher. He happened to see me one day going into a classroom. I thought I was in there by myself and I pulled out the jelly biscuit. He was standing at the door looking at me and I didn't know he was cause he was looking through the glass on the door. And getting back to biology class, we was dissecting a frog and I couldn't quite get it cause I was so fat. I was fat and my fingers were clumsy. He spoke up right there in front of the class, everybody was listening to him and he says, “Doyle, you could dissect that frog if you would leave off eating all those biscuits. And you wouldn't be so big and fat.” And everybody in class laughed and I tell you, I hated to go into class after that. And sometimes I would tell my mother that I had forgot my lunch, but I wouldn't forget, I was just too ashamed to carry it, the brown bag. If he had never told them about me carrying biscuits, but they [the teachers] looked down on me.

Fond memories of teachers who had taken “special care” paralleled with equal frequency such memories of teachers calling attention to students' deficiencies, both social and intellectual. Whereas the Philadelphia women provided stories in which they were angry with or shamed by teachers' extreme punishment (tying students to chairs, locking students in closets, hitting students with rulers, etc.), the North Carolina women shared stories in which they had been shamed by a teachers' cruel or arbitrary verbal abuse, as this one of Geraldine's: “In the classroom I got along most of the time, I knew the lesson and stuff like that. But she [her teacher] would always be saying that was I dumb or something like that. Maybe that come from me having kind of a stutter, and she said from that. In front of the whole class she would talk about me.” In such stories, some women recalled being shamed by their teachers for things related to being poor (having inadequate clothes or no shoes), having “country ways” (bringing brown bags with biscuits), or not being able to attend school regularly. Indeed, Beverly explains that she dropped out of school

³⁵ Like the Philadelphia women, some of the North Carolina women referred to the girls they hung with, their “friend girls” in contrast to the “teacher's pet” types, but more often they talked about children who “picked” on them. These were the embattled relationships that organized their schooling narratives.

to insure that her new baby could one day attend school without shame: "And when I had my son I said, I don't want him to come up poor, go to school half ragged and everything. And then at that time white people liked for you to work in their houses so I told momma I ain't going back to school cause I want my son to wear nice clothes, you know and all to school too."

Others, like Geraldine, recalled having suffered public humiliation for what was most often referred to as being a "slow learner." Most telling was the finding that all the North Carolina women chronicled their school narratives according to whether they were passed onto the next grade or were kept behind. In light of the fact that they attended one-room schoolhouses or schools with only a few rooms, I asked how they knew what "grade" level they were in. Even without age-graded classrooms, standardized tests, or formalized report cards, the North Carolina women perceived that they had been judged by some set of rational, performance-based set of standards that did not correspond with their abilities or opportunities to perform. Nevertheless, they internalized these standards and explained the moral behind their failure: they had been "slow learners." Gloria sums up what more than half the North Carolina women said about their problem in school: "My problem was that I was a slow learner. I didn't catch on the way the other childrens did. I was always behind trying to catch up; the teachers didn't take up no time with me. Except in third grade with Miss Johnson. She was a good teacher and she made sure that I stayed up with the class."

Despite images of themselves as invisible and as slow learners, the North Carolina women also agreed that school held little promise for them. It did not offer upward mobility and, as Ola explains, schoolwise knowledge was not perceived as necessary for their work as women in their families: "Long back at that time we didn't have nothing to go to school for. All of us, like a bunch of girls would get together, they'd say, 'What good is going to school? We's out here on the farm so we ain't going to do nothing but stay out here on the farm and have babies, farm, and keep house.' You can do that, you can learn that from momma and daddy. You don't need to go to school for that, to stay out on the farm or to babysit and clean house for white peoples." Or as Beverly further explained why she had dropped out of school, "I decided I'm just going to give up my education so [my son] could get his. Cause education didn't mean nothing to me back them, it didn't lead to nothing. Now I see that we both should probably have went on to school, but I just made sure that he went to school and graduated."

Whether they attributed their problem in school to one of limited access, ability, or promise, the North Carolina women did not view school as posing a set of conflicting choices for them. Ironically, despite

the fact that school held no promise for them, the North Carolina women were more free to immerse themselves in school values, styles, and authority. They were not concerned over who knew more, teachers or students, but rather who was allowed to know or who was capable of knowing, who was encouraged and who was passed over. It was not the authority or legitimacy of schoolwise knowledge that was at stake in the North Carolina women's school struggles but, rather, their own legitimacy as school students.

Effects of school organization and mission

How do we account for the women's different versions of school and what do these versions tell us about the twisted relations of gender, knowledge, and power? In this section I will consider the effects of school organization and mission on the women's different versions of school. My argument is that the two school contexts—one rural-community and the other urban-comprehensive—organized the relationship between gender, knowledge, and power differently and thus generated different views among the women about these twisted relations.

