Full Length Essay

Befriending (White) Women Faculty in Higher Education?

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In this essay Thayer-Bacon explores the issue of a chilly climate in higher education that is generated by some women, in particular White women, and the destructive behavior they bring to higher education that damages their programs, as well as their working relationships with colleagues and students. The author seeks to find ways to befriend women in higher education, her sisters of color as well as her White sisters. Thayer-Bacon's focus here is on White women. Her approach is to use stories from the field to illustrate problems that are analyzed, using a narrative style of philosophical argument.

Key words: white women faculty, higher education, horizontal violence, women of color, befriending girls and women, Susan Laird, Jane Roland Martin, and Paulo Freire

Introduction

As a little girl, I started first grade when I was 5 ½ years old, two weeks after my peers' first day of school, as my parents were on leave when school started. I remember my first grade teacher well, Mrs. Rogers, as I was terrified of her. Mrs. Rogers gave me some ditto sheets to do when I arrived in her class, without giving me any explanation of what I was supposed to do. Since I could not read, I could not read the instructions. I stared and stared at that paper, hoping to make sense of the pictures when a little boy sitting cate-corner behind me offered to help. He told me what to do and I followed his directions, completed the assignment, and turned in the work. I had it returned to me that same day with red lines through what was wrong, and figured out from the corrections what I was supposed to have done, which was *not* what my new-found friend had directed me to do. I was mortified! That day probably marks the beginning of my mistrust of teaching assistance from *that* little boy, although it certainly didn't cause me to lose interest in him as a friend. As I think back on this scenario today, I remember that there were several little girls sitting around me, three, I believe, and not one of them offered to help. Even if my male neighbor's assistance turned out to be less than helpful, at least he tuned in to my distress and tried to help.

The little girls who sat around me in that first grade classroom, or others like them, have grown up to be my colleagues in my various departments in higher education. Unfortunately, I am still finding many of the men whose offices are around me more willing to offer assistance and mentoring than the women whose offices are near by. Even more disturbing, I have had to put significant amounts of energy into defending myself from harm by various women colleagues over the years and have witnessed and helped to defend others from similar attacks. Not only do many women in higher education lack the ability to collaborate with each other in healthy ways, they have been known to actively sabotage the work of both male *and* female colleagues. I write this essay in an effort to explore this issue, a chilly climate in higher education that is generated by some women, and the destructive behavior they bring to higher education that damages their programs, as well as their working relationships with colleagues and students. I seek to find ways to befriend women in higher education, my sisters of color as well as my White sisters. My focus here will be on White women.

It is important that this essay be written by a White woman, as an insider to the social group in question. If a man tried to write this essay he would likely be accused of sexism. If a woman of color tried to write this essay she would be vulnerable to accusations of having a chip on her shoulder. It is also important that it be written by a feminist scholar, who is appreciative of gender inequities and sexist practices that exist in American society and takes these inequities seriously, for one of my biggest concerns is writing an essay that does not "blame the victims," knowing that all of my female colleagues have grown up in sexist societies, many of them under misogynist conditions. This essay needs to be written by someone who values the work of other feminist scholars and tries to live a life consistent with feminist theory, in terms of

pedagogical practices in her classrooms as well as in terms of her leadership style as a program coordinator, department head, and chair of various professional organizations.

What I am pointing to is a hidden story, not spoken of publicly for fear of being accused of sexism. It may be a generational story, unique to the baby boomer generation and not a problem for younger White women in higher education but I am not convinced this is so. My hope is that because I am a woman, and a feminist scholar, what I have to say will not be dismissed as sexism. I also hope that because I am a cultural studies scholar, what I have to say will not be dismissed as *essentializing women*. I think this topic is an *elephant in the room* kind of topic, one that most of us in higher education have much experience with, and yet we are not talking about publicly. Let me leap into the topic before my courage disappears, and hope for the best. If I can open up a conversation on this issue, and get people talking to each other in caring, generous ways, maybe we can befriend women in higher education and find ways to help them/us heal from the harm they/we have experienced in our sexist societies.

I begin by explaining what I mean by *befriending women in higher education* with the help of Susan Laird (2003) and Paulo Freire (1970) in section one. In section two I will return to the scenario I opened with and look deeper at girls' relationships with each other, or the lack there of, in comparison to their relationships with boys, with the help of research on co-education versus single sex schools. This discussion will need to be troubled by looking at the research on girls' of color relationships with each other and boys, as their relationships differ from those of White girls. With the help of JoAnne Pagano (1994) and Jane Roland Martin (2000), I will move the discussion to higher education in section three. My approach will be to use stories from the field to illustrate problems we can then analyze, a narrative style of philosophical argument often used in feminist scholarship. My stories are a compilation of many experiences, mine as well as others', accumulated during the course of a career in higher education.

