

WHOSE VOICES SPEAK WITH WHOM?

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Patti Lather. *Getting Smart: Feminist Research with/in the Postmodern.* New York: Routledge, 1991. Pp. 212. \$45.00 U.S. cloth, \$14.95 paper.

Ideally, feminist criticism of another feminist's work avoids the infamous practice of "trashing" the work—that is, of easily lending itself to the reproduction of masculine privilege, divisiveness among women, or other such anti-feminist purposes. Such an aspiration is particularly laudable when we consider how feminist criticism can be appropriated to provide unintended ammunition for the current reactionary backlash against the recent gains made by feminists inside and outside the academy. At the same time, though, the effort to avoid trashing can unwittingly become a way of silencing discussion or circumscribing the terms of our debate within a polite, but nonetheless false, consensual discourse over the means and ends of various feminisms. To participate in such a discourse poses at least as grave a threat to the future of feminist scholarship as does the readily identifiable practice of unconstructive divisive criticism among feminists. In assessing the context, text, and absent text(s) of Patti Lather's book, I aim to steer this sensitive and difficult course of sisterly criticism while expanding the public debate over its implications for pedagogical and feminist political practice.

As a postmodernist feminist educator, Lather suggests that she will depart from the hopeless dualism of idealism/pessimism, that is, of viewing specific forms of oppression as *caused* by abstract Otherness. She explicitly announces the volume's intent to ground her defence of postmodernism in her research on "student resistance to the liberatory curriculum" (p. 1). In addition, she states that "to write postmodernism is to simultaneously use and call into question a discourse, to both challenge and inscribe dominant meaning systems in ways that construct our own categories and frameworks as contingent, positioned and partial" (p. 1). Shortly, I shall consider the implications of treating all knowledge claims as "partial" and thus as equally reliable representations of the social world. I shall ask whether such an argument provides a viable non-relativistic alternative to prevailing aims of curricular inquiry—the "dinosaur culture of master narratives" against which Lather argues (p. xvi). For now, it is sufficient to suggest that Lather's claims about the value of conducting educational research or pedagogical inquiry "with/in" the postmodern are as multiple and contradictory as is the uncertain ground on which she announces Western civilization to stand.

In her preface, Lather contextualizes postmodernism as her preferred alternative to the pseudo-neutrality of positivistic conceptions of objectivity and the totalism of modernism. She states that her “struggle” to convey the insights of deconstructionist thought to a “transdisciplinary” audience is one which attempts to disrupt “hegemonic and received ways” of thinking about and practising emancipatory pedagogy and research (pp. xi, 1). Initially, she rejects a wholly individualistic model of empowerment in favour of a more structural definition of the term, which analyses “ideas about the causes of powerlessness,” and which recognizes “systemic oppressive forces” (p. 4). For Lather, empowerment is both a personal journey—“people coming into a sense of their own power”—and a collective struggle to change the oppressive conditions of their lives (p. 4). She is particularly critical of notions of radical or critical pedagogy and research that are locked into an elitist model of “vanguard politics” and “consciousness-raising” (p. 4). Lather’s critique of Western positivistic dualisms, while not original, is of course always welcome as is her wariness of dogmatic or authoritarian regimes of truth which masquerade as the latest critical approach to empowerment.

Because the book presents this version of postmodern pedagogy as an alternative to other forms of critical theory and feminist practice, it is fair to ask some crucial questions, at a grounded level of specificity, that test its vision for social change. What are the principles and practices that inform Lather’s postmodern liberatory curriculum? In what ways are they distinctive from those that might constitute other forms of critical theory and practice such as, variants of cultural materialism, feminism, and postcolonialism? Can feminism, neo-marxism, and postmodernism be combined eclectically without explicitly addressing the conflicting agendas of these respective political traditions? Does the book articulate consistent and adequate arguments for postmodernism that deal with the ethical and political issues that pervade classroom pedagogical choices faced by both teachers and students? Can a new constructive or liberatory practice be forged solely on the basis of deconstructive activities without reference to the activities of building, repairing, and thus radically altering the norms, principles, and institutional arrangements of existing schools and curricula? Or is it the case, as Nancy Fraser has argued, that the politics of particular forms of postmodernist deconstruction amount to little more than the deconstruction of politics or the political?¹ What answers to such questions does Lather’s book provide?

