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ABSTRACT

This paper reviews the program of the Bryn Mawr Summer School for Women Workers in Industry, held from 1921 to 1938, and attempts to discern whether the curriculum and pedagogy of the school was feminist. An introduction notes that sources for the paper include course syllabi, videotaped interviews, and first person accounts of the school's functioning. A section describing the history of the summer school covers the thinking of its founders, Hilda W. Smith and M. Carey Thomas, the opening of the school, the curriculum, the student body which was racially integrated, and the school's involvement in the union movement (which eventually caused its close). A central section looks at the characteristics of the school, student evaluation, non-academic learning experiences, curriculum, and the effect of the school on its students, women from blue-collar occupations. A further section offers an overview of feminist pedagogy and method as a preparation for a section on the use of feminist pedagogy at the Summer School. This section notes that the school's educational philosophy was founded on feminism and the progressive education of John Dewey. A conclusion argues that the experience of the school demonstrates that a commitment to women's learning makes possible collaborative process, shared authority, and empowerment. (Contains 23 references.) (JB)

POWERFUL LEARNING:
A STUDY OF THE BRYN MAWR SUMMER SCHOOL FOR WOMEN WORKERS IN INDUSTRY 1921 - 1938

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INTRODUCTION

The summer of 1921 saw the beginning of a grand experiment in the education of women. That summer the Bryn Mawr Summer School for Women Workers in Industry began on the campus of Bryn Mawr College. The Summer School was unique in several ways in the labor education movement: 1) it was solely for women workers, 2) it was a collaborative effort by and for women, and 3) it was held at an exclusive women's college (Filmaker's Library, 1985).

While drawing on the strengths of the college, the Summer School curriculum and pedagogy differed significantly from the traditional classroom experience. In the 1920's and 30's, feminist education invariably meant providing for women the same classical education given to men. The Summer School began to broaden the concept of women's education.

This paper will examine the Bryn Mawr Summer School for Women Workers in Industry (1921-1938) in an attempt to discern whether the curriculum and pedagogy of the School can truly be described as feminist. If the Bryn Mawr Summer School does provide a long term and extensive model for feminist education, what does it tell us about the possibilities and the pitfalls of such an undertaking?

Feminist pedagogy and curriculum offer a clear challenge to "business as usual" in the academy. Breaking with the tradition that sees students as empty vessels, waiting to be filled with knowledge properly deposited into their minds by "experts in the field," feminist teaching offers another model of understanding

teachers, students and what happens in the classroom (Shrewsbury, 1987) A feminist perspective on the pedagogical process understands learning to be a process of empowerment through shared learning and shared authority between teachers and students (Shrewsbury, 1987). Further, a feminist perspective on teaching and learning is grounded in an understanding of education as education for social change (Schuster and Van Dyne, 1985). Initially, the Bryn Mawr Summer School seems to have met these criteria for feminist education.

This paper will explore the Summer School from its inception as M. Carey Thomas's dream, through its end in 1938, a victim of the political currents of the time. Primary sources include course syllabi, videotaped interviews, and first person accounts of the School's functioning. The paper will then turn to an examination of feminist pedagogy and method to discover its constituent elements. Finally, the paper will examine the Summer School through the lens of feminist pedagogy in the hope that such an examination will illumine the practical implications of feminist pedagogy for teaching and learning in the 1990's.

HISTORY OF THE BRYN MAWR SUMMER SCHOOL

The Bryn Mawr Summer School for Women Workers began with a vision in the desert, or so says the mythology. Both Hilda Worthington Smith, the School's first director and the woman most responsible for the shape of the Summer School, and M. Carey Thomas, President of Bryn Mawr College, understood the School's

roots to be in Thomas's Sahara Desert experience (Smith, 1978; Thomas, quoted in Smith, 1929). As Thomas describes the experience,

> One afternoon at sunset I was sitting on my golden hilltop, rejoicing that British women had just been enfranchised and American women would soon be politically free. . . I also saw as part of my vision that the coming of equal opportunity for the manual workers of the world might be hastened by utilizing the deep sex sympathy that women now feel for each other before it has had time to grow less. . . It belongs at the present time to all women the world over because of their age-long struggle, which is not yet over, for human rights and personal and civil liberty. . . Then with a glow of delight as radiant as the desert sunset I remembered the passionate interest of the Bryn Mawr College students in fairness and justice and the intense sympathy with girls less fortunate than themselves, and I realized that the first steps on the path to the sunrise might well be taken by college women who, themselves just emerging from the wilderness, know best of all women living under fortunate conditions what it means to be denied access to things of the intellect and spirit (Thomas, quoted in Smith, 1929, p. 256-7).