Befriending Girls and Women
In 2002, Susan Laird presented a paper to the Philosophy of Education Society titled, "Befriending Girls as an Educational Life-Practice." In this paper she made the case for a need to name an educational life-practice that seeks to give the gift of friendship to girls. This gift labor can be given individually or collectively, privately or publicly, professionally or non-professionally, as a direct or indirect gift that is material or spiritual, given by men or women. Laird used the term, *befriending*, to distinguish holding on to friendship for oneself, versus giving friendship, a gift offered that any girl may accept of reject. Laird's aim was to assist and affirm "*girls' growing capacities and responsibilities for learning to love themselves and diverse others, including the non-human natural world, to survive and thrive despite their troubles*" (Laird, 2003, p. 77, italics in original). Laird recognized that she may be vulnerable

to charges of sex bias or inequality because she advocates befriending as needed for *girls*. She responded:

> I would beg such critics to explain on what grounds girls should be denied helpful affection from friends who try to understand what they are going through, especially when girls so often do have to cope with oppressive gender effects to which others are, in their alleged impartiality, blind or indifferent. (Laird, 2003, p. 75)

Laird addressed the issue of how she defines "girls" and "women" with the help of Iris Marion Young's (1997) feminist concept of "gender as a series" that allows us to recognize that girls come from a variety of differing social class backgrounds, religious beliefs, ethnicities, physical shapes and sizes, shades and hues of skin color, with different sexual orientations and they may respond to gender in different ways. Still, Laird stressed that girls have bodies that menstruate, and while these biological facts alone don't locate individuals in the series "girls," "(s)ocial rules and practices surrounding menarche construct gender as a principle both for division of labor and for compulsory heterosexuality, thus constituting girls in a relation of growing vulnerability to boys' and men's appropriation" (Laird, 2003, p. 76). Girls can have much in common or very little, performing gender in a variety of ways, from embracing highly sexualized forms to resisting gender norms to the point of being identified as a boy. "Yet all these girls, even the lucky one who wonders, are confronting gender effects in others, if not themselves, whether they are yet more than dimly conscious of such effects or not" (Laird, 2003, p. 76). Laird described *befriending girls* with loving attention, so that gender-sensitivity will also allow us to attend to girls in all their diversity. Laird recommended that to befriend girls we need to take "a macroscopic perspective that is open and fluid, sensitive also to other serialities and their consequential interactions with gender, variously narrated and divergently theorized" (Laird, 2003, p. 77).

Befriending girls is political life-practice but also an educational life-practice, according to Laird. It can occur in any setting. As a political practice befriending girls can become a means of girls' resisting oppression, but it can also be used to foster oppression, it is not necessarily good. Befriending girls can be done in ways that are manipulative, aimless, or unreflective, that teach girls hidden curriculums or it can be done in ways that teach girls how to resist hidden curricula. Befriending girls can be used in miseducative ways if unevenly and unreflectively bestowed, especially in schools, so that befriending can become a "dispensing of favoritism and privilege to some girls at other girls' expenses" (Laird, 2003, p. 74).

There is always a risk in befriending girls as to whether or not the girls will even accept such friendship, as the girls have the freedom to pick their own friends. "As an adult commitment,

therefore, befriending girls makes its practitioners vulnerable to griefs, disappointments, delusions, temptations, and risks both large and small" (Laird, 2003, p. 80).

If we are to undertake befriending girls seriously, Laird recommended we must actively engage in *self-educative self-befriending*, "a practice that can simultaneously present possible instructive examples for girls learning to love themselves, survive, and thrive despite difficulties" (Laird, 2003, p. 80). This self-educative self-befriending entails "*befriending women* and learning from us about our myriad ways of loving, surviving, and thriving despite our adult difficulties" (Laird, 2003, p. 80, italics in original). Laird recommended "a spiritual discipline composed of activities such as attention, study, self-examination, consciousness-raising, service, guiding, exploration, play, bearing witness, letting go, celebration, and giving" to help us engage in self-educative self-befriending (Laird, 2003, p. 80).

In a response to Laird's essay, a doctoral student in my program, Katharine Sprecher (2008), wrote about the difficulty women face learning to love ourselves, to heal, and fully befriend other women. Sprecher gave several examples of times she has worked with various groups of feminist women only to find their good intentions go awry "in the face of deeply embedded behavior patterns, expectations, and wounds" (Sprecher, 2008, p. 2). It is not easy to learn to love ourselves and other women "in a society that has taught us since we were children to mistrust, disrespect, denigrate, and often hate all that is female, including ourselves" (Sprecher, 2008, p. 2). Sprecher reminded us that we are bombarded by negative messages about women from all forms of media such as the radio, television, magazines, billboards, etc. She also pointed out that "in a male supremacist society, it is not safe for women to express and feel anger towards men, … we have instead learned to direct suppressed angers at safe targets like other women, children and ourselves" (Sprecher, 2008, p. 3). Laird's call to engage in self-educative self-befriending in order to have a chance at successfully befriending girls, is not going to be easy for women who grew up, and continue to live, in a patriarchal, sexist society. It will require a proactive commitment to self-healing that is on-going.

Sprecher pointed us to a problem for women that Paulo Freire (1970) described quite well in his chapter one of *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. For Freire, his description of oppression focused on socio-economic class issues, but his analysis works well for other categories of discrimination too, such as race, sexual orientation, and gender. Freire explored the relationship that exists between the oppressor and the oppressed and how the oppressed will identify with the oppressor and "have no consciousness of themselves as persons or as members of an oppressed class" (Freire, 1970, p. 30). He described how people who are oppressed unconsciously internalize their oppression, and find in their oppressor their model of freedom and adulthood. When they have the opportunity to seize a little

power and acquire land, in Freire's example, they will use that power to turn on others like themselves, and become even more tyrannical bosses over the workers that were once their co-workers, than the owners were toward them. Freire pointed to examples where men, in the public world of work, go from working on a factory line or for a landowner to becoming the foreman. However, we can see this same phenomena in the private world of homes, where men who have little power in their public worlds come home and act abusively toward their wives, and where women who have little power and freedom in their married relationships will turn around and be tyrants with their children. We see this with older siblings in abusive home settings who will in-turn be abusive toward their younger siblings. It is a cycle of oppression that is difficult to break.

