

Miss Congeniality Meets the New Managerialism: Feminism, Contingent Labour, and the New University

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ABSTRACT

In Canada, non-permanent faculty are no longer simply a reserve, flexible labour pool available for administrators to draw on when needed (e.g. during times of fluctuating enrollments); rather, they represent a strategy utilized by universities to reduce overall labour costs. In this article I bring together Women's Studies, feminism, contingent academics, and new managerialism. I explore how Women's Studies, as a site for thwarting ruling relations and offering the promise of alternative pedagogies, is being undercut by its forced reliance on contingent labour. Second, I argue that the new managerialist culture undermines the role of feminism in the contemporary academy such that faculty members' feminism complicates their tenuous positions as non-permanent faculty members.

RÉSUMÉ

Les chargés de cours et autres membres non-permanents du corps professoral constituaient naguère au Canada une simple réserve d'enseignantes et d'enseignants que les administrateurs universitaires pouvaient utiliser au besoin. Aujourd'hui, le recours à une telle main-d'œuvre temporaire est devenu une stratégie de réduction de la masse salariale. Cet article fait converger les thèmes des études des femmes, du féminisme, des travailleuses et travailleurs temporaires et des nouvelles pratiques de gestion. J'y explore comment les études des femmes, qui permettent de contrebalancer le rapport de forces actuel et offrent la promesse de pédagogies différentes, sont contrecarrées par le recours systématique des universités à du personnel non-permanent.

J'explique ensuite comment les nouvelles pratiques de gestion minent le rôle du féminisme, faisant en sorte que les universitaires féministes voient leur position déjà fragile s'amenuiser en tant que membres non-permanents des facultés.

Non-permanent faculty are no longer simply a reserve, flexible labour pool available for administrators to draw on when needed (i.e. during times of fluctuating enrollments); rather, they represent a strategy utilized by universities to reduce overall labour costs (Bauder, 2006). The increase of contingent faculty members marks the most definitive change in the past twenty years in higher education (Curtis, 2005). Yet, only recently has literature emerged on contingent faculty in universities (see for example Canadian works by Bauder, 2006; Hannah, Paul & Vethamany-Globus, 2002; Muzzin, 2003; Mysyk, 2001; Rajagopal, 2002; 2004; and in the United States, Baldwin & Chronister, 2001; Leslie, 1998). Contingent faculty is used as an umbrella term in this paper to capture both part-time faculty (those hired on a course-by-course basis – also known as stipend instructors, sessional instructors and adjunct faculty) and full-time, non-permanent faculty (this includes those hired on contractually-limited term appointments, typically in one or two year durations. These positions are not on the “tenure track”). We know from available figures that contingent academics represented 45% of all faculty in 1998 in Canada (Rajagopal, 2004). Part-time women academics proportionately outnumber their full time counterparts, as 42% of part timers (1997-1998) are women compared with 26% of full timers (1997-1998) (Omiecinski, 2003). Rajagopal's (2002) data also speak to contingent academics as a gendered and racialized group since the proportion of women and minorities who are contingent academics is larger than the comparative proportion who occupy secure full-time positions in universities. As Muzzin (2003) notes, contingent academic workers are a “feminized (and somewhat racialized, though still mostly white) group supporting the still largely white male academic enterprise” (p. 6-7). Karumanchery-Luik and Ramirez (2003) speculate as to whether universities could operate without the labour of contingent faculty, just as Fisher and Rubenson (1998) note that the increased reliance of Canadian universities on part-time or sessional instructors doing the work that used to be performed by tenure-track faculty. Thompson (2003) describes the contemporary university as resembling an hourglass: expanded administration on the top, pinched full-time faculty in the middle, and a large bottom of part- time/non-tenure track faculty.

The few Canadian articles on non-permanent faculty examine mainly the phenomenon from political economy perspectives; exploring the context of political and fiscal decisions (decreased government funding to postsecondary institutions, adoption of new managerialist policies by universities) that produce a situation of decline in the full-time professoriate and an increase in non-continuing appointments (a reserve, flexible workforce) (Bauder, 2006; Mysk, 2001; Rajagopal, 2002; 2004; Rajagopal & Farr, 1989). In this article, I wish to bring together Women's Studies, feminism and new managerialism. I

explore how Women's Studies as a site for thwarting ruling relations and offering the promise of alternative pedagogies is being undercut by its forced reliance on contingent labour. Second, I argue that the new managerialist culture undermines the role of feminism in the contemporary academy such that faculty members' feminism complicates their tenuous positions as non-permanent faculty members.

