Chapter 5: Feminist pedagogy as a corrective to patriarchal models of caring

INTRODUCTION

In chapter 4, I concluded that women need to develop a more critical awareness of patriarchy and its various manifestations within the church, in solidarity with other women, to ensure that their caring work is not co-opted into a patriarchal agenda but can be transformative for themselves and others. An understanding of social analysis and the complex causes of issues is also important so that women are able to engage more effectively and collectively as moral agents in relation to the broader social and economic issues.

Recognising that the 'sites of struggle' against patriarchy are within women, as well as within their homes and the church, this chapter shifts the discussion to the theological educational context and processes of formation of women's agency in engaging critically with both the external and internalised forms of their oppression. This will be followed in chapter 6 by a discussion of how the principles of feminist pedagogy can be applied in the training of women for ministry.

We are dealing here with both an ethical issue as well as an educational one. As chapter 2 has shown, moral decisions and actions are dependent on women being subjects of their decisions and choices. But moral behaviour is also influenced by the character of the person and their maturity to be able to make moral decisions, to take responsibility, be accountable for them, and be committed to seeing them through. But, women's socialisation in the church and in society has created a model for 'the good woman' which is submissive, accommodating and compliant with authority – things that detract from women's ability to act as heteronomous moral beings. This affects the way women respond to demands for caring and often lead to lack of self-care and uncritical caring of others.

Thus, the moral formation of women requires that these tendencies are countered and women are supported to develop the character, the will, the insights and judgment to become the moral beings they are intended by God to be, as well as acquiring the

requisite analytical skills on which to base their moral decisions. This places demands on the aims and processes of pedagogies that are adopted. This chapter proposes that feminist pedagogy has a contribution to make in support of women's development as moral beings and critical carers.

> Jean Barr (1999:113,115,123) describes feminist pedagogy in the following way:

> Feminist pedagogy arose out of the failure of Freire's[1] critical pedagogy to address the issue of gender... It challenges those epistemological communities that have been dominated by privileged white men… and creates spaces for women to speak, for listening to what women's silence has to say …, and the inclusion of the body and emotions in notions of rationality and knowledge. Its focus is on the knower, that which is known, and the processes of coming to that knowledge. Thus it incorporates a scrutiny of content, of learning processes and of relationships within the learning environment. At its heart is a political challenge to notions and structures of knowledge and power.

Different feminist theorists have contributed richly to this field of study from a range of perspectives and a number of them, as well as theologians who have contributed to the discussion, will be referenced during this chapter, e.g. (Anderson 1998, Barr 1999, Belenky 1986, Goldberger 1986, Horsman 2000, Maher 1994, Oduyoye 2001, Phiri 2002, Rakoczy 2004, Stanton 1996, Weiler 1988, 1991) as I examine the following themes:

- power and knowledge

- women, voice and subjectivity

- ways of teaching and learning

- learning environments.

5.1 TO WHAT END AND WHAT MEANS? – THE POLITICS OF KNOWLEDGE AND POWER

If a central goal of feminist pedagogy is to support learners in critiquing patriarchy and its locations and modes of operation within teaching and learning, then questions about what we are educating women for, and what paradigms underpin the educational models

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[1] Paulo Freire, a Brazilian educator is best known for his liberating pedagogy described in his book *The Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (1970) in which he challenges the banking methods of traditional education which helped to maintain the existing power relations in society. His philosophy and methods of education for liberation sought to empower those who were poor and disempowered in society. His ideas are developed in more detail in section 5.1.2.3.

that are selected, are important. They, in turn, raise the deeper questions about how knowledge and power within educational institutions are understood and how these are reflected within programmes with women. In this section I investigate these questions and relate them to a discussion of theological education of women.

5.1.1 Different goals of feminist pedagogy

Jean Barr's description of different pedagogical approaches and their articulating agendas is helpful to launch our discussion. She identifies the *liberal feminist approach* whose aim is the education of women for equal access. Thus its focus is on mechanisms for inclusion of women into institutions and programmes to support women in increasing their confidence and encouraging their self actualisation, with the emphasis on 'catching up' and 'compensating for past disadvantage' so that they can participate within the mainstream (1999:101).

But women are not only excluded or disadvantaged, women are oppressed and exploited under patriarchy and the capitalist system and this analysis of the problem is addressed by other approaches. *Radical feminists* advocate changing social structures and envision a new social order where women's distinctive contributions, which have been excluded from the mainstream, will make an impact. And so educational objectives are defined in order to develop and support women in their own right, by providing women-only courses and fostering the development of women-centred knowledge 'to foster women's uniqueness' (Barr 1999:102). Women's Studies programmes that proliferated in institutions of higher education in Britain and the United States in the 1980s are examples of such an approach.[2] But, as Barr (:91) says about such courses, 'Starting from where people are, is an excellent starting point but a lousy finishing point! It can too often leave them there'.

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[2] Madoc-Jones & Coates (1996) in their *An Introduction to Women's Studies*, discuss the place of Women's Studies courses in the academy. They served to foreground women's history; recognize and celebrate women's experiences; and supported women to 'find voice' and to challenge the 'received knowledge'. Such courses attempted to recognizes the diversity of women's experience in relation to class, race, ethnicity and sexuality. Lather (1984, 1988) argues for the importance of Women's Studies in creating spaces where debates over power and the production of knowledge can be held, but cautions against the danger of simply replacing 'our own reifications for those of the dominant culture', which leave the student without the conceptual tools necessary for genuine participation in the culture' (:569).

Structuralists, Marxists and socialists criticise the emphasis on subjective experience in such programmes, concentrating instead on the social, political and economic structures which cause women's oppression and exploitation, and seek to promote the transformation of the whole adult education curriculum and its underlying gender assumptions (Barr 1999:102). Here the emphasis is on class, race and culture and how women are located within these structures.

Poststructuralist feminists investigate the theme of gender as it traverses language, politics and subjectivity. This approach raises questions about whose knowledge is being transmitted, whose voice is privileged or marginalised in the process, and how language shapes knowledge and power. It highlights different positionalities as a result of overlapping features of race, class, cultural and sexual orientation, and how women's agency is expressed.

Saddington (in Fenwick 1998:7), although not writing from a gender perspective, provides a helpful framework (see footnote 3) for situating the above approaches within broader adult educational theory. The three basic orientations that he examines – progressive, humanist and radical - each take on specific features depending on the analysis of the problem and the underlying social theory which shapes it.[3] Aspects of Barr's liberal feminist approach approximate Saddington's 'humanist' and 'progressive' orientations with their focus on reform and self actualisation as their underlying theory of social development. And her feminist structuralist (socialist/Marxist) approach comes close to his 'radical' orientation which seeks social transformation as its goal.

Although the poststructuralist position approximates most closely the overall aims of this research with its focus on the development of women's moral agency, I contend that it is not possible to see women's feminist theological education in exclusively one orientation. The progressive model guarantees women access; the humanist ensures that women overcome the effects of their oppression and develop confidence and their self

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[3] Saddington's 3 orientations are an extension of Warner Weil and McGill's (1989) 4 sites or 'villages' which illustrate four different forms of educational practice in adult education: 1. the formal processes of preparing and accrediting learning from experience for entry into higher education or employment (Recognition of Prior Learning RPL); 2. using experiential learning to challenge higher and continuing education schools and curriculum; 3. focusing on social change – where learner is helped to see broader socio-political environment; 4. focusing on individual development, humanist perspective, and personal growth.

esteem; and the structuralist approach ensures that women's gaze moves outward to challenging the social structures that continue to oppress other women. Whilst the schema offers a succinct way of describing particular forms of adult education, it presents the difficulty of any schema in that it suggests an either/or approach.

Table 3: The Three Orientations

Key features	Progressive	Humanist	Radical
Social problem taken most seriously	Social change	Personal meaningfulness	Oppression
Underlying theory of social development	Reform	Self-actualization	Social transformation
Best metaphor for educational practice	Problem solving	Personal growth	Empowerment
Key value	Democracy	Acceptance	Freedom
What counts as knowledge	Judgment and ability to act	Wholeness	Praxis – reflective thought and action
The educator's task	Guidance	Support	Conscientization
How an educated person is described	Responsible	Integrated	Liberated
Role of the learner's life experience	A source of learning and inseparable from knowledge	The source of knowledge and content of the curriculum	Basic to understanding societal contexts and the source of knowledge
Types of experience mainly used	Structured	Personal focus	Self in society

(Saddington, in Fenwick, Tara, J 2001. *Experiential Learning: A Theoretical Critique from Five Perspectives* Information Series No. 385, Ohio: ERIC Clearinghouse on Adult, Career, and Vocational Education Ohio State University Columbus, p.7)

What we can see from the work done by researchers of feminist pedagogies (Maher, Horsman, Barr) is that elements of all three orientations inform the practice of feminist educators. The post structuralist position offers a way of seeing the different positionalities of learners and educators.

However, I part company with post structuralism in its insistence on all truth as relative. Whilst I acknowledge the partial nature of any truth-claim and thus distance myself from views that absolutise one religious perspective over another, or describe other perspectives as 'approaches to the final truth' (Hall 1998:65), I think there is a place for commitment as a member of a faith community without needing to make claims that this 'revelation surpasses or fulfills other religions' (:205). I suggest that each pedagogical approach and orientation, although shaped by a distinct internal logic in

relation to its goals, has a contribution to make in the training of women for ministry. I propose that the goals of theological education for women need to include the following dimensions which I now discuss.

5.1.1.1 Access and support

Agendas that encourage access and support women in entering new spaces where they have hitherto been excluded are necessary. Isabel Phiri (1997:74) raises the question of access for women to theological education in Africa. Because traditionally it has supported a clerical agenda, and ordained ministry has been mainly reserved for men, most women have not been given a chance to study theology. Until fairly recently, only a few theological institutions have accepted women among their staff and students. Of those women who have received theological education in Africa, most have acquired it through departments of religious studies and/or theology at secular universities. Furthermore, as gender issues are generally not dealt with in African theological institutions, most of the trained clergy come out of theological colleges with a classical western theological perspective which may not include gender issues. As a result many clergy oppose the inclusion of women in leadership positions. She adds that women who have not been exposed to gender issues in the church and society also become hindrances to progress. This has motivated the Circle of Concerned African Women Theologians to actively campaign for the inclusion of gender issues in theological institutions and places of higher education.[4]

5.1.1.2 Healing, consciousness and confidence

But for those women who have secured access, once in, strategies that promote healing, consciousness and confidence are also important where women have been marginalised, subordinated and harmed by patriarchy. Groves (1997), drawing on her research among

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[4] The Circle of Concerned African Women Theologians was established in Ghana in 1989 with the aim of developing the writings and publications of African women around four major areas: cultural and biblical hermeneutics, women in culture and religion, history of women, and ministry and theological education and formation. To date it has published about 100 books. The Circle comprises about 400 members from different parts and religions in Africa. It is organised into local circles. In South Africa there are active circles in Cape Town and Pietermaritzburg. In Rakoczy, *In Her Name: Women Doing Theology*, (Pietermaritzburg: Cluster Publications, 2004) pp.22-23.