Freire said that "the oppressor, who is himself dehumanized because he dehumanizes others, is unable to lead the struggle" for a fuller humanity (Freire, 1970, p. 32). "Any attempt to 'soften' the power of the oppressor in deference to the weakness of the oppressed almost always manifests itself in the form of false generosity…" (Freire, 1970, p. 29). "It is only the oppressed, who, by freeing themselves, can free their oppressors" (Freire, 1970, p. 42). How do the oppressed free themselves, and thus their oppressors? Through love. In learning to love themselves and each other, they free themselves and each other. They learn to perceive the reality of their oppression as a limiting situation that can be transformed rather than as a fixed reality. Freire's act of love points us right back to Laird's idea of befriending, and the importance of self-befriending as part of the healing process from experiences of oppression.

The women in higher education whom I want to consider, ones who create much animosity and consternation among their colleagues due to their troubling styles of relating and communicating, were once little girls in need of befriending. They grew up in a sexist society surrounded by negative messages about girls and women, as well as being continually exposed to the modeling of behavior that puts boys and men's needs ahead of girls and women. They learned about *his* story, and how to write, speak, and think like a man, so they would be listened to and treated as respectable scholars. They got the grades, passed the exams, and defended their dissertations, then took jobs in higher education, like the workers who become foremen, and now they exert power in abusive forms on students and colleagues.

The women in higher education whom I want to consider will gossip about colleagues behind their backs, and blame them for problems rather than take responsibility for their own actions. They will manipulate communications and data such as email messages to try to make themselves look good and others look bad. This is what Freire (1970) referred to as *horizontal violence*, when oppressed people strike out at their own comrades. These women will take credit for work done by their students and/or colleagues and pass it off as their own, however

if any questions come up in regard to that work they will wash their hands of any responsibility and blame their colleagues, students, and/or staff for any mistakes they have made. They will demand immediate attention and insist on having more than their fair share of resources, and cry foul if others complain at the unfairness of the situation. They will set up impossible situations that stretch university policies to their limits or beyond, and then, after everyone bends over backwards to try to accommodate their needs for fear of discrimination charges, if things do not go in their favor (e.g. tenure and promotion votes), they will complain that the policies were not adhered to and that they've been disfavored somehow in the process. When pushed into a corner or caught in the act, when decisions do not go their way, they will turn to a higher authority such as an associate dean, or dean, even the provost or university president, to step in on their behalf and give them what they want.

Let us return to the scenario with which I started and consider further what little girls experience in schools and what it would mean to befriend them. In this next section I want to add race and class as other categories in the analysis and consider what makes the situation different for little girls of color.

Gender Equity in K-12 Schools
Remember, I was 5 ½ years old, and trying to cope with my first day of school in a classroom full of strangers, as the "new kid" who started two weeks later than everyone else. I was given an assignment to do without any guidance from my teacher as to how to do it. I should add to the story that my parents enrolled me in first grade for two weeks in Pennsylvania, while on vacation because they were confident I was ready for school and the Pennsylvania age cut-off date for 1st grade was January 1st, allowing me to qualify, while the October 1st age cut-off date in Indiana, disqualified me from starting school. My parents thought that by going ahead and enrolling me at Grandma's, and then "transferring" me to my school back home, they might be able to get me in – in spite of the age-limitation. The school in Indiana agreed to let me start with the understanding that if I was not doing well, they would pull me out and restart me the next year. It was a gamble on my parents' part, but it worked. I really wanted to go to school and I was ready to do so. However, as I sat there on my first day in Indiana, trying to figure out that worksheet, I knew that if I did not convince my teacher I was ready for first grade, I would be pulled out. That added to my pressure to decipher that matching work (I still remember what it was, a picture worksheet on association of objects such as shoe to foot, cup to saucer, dog to doghouse).

When I think back on the situation, not only am I struck by the lack of help offered by the little girls sitting around me, I also wonder about that teacher, Mrs. Rogers. What kind of teacher would give a child new to her classroom an assignment with no directions on how to do it? I am fairly confident she was trying to assess my abilities, but she did not succeed in finding out my

skills that day. What she did find out were the abilities of my neighbor cate-corner behind me, although she did not know that. Fortunately for me, from that day on I was in attendance when instructions were given and I was able to complete her assignments by relying on my own abilities, and thus counter whatever damage I did to her assessment of my ability levels that first day. Still, what kind of teacher would give a child so little attention? I wonder, is there a commonality between my unique, individual experience and that of other little girls?