I draw from a larger study on the social organization of feminist teaching (Webber, 2005a). An overt focus on contingent faculty was not part of the original project design; however, significant issues relating to contingent faculty arose as half of the faculty participants hold these tenuous positions. Further issues surrounding the use of non-permanent faculty members surfaced consistently in the interviews with permanent faculty, teaching assistants, and students. This paper is limited by the original research design not specifically incorporating interview questions focused on non-permanent faculty members. Nonetheless, the material provided herein contributes to the field and also indicates that further research is necessary.

Twenty-two participants were interviewed (eight faculty, five teaching assistants, and nine students). The data for this article are drawn mainly from the interviews with faculty members, but student and teaching assistant material is interwoven where applicable. While the sample size may seem smaller than ideal, I argue that the results nonetheless carry catalytic validity (Lather, 1991) as reading the realities of contingent academics' work lives may empower transformation in the academy. Catalytic validity reminds us that good research will "ring true" (Jackson & Verberg, 2007) and may inspire praxis for some readers (Estola, 2003).

All of the faculty members are white, identify as feminists and are involved in teaching courses that are cross-listed with Women's Studies. These cross-listed Women's Studies courses are all linked to courses in the Faculty of Social Sciences – drawing from Sociology, Psychology, Economics, and so forth. Participants engaged in semi-structured interviews. In the interest of confidentiality, the research university is not identified and all names used are pseudonyms.

Participating faculty in the project were one sessional instructor (hired on a course-by-course basis) with several years of teaching experience (Sue Ann), two lecturers on contractually-limited term appointments (Tina – who spent several years as a sessional instructor, and Bettina – in her first academic appointment), one assistant professor on a contractually-limited term appointment (Jordan – her first academic appointment), two tenured associate professors (Ilana and Rosemary) and two tenured full professors (Cara and Paula). The teaching assistants interviewed were Sarah, Dale, Julia, Donna and Arja. Julia, Arja and Dale were in their first year of being teaching assistants while Sarah and Donna were experienced TAs. Eight women and one man were interviewed as students: four "young" students (Heather, Rebecca, Charlene, Liam) and five "mature" students (Melissa, Alicia, Susan, Connie, Veronica). All of the students were in either their third or fourth year of studies.

It is important to note that some of the institutional practices referred to in this article may or may not be in play at other universities. In this institution, reliance on contingent faculty can vary by department and this variation is not in the control of the departments themselves. In the institution I studied, Women's Studies was particularly implicated with high levels of non-permanent faculty and thus provides an excellent opportunity for exploration of the connections between new managerialism and Women's Studies spaces and faculty.

The Promise of Women's Studies?

Women's Studies is meant to be a "site of promise for social and intellectual transformation" (Brathwaite, Heald, Luhmann & Rosenberg, 2004, p.10). The first formalized Women's Studies program in Canada began in 1973 at the University of British Columbia (PAR-L, 2008). The presence of Women's Studies in Canadian universities is well-established, as over 40 institutions across the country currently offer Women's Studies programs or house Women's Studies institutes. Despite the entrenchment of Women's Studies, few people have full-time tenure-track or tenured positions housed solely in Women's Studies. Rather, cross-appointments, faculty loans from other departments, and part-time faculty comprise the majority of appointments in Women's Studies (Brathwaite, Heald, Luhmann & Rosenberg, 2004).

Preceding the formalization of Women's Studies programs, introducing students to feminism happened more on the basis of individual faculty members who were willing to introduce the topic of women's liberation or sexism into their classrooms. Currently, an institutional structure exists in the academy where students know they can go if this is where their interests lie, whether on a course-by-course basis or as a major.