Anglican Church women in the Eastern Cape, speaks about their 'internal struggle' and the need for women to work on themselves. She suggests there is the danger of externalising the struggle and simply tackling gender issues 'out there'. But she suggests the difficulty is on a more interior level, of claiming freedom in one's more personal spaces and within one's own psyche.[5] But, as Barr has previously commented, this cannot be the end point and other questions have to be addressed, viz. what do women experience within the institution? Whose knowledge and experiences shape the programmes? Who controls the processes of teaching and learning? And after training, what do women encounter in the church?

5.1.1.3 Analysis and challenge

In chapter 4, I discussed women's experiences in society and in the church. Approaches that help women analyse and challenge the systemic dimensions of their experiences of marginalisation, exclusion and victimisation in the church; how women have internalised this oppression; and the way that theological knowledge often legitimates this oppression are essential in theological education. So I suggest that theological education for women needs to hold in tension the values and agendas of these different focuses, in order to respond to where women are coming from and their different needs, while keeping alive the deeper project of transformation of the self and the church. And this is about understanding and transforming relationships and structures of power.

5.1.2 Addressing power and knowledge - the deeper project

I begin my discussion on power with an examination of its different forms and their manifestations within the contexts of the church and theological education. Jarvis (1997) suggests three categories within educational contexts which are helpful for this study.

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[5] Groves claims that 'working on small changes in one's life is a valid form of activism' (1997:42), as is the importance of cultivating 'a grounded and practised spirituality' which Groves suggests is necessary if women are 'to come to a place of healing and to have the wisdom and courage to engage creatively in society' (1997:123).

5.1.2.1 Overt power

This is the power of force or control to dominate or impose conformity, for example an army or police force exerts force. Teachers may be guilty of using the force of corporal punishment, or, without recourse to physical force, may enforce their will using their position of authority to impose on learners (:79). In relation to women in this study it refers to their experiences of abuse and violation in domestic relationships and in the church – situations which often go unchallenged by the church.[6]

5.1.2.2 Covert forms of power

This is what Gramsci terms *hegemony*[7] – whereby a consensus is created in order to have a certain agenda or programme implemented, to prevent other agendas from being implemented; or manipulating the way that issues are discussed when they are actually on the agenda (:79). These forms of power display themselves within committees, councils and other structures of the state and in educational institutions.

Various debates in higher education circles have raised the question of whether the Council for Higher Education's requirements for the registration of institutions and their qualifications are imposing limits on the autonomy of academic institutions, and in our case the theological institutions. In the interests of achieving a broad consensus around its transformation objectives in education, is the state encroaching on academic freedoms, and, in the case of theological education, imposing its agenda which may not always be in line with that of the church?

Chatfield (2004) sees increasing governmental control over academic institutions as an attempt to advance its transformation agenda in the wake of apartheid and Bantu education. He speaks about this as a mixed blessing: On the one hand, through its

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[6] See for example Karen Buckingham (ed). *Violence Against Women: A Resource Manual for the Church in South Africa*, (Pietermaritzburg: PACSA, 1999); Isabel Apawo Phiri, Domestic Violence in Christian Homes: A Durban Case Study, *JTSA* vol 6:2 Dec 2000, pp. 85-110; Susan Rakoczy (ed). *Silent No Longer: The Church Responds to Sexual Violence*, (Pretoria: Southern African Catholic Bishops' Conference, 2000).

[7] The term 'hegemony' is used by Antonio Gramsci in his *Prison Notebooks* (1971) to denote the consensus that is created in society by civil agencies to 'the general direction imposed upon social life by the ruling group' thus making it into popular culture. The task of establishing hegemony is that of the 'organic intellectuals' of the ruling class through the various organs and institutions of the sciences and the arts, educational and media and other cultural institutions. Hegemony is a precondition for dominance. In *The Penguin Dictionary of Critical Theory,* David Macey (London: Penguin Books, 2000), p.176.

systems of registration of qualifications, agreement across theological institutions around outcomes and assessment standards, and monitoring of institutions as service providers able to deliver on quality to their learners, this represents a positive step in raising standards of education in the church and ensuring parity and transferability of credits. On the other hand, he sees its potential dangers in compromises that theological education might be forced to make in serving a political agenda, as well as being sucked into the trap of marketisation of qualifications, the paper chase and the loss of values and important skills for the ministry. Thus he seems to be arguing for vigilance without being reactionary in the service of an ultimate goal of theological education which is for 'liberation, not for control, for service not for authority, and for its purpose - to change the world'.

But the struggle over hegemony does not only operate at the level of the state; within the church male hegemony has been established and covert forms of power are exercised through structures and decision-making bodies and, as pointed out in the previous chapter (4.4.1.5), women find it very difficult to challenge this, especially when they are the only woman, or one of few women.

5.1.2.3 Socialisation

In chapter 2 (2.1.1.2) I discussed the way our socialisation and our psychology shape our attitudes, behaviours, values and moral perspectives. We choose something because we think it is right, but in fact it is right because the view of the society or culture has made it so, and we have been socialised into accepting this as the norm. However, when we talk about moral agency - the reflecting, responsible, acting agent - we allow for the possibility of reflection and critique of these processes of socialisation.

Education is one of the key vehicles of socialisation and through its formal and non-formal processes knowledge, habits, attitudes and values are transmitted in order to create conformity to the *status quo*. While the survival of any group and its ethos depends on degrees of socialisation, Lukes (in Jarvis 1997:80) points to its uncritical and coercive potential:

> …is it not the supreme and most insidious exercise of power to prevent people, to whatever degree, from having grievances by shaping their perceptions, cognitions and preferences in such a way that they can see or imagine no alternative to it, or

because they see it as natural and unchangeable, or because they value it as divinely ordained and beneficial? To assume that the absence of grievance equals genuine consensus is simply to rule out the possibility of false or manipulated consensus by definitional fiat.

At this point I turn to the contribution of Paulo Freire (introduced in footnote 1) in showing how critical pedagogy presents a challenge to processes of socialisation in education. Freire was concerned with issues concerning social difference, justice and transformation within the Latin American context in the 1970s - societies that were characterised by unequal relationships of power between those in positions of economic privilege and political power and the oppressed. His contention was that education is not neutral - it either works in favour of the dominant political and social interests, or it challenges it – and the inequitable relationships in society are facilitated by the traditional banking methods of education (1993:53-67).[8]

Traditional educational processes, based on a reproduction theory of knowledge, encourage people to internalise or accept a subjectivity and a class position that leads to the reproduction of existing power relationships and social and economic structures (Weiler, 1988:7). Freire saw developments in adult education (problem-posing education) as a way of helping adult learners understand these processes, and develop a sense of agency where they became active participants in the process of their own learning through key processes of praxis and conscientisation (:60-67).[9]

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[8] Banking methods refer to a top-down approach to knowledge transmission, through which the teacher is the sole dispenser of knowledge and the students are its passive recipients. In essence this constitutes a non-reflective mode of learning where the learner is the object rather than the subject of the learning process and encourages deference to authority, and the uncritical consumption of knowledge, an immersion in what Freire calls the 'culture of silence'. The learner is alienated from any relationship with the material to be learnt thereby constituting 'a process of cultural alienation'. It also facilitates what Freire called 'cultural invasion', since the learner becomes vulnerable to ideas imposed from above (ideas related to the dominant culture) and from without (ideas disseminated as part of a process of 'cultural imperialism'. In Peter Mayo, *Gramsci, Freire & Adult Education.* (London: Zed Books, 1999) p.59.

[9] *Praxis* is the process of *action* and *reflection* with the aim of making changes to transform the world. Both aspects are crucial: without reflection it is mindless activism, without action it is empty theorizing. In Mayo, *Gramsci, Freire & Adult Education.* (London: Zed Books, 1999) p.63. *Praxis* is developed through the process of conscientization (*conscientização*) which is the deepening of consciousness. It involves being able to see contradictions in the social, political, and economic dimensions and to take action against the oppressive elements of reality (:64).

Griff Foley (1999) suggests that the most important learning occurs as people struggle against oppression, as they try to make sense of what is happening to them, and how to deal with it. Learning can be a process of conscientization. Through processes of social action people learn how power works; they acquire self-confidence in action against it; and realise the importance of support of one another as 'a community of actors' that can make a difference (in Fenwick 2001:41).

Feminist educators have drawn from Freire's critical pedagogy but have inserted gender as a key component within it (Weiler 1991, Barr 1999). Weiler (1991:27) suggests that one of Freire's assumptions in his *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* is that in struggling against their oppression, the oppressed will move toward true humanity. But this leaves the multiple forms of oppression that different actors experience unaddressed. Also, and something we will consider later in this chapter, the role of the teacher is far more complex than Freire suggests, and does not take into account the subject positions of the teacher (see 5.3.2):

> the assumption is made that the teacher is "on the same side" as the oppressed, and that as teachers and students engage together in a dialogue about the world, they will uncover together the same reality, the same oppression, and the same liberation (:28).

In chapter 2 (2.2.1.1), I explored the way that feminist theory takes into account the question of different subjectivities and does not presume an homogenous experience of oppression. Further, that it interrogates the layered natures of oppression within particular contexts and the nature of the power relations that operate within them, including that of the teacher and learners. Later in chapter 3 (3.3.3.3), I pointed out different ways of understanding power: as a commodity held and exercised by an individual, group or institution over another, or as something that flows between people for their mutual empowerment. I also examined Foucault's notion of power as discourse and Scott's analysis of resistance of subjugated groups. But Foucault also raises the question of knowledge power, which I want to examine below in relation to theological education, as well as the ways in which women participate and resist within this discourse.

5.1.3 Whose knowledge, what knowledge?

Knowledge and skills are not neutral but are culturally constructed (Tobias 1990) and the selection of which knowledge should be taught or accorded status is a political question (Bourdieu 1980).[10] Yet, as Tobias suggests, learners' attention and critique is often diverted away from these broader political questions in a process which actually subverts their resistance to external control, and 'subjugates them to an internalised disciplinary gaze' (in Fenwick 2001:42). Regarding the privileging of certain knowledge over others, Harding (1996:444) points to the powerful interests in maintaining the dominance of certain knowledge systems. Contending that while all 'knowledge is local', some forms of local knowledge systems (LKS) are more powerful because they have access to more of the resources and can control others. For example, the modern Northern scientific knowledge has great power and also has been able 'to siphon knowledge from other LKS giving nothing in return, leaving the other LKS mere empty husks of their former selves'. At the same time, she suggests, it has remained remarkably ignorant of the value of the other LKS:

> The production of systematic ignorance has accompanied the production of systematic knowledge in these most powerful of knowledge systems no less than in less powerful ones (:445).