Writing about how gender relations operate differently according to school organization, Elisabeth Hansot and David Tyack (1988) characterize the rural-community and the urban-comprehensive school in the following ways. In the rural-community school, age and cognitive proficiency organized instruction, whereas in the urban-comprehensive school, gender organized the curriculum. In the 1920s, “progressive” school reform sought to design the curriculum to address the so-called different needs of boys and girls. Educational reformers worried about the way high schools were differentiating students by class, yet these same reformers tended to see differentiation by gender as natural and desirable. Whereas the explicit goal of the urban comprehensive school was to prepare students for adult occupations, fashioned primarily around the needs of industry, the implicit effect was to replicate in the school the same sexual division of labor that students would be expected to accommodate as adults. Thus, according to Hansot and Tyack, gender gained greater “institutional salience” in the urban public schools, even as school practices worked to obscure this salience. Moreover, gender gained greater, if not hidden, salience in the urban public school because of the rigid institutional boundaries that separated family, work, and school. In rural communities, these boundaries were more fluid, viewed by students as “part of a seamless web of community contexts, each interwoven with and legitimating the other” (1988, 752). In contrast, the urban school system was large and bureaucratic, no longer analogous in either structure or operation to families, churches, or community life.

Thus, school was viewed by students as set apart from, rather than integral to, other institutions that prepared them for their future roles and responsibilities. Furthermore, because gender relations varied from one institution to the other, students in urban-comprehensive schools were forced to negotiate different gender expectations. For example, a young girl might find that in school she did the same work as boys and was rewarded in the same way for her efforts. But when she entered the work force and found that her opportunities were limited and that she was not rewarded in the same way as her male counterparts, she was forced to somehow make sense of the discrepancy. How she made sense of and negotiated changing gender practices and meanings was not simply the result of personal insight but was also governed by historical, cultural, ideological, and institutional forces.

In this light, let us consider how each school context generated a different set of gender practices and problems for the women to negotiate. Consider the Philadelphia women's view of school as both stemming from and answering to the urban-comprehensive school's organization and mission.³⁶ Organized around the requirements of industry, the urban-comprehensive school emphasized the obedience and discipline required in working-class jobs as it prepared students to enter a sex-segregated labor force (Bowles and Gintis 1976). The "commercial track" and the "kitchen practice" (the latter referred to by one Philadelphia woman as "where they put the real low life in the school") were part of this preparation where girls learned clerical or waitressing skills while boys learned a skilled trade in "shop" classes. I would argue that the Philadelphia women made sense of this school organization in class rather than gender terms. For example, to explain why they chose the commercial track, the women drew on class-based antagonisms between teachers and students and between schoolwise and streetwise knowledge to account for their "choices." Their explanations pit their middle-class teachers, for whom they did not want to "work too hard" and with whom they did not share the same life concerns or values, against their peers, with whom they shared common interests, knowledge, and authority about how to "get by in life."³⁷ Similarly, the Philadelphia women

³⁶ There were in fact three school contexts, including Catholic school. I discuss the particular effects of Catholic School on the women's aspirations in Luttrell 1992. However, in terms of framing their school "problems," there was no difference between those Philadelphia women who attended public and those who attended parochial school. This may be due to the small number of women who attended Catholic school in the sample. Future research might yield important contrasts.

³⁷ Such antagonistic relationships are reminiscent of how Thompson 1963 accounts for the development of class consciousness, as a process that happens when people articulate and identify their interests, capabilities, or concerns as being common to others like themselves and against those whose interests are different from (and usually opposed to) theirs.

made sense of the separation between schools, families, and workplaces and of the discrepant gender expectations of each in class terms. Recall how the women resented their middle-class teachers for refusing to acknowledge the multiple responsibilities of working-class girlhood and thus rejected schools as a way to claim a voice (i.e., knowledge and authority) about family life and its demands. Yet regrettably, these class-based understandings of school worked against the Philadelphia women’s abilities to see the implicit gender inequalities organizing school, families, and workplaces, as in the case of Tina who opted for marriage and motherhood, which she viewed as natural and desirable, over school.

Then, in contrast, consider the North Carolina women’s views of school as both stemming from and answering to the organization and mission of the rural-community school. Organized as part of a seamless web of family, work, church, and community contexts, each woven with and legitimating the other, the rural segregated school context produced a different set of gender practices and problems for the women to negotiate. The rural school did not track students according to gender, nor were the gender practices in school so different from those on the farm, in families, or in church. Through their daily caretaking efforts, black teachers in rural schools promoted the value of what is traditionally defined as “women’s work” to sustain family life. In this seamless web of caretaking institutions (school, families, church), black female teachers implicitly, if not explicitly, promoted the knowledge and authority of black women in their efforts to preserve black communities. In contrast to the female teachers in urban-comprehensive schools who were supervised by male principals, these black teachers in rural schools also exercised more autonomous authority, especially in isolated one-room schools. Thus through their affiliation with black female teachers, the North Carolina women were encouraged to claim rather than to deny their knowledge as women as part of their schooling.