Women's Studies offers a space that is supposed to challenge the regime of rationality that operates in the academy (Smith, 1992). Women's Studies promises the use of liberatory pedagogies in its classes. Feminist faculty are supposed to be able to "do" things differently: research and publish from feminist perspectives, draw on feminist pedagogies in their teaching, and utilize feminist principles in their contributions to university governance¹. In the United States, the National Women's Studies Association describes Women's Studies in the following way:

Women's Studies is the educational strategy of a breakthrough in consciousness and knowledge. The uniqueness of Women's Studies has been and remains its refusal to accept sterile divisions between academy and community, between the growth of the mind and the health of the body, between intellect and passion, between the individual and society. (NWSA, 2002, p.xx)

Important to this paper is Women's Studies as one possible space for enacting feminist pedagogies in the academy. In a very general sense, these pedago-

gies revolve around intentions to understand and make visible gender relations/ gender oppression (also, as connected to issues such as race, class, and sexuality), value the realm of experience, recognize and restructure power relations in classrooms, interrogate the status quo, and engender social change/ social transformation (Bignell, 1996; Briskin, 1994; hooks, 1988, Hornosty, 2004, Morley, 2001; Rinehart, 2002; Welch, 2002).

As a site for thwarting the regime of rationality and ruling relations and offering the promise of alternative pedagogies, Women's Studies at the research site is being undermined by its forced reliance on contingent labour. In Canada, Women's Studies programs are particularly vulnerable as few Women's Studies departments have full-time faculty positions housed solely in Women's Studies (Brathwaite, Heald, Luhmann & Rosenberg, 2004). It cannot be ignored that relying heavily on non-permanent faculty makes it difficult to develop strong departments with collective future goals (Parsons, 2002).

Strong university departments require continuity and stability in faculty. Having to rely on contingent faculty means people are often hired at the last minute (Rajagopal, 2004). Failing to provide adequate notice of an appointment is a pervasive problem that CAUT (2005) identifies in their policy statement on fairness for contract academic staff. Inadequate notice of teaching assignments was certainly evident in this project. Tina recalls being given two weeks notice for teaching a course. This short notice has implications for how she organizes and teaches the course. She does not have the luxury of time to be overly creative in selecting readings for the course by designing her own course package. Rather, as she describes,

So the worst-case scenario would be to phone a couple of publishers and ask to send along as quickly as possible any books in those areas. And then I would look at previous course outlines and then [it was] contingent [on] me [as to] what was available to me in textbooks and you know any kind of background reading that I could conjure up.

These last minute hirings have the potential to jeopardise quality curriculum (Parsons, 2002; Thompson, 2003). The feminist faculty also speak of being concerned about the selection of course materials. Not being familiar with the program and university meant Tina asked herself, "Is this too strident a text? How strident can you be? How much do you have to soft soap the story?" As argued elsewhere (Webber, 2005b), feminist faculty are concerned about the potential resistance they might face from students not open to feminist content. In the case of contingent academics, there is heightened nervousness around "rocking the boat," not just around student interests but also around what are perceived as the conservative interests of the department.

When departments are forced to rely on non-permanent faculty members for teaching, they are often hiring with little notice and many of the hired faculty are engaging in continual new course preparation. Faculty members speak of "teaching to survive." The first time they taught a course they were teaching just to get

through the course and hoping for no disasters to come their way. One's first time teaching can have positives though; it can represent getting a foot in the door or can help one's self-satisfaction. Karumanchery-Luik and Ramirez (2003) note that as contingent faculty they too were continually asked to teach courses they had never taught before. Teaching a course for a second time is seen as a luxury: not having to prepare another brand new course. As someone who thinks teaching is as important as her research, Bettina has now taught one course twice and only now says she is able to redesign it to make it better because she has "survived them" [survived the first two times]. Survival for these faculty members is getting their lectures prepared and course readings done. They comment that they did not have much time to consider pedagogy. Here again we see the institution chipping away at the goals and possibilities of Women's Studies. All faculty ought to have time to consider pedagogy. However, a key force of Women's Studies is the explicit political commitment to the importance and utilization of alternative pedagogies. Here we have feminist "knowledge workers" who are throwing away their pedagogy because they are constantly working on the margins of academia.

Faculty members who teach classes larger than 40 students at this university are assigned teaching assistants to cover some of the grading of the course and front-line interactions with students. Non-permanent faculty sometimes find themselves in a position where they look to their teaching assistants, who may have prior experience with the university, for guidance on how to navigate the institutional relations of teaching a course. As Sue Ann states,

I had Sari and Ivan last year, and Sari knew way more about this place, way more than I ever will. So there was a funny dynamic where Sari knew more of the administrative stuff than I did and I was having to lead the course and rely on what she knew. That set up an odd dynamic between the two of us.