Mary Grey (1989:9) gives examples of subjugated knowledges[11] to include 'the wisdom of the elderly, of North American Indians, of those skilled in alternative medicine, of the spiritual gurus of different faith traditions, as well as the lost wisdom of women through the ages'. But let me discuss the way Africans' and women's knowledge have been subjugated, especially with regard to religious knowledge.

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[10] Tobias and Bourdieu are both quoted extensively in Fenwick, Tara, J 2001. *Experiential Learning: A Theoretical Critique from Five Perspectives* (Information Series No. 385) Columbus, Ohio: ERIC Clearinghouse on Adult, Career, and Vocational Education Ohio State University.

[11] Subjugated knowledge refers to a whole group of knowledges pointing to the specific history of subjugation, conflict and domination which have been lost or deliberately erased by the triumphalistic framework.

5.1.3.1 Africans′ knowledge

Postcolonialist writers echo this challenge to western epistemological imperialism, claiming that all histories, experiences and learning have been associated in some way with colonisation, and that education has been a colonising experience which has created oppressions but also multiple resistance (Fenwick 2001:40). Gabriel Setiloane (1986:1) laments the brainwashing and conditioning of modern urbanised Africans who often 'look back with shame at their pre-westernised culture, denigrating it as 'savage' or 'brutal' which, he suggests, is evidence of the way western images have been internalised.[12] John Pobee (1990:194) raises such a critique with regard to theological knowledge in Africa which he says is under 'North Atlantic captivity and inheritance' as a consequence of colonialism and the missionary endeavour. For the Word to become flesh in Africa there is a need for recontextualisation, for 'a new *skenos* (Greek: tent), which is African and communicates to *homo africanus* and theology like theological education becomes an instrument of *skenosis*, a tabernacling of the eternal word of God in Africa too (John 1:14)' (:195). To achieve this, he suggests that many of the inherited assumptions have to be put to the test, one of them being the scientific method which 'has to be tested in the context with a view to making it a relevant tool' (:196); the other is the influence of liberal philosophy which Pobee claims has led to a separation between faith and life, something which is alien to the African mentality, as well as to 'authentic biblical faith' (:197). He proposes that the curriculum of theological education has been shaped by colonial powers to suit their agenda and not the socio-political needs of African people, and even though Africans have taken over, the agenda has not changed. 'Autonomy has not necessarily meant the wiping out of North Atlantic captivity' (:198).

While Pobee laments the absence of the African subject with regard to theological knowledge, it is our task to lament the absence of women as subjects of religious knowledge.

5.1.3.2 Women′s knowledge

Various feminist theorists argue that dominant knowledge practices disadvantage women by (1) excluding them from inquiry, (2) denying them authority over their knowledge, (3)

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[12] Gabriel M Setiloane, *African Theology: An Introduction*, (Johannesburg: Skotaville, 1986).

denigrating their 'feminine' cognitive styles and modes of knowledge, (4) producing theories of women that represent them as inferior, deviant, or significant only in the ways they serve male interests, (5) producing theories of social phenomena that render women's activities and interests, or gendered power relations, invisible, and (6) producing knowledge (science and technology) that is not useful for people in subordinate positions, or that reinforces gender and other social hierarchies (Stanford 2003:1).

Western epistemologies have been largely rooted in the Cartesian rationalist model,[13] characterised by binaries or separations – of the subjective knower and objective knowledge which can be controlled; between reason and emotion; and mind and body. What this has meant is that other ways of knowing have been seen to be non-rational. Anderson (1998:8) suggests that the dominant western philosophies of religion have been based on these notions of rationality, where rationality has been equated with masculinity and the male subject, while excluding femininity which has been associated with the non-rational (:31). As a result, women's memory, knowledge and wisdom have been suppressed in Christianity (Grey 1989:154). What we are about as feminist theologians and researchers is the recovery of this subjugated knowledge by challenging epistemological frameworks that have valorised one form of knowledge over others, and separated abstract knowledge from the living, feeling, embodied lives of women and other people.

Feminist theorist (Harding 1986)[14] describes three different feminist epistemologies in evidence: feminist empiricism, feminist standpoint epistemology, and feminist postmodernism. *Feminist empiricism* seeks the same objective knowledge and uses the same methods as empirical realism in its search for evidence and its application of reasoning.[15] Feminist empiricists insert feminist values into empirical inquiry, and criticise scientific methods where they are biased against women. Feminist empiricists are concerned with the impact on inquiry of gender, race, class and other inequalities.

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[13] According to the dominant tradition of western philosophy, 17th century philosopher, Descartes is known as the symbolic father of modern philosophy and epistemology (Anderson 1998:105).

[14] Sandra Harding, *The Science Question in Feminism,* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1986).

[15] Empiricism is the view that experience and sensory data provide the primary source for all knowledge. Empiricists held that the content of experience could be described in objective and neutral terms.

Scientific inquiry is seen as a fundamentally social process and the basic subjects of knowledge may even be communities or networks of individuals (Stanford 2003:16-17).

Feminist standpoint epistemology privileges women's knowledge in relation to experiences of oppression in gender relations, and of social and psychological phenomena in which gender is implicated. Many feminist standpoint theorists support the view that the development of gender identities leads males and females to acquire distinctively masculine and feminine cognitive styles. The masculine cognitive style is abstract, emotionally detached, analytical, and oriented toward values of control or domination. The feminine cognitive style is concrete, practical, embodied, emotionally engaged, intuitive, relational, and oriented toward values of care. These cognitive styles are reinforced through the distinctive types of work assigned to men and women. The feminine cognitive style is said to be superior because it overcomes the dichotomy between the subject and object of knowing and because it encourages an ethics of care which is superior to an ethics of domination, which, as we have seen, is a position held by Gilligan and others (Stanford 2003:9-12).

Feminist postmodernism rejects claims of any privileged knowledge, and emphasises instead the 'contingency and instability of the social identity of knowers, and consequently of their representations'. It rejects all universal claims about women, gender and patriarchy, suggesting instead that there is a proliferation of meanings for each (:13-15). Feminist postmodernists see behind the assertion of a universal woman's viewpoint the perspective of relatively privileged white women (Lugones & Spelman 1983).[16]

As suggested previously (chapter 2, 2.2.1.1), acknowledging the different experiences of sexism as mediated by race, class and other social locations is critical. However, as critics of feminist postmodernism suggest, in rejecting the category of 'woman' and insisting on the infinite fragmentation of perspectives, it precludes critical analysis of large-scale social forces that affect women (Benhabib 1995),[17] and reduces the possibility for any effective action among women with different identities. The fact

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[16] Maria Lugones and Elizabeth Spelman, Have We Got a Theory for You! Feminist Theory, Cultural Imperialism, and the Demand for 'The Woman's Voice'?, *Women's Studies International Forum*, 1983: 6, pp. 573-581.

[17] Seyla Benhabib, Feminism and Postmodernism, In Benhabib, Seyla, Judith Butler, Drucilla Cornell and Nancy Fraser, *Feminist Contentions*, (New York: Routledge, 1995).

that women in different social positions may experience sexism differently does not mean they have nothing in common — they still suffer from sexism (MacKinnon 1999).[18] As Thistlethwaite (1989:141) has said, there is a way to hold their 'otherness in tension', making it possible to engage in collective action against sexism and other forms of oppression (Russell 1988:28).

Anderson (1998:67) argues that both feminist empiricism and standpoint theologies try to insert women's voice into the traditional discourse of rationality which she believes is fundamentally flawed because it ignores emotion, desire and embodiment.

> …scientific objectivity excludes and devalues female desire. The recovery of both the content of female desire and the expressions of sexual difference becomes highly important for any feminist epistemology of religious belief; this content and these expressions have been repressed by patriarchal configurations of rational belief.

The influence of Greek dualism on Christian thinking has led to dichotomies like body/spirit (soul), flesh/spirit, and reason/nature, with negative associations attached to women, flesh and nature. 'Our body-self experience includes our sexuality, the one aspect of humanness which Christian tradition has been most afraid to include in the image of God' (Rakoczy 2004:45). The medieval mystics Hildegard of Bingen, Julian of Norwich (Jantzen 1988), Teresa of Avila all stressed emotion, desire and the body in their mystical writings.

Anderson does not support postmodernism's claim of the 'death of the rational subject', but instead argues for a revisioning of rationality to include women – embodiment and desire (:55). She (:xii, 45) proposes that *feminist post-structuralism* which challenges all dualisms, does not privilege the female over the male. However, it rejects notions of 'male rationality, its objectivity and the patriarchal beliefs which go with it' and asserts that these have 'resulted in violent and oppressive consequences for women, other nonprivileged persons, and animals' (:49). A point that Gebara (2002:73) makes, which is important for this thesis, is that any exclusionary knowledge is unethical 'as it reduces the other to oneself'. By inserting gender into rethinking the

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[18] Catherine MacKinnon, *Toward a Feminist Theory of the State*, (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1999).

epistemological schema 'makes suspect the experiential reality of this schema and also denounces maintaining injustices against women at the level of consciousness (:75).

This discussion of western feminist epistemological approaches needs to be seen alongside other frameworks that shape women's theologies in Africa. Oduyoye speaks about two influences that underpin the theologies of African women – one is the 'spiritual universe of African traditional religion' which shapes women's views on the interconnectedness of all life and harmony with nature, human beings and the divine reality; and the second is the context of suffering and struggle which dominates all experiences of doing theology: [19]

> …women do theologies with their bodies: fetching water over long distances, chopping wood for fire to prepare food for the families, working in the fields – and in the homes of the middleclass and upper class. These actions of care and concern are the first theological voices of African women.[20]

Phiri, Govinden and Nadar (2002:2) describe the different theologies and their relationship to feminism among women in Africa. They suggest that women in Africa straddle a wide spectrum of positions in response to their experiences of patriarchy in their cultures and churches, ranging from active intervention or radicalism, to negotiating roles and identities, to ameliorative, reformist, even collaborative, strategies of engagement'. They draw attention to the communal, non-hierarchical and inclusive nature of doing theology expressed in circular symbols of 'circle' 'table', 'threading beads' (:15). Phiri *et al* extend the circular symbol to include the word 'campfire'.

> We invite you to come and sit around the campfire with us. Our foremothers, our present mothers and our future mothers are going to tell us stories. These are stories of women of faith in Africa (:1).

Thus when we are discussing the subjectivity of women we need to bear in mind that we do not only speak about the individual voice but also about the collective voice. As Usher *et al* suggest:

> Indeed, the very idea that this category of self is definitive of subjectivity is a

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[19] MA Oduyoye, *Introducing African women's theology*, (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2001).

[20] Oduyoye in Susan Rakoczy IHM, *In Her Name: Women Doing Theology*, (Pietermaritzburg: Cluster Publications, 2004) p.19.

specifically Western cultural phenomenon. In other cultures and in Western culture at different historical periods, subjectivity, or the sense of self, has been seen as relationally constituted – for example, in relation to family and kinship, to community, to the natural world (1997:102).