For Lather, curriculum inquiry is “full of contradictory voices” (p. xvi). Although specific reactionary voices or forces are never clearly identified, in Lather’s terms they include the “guardians of orthodoxy who want permanent boundaries and unquestionable canons” (p. xvi). Lather’s argument, however, does not suggest that the point of postmodernism is to place these voices in their historical context as one way of beginning to evaluate the conflicting ethical stances, material interests, and ideological priorities that may underlie them. For Lather, to engage in such rational pursuits is to reinforce the “high priests of

Western culture" who are struggling "to retain their dominance" (p. xvi). Initially, she states that neomarxism, feminism, structuralism, and "minoritarianisms" (a tradition which is new to me and undefined in the text) are equally critical allies of postmodernism/poststructuralism—terms she uses interchangeably. They are presented as related traditions involved in the battle against Western logocentrism—a battle which aims to show how "power permeates the construction and legitimation of knowledges" (p. xvii). Yet one sentence later, she argues that what postmodernism/poststructuralism adds to "critical theory is the incapability of how our positionality shapes our rhetoric and practice" (p. xvii). Lather does not identify which texts and works within critical theory she finds incapable of saying much about "positionality." Nor does she make clear whether or not she includes various traditions of feminism and neomarxism in the category of critical theory, even though they are for her clearly part of the modernist tradition she rejects.

Such an argument seems to set up a crude, indeed binary opposition between postmodernism as the anti-truth and critical theory and modernism as master narratives *inevitably* linked with totalism, logocentrism, and domination. Yet the question remains: How does one deconstruct all the significations that have their source in the logos or in the Enlightenment, including those of truth and/or rationality, without implicitly relying on them?² Lather's binary opposition between modernism and postmodernism implies erroneously that postmodernism is distinctively or uniquely qualified to analyse the relationships between knowledge, power, and the interests or "positionality" of critical researchers or educators.

While few would rush to embrace explanations that are the subjects of totalism, logocentrism, or domination, we would do well to remember along with James A. Whitson, that, historically speaking, modernism itself was "founded in the emancipatory rebellion against the totalism of premodern ecclesiastical authority."³ This would seem to suggest, as does Whitson (following Ernesto LaClau), that "postmodernism cannot be a simple rejection of modernity: rather, it involves a different modulation of its themes and categories."⁴ Moreover, it would also seem to suggest that if postmodernism has been informed by the modernist commitment to emancipation and the history of ideas which include the often conflicting traditions of various feminisms, materialism, and structuralism, then no such strict or monolithic opposition between the texts of postmodernism and those of modernism can be said to operate in the terms in which Lather suggests. Confusingly, at times Lather seems to be proposing a marriage between postmodernism (as the post-Enlightenment emancipatory discourse) and some unspecified form of modernist feminism, while at other times, she seems to tacitly speak of postmodernist feminism as being epistemologically distinct from, say, such unredemptive modernist feminisms as radical, liberal, or especially socialist feminism.

A more fruitful approach would have entailed comparing how specific texts within these traditions treat similar problems or questions, such as explanations

of oppression. While contemporary scholars of different critical traditions, particularly across the range of feminisms, are united in their opposition to oppression and in their commitment to emancipation, they may, nonetheless, conceptualize these terms in fundamentally different ways. These differences are not crudely taxonomic and they are certainly not epochally defined as premodern, modern, or postmodern, as is the case with one of Lather's diagrams (p. 160)—they are rooted in the political, ethical, and practical assumptions each tradition makes about how it would overcome various forms of oppression and how it would construct the means to achieve its vision of social justice. In educational debates, the conflicts over the implications of these different traditions concern such questions as: whose knowledge gets legitimated in order to effect a liberatory curricula or emancipatory research? What kind of ethics and methodological practices stem from a commitment to radically democratize education? Can such commitments be practised in ways that provide alternatives to authoritarianism or the stance of giving *a priori* privilege to certain groups' standpoints without resorting to an ahistorical account of power relations among groups? Which groups can claim membership in the category of the oppressed, and who gets to determine the adequacy of such claims in the process of educational reform?