During the second wave of feminism (1960s-80s) there was a significant amount of research generated on gender discrimination issues in schools, as well as a heated debate on the pros and cons of coeducational schooling versus single sex schools for boys and girls (Frazier & Sadker, 1973; Sadker & Sadker, 1982; Spender, 1982; Stacey, Bercaud, & Daniels, 1974; Stanworth, 1983). Researchers studied language patterns in classroom discussions such as direct speech versus indirect, qualified speech, who was called on more often by teachers, who had opportunities to correct their mistaken answers, or not, how what was said was received by the teacher and classmates, etcetera (Association of American College, 1982; American Association of University Women, 1992; Thorne & Henley, 1975). Researchers noted linguistic bias, stereotyping, invisibility, imbalance, unreality, and fragmentation in textbooks (Sadker, Sadker, & Long, 1989; Sadker & Sadker, 1995). Studies were also done on discipline patterns, in terms of gender, such as what was tolerated as "boys will be boys" behavior that is coded differently if done by a girl, (e.g. amount of physical movement in classrooms), and much effort was placed on trying to define "sexual harassment" behaviors (Frazier & Sadker, 1973; Sadker & Sadker, 1982; Spender, 1982; Stacey et al., 1974; Stanworth, 1983). Scholars debated ways to counter "gender bias" in our schools, with "gender free" educational practices that sought to ignore and disregard gender, versus "gender sensitive" educational practices that sought to pay more attention to gender, not less, and take a situational strategy that can be self-correcting and maintains a constant vigilance (Diller, Houston, Morgan, & Ayim, 1996; Houston, 1994; Martin, 1982).

It was shocking to discover from the research that giving girls more than a third of one's attention felt as though the teacher was favoring the girls, by all of us in the classroom (Spender, 1982). And, that teachers failed to notice who was interrupting whom (boys would routinely interrupt girls when they were talking without getting in trouble for doing so), or whose points were taken up as serious and whose were ignored (girls could offer a point that teachers would ignore, until a boy offered it, and then they would note it) (Spender, 1980; Spender & Sarah, 1980). This kind of daily interaction and behavior leads to deep-seeded, acculturation that is unconsciously taken for granted.[1]

Add to the complexity of gender bias in our schools the point Barbara Houston made, that even though teachers may ignore

gender (which they do not), *students* do not, and we have a whole other layer of research that was developed during the second wave of feminism (Houston, 1994). For me, the focus on gender discrimination that goes on in schools between students was best illustrated in the co-ed versus single sex schools research (Gilligan, Lyons & Hanmer, 1990). I learned from this research that coeducational schools served boys interests more than girls, as not only did girls face discrimination by their teachers, peers, and the curriculum in schools, girls came to school already having learned from their social surroundings the importance of paying attention to boys' needs. When one grows up in a society where men and boys have more power than women and girls, mothers teach their little girls what they have learned, the importance of being able to communicate with and relate to those who have more power, for one's own safety and protection. In the language of Freire, the possible chances of improving one's conditions depend on the ability to understand those in power, "the oppressors." Little girls came to school already knowing how to befriend little boys, and help them settle in to school, do their work, and recover when they have disappointments or set-backs. However, girls did not do this befriending for each other. Instead they competed against each other for the boys' attention, often enacting passive/aggressive forms of horizontal violence against each other (maybe in the form of taunting, and belittling, or ignoring, but also in the form of tattle-telling or gossiping, or even physically fighting – hair-pulling, scratching, kicking, biting) (Clarke, 2007; Laird, 1994a, 1994b; Morse, 1998; Spielhagen, 2008).

Researchers studied single-sex schools to see if they helped girls improve their self-esteem and their academic skills with the goal of empowering girls to overcome society's sexism and reach their full potentials. Some studies indicated that it may be valuable to separate girls from boys to ensure that girls have an equal opportunity to participate and develop their skills (Finn, Reis, & Dulberg, 1980; Laviqueur, 1980). However, what Gilligan et al., (1990) found in their study of a selective single-sex school was that even though the girls had strong women role models with their teachers, and much encouragement to do well in their classroom environments, once the girls stepped outside of their classrooms, they passed on society's norms and standards for girls to each other through their informal interactions. In the halls, bathrooms, and lunchroom, they passed on expectations for girls' appearances and attraction to boys, what society considered beautiful, how society viewed smart women, for example, even though these cultural norms were contrary to what the girls were being taught in their classrooms by their teachers or reading in their textbooks. The cultural norms for girl behavior were so strongly represented through popular culture (such as commercials on television, advertisements in teen magazines, representation of girls and women in movies, television shows, and through music lyrics, as well as the role modeling musicians and actors/actresses present to girls) that the girls policed themselves and oppressed each other, very similar to

what Foucault (1965, 1979) uncovered in his work on "criminal" and "insane" behavior in prisons and asylums. The ways that affluent, White girls treated each other in single sex schools serve as a powerful example of horizontal oppression that result in internalized oppression for girls, even in a school environment that sought to counteract the sexist norms of society.

What about girls of color and/or working class girls? For girls who must negotiate their self-esteem and learn to befriend themselves, as well as each other, in conditions that involve class and racial discrimination, not just gender, how do they fair in terms of their relationships with each other, against multiple forms of oppression? As Ruth Zambara (1994) pointed out in regards to Latina women, "Latina women have had to teach themselves" for there is a "critical absence of scholarly work on race/ethnicity," and even more of an absence in regards to Latina women (p. 135). Second wave feminist theory was grounded in the experiences of White, middle-class and affluent women and girls of the majority society, and failed to take into consideration racial and class oppression and its impact on the lives of women and girls of color. While second wave feminism exploded the myth of gender-neutral research, third wave feminists exploded the myth of feminism as representing all "women," by exposing the lack of attention second wave feminists gave to race, class, ethnicity, and sexual orientation, for example (p. 136).