A vision of a school for workers would seem to have been out of character for M. Carey Thomas. The Bryn Mawr president had spent her life in higher education working for the same academic elitism in women's colleges that she perceived in the elite men's schools. A friend and admirer of Susan B. Anthony, Thomas was a feminist, but nothing in her early career indicated that she was likely to support, much less champion workers' education (Thomas, quoted in Smith, 1929; Filmaker's Library, 1985). However, while visiting her friend and cousin, Alys Russell, in England, Thomas was exposed to the Workers' Education Association, a Christian Socialist organization (Heller, 1984). It was in England that Thomas discovered the possibility of a partnership between the university and the working class.

Although by 1920 Thomas was in the later part of her academic career, she rushed into the new project with enthusiasm. Drawing on the British model, the Bryn Mawr Summer School for Women Workers in Industry opened in 1921.

> The Bryn Mawr experiment emulated the British in curriculum philosophy and tutorial approach and in deliberately fostering alliances among incompatible constituencies and institutions. The school brought privileged, educated women into a partnership with poor and uneducated women. The college establishment and its capitalist network were the main sources of financial support of a school created to benefit and nurture women workers and, indirectly, the labor movement (Heller, p. 112).

After a unanimous vote by Bryn Mawr's directors, faculty, and alumnae (Smith, 1929), Thomas called together a joint conference of representatives from each Bryn Mawr constituency and a broad-based group of industrial workers to begin making plans for the School (Schneider, 1941). The planning committee included Susan Kingsbury, director of Bryn Mawr's social work school, Mary Anderson of the U.S. Women's Bureau, Fannia Cohn of the International Ladies Garment Workers Union (ILGWU), Mrs. Robert Speer of the YWCA, and Hilda (Jane) Worthington Smith, who would become the Summer School's Director.

It is safe to say that M.Carey Thomas did not realize the scope of her vision, or that the School would draw ever closer to the organized labor movement. Thomas had planned to "incorporate blue-collar women into the liberal humanist tradition" (Heller, p.113). But in spite of her insistance that the School remain politically neutral, the need for collective analysis and action soon became apparent, moving the focus of the School from

individual betterment of the students to motivation of their involvement in social problems. In 1923, the Statement of Purpose was revised to read:

> The aim of the School is to offer young women in industry opportunities to study liberal subjects and to train themselves in clear thinking: to stimulate an active and continued interest in the problems of our economic order; to develop a desire for study as a means of understanding and of enjoyment of life. The School is not committed to any theory or dogma. The teaching is carried on by instructors who have an understanding of the students' practical experience in industry and of the labor movement. It is conducted in a spirit of impartial inquiry, with freedom of discussion and teaching. It is expected that thus the students will gain a truer insight into the problems of industry, and feel a more vital responsibility for their solution (Smith, 1929, p. 7).

Just as the nature and purpose of the School evolved from the beginning, so too, did the curriculum. Initially attempting to incorporate a wide variety of liberal subjects into a single curriculum, by 1928, the faculty had designed an interdisciplinary approach with Economics and English at the core (Schneider, 1941; Smith, 1978).

The student body changed as well. For example, there was an attempt on the part of the School initially to recruit workers equally from union and non-union ranks. However, by 1938, 84% of the student body was related to the unions (Schneider, 1941, p. 86).