Feminism (and African culture) challenges western culture's idea of universal or fixed categories of the 'monological self' (:103). Instead it sees the self as located in 'concrete social relations and cultural texts' (:102) and that through our stories we are constructed. When we tell stories about our experiences, they are not simply stories about ourselves as entities that exist independently of the story, but they are also stories that help to shape ourselves. And so our subjectivity is constantly being shaped and storied into being, and this story has to be 'read' or interpreted, as any story would (:104). Rebecca Chopp (1995:21) speaks about 'narrativity as the active agency of writing one's own life: the ongoing construction of one's own life in the context of human and planetary relations' (:21).

In the light of this analysis I suggest that three major aspects are necessary in revisioning theological education. *Firstly*, the epistemological frameworks which underpin the theological knowledge that is being reproduced and taught as 'truth' will need to be scrutinized. This challenge to the 'symbolic universe' (Maxey 1972:260) that underpins traditional theological knowledge will open up new discussions about notions of God and ways of describing God in relationship to humankind and the universe. As previously suggested (chapter 2, 2.2.2), it calls for new ways of thinking about teachings like sin, grace and salvation that are liberating for women, and of interpreting scripture and the doctrines of creation, incarnation and redemption in ways that speak to women's experiences and invite women's full participation.[21]

Secondly, women's diverse experiences need to be included in the curriculum *and* the language they use to describe them. *Thirdly*, drawing on intuition and the emotions as

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[21] See in particular Rosemary Radford Ruether, *Sexism and God-Talk: Towards a Feminist Theology* (1983); Mary Grey, *Redeeming the Dream: Feminism, Redemption and Christian Tradition* (1989); Sallie McFague, *Models of God in religious language* (1982); *Models of God: Theology for an Ecological, Nuclear Age*, (1988), *The Body of God: An ecological theology* (1993); Susan Frank Parsons, *Feminist Theology as Dogmatic Theology* (2002a).

legitimate forms of knowledge, will open up the spaces for issues that affect women's bodies – rape, abuse, HIV and AIDS, and hunger - to be inserted centrally into the theological agenda.

This implies that women in theological education need to claim their own religious experience and begin to produce new ways of speaking about it so that they can become the subjects of their own knowledge, which up until now, has been defined by men. It also raises questions about women's individual choices and responsibilities as moral agents in relation to the group or social context within which the individual is nurtured and socialised. It is necessary for Christian women whose stories are shaped by their familial and cultural connections, as well as by their church and religious affiliations, to assert their agency against the constraints of cultural or religious hegemonic forces and this requires more than an individual moral decision or an act of will. It is here where alternative communities of support and formation are necessary to provide the support for women to make these shifts. We will examine this more carefully in chapter 6.

But not all women are able to tell their stories with confidence or are able to articulate what they know about themselves and their experiences. Many women do not see themselves as agents or of having a voice to speak. They are often uncertain about what they know, and whether their knowledge is of importance unless it has been validated in some way by an external authority. In the next section, I will examine these issues more carefully as I discuss different ways of speaking and authenticating experiences as a further aspect of the work of feminist pedagogy.

5.2 HOW DO WOMEN SPEAK ABOUT WHAT THEY KNOW?

The metaphor of 'voice' has been widely used to describe the individual as knower and the subject of his or her knowledge and experience, in contrast to the silencing or disempowerment of people – women and subjugated others. Feminist theorists have described the different ways that women's voices have been silenced (Maher 1994, Walden, 1995). Is women's silence because women do not have language to speak? Or, is it that nobody is listening to them?[22] Van Schalkwyk (1999:36) citing Brueggemann

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[22] Deborah Cameron (1985) says: 'It is not simply the case that women do not speak. Indeed they are often accused of speaking too much. Rather, it is the case that women do not have language to speak'. Jantzen

(1987:131) speaks about the members of a muted group who may be forced to speak with an ambiguous and ironic voice. This is a strategy to project their personal voice through a medium of the dominant culture thus leaving 'embedded messages which are invisible to their mentors and minders but which are decipherable to those who know what they are looking for'. The following discussion will suggest that women do speak, in many different voices, and silence is one variant. But some of the ways that women speak have not been valued and so they are not listened to seriously. This has impacted negatively on women in formal spaces, including the academy, which we will look at more carefully in a later section.

Feminist pedagogy seeks to help women speak in their different voices, and to create spaces for listening to what women's silence has to say (Barr 1999:115).

5.2.1 'Women's Ways of Knowing'- the framework

Belenky *et al* (1986) in their classic work *Women's Ways of Knowing* have provided a useful framework for helping to analyse women's voices and subjectivity.[23]

(1998), on the other hand, suggests that 'women do have the language but men refuse to listen'. In Trisk, *Who do I say that I am?* (Cape Town: University of Cape Town, 2002) p.34. De Vault (1999:61) suggests that women's 'mutedness' does not imply that women are silent but that 'they speak in ways that are limited and shaped by men's greater social power and control'.

[23] Mary Field Belenky, Blythe McVicker Clinchy, Nancy Rule Goldberger, Jill Mattuck Tarule, *Women's Ways of Knowing: The development of Self, Voice, and Mind,* (New York: Basic Books, 1986). In their research they worked with 135 women from diverse backgrounds over a period of time to investigate the way family and school shaped their understanding of themselves and ways of making decisions. In the analysis of their findings they identified five different perspectives from which women view reality and draw conclusions about truth, knowledge, and authority (1986:15). Their research is a response to the work done by William Perry in 'Forms of Intellectual and Ethical Development in the College Years' (1970) where he tracked the epistemological developments that students undergo as they progress through their educational experience. He named the following positions:
1. basic dualism – students see everything in black and white, right and wrong, good and bad; they depend on authority to give them the truth; they are passive learners
2. multiplicity – where the student realises that there are a range of opinions and perspectives and so this faith in the authority is shaken; s/he starts to cut out his/her own path and opinions
3. relativism subordinate – the teacher's insistence on evidence to substantiate position encourages the student to actively cultivate an analytical and evaluative approach within the discipline
4. relativism – the realization that truth is relative, and meanings are constructed. 'It is within relativism that Perry believes the affirmation of personal identity and commitment evolves (p.10).
  I do not agree with Perry's position that all truth is relative. Whilst I believe that all knowledge is situated and therefore relative, as a Christian I do believe that there is an ultimate truth, God.
  As Perry had used only a few women in his original study and only men to validate his original schema, Belenky *et al* chose to listen only to women stating that 'The male experience has been so powerfully

… our interviews with women uncovered salient themes .. related to the experience of silencing and disempowerment, lack of voice, the importance of personal experience in knowing, connected strategies in knowing, and resistance to disimpassioned knowing. Such themes suggested to us that there are hidden agendas of power in the way societies define and validate and ultimately genderize knowledge; the stories women told depicted a variety of different ways women understand, accommodate, and resist societal definitions of authority and truth (Goldberger 1996:7).

They describe five different perspectives from which women view themselves and reality, and draw conclusions about truth, knowledge, authority and ethical decisions. A brief summary of the five perspectives is in order before I examine the framework and its application more carefully.

5.2.1.1 Silence

This is where women perceive themselves as mindless and voiceless – their voice is replaced by the voice of whichever external authority is present. For them, authorities are all-powerful, and in order to survive they blindly obey and allow the 'other' to shape their choices. They are isolated from others and do not seek nor find opportunities for dialogue with others. There is little awareness of the power of language for sharing thoughts and insights. Many women who fit into this category of silence have been, or continue to be abused, and they have not yet had an opportunity to work through these experiences, so often their silence is a cry for help (Belenky 1986:23-34).

5.2.1.2 Received knowledge

Received knowledge refers to being able to receive and reproduce knowledge from external authorities but not being capable of creating one's own knowledge. Moral choices are based on what the authority says is right, rather than on what they think might be right. Intent on listening, these knowers seldom speak up or give an opinion.

In looking outward for self-knowledge, received knowers organize their attempts at self-definition around the social expectations that define concrete social and occupational roles(:50).

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articulated that we believed we would hear the patterns in women's voices more clearly if we held at bay the powerful templates men have etched in the literature and in our minds' (p.9).

These women often devote themselves to the care and empowerment of others, seeing caring and remaining 'selfless' as central to their life's work (:46). (Belenky 1986:35-51).

5.2.1.3 Subjective knowledge

When women claim subjective truth and knowledge they think about them as personal, private and subjectively known or intuited. For them, only this knowledge is truth. They speak from their feelings and experiences, with their heart. However, they are often reluctant to share their private world and may choose not to reveal their opinions and instead 'retreat into anonymity and surface conformity by adopting a wait-and-see attitude'. They tend to act on what feels right to them, but do not generalise it to others. Although they may listen to the other's views, they do not consider it an obligation to follow them (Belenky1986:52-86).

5.2.1.4 Procedural knowledge

There are two forms of procedural knowledge: separate and connected.

Separate procedural knowing suggests that the woman vests her knowledge in the institution, the discipline, or procedures and methods where 'acquiring and applying procedures for obtaining and communicating knowledge' are important (:95). Feelings and personal beliefs are rigorously excluded (:109). This knower aims for accuracy and precision and even modulates her voice accordingly. What is interesting to note is that sometimes women will operate in private spaces as subjective knowers, and procedurally in formal contexts, thus providing the required analysis for the system, but also holding onto their personal views which may be shared with friends (:109). Choices and decisions are based on impersonal procedures for establishing justice' (:102). (Belenky 1986:87-112).

Connected procedural knowing - While separate knowers favour logic, analysis and debate, *connected knowers* prefer empathy, collaboration and careful listening. They seek dialogue where they can express and hear the other's voice – in conversation and in theory - and understand it well, believing 'that the most trustworthy knowledge comes from personal experience rather than the pronouncements of authorities' (:112-3). They

devise ways to try and understand the experience of others, preferring to understand rather than to judge.

> Procedural knowers feel like chameleons; they cannot help but take on the colour of any structure they inhabit. In order to assume their own true colors, they must detach themselves from the relationships and institutions to which they have been subordinated…and when they do this they may blame themselves for being "selfish" (:129).

While they realise that reason is important, it is not sufficient. These knowers 'tend to espouse a morality based on care' (:102). (Belenky 1986:100-130).

5.2.1.5 Constructed knowledge

Constructed knowers reach the point of seeing all knowledge as contextual with regard to questions of truth, and they experience themselves as creators of knowledge and value both subjective and objective strategies for knowing (:15). They attempt 'to *integrate* knowledge that they felt intuitively was personally important with knowledge they had learned from others' (:134). For them theories are simply ways of trying to understand experience and are not the absolute truth (:138). They understand 'that all knowledge is constructed and the *knower is an intimate part of the known'* (:137). They are both adept at marshalling/critiquing arguments as well as empathetic listening and understanding.

When making decisions and choices they are sensitive to the situation and context, and the complexities of moral dilemmas. They insist on a respectful consideration of the particulars of everyone's needs and frailties, even if that means delaying making decisions or taking action (:149). Further, they strive to translate their moral commitments into action, both out of a conviction that 'one must act' and out of a feeling of responsibility to the larger community in which they live (:150). (Belenky, 131-152).