Sue Ann recognized that she was being paid significantly more money than her teaching assistant to administer the course; yet, because she was new to the university, and there was no adequate administrative training provided by either her department or the university, she found herself exploiting the knowledge of her experienced teaching assistant. The politics of feminism mark this exploitative relationship as problematic for Sue Ann. Even more devastating politically is that this exploitation was located within a Women's Studies department itself. These relationships highlight specific instances of the clash between the promise of Women's Studies and its location inside an institution whose primary concern seems to be the economic "bottom line."

A further example of institutional undermining of Women's Studies is the process of hiring part-time instructors for courses cross-listed with Women's Studies. A frequent theme emerges in the interviews that prospective applicants/successful hires were not informed of the status of their courses (Sociology, Psychology, Economics, etc.) as being cross-listed with Women's Studies, nor were they informed of the substantive and pedagogical requirements of Women's Studies cross-listed courses. Bettina comments on the courses she

taught, “I thought of them as [discipline]. I wouldn’t even know today if they were cross-listed with Women’s Studies.” As it turns out, this instructor brings a feminist perspective to all her work, both in terms of her course content and her pedagogical approach. However, departments are not always this fortunate to hire someone with an adequate feminist background/training for courses which are cross-listed with Women’s Studies, yet are not advertised as such to prospective instructors, nor are they communicated as such to the successful hire. One instance in particular was raised in several of my interviews of a man being hired to teach a course on the sociology of law which was a course cross-listed with Women’s Studies. Again, nothing in the job advertisement indicated the institutional requirement of the Women’s Studies department that this course needed to have someone who would include feminist theory and content in the course. It is not clear why this omission happened.

Two of the students interviewed for this project took this course offering with this particular non-feminist instructor. One of the teaching assistants I spoke with was also the teaching assistant for this specific course. The critique that was raised in the interviews was not that you have to be a woman to teach a cross-listed Women’s Studies course, but that there needs to be some feminist content, and in this instance, there was none. The teaching assistant for the course, Sarah, wondered if the department failed to remember that the course was cross-listed. “Sometimes I wonder if the department forgets it’s cross-listed when they hire somebody who doesn’t have a feminist background. But people that are teaching cross-listed courses should have a background in feminist theory.” Certainly, there is no concern that this happens as a deliberate action, but it is a significant oversight to fail to list the course in the job advertisement as cross-listed with Women’s Studies and/or not hire people with adequate backgrounds to teach the feminist content. The decision to hire someone with no background in Women’s Studies, let alone inform them of the cross-listed aspect of the course, affects the delivery of the course and undermines the goal of having courses cross-listed with Women’s Studies.

The two students who completed the course indicated that the professor did not incorporate an analysis of gender into his course structure. Therefore, the course did not fulfill the department’s requirements for Women’s Studies courses. One has to question the administrative and departmental commitment to the quality of the Women’s Studies program when these practices are tacitly condoned. Again, these practices work to undermine the ability of Women’s Studies to develop as a strong department in the university. A comment from one of the students raises the possibility that this individual was hired due to a need to cover a course rather than to benefit the Women’s Studies department.

It seems inconceivable that you would hire someone who has no Women’s Studies background to teach a cross-listed course, then you’re all of a sudden, you’ve already reduced the class, you’ve reduced it to money and numbers, you haven’t acknowledged the role of the Women’s Studies program in the course. (Rebecca)

Hiring is important work, quite worth the time it demands in order to sustain quality programs. The hiring of non-permanent faculty should not be seen as “just covering a course.” There needs to be a match with the hired instructors and the course and program she or he is becoming a part of, even if it is only for a short period of time. Not being able to exercise control over the hiring process undermines the commitment to various university departments--in this case, Women’s Studies.

Sessional and contract faculty are also frequently spatially separated from the program or department in which they are hired. They are often given office space/desk space outside of the department. Some are denied even these basics (Nutting, 2003; Thompson, 2003). The non-permanent faculty interviewed feel disconnected from the departments in which they are teaching. I know I certainly felt this disconnection at one university I worked at where only one full-time faculty member ever came to my office and introduced himself (in this case), over the course of the eight months I was on campus. Nutting’s (2003) article about why we need to care about part-time faculty challenges full-time faculty to be able to list the names of the part-timers in their departments, to be able to pick them out of a crowd, and to include them in departmental functions, visit them in their offices.