In 1926, at the request of the students, African-American women were admitted to the Summer School. Hilda Smith strongly supported the idea of an integrated school, even in the face of Thomas's objections. Upon hearing of the admission of the first 5 African-American women, Thomas wrote to Smith:

> Dear Hilda, I am happy to hear that the Summer School is so satisfactory this year. Personally, I hope you will not complicate its full success by asking the girls to live, eat, and sleep with even a very few Negro [sic] girls. Susan B. Anthony always used to say, 'Do not mix reforms, but drive straight to your goal looking neither to the right nor to the left' (Filmakers Library, 1985).

But like the union movement in general, students steadfastly "looked to the left."

The 1930's saw the exacerbation of what had been a troubling issue all along, the level of the School's involvement in labor activity and unrest. Students had reacted strongly to the trial of Sacco and Vanzetti in 1927. Many students believed that the School ought to participate in protests and rallies on Sacco and Vanzetti's behalf. After a long and conflict-laden meeting of the whole School, a decision was made that individual students would be allowed to participate, but that the School would not take a public stance (Smith, 1929). This policy held into the 1930's.

In 1934, faculty members and students of the School went to observe a strike in process at the Seabrook food-packing plant. The Philadelphia Inquirer reported their presence at the strike and identified them with the Bryn Mawr Summer School. Bryn Mawr alumnae, Board members and donors reacted with alarm, fearing the publicity would harm fundraising efforts. In 1935, the Summer School left the Bryn Mawr campus for a year, in order that "the issue could be decided upon objectively" (Schneider, p.99). Although the School returned to Bryn Mawr in 1935, it closed its doors for good in 1938 as funding became harder to obtain.

Esther Peterson, a faculty member, puts it this way, "We weren't just nice girls anymore. We were vigorous people who wanted to change society. The money, therefore, to supply the School began to shrink . . . I guess we were just too radical, I don't know" (Filmaker's Library, 1985).

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SUMMER SCHOOL

There were two constants of the student body throughout the life of the Summer School -- all the students were women and all had at least 3 years experience in non-supervisory roles in industry (Schneider, 1941). Nearly every other qualifying characteristic and prerequisite was flexible and evolved over the years. Initially, the School administrators had hoped to limit enrollment to women with at least an eighth grade education. However, even as the numbers of high school graduates increased at the School, the prerequisite was lowered to sixth grade to accommodate some workers (Schneider, 1941). While the School always had a strong immigrant component, it followed the national trend as immigrants decreased in percentage from 50% in 1930 to only 16% of the School's population in 1938 (Schneider, 1941, p. 82).

The student body reflected the broad base of American industry, with representatives from milliners, to millworkers, to rubber workers (Schneider, 1941). Try as they might, however, the School's recruiters and faculty were unable to maintain the desired balance between union and non-union workers. The hope had been for the School to include a variety of perspectives on

the unions, but by 1934, two-thirds of the students were active unionists and by 1938 the number rose to 84% (Schneider, p. 86). As the number of unionized participants rose in the School, so too did the level of their union experience, at times with the aid of the School's recruiters. Faculty were increasingly eager to work with women who already had some leadership experience and the student body came to reflect that preference (Schneider, p. 86).

The Summer School's governance reflected the commitment to democratic process at all levels, with shared participation from all the interested and affected parties (Smith, 1978; Smith, 1929). Administration and policy development were handled by the Joint Administrative Committee. After a conversation with one of the School's students in the summer of 1921, M. Carey Thomas became convinced that the School should be governed by a board composed of equal representation from industry and from Bryn Mawr. Until its closing the Joint Administrative Committee brought together representatives from the college and its alumnae association and women representatives from industry as well as Summer School alumnae (Smith, 1978).

The internal day-to-day governance of the School also provided an opportunity for shared decision-making. The School Council, composed of seven students, three faculty, and three administrators, met once a week to plan the School program and hear reports from its various sub-committees. Self-governance was not an easy thing, as reported by Hilda Smith:

> Heated argument, wounded sensibilities, uproar, fatigue, ill-advised decisions, confusion of mind and confusion of issues have often accompanied the process of self-government in the Summer School. In many crises, the saving factor in the situation has been the reality of the control of the School by this whole School group. The students and faculty are always impressed with the fact that the School is actually in their hands, and that their vote on School issues will be a deciding one (Smith, 1929, p. 149).