The capabilities of the constructed knower are very important for women who wish to develop a stronger sense of themselves with a sense of moral agency, and who are able to make decisions to care for themselves and for others within the church and community.

5.2.2 Contribution of 'Women's Ways of Knowing' to feminist pedagogy

While these categories can also be applied more broadly, they have been researched specifically among women which is useful for our purposes here. And despite a number of criticisms that have been leveled at some of the assumptions and conclusions,[24] I suggest that the framework offers useful insights for feminist pedagogy within theological education for women as detailed below.

5.2.2.1 It recognises different modalities of speech

The five voice perspectives allows us to see how women may speak in a number of voices – each one shaped in particular social or contextual relationships. Each voice provides a particular way of responding to the world. This framework helps us understand why some women experience difficulty in speaking publicly, while others are quite confident in engaging in the discourse of the discipline; and some retreat into silence, subjectivity or inconsistent judgments and opinions.

5.2.2.2 It validates subjective knowledge in formal spaces

The underlying assertion in *Women's Ways of Knowing* is that 'connected knowing is not opposed to, but is an instance of, rationality' which is reasoned and thoughtful (Goldberger 1996:11). However, ways of knowing identified as feminine, intuitive/subjective and connected 'have been devalued and discouraged in institutions of

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[24]A number of feminist educators have applied the framework of *Women's Ways of Knowing* within different disciplines, and questioned some of its assumptions and conclusions. Some of these critiques are contained in essays in Nancy Goldberger *et al* (eds). *Knowledge, Difference and Power: essays inspired by Women's Ways of Knowing*, (New York, Basic Books, 1996). I sum up what I consider to be the most useful for our purposes:

 (1) The approach seems to suggest a 'genderization of knowledge' which lends support to the trend within cultural feminism to valorize women's experiences and virtues as superior and different to men's (Goldberger1996:14).

 (2) The research did not deal with the question of how social positionality – race, class, sexual orientation etc. and of how experiences of oppression impact on the construction of knowledge. As a result it seemed to assume that all women have universal concerns based on gender alone and did not include the voices of women who are coloured or economically disadvantaged who use their voices within predominantly white institutions (Bing & Reid, 1996:192-193). See also Maher & Tetrault (1996:167) who see the absence of positionality as 'a silent assumption of whiteness or other aspects of mainstream culture as the norm'.

 (3) Maher & Tetreault (1996:150) question the focus on individuals as knowers rather than on the 'community of knowers'. They speak about the construction of learning, not only in individuals but also in the classroom.

higher learning, in favour of propositional knowledge and abstract, meta modes of knowing, particularly what we call separate knowing, which stresses impartiality and detachment' (Goldberger :9). The potential danger for those whose ways of knowing are different is that he or she may experience a sense of coercion over 'the right way to know' or may feel called on to silence or give up ways of knowing that are devalued.

Kegan (1994:212) distinguishes between two different communication styles prevalent in the classroom and, which he argues, are both legitimate: the *narrative* style (which would incorporate subjective and connected knowing within the Belenky framework) is 'characterised by personalised, experiential, linking story and thoughts that gradually build to a general idea; and the *objective* style (this would include received and procedural knowing) - 'abstract, creating an overarching idea or intellectual framework that establishes and bounds the context for joint exploration'. He challenges the popular way that they are polarised as 'cognitive' and 'emotional', and insists that they do not represent the difference between 'irrational' and 'rational'. The content of either styles could contain both attributes, as he says: 'Each (style) has its own integrity, its own genius'.

5.2.2.3 It highlights the importance of listening

Schweickart (1996) discusses the role of listening in communication. She says that in active listening there has to be a speaker and someone who listens, which is an asymmetrical activity. This contrasts with Habermas' view of communication[25] as a symmetrical activity of argumentation involving two alternating speakers. Schweikart suggests that in this model the listener is reduced to simply agreeing or disagreeing and anticipating the next opportunity to defend himself 'or shoot down what the other has said' (:317). This reduces the potential for active listening and hence of understanding:

> The overestimation of the assertive agency of speaking goes hand in hand with

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[25] In his theory of communicative acts, Jurgen Habermas speaks about communication between free and equal partners (or in Transactional Analysis terminology 'adult to adult' communication). Communication should be aimed at eliminating violence and engaging people in dialogue or negotiation to settle differences, thus helping them gain greater freedom and equality. Those who engage in communication are equals and power relations have to be monitored to ensure that this equality is maintained. Participants in these communicative acts are free to withdraw or join if they choose, In Schweickart, Speech is Silver, Silence is Gold, in Goldberger *et al, Knowledge, Difference and Power,* (New York: Basic Books, 1996) p.317.

the underestimating of the receptive agency (the paradoxical "negative capability") of listening, with the overvaluation of argument, and with the reduction of the goal of "understanding" to that of "agreement".

She questions the privileged role of argument as a way of 'vindicating truth and moral claims', and points instead to forms of 'communicative action oriented towards understanding' that have been obscured and marginalised as a result of the overvaluation of argument (:314). Underpinning active listening is an ethic of care which is in itself an asymmetrical activity involving two different subjects and two different modes of being subjects (:321-322).

In the previous section I have indicated the contribution of this analysis of voice to feminist pedagogy, as well to understanding the ethical voices of women. The table over page draws together the elements of agency and ethical voice for each of the stages identified by Belenky *et al*, and the 3rd column reflect my conclusions about the way each stage may be expressed by women in ministry. It illustrates a progression in ethical responsibility from a position of total withdrawal, to obedience and dependence on an external authority, to a greater awareness of the need to take responsibility for one's own decisions and actions. There is also a development in the locus of concern – from total self-absorption, to extending the gaze beyond self to others. The careful and thoughtful approach of the constructed knower suggests the ability to analyse and weigh up responses in a considered way, and to make choices free of coercion or obedience to an external authority – family, religious, cultural and social. It is this freedom that allows for the acting moral agent to respond in faith and in response to the perceived needs around her. It is evidenced when women respond to their 'call' to minister and to challenge patriarchal attitudes and behaviour, suggesting that they have sought validation for their work and their identity in their faith in God and *beyond* the authoritative voice of the church.

Table 4: The relationship between voice, agency and women in ministry (*my table*)

Voice	Ethical voice and agency	Woman in ministry
Silent	They blindly obey and allow the 'other' to shape their choices.	These women represent those women in our churches who have been abused or wounded in some way; they are totally needy, yet are not able to seek their own care, let alone respond to others' needs.
Received	Moral choices are based on what the authority says is right. Unquestioning obedience to laws, rules and the directives of those in authority suggests that agency is minimal in this stage.	The voice of authority is represented by uncritical reading of Scripture, and unquestioning acceptance of the teachings of the church, the norms of those in positions of authority, as well as cultural norms and family codes.
Subjective	Choices are made on the basis of 'what feels right', but reasons are not easily expressed or analyzed, and there is a tendency to individualistic responses, rather than to generalize a position, encourage others to share it, or mobilize others around them.	These women will exercise their own judgment on what 'feels right' and resist being imposed on them by those in authority in the church. However, they will not easily share their insights outside of their immediate circle of trust and so minimize the possibilities of building support for their different views or actions among others in the church.
Procedural - separate	Choices and decisions are based on the application of established principles and procedures of the institution or discipline. Attention to feelings and personal beliefs is excluded from such decisions as the search is for an 'objective' and reasoned response.	These women understand, accept and apply the rules, procedures and protocols in their ministry. Although they do what is required of them and are loyal to the church and its traditions on a formal or public level, they may hold other views in private. They do not feel comfortable speaking publicly about their own position.
Procedural – connected	The requirements of the discipline or institution are thought to be important in making decisions, but these women are also concerned about the relationships and how others feel in the situation. Trying to balance both these concerns causes tension.	These women will consider both the procedures and their own feelings and assessments of situations before making a decision. They will be inclined to resist the rules if they are not caring of the other, but they will not be totally comfortable and will agonize over 'breaking the rule'.
Constructed	The woman tries to balance the concerns for the immediate situation and the complexities of the moral dilemma. She makes judgments based on broader knowledge and wisdom, as well as trusting her own wisdom and judgment. She engages in action in response to the needs and interests of the larger community.	These women will try to engage actively in the church, and be knowledgeable about its theology and teachings. At the same they are not afraid to speak, or to be critical and considered in their views. They connect with others around issues and actions. Their spirituality is mature enough to discern God's call.

Although Belinkey *et al* insist that their schema is descriptive only and does not represent a progression to a more mature voice (Goldberger 1996:13), in the context of formation of women ministers for interdependent, critical and responsible agency, I believe that the constructed knower needs to be one of the goals of the feminist classroom for women in ministry. However, what is important for the teacher/facilitator in the classroom is to be able to recognise and work with women from where 'they are'. This will be discussed in section 5.3 of this chapter.

In the next section I apply *Women's Ways of Knowing* in a discussion on how women speak about their spirituality – their experiences of God, self and others.

5.2.3 Speaking about God in different voices

Sandra Schneiders (1986:38) speaks about the 'masculinising' of Christian religious experience which has resulted in women often silencing their voices about their religious experiences and accommodating their religious knowledge to fit the predominantly male experiences. The effect of this, she suggests, is the deep sense of exclusion from the divine that women imbibe as part of their sense of who they are. God, to woman, is man 'writ large'. Men are God 'writ small'. God and man belong to the same order of things and from that order women are excluded (:42).

How did the women in the research describe their spirituality and experiences of God, themselves and others as they are exposed to a critique of patriarchy? One participant described her struggle with being challenged to look at the androcentric images of God during the course. When asked how she felt about calling God "mother", she responded: 'I think it is ridiculous'. She explained her resistance to seeing feminine qualities of God by referring to her own biological father who was not an abusive parent, and therefore a good role-model which she could associate with notions of a male God. When pressed to consider her own mother and her qualities, she acknowledged her positive attributes as well. She was also able to see that the positive qualities she had attributed to men and women could also be shared, and that 'strength and protectiveness' and 'gentle, loving and being interested' were not necessarily male or female attributes.

The above interview excerpt presents the reality that not all women wish to appropriate a feminist theoretical/theological position. Lather (1991:59) warns against

simply concluding that women's resistance to consider different symbols and language is necessarily a consequence of false consciousness.[26] Rather educators have a responsibility to teach students the skills of reflexivity and critique, but educators should practise them as well so that we are not guilty of imposing a new ideology (:80).

Another participant suggested that God's gender is not significant within African ways of naming according to the qualities of God:[27]

> 'Concerning gender, God has no gender. God is God according to my understanding. But I don't have any problem if they call Him Father, I don't have because I am relying how I understand God, God is good. If I want to bring God to myself as Father He is my father yes. If I want to bring God as my mom he is my mom He is my everything as I have been saying so I don't have any problem yes. God is God. Maybe what helps me is the understanding in my land in my... how can I say.. yes in my land... because they just call God "Unkulunkulu" just God, just God. They are used to that so that's how I take God. I don't worry myself. And it won't cause me to fight against...it.'