This spatial disconnect can also contribute to a larger disconnect. The non-permanent faculty members interviewed were at times unaware of how their courses were meant to be part of the larger program(s) and as such they are unable to get excited about or even understand how their courses fit into the overall program. Sue Ann talks about how the rest of the department is unfamiliar with her: “The problem with being part time is you’re not here enough, you’re not known enough. Like my office isn’t in this corridor, it’s over there so I don’t bump into people much.” She further points out that she is unsure of how her cross-listed course fits into the overall Women’s Studies curriculum; when she was hired, nobody spoke with her about this aspect of the course.

I wish that we got together. Is there a head of Women’s Studies? What are we trying to do with this feminist focus in the course? And how do I fit there? I know where the Women’s Studies office is and that’s about it. So as a group of feminist teachers what are we trying to do? (Sue Ann)

This disconnection from the larger department or program in part organizes how the non-permanent faculty interviewed in this university approach their teaching assignments. Simply including these faculty members in departmental or program meetings would alleviate some of the disconnection they experience. They might then have a sense of how their course(s) are part of a larger program and could shape their content to fulfill programmatic goals. Sue Ann states in her interview, “As part timers we don’t go to staff meetings, we’re not invited.” Rarely are non-permanent faculty asked for their input into curriculum design (Mysk, 2001).

Although office space at most universities is a contentious issue, giving these faculty members space to work within the departments for which they are teaching would benefit not only the individual faculty members themselves, but also the larger department. Having space within the department for part-time faculty would also help the students see these faculty members as part of the department. Not providing departments with adequate institutional space chips away at possibilities for collegiality and strong and cohesive programs.

Many full-time academics view contingent academics “simply as necessary and expedient fillers to handle enrollment pressures” (Rajagopal, 2004, p.68). Some full-time faculty further see themselves as “gatekeepers of the collegium” (Rajagopal, 2004, p.68). One of the full-time professors interviewed adds to this by outlining how Women’s Studies, by not being adequately funded by the university, has created a rancorous legacy on the part of the non-permanent academics.

We have no opening positions so there’s a long history of bitterness and tremendous pain involved with part time and contract instructors in Women’s Studies. And this has been really a dreadful thing for the female faculty involved in Women’s Studies who have found themselves repeatedly at the other end of very painful disputes, accusations and feelings of disappointment and betrayal and downright bitterness, because people have given a lot to the program and have been paid very little, and nothing really becomes of it in any permanent way. (Ilana)

Ilana goes on to describe how some of the permanent faculty have been affected by this situation.

I think that this has become really very hard for a program that people are already doing for a second or third shift, and it has not been pleasant for many of those who have become the targets of the most of this [part time faculty being upset about not being hired in permanent positions]. I’ve seen the toll this has taken and I would have to say structurally created by the institution. It just seems like a waste of tremendous energy, very good people and a hard situation.

Ilana further speaks to the exploitative aspect of universities allowing the Women’s Studies program to be sustained by a staff of non-permanent faculty. The contributions of the non-permanent academics are not recognized or valued by the institution (Rajagopal, 2004).

I think people who teach part-time and especially under contract have expectations that this is going to turn into something and it never has, given the circumstancesBecause the program has relied so heavily on part-time and contract people, because our full-time faculty has not been able to support it, it’s run itself on the backs of people like that who then have quite often become quite disillusioned.

This university is not alone in its practices though, as literature documents that the use of contingent faculty is becoming part-and-parcel of the business of managing finances in today's universities (Nutting, 2003; Thompson, 2003). In the end, we see the creation of a vicious self-fulfilling prophecy. In this instance, Women's Studies is not a strong department and is forced to rely heavily on non-permanent faculty to mount its courses. As a result of this reliance, Women's Studies is not able to develop a strong, cohesive curriculum with input from all constituents; it does not have adequate institutional space, nor does it have control over the hiring process. As a result, Women's Studies is not able to develop a strong presence in the university as it lacks the currency that comes with a department of permanent faculty who are able to: develop research agendas, secure external research funding, develop coherent curriculum, and have a strong presence in university governance. The self-fulfilling prophecy of Women's Studies as marginal occurs as Women's Studies (in this particular institution) is structurally unable to develop as a strong department in this current era of heavy reliance on contingent academic workers.