Throughout her book, it is not clear that Lather understands what is at stake in combining these theories and traditions, nor is it clear how she adjudicates their different and often conflicting political assumptions. In the absence of such comparisons, as well as of compelling arguments for postmodernist pedagogy *per se*, readers are left to speculate as to what Lather's postmodernist vision of social justice entails.⁵ Furthermore, there are a number of slippages between the volume's stated intentions and its actual accomplishments. These slippages arise out of the structure and organization of the book and not just its symptomatic alignment with a relativistic version of postmodernism. The book is largely a collection of previously published and revised essays, spanning several years of Lather's work. Undoubtedly, there have been some changes of position that make the book less coherent or consistent in its assertions than it would have been had Lather written it over a shorter time span or with the specific intention of addressing changes in her political position.

One example of an apparent yet unremarked change of position appears when we compare the arguments Lather makes in chapter three, "Research as Praxis," with those of chapter seven, "Staying Dumb? Student Resistance to the Liberatory Curriculum?" Chapter three was originally published in 1986 as an article in *Harvard Educational Review*.⁶ It elaborates Lather's alternative to both positivistic epistemologies and methodologies of research as well as to orthodox Marxist understandings of consciousness and ideology. Both traditions, she argues, assume impositional and exploitative social relations between researchers and research subjects. With the exception of the new postmodernist language of the first few pages, the argument in *Getting Smart* is largely the same as that presented in the original version. Lather uses the language of cultural materialism

to construct a non-relativistic approach to what she means by “empowering research” praxis between researchers and research subjects (p. 58). Empowering or emancipatory research, Lather argues, calls for reciprocity and mutual negotiation of the power between the researcher and research subjects in all stages of data collection and interpretation. Empowering research also calls for “the stance of dialectical theory-building” rather than theoretical imposition on the parts of researchers (p. 58). With this argument, Lather challenges the positivistic quest for value-neutrality in research and inquiry. Positivistic aims, she argues, may reinforce the quest for more and better data at the risk of objectifying or exploiting research subjects and reifying existing power relations in the larger society. In contrast, she argues, emancipatory research rejects the desirability and attainability of value-neutrality on the parts of researchers. Lather uses the concept of “catalytic validity” to align herself with a Freireian understanding of research as socially transformative praxis. Here, the adequacy of research or pedagogical inquiry is judged by its contribution to the critical consciousness and reflective action it enables the research subjects and researchers to take in order to change oppressive material conditions of their daily lives.

Lather also explicitly rejects what she sees as the problematic presumption within orthodox Marxism of false consciousness on the parts of the oppressed. Instead, she favours Gramsci’s more complex understanding of common-sense ideology as contradictory, containing elements of both good and bad sense. I have found myself returning, in my own work, to the earlier version of this argument which Lather makes without the aid of postmodernism. In particular, her use of the concept of “catalytic validity” offers justificatory strategies for research that provide a non-relativistic way of assessing whether or not a given piece of research or process of inquiry is valid or socially useful by virtue of whether or not its ethical practice and norms of critical reflection and action contribute to the radical democratization of power both in the context of research or education and in the larger society.