Patriarchy implies that men have power and access to material resources, however, as Zambara (1994) pointed out, historically Latinos and Black men have not had power and resources, only White men. Men *and* women of color, *and* their communities, have historically lacked power in American society. Zambara recommended that in order for us to move forward in a proactive way on research on girls and women, we must be sure to clearly recognize the historical conditions of Latina women and that these continue to be different from those of dominant culture women.

Bonnie Dill Thorton (1994) described how Black women supporting each other, as a sisterhood, is not new to the Black community, in fact it has been institutionalized in Black churches and women's clubs. Black women have historically experienced an objective equality with Black men, due to their common experiences of struggling against racism. As a result, Black women have always been a part of a collective movement toward liberation. That theme is found in the ideas and experiences of women as diverse as: Audre Lorde (1984), Shirley Chisholm (1970), Gwendolyn Brooks (2006), Patricia Hill Collins (1990), Angela Davis (1981), Alice Walker (1974), and bell hooks (1984, 1989). Thorton recommended that we look at the structures that shape women's lives and their self-presentations. We need to take a more pluralistic approach to sisterhood, where we "concentrate our political energies on building coalitions around particular issues of shared interest" (Thorton, 1994, p. 53), and recognize that "feminist questions

are only one group of questions among many others that are being raised about public education" (Thorton, 1994, p. 54).

Patricia Hill Collins (1990) helped us understand that U.S. Black women's efforts to construct individual and collective voices have occurred in at least three safe places: in their relationships with each other, in Black churches, and in Black women's organizations. "In the comfort of daily conversations, through serious conversation and humor, African-American women as sisters and friends affirm one another's humanity, specialness, and right to exist" (Collins, 1990, p. 102). Mothers and daughters enjoy strong relationships with each other, as mothers seek to empower their daughters "by passing on the everyday knowledge essential to survival as African-American women" (Collins, 1990, p. 102). Even among African-American women who are strangers to each other, they share a recognition of the need to value Black womanhood, and will seek to encourage each other's daughters to succeed. As Collins pointed out, with several levels of oppression to deal with, if Black women "will not listen to one another, then who will?" (Collins, 1990, p. 104).

Are girls of color better able to nurture each other, due to their common experiences of racial discrimination and class oppression? It appears to be so. While patriarchy alone causes girls to fight against each other for boys attentions, racism positions girls of color in camaraderie with each other and boys of color, in order to protect their community against the dangers of racism. Signithia Fordham (1993), as an anthropologist, wrote about this very issue in her analysis of her data obtained from an ethnographic study of academic success in an urban high school (Capital High). "Those Loud Black Girls" examined how African American girls must negotiate the normalized definition of "femaleness" – as well as their Blackness - – based on While middle class standards of womanhood. Fordham used the metaphor of "loudness" to symbolize African American girls' contrariness and resistance to dominant racism and sexism that asserted their "nothingness" in American urban schools. In her study, we found the evidence of sisterhood that girls of color learned while young, to help them negotiate two levels of domination, racism and sexism.

Others' and my personal experiences in higher education make sense when we take into consideration the research work on gender, race, and class in k-12 schools that I have shared. In the current world of higher education, where affirmative action policies have opened the doors of higher education to more women (Black, Brown, Red, Yellow, and White), and men of color, women of color are better able to negotiate and collaborate with each other, and their male colleagues of color, than White women. Women of color may be better able to work with their White male colleagues too. White women stand out as less able to work well with others, regardless of race, class, or gender. As one who is from this population group, it is a very sad statement for me to make. Once again,

Freire (1970) helped us understand why women of color are better able to work with others, for learning to protect oneself from various forms of oppression is vital to one's own survival. For women of color, that means learning how to read danger signs from men in general, as well as from White people in general, and White men of means in particular, as well as danger signs from White women who seek to shore up their own positions of power within patriarchal culture by disassociating themselves from women of color.

Now that we have re/discovered how difficult it is for White girls to learn how to work well with each other, as well as with their sisters of color, and we have uncovered some of the social pressures that make it difficult for girls to befriend themselves, let us move the focus of our analysis to women in higher education. I want to explore the chilly climate in higher education that is generated by White women, and their destructive behavior toward their colleagues and students. Again, my goal is not to blame White women for their harmful behavior but to encourage them/us to engage in self-educative self-befriending so as to better be able to befriend others, and help us all overcome the oppressive, harmful conditions within which we were raised, educated, and continue to perpetuate through our own thoughtless actions of horizontal violence.

Gender Equity in Higher Education
In 1988, as feminist theory was entering into its third wave, and turning its attention to the claim of feminism as representing all "women," Jo Anne Pagano (1994) published an essay that explored women's roles in higher education titled "Teaching Women." I was a graduate student working on my doctoral degree then, not being exposed to any feminist scholarship in my classes, even though I had a strong woman philosopher of education as one of my major professors. My major professor used the male measuring stick she learned as a graduate student to measure women's work, and found them wanting, therefore not including women's work in her course curriculum, except her own. Nor did either of her male colleagues include any women in their curriculums. I did not discover Pagano's essay asking, "(w)as there ever a creature so riddled with self-doubt as the female professor?" until I was a female professor myself. My answer to her was resounding agreement – "No. There never was!" (Pagano, 1994, p. 262).