New Managerialism, Feminism and Miss Congeniality

When discussing the academy in the 21st century, Drakich, Grant and Stewart (2002) argue that hiring freezes and budget cuts characterize the last thirty years in universities. With cutbacks in federal government levels of funding, universities have seen their overall funding levels decline dramatically. Currie and Newson (1998) argue that globalization, with its accompanying market ideology and practices common to the business world, is one of the key factors behind the current corporate restructuring in Canadian universities. New managerialism emerges as a useful concept for explicating Currie and Newson's (1998) argument. New managerialism has seeped into the academy over the last two decades and has been instrumental in some of the changes we see in universities. Where we once spoke of "communities of scholars," we now speak of "workplaces" (Deem, Hillyard & Reed, 2007, p.2). New managerialism is a wide ideological movement "that regards managing and management as being functionally and technically indispensable to the achievement of economic progress, technological development, and social order within any modern political economy" (Deem, Hillyard & Reed, 2007, p.6). Alongside this ideology comes an associated set of practices concerned with performance measures, accountability, economy, efficiency and enterprise in contemporary universities (Deem, 2001; Deem, Hillyard & Reed, 2007; Furedi, 2002; Saunderson, 2002). Regimes of performance measurement are now firmly entrenched in universities "with the aim of realizing the benefits of customer-driven competition between service providers" (Deem, Hillyard & Reed, 2007, p.11).

Connected to the new managerialism is Ritzer's "McUniversity" (2002) which helps set a context for understanding the role of the contemporary academy in a knowledge society. Education is understood as a consumable good in the marketplace. Students (and their parents) are seen as consumers/clients

seeking skills that will lead to a job versus students seeking an education (Fox, 2002; Smith, 2004; Tudiver, 1999). There is an infantilizing of students (Fox, 2002). Faculty members are to seek external research funding as a way to contribute to their university's overall cost-recovery program (Tudiver, 1999). Further, research itself becomes a market commodity, promoted as a potential service to business (Smith, 2004).

Notable feminist reaction to the contemporary trends in higher education explores whether "quality audits" create opportunities for advancement or exploitation of women (Morley, 2005), how new managerialism processes impact women academics' identities (Saunderson, 2002), the connection between market-driven universities and student treatment of feminist academics (Lee, 2005), and the opportunities for feminist academics to disrupt the contemporary McUniversity (Rinehart, 2002). In Canada, Hornosty (2004, p.47) argues that feminist paradigms have successfully challenged the male hegemony of the university and worries that the corporatization of the academy will undermine our progress toward a "woman-friendly" institution. She points to the danger of corporate sponsorship of research and how this might then drive research agendas, leaving little space for feminist scholarship, as feminist projects are not typically understood as having marketability. New managerialism is "a new form of organisational masculinity for feminist educators to negotiate" (Morley, 2002, p.95).

Under new managerialism, there are calls for quality and accountability. Performance indicators are one mechanism of attempts to quantitatively objectify quality and provide accountability. Polster and Newson (1998) identify performance indicators as globalizing practices that are "technologies for managing and controlling the academic activities that flow within and through institutions of higher education" (p. 174-5). Poststructuralists argue that mechanisms such as student evaluations, as a performance indicator, are disciplinary technologies which aim to create docile workers in the academy (Blackmore, 2002; Luke, 1997; Morley, 2002). These disciplinary technologies operate to normalize particular teaching practices, and create more authoritarian and objective modes of pedagogy. As Furedi (2001, p.16) notes, "many courses have already reduced or dropped theoretical themes and other 'difficult bits' from their program After all, customers are not there to be challenged" (p. XX) My data support this conclusion because the faculty members interviewed are very aware of the impact of students' attitudes towards feminist course content and that ultimately their course evaluations might be used to evaluate their work by administrators and their department chairs. In particular, the research site relies solely on anonymous student course evaluations to evaluate faculty members' teaching practices.