Regrettably, however, the affiliation was made problematic by the “racial uplift” mission of the black rural-community school. At the time when the North Carolina women attended school, black middle-class female teachers who had been assigned to rural schools were committed to racial uplift that “equated normality with conformity to white, middle-class models of gender roles and sexuality” (Higginbotham 1992, 271). Exposed to the domestic science movement as a way to promote the moral uplifting of rural blacks, these teachers sought to correct black country ways, including speech, appearance, behavior, dress, and etiquette, that were viewed as impediments to social mobility not only within black communities but also within white society.³⁸ This model

³⁸ Fields 1983, 88–90, refers to this influence in her teacher training.

contrasted sharply with the vocational model and thus generated different relationships between female teachers and students. We can recall that the North Carolina women spoke about the school's mission to correct country ways with shame and humiliation. Moreover, they interpreted the school's mission in race and class-based terms, citing in anger all the ways in which teachers invoked the "intimidation of color" as they "passed over" groups of darker-skinned students or neglected to encourage students whose parents were not professionals. Less recognized was the way in which teachers invoked traditional, middle-class styles of femininity as part of their uplift mission. Instead, the North Carolina women remembered with fondness those teachers who had made them "feel special" by attending to their daily needs. Yet by buying bows and dresses for those girls who because of poverty could not attain a traditionally feminine image, these teachers unwittingly promoted split images of femininity.

Yet, whatever their goals, the efforts of black, middle-class teachers were undermined by the racism and segregation that signaled to rural black children living in poverty that they were worth less than white children. Whatever schoolwise knowledge black students might claim would not be recognized by the larger white society, nor would it provide them occupational mobility, regardless of gender. Organizing instruction around age and cognitive proficiency, when regular school attendance was sporadic if not impossible for girls as well as boys, also served to promote the view that individual ability more than anything else accounted for school success. Admittedly, such organization was not intended to undermine black students' beliefs in their academic abilities. Yet the North Carolina women's narratives speak to the unintended consequences of institutional practices that, when joined with racist ideologies about blacks' inferior intelligence, converged to support their perceptions of themselves as slow learners.

Thus each group of women understood and negotiated the twisted relations of gender, knowledge, and power differently according to school organization and mission. I do not offer this explanation as a complete account but, rather, as a corrective to essentialist accounts that ignore the varied and changing contexts within and against which women construct and claim knowledge. In the next section I want to broaden the scope of our understanding of these contexts and obstacles by considering the ideological dimensions of the women's view of school as a battleground, and particularly of the teacher's pet theme.

Another version of the teacher's pet theme

While both groups of women viewed teachers' pets as having knowledge and power, on closer scrutiny we can see that this is a distortion, if

not an illusion. Despite their distinct versions of school and teachers' pets, both groups of women shared contradictory insights about the process of schoolwise knowing. On the one hand, the women believed that the acquisition of schoolwise knowledge was not haphazard, random, or idiosyncratic. It was not Dorothy as an individual, that is, but Dorothy as a light-skinned, middle-class, traditionally feminine black girl that made her the teacher's pet and enabled her success in school. It was not Helen as an individual, but feminine, cute, and obedient Helen as a "type" that accounted for her school achievements. Whether defined in race, class, or gender terms, both groups of women believed that teachers chose pets and passed on schoolwise knowledge according to interests that were in conflict with the students' own. The women's experience of teachers' pets served to corroborate what they already knew about social divisions. Moreover, these relationships served as a way to express their affiliation with and opposition to certain collective identities, interests, values, and knowledge. Yet at the same time, the women also shared the belief that teachers acted on personal prejudices and preferences rather than on structural imperatives of either the educational system or the society at large when they chose their pets. Put another way, the theme of teachers' pets offered the women an individual and psychologized explanation of knowledge and power for what is in fact a structural and political relationship.

The women's shared view of school was based on gender ideologies that pitted good girls against bad girls in the struggle for schoolwise knowledge. This good girl/bad girl dichotomy falsified gender relations in the classroom. Likewise, the light skin/dark skin dichotomy falsified race relations, making it appear as if it was a teacher's individual prejudice rather than institutional racism that undermined black students' success. Lighter-skinned blacks were sanctioned as smart and as successful learners at the expense of darker-skinned blacks, thereby dividing black students against each other and undermining their collective knowledge and power. At the same time, the light skin/dark skin dichotomy also falsified gender relations, making it appear that it was only the color line rather than patriarchal impositions that colluded in dividing the black rural female students against each other.