What made Pagano's essay even more powerful for me in particular was that she uses the metaphor, plagiarist, to describe how women feel in higher education, and at the time when I read that essay I knew someone (let us call her Kim) who was in the process of defending herself against a charge of plagiarism, by another woman in higher education, another White feminist scholar whom she had mistaken for a friend (let us call her Chris).

As a brand new assistant professor in her first year of work in higher education, Kim was invited by Chris to collaborate with her on an article, based on Chris's read of a paper from Kim's

dissertation that she submitted as part of her application file for the job she was offered, and accepted. Chris was on the search committee that invited Kim to campus for her interview. She had a paper addressing similar themes that she had presented at a conference, and proposed that Kim and she could put these two papers together as an article. What Kim discovered Chris meant by her invitation was: would Kim put their two papers together for a quick and easy publication for her, as Chris was nearing the time for her to have to submit her tenure case and she had three publications to date (or was it five?). Later, as Kim went through the appeal process and tried to defend herself against Chris's charge of plagiarism, Chris denied even entering into a collaborative relationship with Kim. Fortunately for Kim, she still had the post-a-note invitation Chris had written on a copy of her original paper submitted for her job application, as well as every copy of every draft of her efforts to try to do what Chris asked, along with Chris's editorial comments and suggestions/feedback, and Kim's notes from every meeting they had. Still, Kim had to get all the way to the vice-provost of academic affairs before she found sanity within the university appeals process – another White woman, who told her, "What you tried to do, in taking two completed papers and putting them together as one single essay, was a very dangerous thing to do, even for senior professors with much experience in publications, let alone for you, so new to this process." Of course, by then Kim knew that! Kim is the only junior, untenured faculty member I know who has survived a research misconduct hearing and lived to tell about it. That is not saying much though, as who talks about these things? I am not aware of any empirical evidence documenting cases like these. Kim may have been a trusting, naïve fool trying to be a friend, but she was not someone intentionally stealing someone else's words and ideas of any significance and trying to claim them as her own.

However, as Pagano (1994) so poignantly pointed out, at some level all women in higher education are plagiarists. Our teachers have all been men, even if in female body form, as I had with my lone female professor, a surrogate patriarch, for the male voice rules in higher education, in the form of "the great Western tradition." We have all had to learn the father's language and the male stories, and master them if we are to be allowed to teach in higher education. In the role of teacher, we are narrators who tell the story (his/story) all the while feeling like imposters full of professional anxieties. Women are charged with guarding the culture (though not its production). "Women do not beget culture: they mind it – both in the sense of tending and in the sense of obeying" (Pagano, 1994, p. 256). In the great Western tradition, men have judged women's works to be sentimental or minor and inconsequential, and have represented women in the canons as angels or whores. Women are either locked out or we are plagiarists. Pagano helps women understand, "the cards are stacked against us" (Pagano, 1994, p. 270). Barbara McKellar makes a similar point when she describes the role of the Black teacher: "Only the fittest of the fit survive" (McKellar, 1994). "She is a woman who

certifies male knowledge and is constructed as an object of that knowledge" (Pagano 1994, p. 270).

With competition so keen for women in higher education, and all of us struggling with feeling like imposters and plagiarists, as we master our abilities to be bi-cultural, it's no wonder we have problems working well with each other. Kim's collaborative "friend" was wrestling with her own feelings of inferiority and self-doubt about her abilities to write and get published, a prerequisite for being awarded tenure and keeping her job. Maybe she saw Kim as a competent writer who had mastered the male language, as a social foundations scholar, someone who could help her add to her vitae. Unfortunately for both of them, Kim was not able to fulfill this role for Chris; really it was an editor Chris wanted, not a collaborator. After Kim spent three months trying to put their two papers together, and mainly cutting her own words rather than changing Chris's, they agreed to stop their collaborative effort and go their own separate ways. Chris then sent her original paper to the journal Kim was planning to submit their joint paper to, and Kim sent her rewritten paper with Chris's words taken out of it to the same journal. She did not go back to her original paper, as her thoughts had continued to develop through the process of three months of writing (later she kicked herself for *not* doing that). Unbeknownst to either author, both papers were reviewed by the same editor and both were selected for publication. It was after they were both in print that Kim found herself under attack, when Chris discovered that in Kim's 17-page paper, three sentences of Chris's were still scattered in amongst Kim's text. It was a stupid mistake on Kim's part, certainly not intentional, and easy to correct, which she did immediately in the next issue of the journal, by citing Chris. However, three years of defending herself against a false charge for a mistake that a friend would have laughed with her about over a beer, gave her plenty of time to think about it."Was there ever a creature so riddled with self-doubt as the female professor? No. There never was" (Pagano, 1994, p. 262).

In 2000, Jane Roland Martin came out with an examination of present conditions for women in higher education, presented like a report, as if she had been charged by The Society of Feminist Scholars and Their Friends to study the lay of the land and report back to the general public. In her report back, Martin described how women are more critical of other women's work than they are of men's. Just as when they were little girls and they ignored their sisters' points but attended receptively to what the little boys had to say, as scholars women tend to be much harsher critics of their sisters (other female scholars) while being forgiving and generous to male scholarship. This is what little girls from my generation saw modeled each day they were in school, as well as in their informal education at home, in church, in the media, and in their community. Society taught us to be more critical of each other and more forgiving of males. It taught us to discount female contributions but take seriously what males have to say. I am not convinced things have improved that much for the

current generation of girls either. From a Freirian perspective, females learned that dominant power is in the hands of males, they are the gatekeepers (in school they were the principals and superintendents, in higher education they are the deans and department heads as well as the editors of journals, publishers of books, and reviewers of submissions). One way to claim some authority of one's own in research is to use a razor sharp knife of critique on others' research from one's own social group, other women with little power (the oppressed), by sharply and unforgivingly critiquing their scholarship, thus perpetrating horizontal violence upon them.