One woman described how she could appropriate a female Christ (Christa) as liberating within her experience of abuse:

> 'Looking at the picture of the 'Christa' [one of the tasks in the course] gave me sudden joy. I have "known" that Christ just happened to be born a man, and that he could equally have been a woman. But the image of a woman under the torture of Christ was shocking, and yet liberating, because it somehow (I am not sure why) gave validity to my own 12 years of abuse. Somehow, they were valid too – they were recognized as torture and humiliation, not just 'oh well, you know, husbands do this.' It was as valid as the suffering a man would undergo.'

Schneiders (1986) suggests that the difficulty of changing symbols and language for God will not be solved by biblical study or systematic theology, for the problem lies in the way our religious imagination has been shaped by patriarchy and hierarchy and so, while in our heads we know this is not the truth, our hearts and imaginations need to be healed. The imagination is at work in the formation of:

- one's self image (this leads to avenues of healing through personal growth, therapy, self awareness, creativity);

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[26] False consciousness is the denial of how our common sense ways of looking at the world are permeated with meanings that sustain our disempowerment. Gramsci (1971) in Lather, *Getting Smart: Feminist Research and Pedagogy With/in the Postmodern.* (New York, London: Routledge, 1991) p.59.

[27] Language about God is sometimes seen be a western 'issue'. However, Oduyoye suggests that although names for God are not gender specific and tend to describe God's character and relationship to people (1997:199), African women who have experienced the Christian God in oppressive ways, need to seek images of God that are liberating for them (:201). See 'The African experience of God through the eyes of an Akan woman' in *The Way* 37, 195-206.

- one's image of the world (this leads into areas of social justice and immersion in projects and programmes to transform our world);
- one's image of God (this leads to a search for a spirituality that heals and integrates the feminine aspects of God into spiritual consciousness).

Each of these 'three basic life-structuring images' – self image, world image, God image - interweave and reinforce one another. For example, if one imagines the world as a finite globe floating in space, God may well be imagined as a finite but very powerful being living someplace in space and acting upon the world. The self, in such an imagination, is a very small creature whose basic relationship with God is one of subjection to an all-powerful world-controller. And again, if one experiences the world as patriarchal, in fact and by divine institution, it is logical to imagine God as the supreme patriarch. A woman with such an imagination must see herself as an inferior version of humanity subject first to human men and ultimately to God. This, she suggests, is the imagination which the church has encouraged in both men and women, where God is presented as a great patriarch whose enormous household is this world. This patriarchal father-God enjoys absolute and unaccountable power over nature and persons, recognising in his male children a certain likeness to himself and placing them in charge of his female children, although in relation to God, we are all his powerless and dependent children (1986:18).

Schneiders uses the term 'therapy of the religious imagination', suggesting that it comes, not only from intellectual activities, but also from more integrated approaches.

> I would like to suggest that just as the self and world images can be healed, so can the God-image. It cannot be healed, however, by rational intervention alone. Repeating the theological truth that God is Spirit may correct our ideas but a healthy spirituality requires a healing of the imagination which will allow us not only to think differently about God but to experience God differently (:19).

She goes on to stress that it is only through healing of this religious imagination that we can be healed of what she terms 'the demonic influence of patriarchy' and the 'neurotic repression of the feminine dimension of divinity'.

> It is absolutely imperative that language, which appeals to the imagination through metaphor, symbol, gesture, and music, be purified of patriarchal overtone, male exclusive references to God, and the presentation of male exclusive references to God, and the presentation of male religious experience as

normative. We must learn to speak to and about God in the feminine; we must learn to image God in female metaphors; we must learn to present the religious experience of women as autonomously valid. The therapy of the imagination is an affair of language in the broad sense of the term, and it is crucial that we cease to trivialize this issue and begin the long process of conversion from idolatry of maleness toward the worship of the true God in spirit and in truth (:71).

A recent research project in which I participated was conducted with a small group of postgraduate women at the University of the Western Cape on the question of women's religious voice.[28] In the research the women grappled with the contradictions between what they experienced of God (the divine) and how it had been named and formulated for them by their religion. By the end of the 4-month research process, all of the women had experienced some change or shift within their spirituality – for some it offered clarification and new insights, and for others further questions and challenges were raised. The findings of the research were as follows:

(1) All the participants were able to see how women were marginalised within their own churches – either at a leadership level, or within the general culture and practice of their church;

(2) They could acknowledge the way scripture and doctrine are used to legitimate women's subordinate positions within the church;

(3) They were able to discuss these issues in an action-research project with other women from their church and were enthusiastic about further work as agents of change in their churches;

(4) The atmosphere of trust and sharing within the group and the combination of cognitive and experiential learning activities were essential to the achievement of these outcomes.

I elaborate on these learning activities as follows: Participants met as a group over a 4-month period and the sessions comprised of a range of discursive and experiential tasks including discussions on theory, a seminar presentation, reading and academic

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[28] The research (unpublished, 2004) was conducted by myself and Professor Tammy Schaeffer with a group of five Christian women who were also post graduate students participating in a module on Women and Spirituality offered by the Women and Gender Studies Unit at University of the Western Cape. Using the framework developed by Belenky *et al* (1986), data was gathered and analysed to assess the ways women spoke about their relationship with God, the authoritative sources for their knowledge about God, and the difficulties which they confronted when deconstructing their religious knowledge and its sources. The research process also attempted to examine the modes and processes that could facilitate such shifts in their religious consciousness.

writing; sharing on personal experiences within their families and churches; spiritual practices including a retreat day, journaling, meditation exercises using the labyrinth, artwork, music and movement; and a mini project with a group of women from their church.

Assessment was based on a combination of personal reflection and academic research, participation at the retreat, a seminar presentation, and a detailed report documenting their project.

The last point (number 4) raises the importance of divergent teaching and learning processes which integrate both formal academic knowledge as well as personal and subjective experiences for the retrieval of women's subjectivity. It also highlights the need for alternative forms of assessment that incorporate traditional modes, e.g. essays, assignments, exams, theses as well as stories, projects, artistic work in order to allow for the fullest expression of women's knowledge.

In summing up this section, I have drawn on the metaphor of 'voice' as a way of describing women as knowers and subjects of their knowledge and experience, and used the five categories that have been developed by *Women's Ways of Knowing* for explaining the different ways that women know, express what they know, view authority and express their moral agency. These categories are important for theological education as they stress the need for sensitivity to different speech modalities and the supports that are needed within each one to bring women 'to speech'. They recognise diverse ways of knowing and speaking about knowledge and challenge the theological classroom to devise teaching and learning strategies that both honour these modalities and extend them. Its focus on the asymmetrical activity of listening as essential within the classroom was noted and how this is consistent with teaching as an ethic of care and its aim of empowering the learner.

The framework also points to different ethical voices which have an impact on the way women respond to moral decisions – some are totally dependent on an external authority to direct their decisions and actions; others demonstrate a greater degree of freedom to draw on internalised values and principles.

The discussion of 'women's knowledge and voice' was then linked to women's spiritual knowledge applying Sandra Schneiders' analysis of the masculinising of Christian spiritual experience, and the need for healing of the religious imagination. In examining a few of the participants' responses to working with feminine images of God, I noted some of the difficulties of appropriating new images. The research conducted at the University of the Western Cape highlighted the importance of processes and alternative learning methods in working at the level of religious symbol and language. This leads us to the next aspect of this chapter – a discussion of how the classroom needs to be differently constructed in order to more effectively support work with 'bringing women to voice', and in particular the role of the teacher and the learning environment.

5.3 PROMOTING WOMEN'S SUBJECTIVITY IN THE CLASSROOM

The previous section began to point towards some of the implications of a feminist pedagogy for teaching and this will be developed more carefully here.

5.3.1 The facilitative role of the teacher

A number of theorists describe the teacher's role in supporting women's subjectivity. Belenky *et al* (1986) use the metaphor of giving birth to explain what they call 'connected teaching'.[29] As midwives, teachers 'assist the students in giving birth to their own ideas' by helping them articulate their questions and new directions (:217). And further: 'Midwife-teachers do not administer anesthesia - they support their students' thinking, but do not do the students' thinking for them or expect the students to think as they do (:218). And midwife teachers help learners to have 'conversations with others – those within the class or in the culture or through theory and to reflect on these conversations' (:219).

Describing teaching as an ethic of care, Stanton (1996:45-46) says:

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[29] This is in contrast to the educator's role in the banking method. 'The banking concept distinguishes two stages in the action of the educator. During the first, he (*sic*) cognizes a cognizable object while he prepares his lessons in his study or his laboratory; during the second, he expounds to his students about that object. The students are not called upon to know, but to memorize the contents narrated by the teacher. Nor do the students practise any act of cognition, since the object towards which that act should be directed is the property of the teacher. Freire (1971) in Belenky *et al*, *Women's Ways of Knowing: The development of Self, Voice, and Mind.* (New York: Basic Books, 1986) p.214.

> As the midwife/teacher image dramatically conveys, education is relational – a relationship that involves knowledge, attentiveness and care; care directed not only at disciplinary material but to who students are and what they can become. It involves responsiveness and a stance of hopefulness.

This approach replaces the focus only on procedural knowledge which Stanton (:40) suggests is the agenda of most academic teaching in its various modes of presenting and using theories, methods, debates and findings of the discipline. Instead it incorporates a conversation between this procedural knowledge and subjective knowing. It is only then that connected knowing can emerge.

This has implications for the way that teachers function, i.e. from the one who shapes the learning to one who mediates the learning within and between learners and herself (or himself) so that new meanings can emerge for all. Within the framework of feminist pedagogy, Weiler (1995:34) suggests, the teacher's task shifts from the one-all-knowing to the one-who facilitates knowing.

> In terms of feminist pedagogy, the authority of the feminist teacher as intellectual and theorist finds expression in the goal of making students themselves theorists of their own lives by interrogating and analyzing their own experience… this strategy moves beyond the naming or sharing of experience to the creation of critical understanding of the forces that have shaped that experience.

There is a clear shift in power within this model – away from the teacher as the authority who has more knowledge or expertise and imposes it on the learners, to the one who shares his/her experience and concern with students, developing relationships with participants, is less distanced from students, and is constantly examining his or her own reactions and learning from them (Maher, 1994:20-22). Weiler (1995:34) raises the difficulty of this transition within a culture where the teacher is expected to be the authority and where students have been socialised to expect this, suggesting that the institutionalisation of the teacher's authority contradicts the democratic and collective ideal of a feminist pedagogy.

5.3.2 Ethical implications of the relationship

Jarvis (1997:78) draws attention to the ethical nature of the educational relationship. He discusses the potential for abuse of power in teaching which he suggests can be avoided if the relationship between teacher and learner is seen to be a moral one based on

intention or concern for the other and respect for the autonomy of the student. Drawing on Martin Buber's idea of the I-Thou relationship, Jarvis suggests that the relationship of teaching is to foster personhood. The concern lies in the 'dialogical relationship between teachers and taught rather than the content of what is taught' (:85).