Although an exhausting process, conflict was dealt with openly and within the group. "Nothing affecting the School was hidden from students or faculty," according to Hilda Smith (1978, p. 144). School Council decisions were final, with the one proviso that the Director of the School might suspend action if she believed the matter should be addressed by the Joint Administrative Committee. Smith reported in 1929 that such a decision had not yet been made.

Depending as it did on industry and the unions to provide students for the School and on Bryn Mawr alumnae to provide financial resources, the School organized Regional committees to accomplish both tasks. Again jointly operated by industry women and Bryn Mawr trustees and alums, the Regional Committees varied in function based on their locales, some focusing on recruiting of students, some on raising funds, some focused on publicizing the School (Schneider, p.70). The Regional Committees had no decision-making authority, however they did provide women the opportunity to work across class lines toward a common goal.

The commitment to shared governance in the Summer School extended to the academic structure of the School. It is in the teaching, curriculum, and pedagogy that the unique spirit of the

Summer School can be seen most clearly. While the course content and pedagogy continually evolved to meet changing student desires and needs, Heller suggests that there were three constants that provided stability: 1) a shared commitment to humanistic education; 2) a faculty drawn almost exclusively from the eastern academic community rather than from labor; 3) the Joint Administrative Committee (1984, p. 118).

The teachers recruited for the School were a special group. "They were all people of some originality. And it was a challenge. Because there was prejudice against worker's education at that time. We were too radical and dangerous and insidious and so on" (Broadus Mitchell, quoted in Filmaker's Library, 1985). The commitment of the teachers to the School went far beyond a love of teaching, for while all were well versed in their own disciplines, few if any had experience in adult worker's education. According to Hilda Smith:

> To find the well-trained and experienced teacher who has any conception of the problems of teaching adult industrial workers is another and more difficult matter. Academic ideas and an academic vocabulary must be discarded; a new method of teaching must be the subject of experiment in each classroom. For most teachers it takes courage and the spirit of adventure to abandon well-proven theories, and to begin all over again in a new way (Smith, 1929, p. 91).

Those teachers who came to the School came enthusiastically, ready to experiment with new styles and methods, open to change. At odds with the traditional rigid lines between the disciplines, the School nearly from the first understood its task to be interdisciplinary. "And they took people who were not bound by lines of different disciplines. Economics, history, sociology,

law -- one affects the other so intimately that its presumptuous to think of yourself as belonging to one field. It was an education to be here, really" (Mitchell, quoted in Filmaker's Library, 1985).

Esther Peterson, a gym teacher at the Summer School, describes the excitement and all-encompassing passion with which Hilda Smith spoke about the School,

> I was absolutely captivated. And immediately I said, 'That's the way I want to be.' And the stories she told of the School and what it meant to these people, I thought 'Here's a life!' And I went up to her afterwards and said, 'How do you do it? How can I get into it?' And she interviewed me and gave me a job (Filmaker's Library, 1985).

Participation in the Summer School was more than just a job. It was a way of life, a transformed way of seeing the world.

Initially, and probably under Carey Thomas's influence, the School adopted an extensive liberal arts program of study. Even though attempts were made to stay focused on student needs and interests, the curriculum was overwhelming to those women with very little previous education. Students in the early classes reported that the curriculum and the instructors were out of touch with the issues most concerning working women, ie. collective bargaining, industrial unionism, and direct action (Heller, 1986, p. 201). Gradually, more emphasis was given to the needs as articulated by the students, and by 1928 the curriculum had been redesigned.

In 1928, the "Unit Method" of instruction centered the curriculum around economics and English, with science, the arts, and history as secondary studies. The women were organized into

"units" of approximately 20 students. Each unit had the full-time attention of one English professor and one economics professor, who together had the primary responsibility of designing an interdisciplinary program based on the needs, academic level, and desires of their group (Schneider, 1941; Smith, 1929; Heller, 1984). For example, the outline of the Economics and History course in the Herbst-Griffiths Unit of 1934 included sections on the development of capitalism, the New Deal and the National Recovery Act, and the American Labor Movement. In each section, a brief description of the material was included, as well as reading assignments made (Course syllabi, Bryn Mawr Summer School, 1934).