Furthermore, the women understood the relationship between teachers and their pets as a form of patronage whereby teachers chose individual students to be theirs or to "own." The pet's ability to succeed thus was dependent on her patron, the teacher. According to the terms of this relationship, the patron promised support, encouragement, and praise in exchange for the pet's productivity and achievement. Additionally, this relationship was understood as a unique, one-to-one relationship between a particular teacher and a particular student (your pet cannot also

be my pet). As a result, the women learned to view the nature of knowledge and power as personalized and individual rather than collective or social. Moreover, this personalized image of the teacher's pet connoted an affective bond. Being someone's pet suggested an emotional or even erotically tinged relationship between pets and their owners (as in the common expression, "petting"). In this individual, personal, emotional, and perhaps erotically tinged relationship between teachers and pets, a process of deception and objectification took place. Girls who participated in such relationships were seen or saw themselves as presenting a false self to attract the teacher's attention. Because the pet's achievements and school knowledge was gained through such deception, it was at once false and suspect. Thus the women came simultaneously to long for and to distrust the pet's recognition, attention, and power. Last but not least, the concept of teacher's pet implied that a student was less than a teacher, the human pet being an infantilized person. Thus the pet's power was based on diminution and was ultimately self-negating.³⁹

In all these cases, the pet and her power could never be autonomous from the realm of the teacher. Ironically, then, the concept of teacher's pet makes it appear that those who are not teachers' pets have no knowledge or power. The view of teachers' pets or good girls as powerful based on their ability to get approval of those in power masked the real threat to patriarchal power: those who chose not to be or are not chosen to be pets, the bad girls.

I would argue that the women's shared views about teachers' pets exposes the force of patriarchal impositions, particularly how split images of femininity undermine women's knowing. These split images, invoked by the women as symbolic antagonists in the teacher's pet theme, served to locate the source of their power in female attractiveness, desirability, and submission rather than in intellectual capabilities or in collective identities and interests.

Implications for feminist education research and reform

The varied contexts within and against which women construct, value, and claim knowledge and power have profound implications for how we think about improving women's education. The contextualized account of women's ways of knowing that I have developed here suggests that we must acknowledge the politics of being female when we consider how schools shortchange girls, moving beyond analyses based simply on female socialization or gender identity development.

³⁹ I am indebted to John Wilson for starting me thinking about the ideological nature of the pet's power.

There is still much to know about the politics of women’s knowing—how different women understand and negotiate gender, race, and class relations across institutional contexts and within different schools—before we can develop pedagogical practices that address the multivariied ways that women claim and deny knowledge. I believe that comparative ethnographic research holds the most promise toward this end. The task for feminist educators, as I see it, is to become ethnographers, in the broadest and best sense of the word, actively and systematically observing what students are doing, listening to what they are saying, and probing what they are feeling despite school practices that conspire to distort, mute, or silence what they know and have to say about themselves and the world around them.⁴⁰

When we listen and take seriously what the women in this study have to say about school, especially in their shared theme of teacher’s pet, we gain critical insight into how schools shortchange girls and what is to be done. I will briefly sketch two implications about how to improve women’s education that I draw from their accounts.

Revising school mission and organization

The teacher’s pet theme reminds us that what is most memorable about schooling is not what is learned, but how we learn. By viewing school in terms of embattled relationships, the women held teachers and students accountable for what school organization and mission ignores or dismisses: the knowledge and ethics of care.

Educational philosopher Jane Roland Martin (1985) has argued that the explicit mission of schooling in this century has been to prepare students for what she calls “productive” processes that focus primarily on the workplace and the public/political spheres of life, spheres that until recent history have been associated with men. Missing from such models are discussions about society’s “reproductive” processes, including all those activities that define and maintain communities, families, and private life, spheres that continue to be associated with women. As a result, schools promote a narrow view of citizenship, one that privileges the ethics of work and public life over the ethic of care. Whereas schools introduce students to such values as property, justice, freedom, and equality that support political and economic development, what goes unacknowledged are values such as empathy, nurturance, and sensitivity that support personal growth and development. Evaded in the curriculum are the skills, knowledge, and values that have to do with “taking care”: everything from knowing about and caring for human bodies, to

⁴⁰ Gilligan 1990 and Fine 1991 both write about how schools actively silence what girls already know about the world. This silencing drives girls’ knowledge “underground” or causes them to develop a split consciousness.

knowing about and attending to human feelings and relationships.⁴¹ Moreover, these skills and knowledge, passed down within families and communities, are not viewed with the same reverence or value as those skills and knowledge that are passed down in schools. While we may pay lip service to the values and ethics of caretaking, we have yet to incorporate them into our educational practices and policies. Thus, schools fail to prepare students for citizenship in the broadest sense, as agents of social justice infused with an ethic of care.