Researchers have shown women and men, as students, tend to be more critical of female professors than of males (Martin 2000). Men can maintain a distant relationship with their students and be perceived as objective, principled, and professional, while women faculty will be perceived as distant, unapproachable, and cold. Men can embrace a more connected and personal role as a professor and make themselves stand out as outstanding teachers as a result, often nominated for "teacher of the year" awards by their students for being so caring. However, students expect their female professors to be more nurturing, as women, and do not give them any recognition when they do so, rather they are critical of them if they do not. At the same time students expect scholastic rigor. Feminists have discussed this as "the bearded mother" syndrome (Morgan, 1987; Bogdan, 1994). There is also research that shows work that is submitted for grading by professors, or for review for publication in journals, or acceptance for a conference program, if the very same work has a woman's name on it, it will be more harshly critiqued, given a lower grade, and/or be less likely to be accepted for publication or presentation (Martin, 2000). Men *and* women judge women's work more harshly than they do men's. As Martin said, women are held to "a higher double standard of intellectual 'prowess'" (Martin, 2000; p. 92). Such judgments keep women in higher education from getting hired, tenured, promoted, and awarded in all the ways that faculty in higher education are awarded. As Martin pointed out in her report, where women were once excluded from higher education, they are now contained. "Was there ever a creature so riddled with self-doubt as the female professor? No. There never was" (Pagano, 1994, p. 262).

Befriending Women in Higher Education
What would it mean to befriend women in higher education, and for women to actively engage in *self-educative self-befriending*? Both Laird (2003) and Freire (1970) pointed us in the direction of love. The oppressed (women in higher education) free themselves, and thus their oppressors (men in higher education), by learning to love themselves and each other. We have learned that women in higher education are struggling against very deep-seeded fears, and pain. Only the fittest of the fit survive to become professors in higher education. Those who have survived have learned how to overcome the oppressive, harmful conditions encountered through milieu education (television, films, and songs, etc.), our

informal education (home, church, community, and peers), and our formal education (school, teachers, textbooks, principals, and guidance counselors). If we have learned to overcome our oppressive sexist conditions by becoming oppressors ourselves, as so many others have done in dealing with racist and classist conditions, then we fit right into Freire's description of how people deal with oppressive conditions. White women in higher education who commit horizontal violence on their colleagues are no better or worse than all those others who fight violence with violence, and become oppressors themselves.

I am a pacifist at heart. I do believe in the power of love. However, it is not easy to offer love to a person who is actively seeking to harm one's reputation as a scholar, a teacher, or as a colleague in a program, department, or college. In fact, to offer love to such a person can be quite foolish, for it is likely to make oneself vulnerable to harm by this person. Offering love to a person who means to do you harm is similar to positioning oneself as an enabler for an alcoholic or abusive partner. I do not mean to suggest we should set ourselves up for abuse, or allow someone to get away with bullying behavior. It's important that those who are being bullied stand up to that bullying behavior and not allow it to continue. However, it is equally important that the "standing up to" a person seeking to do harm is not done in a way that is perceived as retaliatory, harmful behavior given right back to the original perpetrator. Bullies need to be confronted calmly, firmly, and with care. "This kind of behavior will not be tolerated here. I know what you are doing and I will not let you harm myself or others." While I am a pacifist, I am also a fighter who will defend myself from harm.

In Kim's case, she had two senior faculty members in her department who befriended her, one was a woman from Chris's program whose office was next-door to Chris, let's call her JoAnne. Chris never confronted Kim directly with her accusation of plagiarism; she went straight to Kim's department head (John) and reported her version of what had happened to him. However, she also talked to JoAnne about it, in her anger, and JoAnne was kind enough to let Kim know that she had a problem she needed to address, and she should go talk to John. Kim did so, and that is how she found out that Chris was charging her with plagiarism. Her two senior colleagues, John and JoAnne, were fair, impartial, and open-minded in trying to help sort through this mess. That generosity, to not jump to a conclusion but listen and attend to both sides of the story, was perceived by Kim as acts of befriending. Not so for Chris. It was not enough that Kim apologize for her mistake and have Chris's three lines properly cited in the journal, Chris wanted to hurt Kim. She wanted Kim to lose her job.

Chris acted like she was satisfied with how the department handled the case, and when it was her time, submitted her tenure case. Once she was assured tenure, she proceeded to have a friend turn in Kim at the university level for research misconduct, triggering Kim to have to go through a university

level research misconduct hearing. Because of Chris's extreme and vindictive response to three lines of hers ending up by accident in Kim's publication, both John and JoAnne moved from being impartial and non-judgmental to supportive of Kim. Whatever had occurred in the women's failed effort to collaborate was not worth destroying someone's reputation and career over. As a junior faculty member, Kim could not know how much stress the situation with Chris probably caused both John and Jane, but she had an inkling, as both John and JoAnne retired from higher education during this time frame, John going first, when he turned seventy, but JoAnne following him shortly after, at a much younger age, after seeing Kim successfully make it through the tenure process (I believe she had over twenty publications).