This relationship is jeopardised when the teacher tries to mould the learner into the type of being that the teachers, or those in power in society want – a form of indoctrination. Jarvis recognizes that teachers have to engage with issues of power and authority relating to their position, but they need to exercise it recognising 'the personhood of the Other', failure to do that is symbolic violence[30] and, therefore, morally questionable' (:87).

Lather (1988:573), in investigating the complex interplay between the 'empowering' and the 'impositional' at work in the liberatory classroom, suggests that instead of construing student resistance to classroom practice as false consciousness, they may say something about the teacher's 'impositional tendencies'. To counter these tendencies teachers need to recognise their own positionality and develop 'the skills of self critique, of reflexivity' (:575).[31]

Race, class, gender and culture are defining features of teachers, as much as they are of the learners they teach. Weiler (1991:38) stresses the importance of teachers recognising their own positionality. Lather (1991:15) reiterates this point suggesting that the whole pedagogical situation needs to be recognised for what it is - the teacher is not a neutral transmitter, neither is the student passive, nor is the knowledge immutable material to impart. As Maher (1994:203) describes:

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[30] 'Symbolic violence' – a term used by Bourdieu and Passeron (1977) who argue that all education, especially with regard to children is a form of symbolic violence. By this they imply education is about introducing (they would say 'imposing') a set of symbols to young people. In Jarvis, *Ethics and education for adults in the late modern society.* (Leicester: NIACE, 1997) p.78.

[31] Reflexivity refers to the interaction between informal theory, formal theory and practice, where informal theory emerges from one's unconscious judgements and interpretations of things and events. Through exposure to formal theory which seeks to represent and explain the world, one's informal theory is brought to consciousness, is reviewed and changed. Thus formal theory can serve 'as a sounding board and resource for critiquing informal theory and exposing its limitations'. And likewise there is interaction between formal theory and practice. Usher *et al, Adult Education and the Postmodern Challenge: Learning beyond the limits.* (London and New York: Routledge, 1997) pp.137-138.

> … positionalities are at work in every classroom – the aim is to help students understand the working of positional dynamics in their lives, to see them through their "third eye", then they can begin to challenge them and to create change.

To hold these variables in some kind of tension requires self-awareness on the part of the teacher, as well as skill and supportive methodologies.

5.3.3 Methodologies that support learning

Teaching needs to support women's speaking and hearing their experiences, in Nellie Morton's phrase 'hearing one another to speech'[32] and this requires a range of cognitive and experiential methods. Maher (1994:18-19) suggests that opportunities must be provided for students to speak for themselves and bring their own questions and perspectives into the classroom, to connect their study to personal experience, and also to engage in dialogue with others, particularly those who are different. This process of collaborative learning is necessary in order to construct new meanings – what Maher calls 'mastery'. This collaborative approach presents challenges to traditional understandings of individualised acquisition of knowledge and skills, according to an agenda determined by the teacher or the expert, applying common assessment standards to determine competence, and grading learners hierarchically according to that standard (:16).

Belenky *et al* (1986) discuss how teachers need to acknowledge the knowledge that women bring with them, and honour their questions and concerns in setting the agenda. One way of 'confirming the self as the knower' is to include women in shaping their own curriculum - starting with what they already know and what they need to know in order to respond to the complex issues of their lives and their communities. But as they say about traditional courses:

> Traditional courses do not begin there. They begin not with the student's knowledge but with the teacher's knowledge. The courses are about the culture's questions, questions fished out of the "mainstream" of the disciplines. If the student is female, her questions may differ from the culture's questions, since women, paddling in the by-waters of the culture, have had little to do with positing the questions or designing the agendas of the disciplines (:198).

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[32] Nellie Morton, *The Journey is Home*, (Boston: Beacon Press, 1985) p.55.

One creative way of women sharing some of their subjective knowledge is through the telling of their stories. Barr (1999:18) defends feminist story and autobiography as legitimate academic forms of writing, not just pieces of unreflected experience, but which include theory, experience and reflection. She argues further that the form of writing, or genre, affects what we write about. Ackermann (2001:19) suggests that telling stories heal and help us to make sense of things in 'a suffering and chaotic world'.

Brooks (2002:146) describes the way story can help to validate women's experiences and in so doing she can be transformed 'from silence to language and action, and from isolation to connection'. While acknowledging that there is always the potential for the stories to reinforce existing stereotypes, she describes the way telling our stories can have transformative potential for women in the following ways:

- It draws personal and social stories together, requiring critical and generative thinking;
- It involves sharing *particular* experiences as well as developing more *abstract concepts*;
- It includes a moral dimension as the narrator weaves a criticism of the past and implies an idea of a better future;
- It develops women's competence and confidence to speak; and
- It engages the whole person – mentally, emotionally, spiritually and physically (:152-153).

So when women gather at the campfire (Phiri *et al* 2002:1), or meet in small groups and 'talk about fridges' as one of the participants complained (chapter 3, 3.4.1.4), there is the potential for story telling and important healing and political work to be done.

Throughout the Women's Studies course (to be discussed more fully in chapter 6), students were encouraged to narrate stories – their own and those of other women.[33] In this research, the women were invited to tell their stories – of their personal and family lives and commitments, their struggles, hopes and dreams for themselves, and also their faith story. Many of them spoke about their 'call to ministry' and described how they

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[33] These stories were either gathered in the classroom (COT) or through assignments and projects (COT and TEEC). During my interviews with the respondents, further stories and references were made to their field of ministry.

experienced this call – the clarity of their knowing about it, the passion they felt, and the resistance they experienced from others in the church.

'If you are a child of colour, Oh! Oh! So we never asked questions ... I felt quite sorry for my clergy person who was my rector at that time, because that conference in 1992, he sat me down and said: "These are 30 reasons why you can't become a priest and any way I don't think the decision is going to be made." And I believed him and I just thought, "Well you know I've seen, if you don't find a door for me then there will be a window somewhere. And I always wanted to do ministry and I don't think anything will stop me."'

'I grew up in the priesthood and I must have got the call at the age of about 11. It took me into a Baptist Sunday school training. And then, as I grew up, [I was] schooled, groomed in the ministry. My mother was a bible woman mostly in the rural areas. I went to school, sang in the Methodist church choir that also motivated me, furthermore... Now that I happen to have found me in this way I presented myself for training just because I felt I cannot let time go on without taking a serious interest in things. In 1981 I responded to the call, I offered to do meals on wheels and they wouldn't understand that I offered to serve people freely. They said you can't, you can't – but anyway that is the story. OK my husband would always push me here, push me there. So I said, OK if I can't do ministry, let me do the bible school and train as a bible woman. But this thing haunted me until last year I enrolled for Healing and Counseling training, Proclamation and Systematic theology - I got those three...
    What is calling ... it is not something that I make – God calls and I respond. Yes, what do I feel called to do, why do I feel called? ... It all comes with passion. Sometimes you don't know how you get yourself there. But always you wake up, and you are the only one there. Or everybody is waiting and you walk in and something just happens. Something that I can't control and say I know what is going to happen. Sometimes afterwards I say, now I understand why I have to be here. Or sometimes you say, "Thanks God".... And it's so funny it will single you out, in a situation, it will take you there and for that. I don't know, it's overwhelming.'

'And that was in the church that God confirmed my calling. I said to God, "You can run my life, I'll stop running from this calling." And I couldn't speak to anyone about my calling because that's why they left the Anglican body, they didn't want women in the church. So I had this deep dark secret.'

Through telling their stories about their religious faith and sources of commitment women can assert their own knowledge. But Gajdusek and Gillotte (1995) alert us to the importance of interpreting voice accurately, and particularly the silences. Speaking about learners for whom English is not a first language, they suggest that silence may be the result of a lack of proficiency in the language. On the other hand, if teachers focus excessive attention on the remediation of language, it may lead them to neglect the conceptual development of these learners, thus disadvantaging them further:

If we are diverted by their more obvious second-language handicap, we may fail to realise the multiple causes of their silence….When teachers focus on the more

trivial, albeit distracting, language errors they may lose sight of the more significant lack of perspective and perception, with the unfortunate result that the more important developmental needs of learners are not addressed (:47).

Kerfoot (2004) discusses research carried out among first year university students at the University of the Western Cape in 2002 to investigate the high failure rates among first year, second language English students in the Arts Faculty.[34] Theories drawn from the field of Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) point to three levels of language – as grammar, as discourse, and as social context where the three general functions of language in social contexts are to enact our relationships, to represent our experience, and to organise discourse in meaningful text (known as metafunctions).[35]

Kerfoot's research indicated that students with weak grammar and language skills find it difficult to operate at the level of discourse, one of the reasons being that they do not recognise modals in spoken or written speech and often misinterpret their meanings.[36] Modals carry important information about the stance and attitude of the writer or speaker and they are essential to the creation and interpretation of meaning in academic discourse. First year students are often completely oblivious to nuances of modality and are often unable to recognise the speaker or writer's views on a subject and the strength of their commitment to the information imparted (:7).

Kerfoot (:4) suggests that language approaches that focus on genre do not pay

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[34] This research was conducted against the backdrop of broader institutional discussions about the feasibility of a bridging year or 'Level 0' for those students who enter the university without the necessary linguistic and cognitive preparation (:2). Statistics for mid-year pass rates for 2002 in the foundation (1st) year of the Arts Faculty indicated that nearly 1/3 of students received less than 30% for their final mark, while a further 1/3 received between 50-60%. Those who received less than 30% did not have the language competence to pass their courses; whilst those in the 50-60% bracket, she says, would not have passed a traditional essay task in which they were required to construct and substantiate an argument. This group of students nevertheless is generally passed at the end of the year and their lack of academic writing skills continues to bedevil their progress through their degrees. This results in poor retention and throughput rates. (:3). For at least 1/3 of first year students the linguistic foundation on which to build academic literacy, critical language awareness of genre-based knowledge is not available. For another 1/3 of students, this knowledge is not sufficient for them to gain control over academic discourse in the time available (:4).

[35] JR Martin and D Rose (in press), *Working with discourse: meaning behind the clause.* In Kerfoot, *Working in the Shadow: Reading and writing in Grade 12 and the implications for academic development.* Cape Town: University of the Western Cape, 2004).

[36] Modals include the modal verbs: must, can, will, may etc but also verbs such as claim, appear, assume, doubt, guess, look as if, suggest, think; adverbs actually, certainly, inevitably, obviously, possibly, and nouns and adjectives related to them (:7).

enough attention to foundational language competence nor to the detailed linguistic knowledge necessary to control that genre. If students fail to master educational genres then the inequalities of the social system are simply reproduced. Also if students are not able to exercise control at the level of interpersonal and textual metafunctions, then they are ultimately unable to act at the level of ideology, i.e. to engage with power relations through text, leaving them at the mercy of the authority of the texts (spoken and written). These conclusions suggest that teaching of language (grammar) as well as genre-based literacy is crucial for second-language learners.