The women's schooling narratives highlight the shortcomings of this narrow mission and separation of productive from reproductive skills and knowledge. While being careful not to reify these separate spheres, it is important to note that school policies and practices that enforce rigid boundaries between these two spheres of activity have particularly damaging effects on poor and working-class girls who may be major contributors to family survival. The failure of schools to broaden their mission and organization not only compromises poor and working-class girls' success in school but also, more fundamentally, threatens to disenfranchise them as citizens lacking either visibility or a voice.

Rethinking school success

The women's stories about teachers' pets speaks to the fact that attending to the ethics and politics of relationships is what makes a difference in women's (and, for that matter, men's) education. Their charged memories about being or not being a pet force us to consider what Frederick Erikson (1987) calls the "politics of legitimacy, trust and assent" as key factors that affect school success. The women's distinct version of teachers' pets illustrates the varied ways in which schools can betray girls' trust and legitimacy as they are played out in school mission, organization, curriculum, pedagogical practice, and student-teacher relationships (including but not limited to the teacher's pet phenomenon). For when school practices and policies acknowledge and validate some students over others, certain students will experience school as a no-win situation where they risk feeling unconnected and unknown, either betrayed by school or feeling as if they have betrayed themselves and others. Indeed, that was what had bothered the women about teachers' pets—that these relationships had allowed some students to "feel special" at the expense of others. Thus from their vantage point, school had violated the rules and ethics of relationships. Teachers' pets had enhanced the hold of teachers and certain students on the privilege of their social

⁴¹ See the American Association of University Women's report *How Schools Short-change Girls* (Wellesley College for Research on Women 1992) for an excellent discussion of the formal, hidden, and evaded curriculum and its effects on the education of girls.

difference (whether gender-, race-, or class-based), and thus served as a ritual celebration of social injustice.

Perhaps the women’s view of school as a set of embattled relationships of power and care helps to resolve the seeming paradox about why women who did not see themselves as successful students nevertheless sought education as adults. Ironically, what had propelled the women out of school as girls is also what had propelled them back to school as adult women: their desire to be viewed as legitimate, to connect and be known, and to remake their relationship to self and others through adult basic education. As feminist educators we should take heed of women’s paradoxical relationship to schooling by working to transform the material and ideological conditions under which students and teachers enter into relationships of knowledge, power, and care.

*Department of Sociology
Duke University*

References

- Adorno, Theodor, et al. 1950. *The Authoritarian Personality*. New York: Harper & Brothers.
- Alcoff, Linda. 1988. “Cultural Feminism versus Post-Structuralism: The Identity Crisis in Feminist Theory.” *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 13(3):405–36.
- Belenky, Mary Field, Blythe McVicker Clinchy, Nancy Rule Goldberger, and Jill Mattuck Tarule. 1986. *Women’s Ways of Knowing: The Development of Self, Voice, and Mind*. New York: Basic.
- Best, Raphaela. 1983. *We’ve All Got Scars: What Boys and Girls Learn in Elementary School*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.
- Bordo, Susan. 1986. “The Cartesian Masculinization of Thought.” *Signs* 11(3):439–56.
- Bordo, Susan, and Alison Jaggar, eds. 1989. *Gender, Body, Knowledge: Feminist Reconstructions of Being and Knowing*. New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press.
- Bowles, Samuel, and Herbert Gintis. 1976. *Schooling in Capitalist America*. New York: Basic.
- Brophy, Jere, and Thomas Goode. 1974. *Teacher-Student Relationships: Causes and Consequences*. New York: Holt, Rinehart, & Winston.
- Chase, Susan. 1991. “Interpreting Women’s Narratives: Towards an Alternative Methodology.” Paper presented at the Southern Sociological Society Meetings, Atlanta, Georgia, April 6.
- Chodorow, Nancy. 1978. *The Reproduction of Mothering: Psychoanalysis and the Sociology of Gender*. Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press.
- Cixous, Hélène. 1976. “The Laugh of the Medusa.” *Signs* 1(4):875–93.
- . 1981. “Castration or Decapitation?” *Signs* 7(1):41–55.