Similarly, an English syllabus from the same year asked students to write an autobiography, or if they wished to answer questions such as, "What kind of life would you live if you could arrange your life just as you wished -- if you could do as you wish and be what you wish?" (English Syllabus, Bryn Mawr Summer School, 1934).

Given the attention paid to student needs and interests, it is not surprising that significant attention was given to the student make-up of the units. Great care was taken to insure broad representation in each unit in terms of ethnicity, geographic origin, and industrial background. Esther Peterson reports that, "Jane (HWS) always said we had to have in each unit a 'little world;' geographically and racially. We had to have

the basic industries there. She insisted they be 'little worlds'" (Filmaker's Library, 1985).

For a variety of reasons, the pedagogical method which held sway at the Summer School was grounded in the experiences of the women students and was primarily discussion. The courses were designed for adult women with limited formal education. Given the untraditional nature of the students, it would have been difficult to transplant the traditional classical curriculum, although that was the model favored by M. Carey Thomas. From the beginning, even in the application process, students were asked what their issues were, what concerned them, what they wanted to study. It was assumed that the experience each student brought to the School was valuable and could provide insight into current problems (Heller, 1984). Alice Hanson Cook, a faculty member in English, recalls that, "Jane (HWS) taught me that we were to draw out the experiences of these women as the basis of our teaching. We made a great point of getting life stories. . .sometimes for hours on end, sometimes for days" (Filmaker's Library, 1985).

Classes were organized as "democratic groups with the teacher as leader and one of the group, not as an authority figure" (Kornbluh, 1987, p.47). The commitment to the sharing of authority was based on the unique needs and backgrounds of the students. As Hilda Smith put it, "It is obvious that with adult student, of mature judgement and long experience, the teachers lose their function as instructors of the uninformed and become leaders of discussion. The process of learning becomes a mutual

adventure between the teacher and the student" (Smith, 1929, p. 100).

Not all students were comfortable with this format for education. One student complained that "We want facts. We want the teacher to talk, not the girls [sic]. They don't know any more than we do" (Smith, 1929, p. 77). For most of the women students, work had always been closely supervised, constantly corrected, with initiative and creativity actively discouraged. It is not surprising that the prospect of sharing the wisdom of others, much less offering one's own insight, was a threatening one.

The Summer School gave no exams and no grades. At the end of the School, students were given a certificate of attendance. Faculty, however, did assess the student's strengths and weaknesses, in part to evaluate the placement of second year students. The philosophy of the School was only to record achievement in effort (Smith, 1929).

In addition to the regularly scheduled course work, the Summer School offered a wide variety of nonacademic learning experiences. Students went off-campus on field trips to museums, factories, and historical sites. In 1924, the first international folk musical festival, featuring students of the School from various ethnic groups, was held (Heller, 1984). An astonishing array of speakers presented programs at the School: Margaret Sanger, W.E.B. DuBois, Eleanor Roosevelt, Frances Perkins (Filmaker's Library, 1985). There were extra-curricular

discussions and panels concerning national political issues, such as the Equal Rights Amendment and the National Recovery Act.

In spite of the School's stated commitment to "impartial" and "non-dogmatic" inquiry, it is clear that the Summer School did not really attempt to be value-free (Heller, 1984). Esther Peterson notes that while she is sure they invited Republicans to speak, none of them ever came to the School (Filmaker's Library, 1985). As early as 1922, economics professor Amy Hewes explicitly took the worker's part in her discussion of capitalism. Broadus Mitchell reported that "advancing the rights and influence of organized labor infused all instruction" (quoted in Heller, p.120). Early on, the participants in the School recognized that social change meant taking a political stance that challenged established class relationships. This perspective, however, was not what M.Carey Thomas or the Bryn Mawr Board of Trustees originally had in mind. The political nature of the School's curriculum and teaching eventually led its critics to claim that it was too radical and as such a risk to Bryn Mawr College (Heller, 1984).