The feminist ideal of letting students come to "voice" is no longer located in experiential learning but is now embodied in anonymous student course evaluations in the current university climate of quality assurance (Morley, 2001). Yet, as Fox (2002) argues, "courting student approval is unlikely to be

a useful way of establishing what constitutes a quality education” (p.132). Indicators on teaching that are pulled from student course evaluations “do not always account for students’ (sceptical and often negative) perceptions of women in positions of intellectual authority” (Luke, 1997, p.438). The concentration of women in large first and second-year undergraduate courses “puts women’s teaching performance at the mercy of beginning undergraduates who are often less than ‘fair’ in their assessment of women academics” (Luke, 1997, p.438). Also at play in the current climate of quality assurance and accountability is the privileging of knowledges that are detached, macro-theoretical overviews (Reay, 2000). Feminist knowledges, as with other critical knowledges, rank low in terms of contemporary knowledge hierarchies. Feminist knowledges are still taken up by many in the academy as merely biased, male hating, personal opinion (Atwood, 1994; Elliot, 1995; Lee, 2005; Letherby & Shiels, 2001; Moore, 1997; Webber, 2005b). So what happens when you are a feminist, working part time in the university, teaching feminist courses? According to the women interviewed, you ultimately pander to the perceived conservatism of your students.

These surveillance or disciplinary mechanisms often inform future hiring decisions, or at least the non-permanent faculty members interviewed perceive this to be the case (Lee, 2005). While all faculty are subject to the surveillance of student course evaluations, the material reality for the non-permanent academics interviewed here is that they perceive course evaluations to be one of the crucial determining factors for securing future employment (and as stated earlier, students at this university are the only ones formally evaluating faculty teaching). Bettina says about being evaluated by her students, “if you have students who just don’t care or don’t like you or whatever, then you get worried about being screwed on your course evaluations”. These faculty members believe they must manage their teacher identities in a way not required of senior faculty members. The non-permanent faculty speak of having to adapt their style according to student reaction because positive student evaluations are necessary (they believe) for rehiring.

There might be things that I do differently, teaching things like feminist theory or whatever if I was tenured [permanent appointment]. So there’s always the sensation, like one thing when I talk about managing the course so it’s okay for the students and it’s also creating harmony . . . so you’re not likely to get the worst course evaluations. (Tina)

Sue Ann does not self-identify as a lesbian to her class precisely because she is a part-time instructor with no job security: “And around the lesbian part, I don’t officially come out to 150 people. And particularly I’m not tenured so there’s a risk there.” Heightened awareness of the power of students to affect their careers by the faculty members is echoed in Lee’s (2005) UK study.

Morley (2002) argues that faculty take fewer pedagogical risks in the current surveillance regime. The presence of these surveillance mechanisms, which are

characteristic of globalizing processes in “modern universities” (in Western nation states), means that faculty who incorporate contentious material into their classes may be taking risks if student dissatisfaction is communicated through evaluations of faculty (Blackmore, 2002; Furedi, 2001; Lee, 2005). Student voices are co-opted to discipline academics who teach politically volatile material (Messner, 2000). The student evaluation, as a disciplinary tool of the new managerialism, potentially undermines the role of feminism in the academy.

Heads of Departments present yet another disciplinary tool. Non-permanent faculty talk of being wary of having students complain about their teaching and/or course content to their Chairs/Directors; they do not want to be seen as incompetent course directors (Lee, 2005). As Tina states, “Because I do know that if there were 10 students out of all of my courses tromping to the Chair, that would be a problem with me having this position.” Another participant, Sue Ann, speaks about a chilling incident happening in her classroom.

Last year, at the end of the lecture when I would be alone in the room, and they’re big rooms, three guys would come in and start with the ‘lesbian hating feminists’, making comments about the overheads and me. They would come in after the class [from the next class] and on 2 weeks they gave me a really hard time. But I didn’t allow it to silence me. So I spoke back to them and got out of there quickly.

Sue Ann experienced this harassment by students whose class took place in her lecture hall immediately following her lecture. On the dates when they harassed her, Sue Ann had overheads on display about domestic violence against women. Although in her interview she states that she spoke back to the men, she further indicates that she did not discuss this situation with the Chair of her department. Even though she wished to seek advice on this kind of situation, because of her insecure position as a part time instructor, Sue Ann did not seek out her Chair because she did not want to be seen as an incompetent course director.