- Collins, Patricia Hill. 1990. *Black Feminist Thought: Knowledge, Consciousness, and the Politics of Empowerment*. London: HarperCollins Academic.
- Connell, R. W. 1985. *Teachers' Work*. Sydney: George Allen & Unwin.
- Connell, R. W., et al. 1982. *Making the Difference: Schools, Families and Social Division*. Sydney: George Allen & Unwin.
- Daly, Mary. 1973. *Beyond God the Father*. Boston: Beacon.
- . 1978. *Gyn/Ecology: The Metaethics of Radical Feminism*. Boston: Beacon.
- Devault, Marjorie. 1990. "Talking and Listening from Women's Standpoint: Feminist Strategies for Interviewing and Analysis." *Social Problems* 37(1):96–116.
- Dweck, Carol S., William Davidson, Sharon Nelson, and Bradley Enna. 1978. "Sex Differences in Learned Helplessness: II. The Contingencies of Evaluation Feedback in the Classroom. III. An Experimental Analysis." *Developmental Psychology* 14:268–76.
- Erickson, Frederick. 1987. "Transformation and School Success: The Politics and Culture of Educational Achievement." *Anthropology and Education Quarterly*, 18(4):335–56.
- Fields, Mamie Garvin, with Karen Fields. 1983. *Lemon Swamp and Other Places*. New York: Free Press.
- Fine, Michelle. 1991. *Framing Dropouts: Notes on the Politics of an Urban Public High School*. Albany: State University of New York Press.
- Fingeret, Arlene. 1983a. "Social Network: A New Perspective on Independence and Illiterate Adults." *Adult Education Quarterly* 33(3):133–46.
- . 1983b. "Common Sense and Book Learning: Culture Clash?" *Lifelong Learning* 6(8):22–24.
- Flax, Jane. 1987. "Postmodernism and Gender Relations in Feminist Theory." *Signs* 12(4):621–43.
- Foucault, Michel. 1977. *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*. New York: Pantheon.
- . 1979. *The History of Sexuality*, vol. 1: *An Introduction*, trans. Robert Hurley. London: Allen Lane.
- Freire, Paulo. 1970. *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. New York: Seabury.
- . 1973. *Education for Critical Consciousness*. New York: Continuum.
- . 1987. *Literacy: Reading the Word and the World*. South Hadley, Mass.: Bergin & Garvey.
- Giddings, Paula. 1984. *When and Where I Enter: The Impact of Black Women on Race and Sex in America*. New York: Bantam.
- Gilkes, Cheryl Townsend. 1985. "'Together and in Harness': Women's Traditions in the Sanctified Church." *Signs* 10(4):678–99.
- . 1988. "Building in Many Places: Multiple Commitments and Ideologies in Black Women's Community Work." In *Women and the Politics of Empowerment*, ed. Ann Bookman and Sandra Morgen, 53–76. Philadelphia: Temple University Press.
- Gilligan, Carol. 1982. *In a Different Voice: Psychological Theory and Women's Development*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press.

- . 1988. *Mapping the Moral Domain: A Contribution of Women's Thinking to Psychological Theory and Education*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press.
- . 1990. *Making Connections: The Relational Worlds of Adolescent Girls at Emma Willard School*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press.
- Grant, Jacquelyn. 1982. "Black Women and the Church." In *But Some of Us Are Brave*, ed. Gloria T. Hull, Patricia Bell Scott, and Barbara Smith, 141–52. Old Westbury, N.Y.: Feminist Press.
- Grant, Judith. 1987. "I Feel Therefore I Am: A Critique of Female Experience as a Basis for Feminist Epistemology." *Women and Politics* 7(3):99–114.
- Griffin, Susan. 1980. *Woman and Nature: The Roaring Inside Her*. New York: Harper Colophon.
- Hall, Stuart. 1986. "Gramsci's Relevance to the Analysis of Racism and Ethnicity." *Communication Inquiry* 10:5–27.
- Hansot, Elisabeth, and David Tyack. 1988. "Gender in American Public Schools: Thinking Institutionally." *Signs* 13(4):741–60.
- Harding, Sandra. 1986. *The Science Question in Feminism*. Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press.
- Harding, Sandra, and Merrill Hintikka, eds. 1983. *Discovering Reality: Feminist Perspectives on Epistemology, Metaphysics, and Philosophy of Science*. Dordrecht: Reidel.
- Hartsock, Nancy. 1985. *Money, Sex and Power: Towards a Feminist Historical Materialism*. Boston: Northeastern University Press.
- Hawkesworth, Mary E. 1989. "Knowers, Knowing, Known: Feminist Theory and Claims of Truth." *Signs* 14(3):533–57.
- Hebdige, Dick. 1979. *Subculture: The Meaning of Style*. New York: Methuen.
- Heckman, Susan. 1987. "The Feminization of Epistemology: Gender and the Social Sciences." *Women and Politics* 7(3):65–83.
- Higginbotham, Evelyn Brooks. 1992. "African-American Women's History and the Metalanguage of Race." *Signs* 17(2):251–74.
- Holland, Dorothy, and Margaret Eisenhart. 1990. *Educated in Romance: Women, Achievement and College Culture*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- hooks, bell. 1990. *Yearning: Race, Gender, and Cultural Politics*. Boston: South End Press.
- Irigaray, Luce. 1985. *Speculum of the Other Woman*, trans. Gillian Gill. Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press.
- Jaggar, Alison. 1983. *Feminist Politics and Human Nature*. Totowa, N.J.: Rowman & Allanheld.
- Johnson, Richard. 1986/87. "What Is Cultural Studies Anyway?" *Social Text: Theory, Culture, Ideology* 16:38–40.
- Jones, M. Gail. 1989. "Gender Bias in Classroom Interactions." *Contemporary Education* 60(4):218–22.
- Keller, Evelyn Fox. 1984. *Reflections on Gender and Science*. New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press.
- Labov, William. 1972. *Language in the Inner City: Studies in the Black English Vernacular*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.