Kerfoot's findings raise an important concern for those involved in the theological education of students for whom English is a second or a third language, and when institutional language policies privilege English. But, second-language English speakers may be doubly disadvantaged in their ability to acquire the language of the discipline, if the culture or *habitus* of the institution is also unfamiliar, something I will address in the next section

Although the issue of academic performance and language as a barrier to learning have not been not a central focus of this research, I believe that it points to a very important area of future research among all theological students, not only women. Here research in the field of linguistics in education could be really helpful.

While acuity in the discourse is essential if women want to become proficient at theology, a lack of language skills and knowledge of the discourse are not the only factors that affect women's performance in academic studies. In the next section I wish to investigate the institutional framework as a significant factor in women's experiences of theological education.

5.4 SUPPORTIVE AND REFLEXIVE LEARNING ENVIRONMENTS

The purpose of a critical feminist pedagogy is not just to eliminate patriarchy from the content of learning, nor only to create classrooms that are facilitative of women's learning; it is also about permeating the broader framework of the institution. In this section, I plan to discuss the nature of this broader organisational context – how receptive it is to women students and how supportive it is to women once they are there.

Earlier (section 5.3.2) I raised the issue of teacher's needing to recognise their own positionality and be reflexive in order to steer a middle course between empowering and imposing on their learners (Lather 1988:575). I believe this quality of reflexivity applies at the institutional level as well, and so attention will be given in the section to the issue of institutions' openness to self-critique and change.

5.4.1 How welcoming and supportive of women?

Bourdieu (in Usher 1997:59-62) speaks about *habitus* as the embedded ways of thinking and acting that we have learned from belonging in different social locations – family, race, class, cultural group etc. what makes us feel comfortable and at ease with ourselves. It expresses itself affectively, cognitively and in our physical actions and behaviour. But Bourdieu suggests that *habitus* is not always at home in its selected field of practice,[37] and he gives the example of a person from a working class *habitus* who may be uncomfortable when entering an academic institution. Similarly, if the *habitus* of the theological environment is predominantly shaped by men and male stories, histories and experiences, and in South Africa it would traditionally have been white males, then women's knowledge, stories and experiences will not be seen to 'fit' and women, especially black women, may very likely feel uncomfortable and alienated when joining a theological institution.

Taylor and Marienau (1995:5-12) suggest some of the barriers for women in the institutional environment, for example, where content and methods ignore needs, experience and perspectives of the majority of learners making them perceive that this education is not made for them; or androcentric programmes (knowledge, curricula and instruction) do not speak to women's experiences; where cultural norms and expectations

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[37] Bourdieu discusses the notion of practices in relation to different 'fields'. Practitioners inhabit different fields, for example the economy or the business world, or in academic terms, the field of theology or computer science. Thus field is the social context within which the individual acts. In Usher *et al*, *Adult Education and the Postmodern Challenge: Learning beyond the limits*. (London and New York: Routledge, 1997) pp.59-62.

are different and may constrain women from becoming learners, or prescribe to them how they should behave in order to fit in.[38]

Horsman, in her book *Too Scared to Learn* (2000) raises the question of how hospitable and healing learning environments are to women who have been violated or abused. Her research, based largely in the context of women's literacy programmes in Canada, has important implications for educators of women particularly in our society where the scale of violence against women is so large (see chapter 4). She speaks about the many women sitting in classrooms who have been, or currently experience violence (:71) creating a tension for the teacher over which should take precedence - the requirements of the educational programme, or the immediate needs of the one who is abused (:69).

Arguing for the classroom as a healing space, Horsman says that experiences of trauma as a result of violence cannot be individualised or pathologised where women have to go away and heal. This violence is endemic and part of a sick society; and there is no place to heal. Thus 'the classroom has to be a healing place' (:74ff). However, she does not discount the impact this will have on the classroom. The abused /violated woman is involved in 'hidden learning' as she tries to deal with or survive the situation, and this other kind of learning takes energy away from the formal learning agenda and these learners may not achieve well and may not be thought to be serious (:79ff).

She suggests also, that the chaos generated by violent homes leads to an inability to develop systematic tasks and routines of daily regular work. When the educational system places exacting demands and expectations on these women the combination of the chaos of their world and the external demands almost set women up for failure. Part of the process is to help develop the 'middle ground' – where the learners can develop some measure of control over their work. This can happen through supportive measures where learners begin to see their gradual progress and incremental changes, e.g. through portfolios of work over time, marking with the encouragement, journals, mentors etc. (:80ff). She draws attention to the fact that many abused women disconnect with their bodies as a way of distancing from the abuse. Part of the educational project is to help

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[38] A Ugandan colleague of mine describes how women in her theological college would have to be very careful not to sit with their legs crossed in the classroom with male students; and also to exercise restraint when they spoke when men were present.

them reintegrate body, spirit, and mind into learning (:177). Van Schalkwyk calls for 'safe communal spaces where women of faith … can feel comfortable to answer the question: "Women, why do you weep?"' (in Phiri 2002:299).

The above discussion points to an important task of feminist pedagogy to critically examine the *habitus* of the institution for any exclusionary practices or privileging of cultural capital of certain groups at the expense of others. But it is also to assess its ability to respond to the healing needs of women. Only then will women feel that they belong and be able to participate fully in the educational process which they are undertaking.

5.4.2 How reflexive in its practice?

What I have discussed previously depends on the openness of the institution to self-critique and to change. Jansen (2004:7) uses the term 'decoding institutional culture' to introduce some of the features of an institution that expose its identity. Some of the examples of interest to higher education that he notes are the portraits and paintings in the corridors, the symbols that appear on logos and advertorial information, the collections that dominate the library, who dominates the (school) governing bodies, whose language dominates a public meeting or event, and whose is excluded, what kinds of public friendships the teachers and leaders model, the complexion of those working in administration and cleaning jobs and how they are spoken to compared to academic staff, and the way women are constructed in social relations.

These are keys to issues that theological institutions need to address in relation to women so that they do not experience their inclusion as assimilation into a male dominated *habitus,* but that they can feel 'at home' in this environment.[39] In chapter 5, I have drawn attention to some of these elements in relation to the experiences of women in the research.

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[39] Jansen uses the term to constitute how black students in the research expressed themselves in relation to being in white institutions (2004:8)

CONCLUSION

In this chapter I have attempted to outline some of the fundamental principles of feminist pedagogy and its application to the theological training of women. I began by examining different epistemological approaches and how they contributed to women's liberation and to the broader social project of transforming society. In pursuing the notion of a critical feminist pedagogy, I drew on the insights of psychological, radical, structuralist and post structuralist contributions, with the view that no *one* approach can provide the necessary theoretical underpinnings for a transformative theological pedagogy for women in the church in South Africa.

As the chapter has suggested, dominant knowledge practices in higher education and in the church disadvantage women in a number of ways, viz. excluding them from inquiry, or denying that their knowledge is useful, genderising their styles and ways of knowing, producing theories that represent women as inferior or submissive to male interests, or producing theories that are not useful to women or which render women's lives and activities invisible (Stanford 2003:1). In the light of this analysis, I proposed that in revisioning theological education we should scrutinise the constructs which underpin the theological knowledge that is being reproduced and taught as 'truth' to women. This includes notions of God and ways of describing God in relationship to humankind and the universe. As previously argued in chapter 2, this also calls for the scrutiny of scripture texts and church doctrines that are oppressive to women, and for new ways of thinking about sin, grace, creation, salvation and human relationships. A revised theological curriculum should include critical reflection on women's diverse experiences, and incorporate feminist ways of speaking about them, drawing on intuition and the emotions as legitimate forms of knowledge. The implications of a new way of doing theology, for women, is that they will be able to claim and recognise their own religious experience, and begin to produce new ways of speaking about it so that they can become the subjects of their own religious knowledge.

The framework '*Women's Ways of Knowing*' (Belenky *et al* 1988) was explored as a way of interpreting women's 'voices' and how these different voices shape a particular relationship to knowledge, its authorisation, and to women's agency. Critics of this framework have warned against essentialising women's knowledge and experiences

in relation to differences in gender socialisation. But, as I suggested, the framework makes a useful contribution to theological pedagogies as it affirms and validates women's experiences and their knowledge, and constitutes them as subjects of this knowledge. It also has implications for their sense of moral agency and ministry. For example, women who defer to the authority of the church or the 'expert' to validate their knowledge, are less likely to question theological teachings, church practices and cultural norms, and are more likely to base their moral decisions on what they are told to do. However, the woman who is able to draw reflectively and critically from different sources, while at the same time making her own judgment in light of her own experiences and insights, is more likely to question issues, be critical of the *status quo* and make moral choices and decisions accordingly.

The feminist notion of 'voice' led me to review the relationship between teacher and learner as one of care and support, and to describe the kind of teaching methodologies that facilitate bringing women 'to speech' as reflective and connected learners. These include replacing the traditional relationship of teacher and learner based only on hierarchies of knowledge and expertise, with a more engaged relationship between teacher and learner, where greater listening and mutual learning can happen.

I drew attention to the limitations of seeing the provision of access and support as the only response required of those promoting theological education for women, and emphasised that there are other challenges that institutions need to confront. In this regard I referred to the classroom as a healing space for women in the context of widespread violence against women (Horsman 2000). Similarly, if the *habitus* (Bourdieu in Usher 1997) of the theological environment continues to be predominantly shaped by men and male stories, histories and experiences, and in South Africa it would traditionally have been white males, then women's knowledge, stories and experiences will not be seen to 'fit', and women, may very likely have to accommodate to this different, and often uncomfortable, culture.

In addition, I argued that the feminist theological classroom must support the development of women's analytical skills in order to understand, challenge and transform the institutional structures of theological knowledge and power. This would help women see the way the patriarchal church shapes their identities and how theological knowledge

has been used to justify their subject positions. I concluded that exposure to the 'bigger picture' of the way patriarchy is at work in society and the church is important for helping women to locate their particular struggle in relation to other church women's struggles.

In this chapter I also drew attention to the research findings that suggest that women resist the imposition of their 'diminished' identity in a number of ways. Examples of how women challenge, assert themselves, and speak up, point to them claiming voice and agency. And when a number of the women describe their 'call' to minister and exercise it, despite opposition, this suggests that they have sought validation for their work and their identity *beyond* the authoritative voice of the church.

In summary, the chapter claimed that feminist pedagogy has the potential to contribute to the formation of women in ministry by:

- Helping women to insert their own voice into the reflection and production of theological knowledge;
- Providing support for their growth, healing and confidence to speak about their knowledge;
- Developing their ability to analyse their oppression at a personal and structural level;
- Promoting women's sense of moral responsibility and agency; and
- Encouraging women to connect to other women in the struggle.

In the next chapter I aim to develop my case studies of a particular application of feminist pedagogy in theological education.