The impact of the Summer School can be seen most clearly in the responses of the students to their experiences. In a survey conducted in 1982, Rita Heller discovered that the School had a significant impact on the lives of its students:

> Most respondents credited the Summer School with giving them an enhanced self-image, greater general knowledge, and changed personal lives. A comparable percentage viewed positively the interaction of diverse social and ethnic groups. Almost half the respondents noted improved social

skills, while a majority believed the School had furthered their careers (Heller, 1984,p.123).

The students initially felt afraid and anxious about attending the School, unsure of what they were to face. "When I was accepted, people said, 'Don't go, don't go! It's white slave traffic!" (Filmaker's Library, 1985). Another student recalls,

> All of us were apprehensive of the fact that we were coming into a school beyond our intelligence, we thought. And we were suspicious of each other. Especially because we had people who spoke with a drawl, some with a Brooklynese accent, some of them couldn't speak English very well. And we thought, what in the world kind of place did we come into, you know. And maybe I was a little skeptical, because I had suffered from intolerance and I thought maybe I could give some of it back (Carmen Lucia, Filmaker's Library, 1985).

Students questioned their right to be at the school at all, assuming that others must surely be smarter and more able than they (Smith, 1929). It was also painful to remember those family and friends left behind in the factories (Smith, 1978). Yet it did not take long for the women to begin to shake off the constraints of industrial life. "After meeting my teachers a Bryn Mawr I shall never again feel that I am a stranger <u>any place</u>. And to sit down to breakfast in the Summer School made me know that I am next door neighbor to all the world" (Smith, 1929, p. 126). The curriculum and pedagogy opened to students entire new worlds and possibilities.

> I was glad to find those first days that others were frightened too behind their smiles. How were we to realize that here, at last, our only requirement was our own eagerness to learn? I remember trembling as I entered the first class session. I remember my astonishment and relief at finding the atmosphere of informality. We were discussing a topic, not being lectured at. How wonderfully strange! (quoted in Smith, 1929, p. 125).

Clearly the Bryn Mawr Summer School had an impact on the lives of the women workers who attended. The progressive philosophy and method of the School gave the women who attended a unique educational experience. But was it a feminist experience? The next section of the paper will use the lens of feminist pedagogy to explore the implications of the Bryn Mawr Summer School for feminist education today.

FEMINIST PEDAGOGY AND METHOD

Feminist pedagogy begins with the critical analysis of the traditional and normally tacit "centering of knowledge around the lives and experiences of the privileged. Women of all social classes, ethnicities, and sexualities, and minority, working class, and gay men are relatively absent from traditional bodies of knowledge" (Thorne, 1989, p. 311). This privileged centering of knowledge, this "entitlement," affects both the entitled and those not entitled in negative ways. Those in positions of entitlement are enabled to take their privilege for granted, not noticing and so perpetuating "patterns of inequality and control" (Thorne, p. 313). The assumptions underlying their knowledge and behavior remain unknown and unquestioned (Minnich, 1989, 281).

The effect on the "unentitled" however, is more severe. Silenced in the dominant cultural discourse, they have access neither to power or to voice. It is this silencing, particularly of women, that feminist scholarship and pedagogy address. "Feminist scholarship constitutes a challenge precisely to the excluding definitions and standards of judgment of that which has

been central to the curriculum, because women have been excluded and judged lacking in the culture that produced that scholarship" (Minnich, p. 281).

Feminist scholarship brings to the surface and speaks aloud the assumptions present in the traditional curriculum. The "invisible paradigms" that guide the development of syllabi have power in "what we agree to call the first instance, for this primary example often serves to define how everything that follows on the syllabus will be perceived" (Schuster and Van Dyne, 1985,p.164). A feminist process of course development seeks to "devise strategies for complicating the framework, such as pairing familiar and unfamiliar texts" in order to avoid the valuing of other angles of vision only inso far as they correspond to the original perspective (Schuster and Van Dyne, p. 164). Feminist process in course design takes into account the "hidden curriculum," what students learn from the process of the course in addition to what they learn from the course content (Smithson, 1990, p. 16).