This atmosphere has consequences for feminist classrooms. The non-permanent faculty members interviewed talk of watering down their feminist content so as to not “offend” their students and trying to secure good student evaluations. As Tina explains,

I would try to integrate a variety of perspectives to make more people happy basically. And I would do that from the position I’m in because of issues of tenure. So if I were in a position where I had tenure, I might do more in terms of saying “I’m using a feminist perspective in this course” and not worrying about you know, where it would sit with the students.

Both Taylor (2001) and Furedi (2001) note how some faculty will indulge their students to avoid negative student evaluations. Tina shares that she teaches from

a liberal feminist point of view because “it’s more easy to get across to a population.” Lowe and Lowe Benston (1991) discuss how there is strong pressure from both faculty and students to concentrate on a liberal version of feminist scholarship and how even the liberal material is met with difficulty. This presentation of liberal material has implications for the kinds of knowledges that get introduced as “feminist” and ultimately has an effect on students’ understandings of feminism and perhaps even an effect on the strength of the women’s movement and feminism in general if students are continually engaging with watered down content. Citing bell hooks, Rinehart (2002, p.177) urges feminists in the academy to keep Women’s Studies as a “location of possibility.”

Surveillance mechanisms such as course evaluations, merit rankings, promotion, and the tenure hurdle all have the potential to dissuade faculty from teaching “contentious” material so as to avoid resistance and discomfort in their classrooms (Messner, 2000; Taylor, 2001), even though this runs counter to the goals of feminist pedagogy and other liberatory pedagogies. For example, Tina speaks in her interview of managing her identity so as to produce a palatable persona: “one of my tactics is to appeal in terms of an identity. . . win the Miss Congeniality prize, to be Mary Tyler Moore and dress up a bit and be happy and up...this worked as a strategy.” Here we see that gender relations are made and remade through people’s practices – in this case the teaching practices of non-permanent faculty members. This pandering to students’ perceived conservative interests serves to maintain the current masculine regime of the university, so that the “fathertongue” (Smith, 1990) or language of the ruling regime goes unchallenged or only mildly challenged. This watering down of feminist content sustains the primacy and authority of the masculinist institutional structure. Often this practice of gendering remains invisible to faculty; it is seen as a way to perhaps improve teaching scores, merit rankings, and/or get them through the day more easily; it is not easily seen as a gendering practice in the current regime of new managerialism.

CONCLUSIONS

These climates of negativity toward feminism and precarious academic labour conditions have consequences for Women’s Studies classrooms in the new managerialist academy. As argued above, Women’s Studies, in the university studied, is hampered by its forced reliance on contingent staff. Women’s Studies is unable to develop a strong presence in the university. Further, the non-permanent academics in this project found themselves made invisible by the lack of adequate office space on campus and their disconnect from their departments. Contingent faculty were not included in departmental meetings where discussions of curriculum and pedagogy presumably happen. Further, a startling finding is that at this university, the contingent faculty were not informed that their courses were cross-listed with Women’s Studies. Not informing instructors of the Women’s Studies requirements of their courses is at least one aspect of a complex situation that can be remedied in a straightforward manner.

As student voices are understood as the all important consumer voice, the contingent faculty interviewed here present liberal and watered-down versions of feminist material that they think will be palatable to their conservative students. Student voices are co-opted to discipline feminist academics and work to undermine the role and strength of Women's Studies in the academy. When feminist material is presented in watered down ways, it is still met with negativity and even outright hostility. Presenting liberal material as the only kind of feminist thought has repercussions for the production of knowledge, and for what kinds of feminist knowledges are seen as legitimate. The academic field of Women's Studies, and presumably feminist work in other disciplines, may be affected as contingent faculty members (and other faculty in insecure positions) alter their pedagogical commitments in order to negotiate their way in the contemporary academy (Burghardt & Colbeck, 2005). However, precisely because of a commitment for transformation by Women's Studies, "feminism has always been concerned with activism" (Lee, 2005, p.207), Women's Studies has the potential to remain "a location of possibility" (hooks, as cited by Rinehart, 2002, p.177) in spite of new managerialism. ♣

NOTES

1. Utilizing feminist approaches to pedagogy is not restricted to faculty in Women's Studies – feminist faculty housed in other departments may also elect to use feminist pedagogies.

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