Cases like Chris/Kim's have taught me to highly value department by-laws, faculty handbooks, and university policies. There are policies in higher education that can protect faculty from harm. If policies are not in place, they need to be written and that might mean volunteering to serve on the committee that writes them and gets them passed. Standing up to bullying behavior in higher education means turning to policies and procedures for help. It means creating a paper trail, and gathering documentation of the bullying behavior. It means keeping copies of all hateful email sent, and making notes of conversations (with dates, times, and locations, and hopefully witnesses, although there are often none). It means turning to the administration for help by keeping one's department head informed, and keeping notes of those meetings and copies of those emails as well. The department head should keep the dean informed. One can only succeed in "standing up" to bullying behavior if those in positions of authority have the strength and wisdom to use the university policy to protect their colleagues (and themselves) from the heat that will be generated by "standing up" to a bullying woman.

Once we have established ways of protecting ourselves from the harm some women in higher education are doing, we still need to try to find ways to befriend women. We need to return to the recommendation of loving the oppressed as the way to free them/us (and our oppressors) from our oppressions. I relied on some important lessons I learned as an elementary teacher, to help guide me as a department head. One, I learned it was important to let all the people who were working well together know that I noticed their positive contributions to our (classroom/department) community, and thank them for their help. Two, as an elementary teacher I learned to find something I liked about all the students with whom I worked. I learned to find a way for everyone to be able to positively contribute, and then make sure I showed my appreciation for their contribution.

Faculty in higher education are not leaving a department any time soon. In fact, in tough fiscal times, if they do leave, the program risks losing that line, and not being able to replace that faculty member with a new hire. It is an expensive, time-

consuming process to hire a new faculty member. All motivation is in favor of trying to help hired faculty members thrive and achieve tenure at the university. This means, our colleagues are not people we live with for a year or two, but maybe twenty years, or longer. This is why it is essential that all faculty feel safe around each other, and that a healthy environment is maintained where everyone can thrive. People don't have to like each other, or be friends, and we certainly do not have to all agree. We just need to treat each other with respect and decency, creating a space where all can feel like they can contribute, and that our diverse contributions are valued and appreciated. I learned from Herbert Kohl (1984) a very important lesson, that children want to feel included and a part of a classroom community. They need to feel like they belong. The same is true for women faculty members in higher education. They want to feel included and valued for what they have to contribute to their programs and departments. They want to be treated with respect and recognized for their contributions. They want to be heard, and know that their views are sought out, not ignored, belittled, or dismissed. My suspicion is that the more we find ways to offer support for women in higher education, and help them in their efforts to grow and thrive, the more we make room for them and find ways to let them contribute to the college community, the more we can consistently show women in higher education that we value them and appreciate their contributions, the more we will find women helping to improve conditions in higher education, rather than generating harmful conditions. These are acts of love, including efforts to hold women accountable for their acts of horizontal violence.

Conclusion

My hope in writing this essay is to get individuals talking about "the elephant in the room," the chilly climate generated by some women in higher education which most of men and wome experience. This is not an easy topic, for most people are aware that little girls and boys in America grow up in a sexist society that favors boys over girls in so many ways. I have tried to remind readers of the various ways that sexism manifests itself in our school classrooms and that little girls are victims of that sexism not only in our schools, but when they walk out of the school building as well. There are committed, caring men and women who work hard to try and address gender inequity problems and concerns in higher education. No matter how hard one works to address these issues, one cannot ignore the fact that every day little girls grow up under harmful conditions that effect who they become. Sexism harms little boys too. I have tried to be mindful of sexism's harm to oppressors as well as the oppressed by connecting this gender equity issue to Freire's analysis of oppression.

I wrote this essay as one who has grown up experiencing sexist treatment, not just in school, but also at home and in my larger community. I have had to learn to self-educate and befriend myself, something I continue to work on as I seek to heal from the harm that continues to be done to me, much of that harm

being unintentional. It is bad enough to have to worry about the harms others who hold more power than us might do to us. It is even worse to have to worry about the harm we seek to do to each other. It is my concern for the horizontal violence that women in higher education do to each other, in particular White women from my generation, which has motivated me to write this essay. I have experienced this horizontal violence myself, watched many others experience it, and have had to step in and try to help protect students and colleagues from this violence, as a department head.

Martin (2000) made numerous suggestions in *Coming of Age in Academe* to help us continue our efforts to reform the academy (higher education). This essay is an attempt to act on her suggestion that we take the academy seriously as a bona fide object of study and look further at what is going on in schools and colleges in terms of gender equity.   As Martin recommended, and many have discovered during their careers in higher education, they need to reject the idea of a female essence, but they should not reject the concept of *women* itself, as it is how the world perceives them.   Martin warned that rejecting *women* will lead to a lack of self-understanding and their own containment. Studying *women in higher education* will help better understand those in the workplace and will help in healing, befriending, and even learning to love each other.

Notes:
1. What Harry Broudy (1954) referred to as *mileau education* and curriculum scholars referred to as the *hidden curriculum* (Giroux & Purpel, 1983; Sadker & Sadker, 1995).

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