Feminist pedagogy, however, moves beyond simply a critique of the status quo, important as that critique may be. A feminist pedagogy produces new and positive ways of interaction between student and teacher, ways which ultimately enhance learning by involving the whole self in the process. Feminist pedagogy rests on the commitment to taking women seriously. This means, as Adrienne Rich puts it,

> . . .Taking ourselves seriously: recognizing that the central responsibility of a woman to herself, without which we remain

> always the Other, the defined, the object, the victim: believing that there is a unique quality of validation, affirmation, challenge, support, that one woman can offer another; believing in the value and significance of women's experience, traditions, perceptions; thinking of ourselves seriously, not as one of the boys, not as neuters, or androgynes, but as <u>women</u> (Rich, 1979, p. 24).

Taking women seriously in the feminist classroom means taking the women students seriously, their experiences, their emotional and intellectual lives. Feminist pedagogy counters the patriarchal denial of the authority of women's experiences, perspectives, emotions and intellects by affirming them (Friedman, 1981).

With this foundation, feminist pedagogy uses the experiences of women students to build the course content and process of the classroom. "One way to do this is by the use of the 'self as subject.' Student educational autobiographies in education courses and family trees and family history in history courses are examples of this approach" (Maher, 1985, p. 41).

Utilizing student experience in course design and process contributes to another facet of feminist pedagogy, the commitment to collaboration. "Feminist educators build cooperation into the classroom by utilizing instructional methods in which students are accountable for their own and others' learning. . .Learning is structured so that individual competitiveness is not helpful to a student's success; cooperation, however, is" (Schniedewind, 1985, p. 75). This collaborative approach takes not only the individual student as learner seriously, but asks each student to

take her colleagues seriously as co-learners whose education can be enriched by the participation of each woman.

A collaborative approach, however, necessitates the sharing of authority in the classroom between students and teachers.

> In interactive and democratic teaching modes the most common form of communication is discussion, not lecture. The teacher (or student) raises a problem from the readings; students explore its meaning and ramifications, relate it to their own experiences, consider solutions and so on. The teacher may have been responsible for the selection of the reading and the framing of the problem, but the discussion legitimizes the experience of all in analyzing it. Hence, both teacher and students can play the role of both experts and learners (Maher, 1985, p. 43).

The collaborative teacher must be willing to give up some of her/his traditional authority, not as an intellectual resource, but as the only legitimate source of information and interpretation (Friedman, 1981). Power is understood, not as power over, but rather as the ability to empower. As Magda Lewis states,

> By fusing women's emotional and concrete lives through feminist critique, it is possible to make problematic the conditions under which women learn, and perhaps to make a feminist political agenda viable in women's own lives wherein they can transcend the split between personal experience and social form (Lewis, 1990, p. 485).

As Lewis indicates, a sharing of power and authority is unlikely to happen without some resistance on the part of students (Anderson and Grubman, 1985) and significant conflict (Schuster and Van Dyne, 1985). However, by acknowledging the conflict and the silences of resistance, even these can be components of learning (Thorne, 1989; Schuster and Van Dyne, 1985). "Openly acknowledged conflict is the expression of

movement, the outward sign of the necessary condition for revision of the status quo" (Schuster and Van Dyne, 1985, p. 171).

Finally, feminist pedagogy takes into account the need for those who have traditionally been silenced to discover and use their own unique voice. Maher calls collaborative and interactive feminist pedagogy, "a pedagogy appropriate for voicing" (Maher, 1985, p. 30). It is a pedagogy that "first recognizes the androcentric denial of all authority to women and, second, points out a way for us to speak with an authentic voice not based on tyranny" (Friedman, 1981, p.207). The claim to an authentic voice, the ability to authoritatively articulate one's own experience as a woman and have that experience valued and respected and recognized as a source for learning is the essence of feminist pedagogy.