- Levesque-Lopman, Louise. 1988. *Claiming Reality: Phenomenology and Women's Experience*. Totowa, N.J.: Rowman & Littlefield.
- Linde, Charlotte. n.d. "Life Stories: The Creation of Coherency." Institute for Research on Learning, Palo Alto, Calif.
- Lloyd, Genevieve. 1984. *The Man of Reason: Male and Female in Western Philosophy*. London: Methuen.
- London, Howard B. 1978. *The Culture of a Community College*. New York: Praeger.
- Long, Elizabeth. 1986. "Women, Reading, and Cultural Authority: Some Implications of the Audience Perspective in Cultural Studies." *American Quarterly* 38(4):591-612.
- Luttrell, Wendy. 1981. *Women in the Community: A Curriculum Guide for Students and Teachers*. Harrisburg: Pennsylvania State Department of Education.
- . 1982. *Building Multi-Cultural Awareness: A Teaching Approach for Learner-centered Education*. Harrisburg: Pennsylvania State Department of Education.
- . 1989. "Working-Class Women's Ways of Knowing: Effects of Gender, Race, and Class." *Sociology of Education* 62:33-46.
- . 1992. "Claiming Authority, Claiming Self Worth: Women's Narratives of 'Schoolwise' Knowledge and Power." Unpublished manuscript, Duke University.
- McCabe, Toni. 1981. "Schools and Careers: For Girls Who Do Want to Wear the Trousers." In *Feminism for Girls: An Adventure Story*, ed. Angela McRobbie and Toni McCabe, 57-79. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul.
- McMillan, Carol. 1982. *Women, Reason and Nature*. Oxford: Basic Blackwell.
- McRobbie, Angela. 1978. "Working Class Girls and the Culture of Femininity." In *Women Take Issue: Aspects of Women's Subordination*, ed. Women Studies Group CCCS, 96-108. London: Hutchinson.
- . 1982. "The Politics of Feminist Research: Between Talk, Text and Action." *Feminist Review*, no. 12, 46-57.
- . 1984. *Gender and Generation*. London: Macmillan.
- . 1991. *Feminism and Youth Culture: From "Jackie" to "Just Seventeen."* Boston: Unwin Hyman.
- Martin, Jane Roland. 1985. *Reclaiming a Conversation*. New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press.
- Martin, Roy. 1972. "Student Sex and Behavior as Determinants of the Type and Frequency of Teacher-Student Contact." *Journal of School Psychology* 10(4):339-44.
- Mascia-Lees, Frances, Patricia Sharpe, and Colleen Ballerino Cohen. 1989. "The Postmodern Turn in Anthropology: Cautions from a Feminist Perspective." *Signs* 15(1):7-33.
- Mishler, Elliot. 1986. *Research Interviewing: Context and Narrative*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press.
- O'Brien, Mary. 1981. *The Politics of Reproduction*. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul.
- Ogbu, John. 1974. *The Next Generation: An Ethnography of Education in an Urban Neighborhood*. New York and London: Academic Press.