FEMINIST PEDAGOGY AT THE BRYN MAWR SUMMER SCHOOL

In looking at the history and development of the Bryn Mawr Summer School it is important to keep in mind several issues. First, the founders of the School, M. Carey Thomas and Hilda Worthingon Smith provided complementary perspectives on the educational endeavor. While Thomas was a feminist, her ideas on education, its processes and methods, were grounded in the traditional education offered to men. Hilda Smith, however, brought an understanding to the School of the need for a different educational method for adult women. It is therefore, fair to say that the School's roots began in both feminism and the progressive education of John Dewey. As Heller points out,

> While it appears that the quality of the educational program contributed to the school's effectiveness -- well-trained academics and activists taught an innovative curriculum to carefully chosen students -- its force derived in part because it fulfilled a need not met by other institutions. The School was in the vanguard of education programs for women workers, offering them scholarships, support, and awareness of their individual and group potential (Heller, 1984, p. 125).

Second, while it is true that the social critique offered at the School was not a critique of patriarchy per se, but rather a critique of economic and social power structures, many respondents to Heller's 1982 survey "wrote of acknowledging for the first time their collective identity as working women" (Heller, 1984, p. 125).

In spite of the above qualifiers, it still seems reasonable to understand the Bryn Mawr Summer School as an experiment in feminist pedagogy. The experience of the women workers in their respective industries was taken with the utmost seriousness. Those experiences framed the content and provided the method for the School's evolving curriculum, increasing in importance with the move to the unit method of instruction. Related to this commitment was the utilization of collaborative process in setting the theme for each summer's School, and the particular ways each theme would be explored within a given unit (Schneider, 1941, p. 94).

The cooperative design and the discussion format generated an enthusiasm for learning in the women as both they and the faculty undertook the "adventure" (Smith, 1929). As Esther Peterson put it:

> Because here it was there, and it was real, they wanted to learn. It wasn't a matter of how do you prepare to get people to want it, it was how do you get them enough stuff. It was a complete reversal of what I had been led to believe teaching was (Filmaker's Library, 1985).

The process of education became, "a sharing of experience and a working out together of the problems that confront the School" (Smith, 1929, p. 93).

Authority became shared and power became empowerment at the School as faculty, administrators, and students learned together, wrestled with issues together, and governed together. In part because of the residential nature of the School, but also as a result of the conscious engagement of both the intellectual and emotional self in the educational process, students not only learned, they grew (Heller, 1984). Through the struggle to find and articulate a common language and voice (Smith, 1929), students gained the confidence to participate fully not only in the School, but in other areas of their lives (Heller, 1984).

Ironically, the very success of the School ultimately led to its closure. As students moved with their newfound understanding, confidence, and voices beyond the walls of the School, they became involved in activities which directly challenged the economic and social status quo (Heller, 1984; Schneider, 1941). Their involvement in the world beyond led financial supporters of the School to withdraw support from such a "radicalized" environment and the School could not survive.

> Within its ivied walls it mixed ideologies, social classes, and races in unique and important ways. As a collective women's experience it was without peer. Communal living and studying, conducted in an atmosphere of mutual respect and

admiration, deepen understanding as no textbook, rally, or lecture ever can (Heller, 1984, p. 128).

What is to be learned from the feminist experiment at the Bryn Mawr Summer School? First, sustained feminist method in education is possible. A commitment to women's learning makes possible collaborative process, shared authority, and empowerment. The lives of the women of the Summer School are the clearest example. Many went on to positions in government and as union organizers. Helen Selden went to Barnard College; Sophie Schmidt Rodolfo established with her husband a vocational school in the Philippines; Elizabeth Lyle Huberman went to work for the United Mine Workers; Carmen Lucia became Vice-president of the milliner's union (Filmaker's Library, 1985; Heller, 1984).

Second, the experience of the Bryn Mawr School shows that feminist pedagogy is dangerous. Feminist process changes students and teachers in ways that are irrevocable. Students and teachers offer active challenge to the comfortable status quo of the privileged. And those in power will resist that challenge, as did the financial supporters of the School.

The vision of M.Carey Thomas in the Saharan Desert took shape in ways she could not have imagined. It produced a legacy of women empowered to work for justice and change. Not only were the lives of the 600 or so women who attended the School changed because of it, but their lives affected other lives, rippling change far beyond the ivy walls of Bryn Mawr.

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