- Personal Narratives Group. 1989. *Interpreting Women's Lives: Feminist Theory and Personal Narratives*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.
- Radway, Janice. 1984. *Reading the Romance: Women, Patriarchy and Popular Culture*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press.
- Rockhill, Kathleen. 1987. "Literacy as Threat/Desire: Longing to Be Somebody." In *Women and Education: A Canadian Perspective*, ed. Jane Gaskell and A. T. McLaren, 315–33. Calgary: Detselig Enterprises.
- Roman, Leslie. 1987. "Punk Femininity: The Formation of Young Women's Gender Identities and Class Relations in the Extramural Curriculum within a Contemporary Subculture." Ph.D. dissertation, University of Wisconsin Madison.
- . 1988. "Intimacy, Labor, and Class: Ideologies of Feminine Sexuality in the Punk Slam Dance." In *Becoming Feminine: The Politics of Popular Culture*, ed. Leslie Roman, Linda Christian-Smith, and Elizabeth Ellsworth, 143–84. London: Falmer.
- Rose, Hilary. 1983. "Hand, Brain and Heart: A Feminist Epistemology for the Natural Sciences." *Signs* 9(10):73–90.
- Rubin, Lillian. 1976. *Worlds of Pain: Life in the Working-Class Family*. New York: Basic.
- Ruddick, Sara. 1989. *Maternal Thinking: Toward a Politics of Peace*. Boston: Beacon.
- Sadker, Myra, and David Sadker. 1986. "Sexism in the Classroom: From Grade School to Graduate School." *Phi Delta Kappan* 68:512.
- Sennett, Richard. 1980. *Authority*. New York: Vintage.
- Sennett, Richard, and Jonathan Cobb. 1972. *The Hidden Injuries of Class*. New York: Knopf.
- Serbin, Lisa, K. Daniel O'Leary, Ronald Kent, and Illene Tonick. 1973. "A Comparison of Teacher Response to the Preacademic and Problem Behavior of Boys and Girls." *Child Development* 44(4):796–804.
- Smith, Dorothy. 1987. *The Everyday World as Problematic: A Feminist Sociology*. Boston: Northeastern University Press.
- Stacey, Judith. 1988. "Can There Be a Feminist Ethnography?" *Women's Studies International Forum* 11(1):21–27.
- Stacey, Judith, Susan Bereaud, and Joan Daniels, eds. 1974. *And Jill Came Tumbling After: Sexism in American Education*. New York: Dell.
- Stanley, Liz, and Sue Wise. 1983. *Breaking Out: Feminist Consciousness and Feminist Research*. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul.
- Steedman, Carolyn. 1987. *Landscape for a Good Woman*. New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press.
- Stockard, Jean. 1985. "Education and Gender Equality: A Critical View." In *Research in Sociology of Education and Socialization*, ed. Alan C. Kerckhoff, 5:293–321. Greenwich, Conn.: JAI.
- Strathern, Marilyn. 1987. "An Awkward Relationship: The Case of Feminism and Anthropology." *Signs* 12(2):276–92.
- Stuckey, Elspeth. 1988. "Invisible Women: The Black Female Educator in the Segregated South." Paper presented at the Southeastern Women Studies Association Annual Meeting, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill.

- Thompson, Edward P. 1963. *The Making of the English Working-Class*. New York: Vintage.
- Trask, Haunani-Kay 1986. *Eros and Power: The Promise of Feminist Theory*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.
- Tronto, Joan. 1989. "Women and Caring: What Can Feminists Learn about Morality from Caring?" In Bordo and Jaggar, eds.
- Waller, Willard. 1932. *Sociology of Teaching*. New York: Wiley.
- Washington, Mary Helen. 1982. "Teaching Black-Eyed Susans: An Approach to the Study of Black Women Writers." In *All the Women Are White and All the Blacks Are Men, But Some of Us Are Brave*, ed. G. Hull, P. B. Scott, and B. Smith, 208–17. Old Westbury, N.Y.: Feminist Press.
- Washington, Mary Helen, ed. 1975. *Black-Eyed Susans*. New York: Anchor/Doubleday.
- Weis, Lois. 1983. "Schooling and Cultural Production: A Comparison of Black and White Lived Culture." In *Ideology and Practice in Schooling*, ed. Michael Apple and Lois Weis. Philadelphia: Temple University Press.
- . 1985. *Between Two Worlds: Black Students in an Urban Community College*. Boston: Routledge & Kegan Paul.
- . 1988. *Class, Race, and Gender in American Education*. Albany: State University of New York Press.
- Wellesley College Center for Research on Women. 1992. *How Schools Short-change Girls: A Study of Major Findings on Girls and Education*. Washington, D.C.: American Association of University Women.
- Welter, Barbara. 1978. "The Cult of True Womanhood: 1820–1860." In *The American Family in Social-Historical Perspective*, ed. Michael Gordon, 313–33. New York: St. Martin's Press.
- Williams, Patricia. 1988. "On the Object of Property." *Signs* 14(1):5–24.
- . 1991. *The Alchemy of Race and Rights: Diary of a Law Professor*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press.
- Williams, Raymond. 1961. *Culture and Society*. New York: Penguin.
- . 1965. *The Long Revolution*. New York: Penguin.
- . 1976. *Keywords: A Vocabulary of Culture and Society*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Willis, Paul. 1977. *Learning to Labour: How Working-Class Kids Get Working-Class Jobs*. Westmead: Saxon House, Teakfield.