Thus, it was disappointing, in chapter seven, to see Lather abandon the principles and practices she earlier identifies as criteria for empowering/emancipatory research and inquiry. Published several years later, in the wake of successive waves of French deconstructionism, chapter seven declares its alignment with a relativistic form of postmodernism by virtue of the pedagogical and research practice it describes and models. In a less than self-critical or reflexive account, it appears to underwrite practices that have impositional and exploitative consequences for both teaching and research. Thus the move to write “with/in” the postmodern is not merely a theoretical one; rather, it is most crucially a political one. It signifies the reduction of what I shall call “means and ends talk” (about in whose interests research or inquiry is conducted) to unself-reflexive talk (of the aesthetic or literary techniques for representing multiple narrative voices). Aesthetic and political concerns are inseparable. This reduced talk, however, often isolates issues of narrativity and voice from the specific institu-

tional contexts and power relations that set limits on whose voices speak or are silenced.

While Lather's postmodernist language of decentring the subject could, in fact, be made to connect with a self-critical political discussion of the institutional power relations of her own teaching and research (think, for example, of the work of Diana Fuss, Nancy Fraser, and Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, to mention a few), it evades such discussion. With little acknowledgement of her own framework of assumptions, she describes her own three-year study of what she terms "resistance" among undergraduate students in women's studies to her own so-called "liberatory" curriculum in an introductory course recently taught at Mankato State University. Surprisingly, Lather employs the rather detached objectified voice of researcher when she recounts how she researched her students' understanding of the women's-studies curriculum and its impact on their lives. Over a three-year period, she used various male and female graduate and undergraduate students (whom she refers to in chapter four as "researchers in training" who were also either ongoing or former members of her "Feminist Scholarship Class") to collect and analyse data from her women's studies students while the latter took the course.

After the argument that emancipatory research calls for researchers to account for their own subjectivities and structural interests, I was struck by the explicit lack of such an account in this chapter. For example, she tells readers that the students taking the women's-studies courses, many of whom were also her research subjects, represented a fairly high proportion of older, returning adult women and a diverse group of racial minorities who comprised 12% of the overall student body. Yet Lather provides little information about the social backgrounds of the "shifting" team of student researchers or of the material conditions and power relations that affected the research design under her direction.

Unfortunately, the methodological design itself is described so haphazardly (with portions presented in three different chapters) that it is almost impossible to discern who researched whom and under what conditions. In several cases, what Lather describes is a process in which student research teams, whose composition changed at different stages of the research, seemed merely to execute Lather's design as they fulfilled course requirements and assignments for their own work with her in another class. Given the power relations involved in carrying out a professor's research agenda while taking her course, or functioning in other senses as her student subordinate, it remains unclear, if not indefensible, how Lather can call the research "participatory" or "dialogical." In what ways, if any, were the power relations between herself and her student team of researchers fundamentally altered? On what basis could the student researchers challenge her methodological assumptions concerning the implementation of the research design or her teaching practices when they were her subordinates? In what ways was their participation generative rather than merely instrumental?

In a similar vein, readers are not told much about the social backgrounds and political perspectives of Mankato State women's-studies faculty, although

they team-taught the introductory courses surveyed as part of Lather's data base. Rather than problematizing whose interests constituted the purportedly liberatory curriculum, Lather presents the curriculum she and the others taught as automatically "liberatory"—as somehow free of internal contradictions and structural interests. She does not show how her own interests or those of other women's-studies faculty (by class, race, national culture, sexual orientation, and political perspective) shaped the curriculum of the women's-studies courses and their ideas of what constituted women's liberation or emancipation, and therefore, may have prompted particular kinds of resistances to it. Because no curriculum is free of interests or contradictions, it would have made sense to offer prospective radical educators glimpses into the knotty practical and ethical situations of teaching feminist courses in an historical moment in which the forces of conservatism come from within as well as outside of self-identified feminist teaching ranks. While all of these dimensions of power relations necessarily affect the research design in various stages, including the formulation of the problem, the kinds of questions asked of students, the nature of the data collected, and the emergent hypotheses generated, they were conspicuously absent as texts for critical analysis alongside those extracts of her students' voices.

Thus, I would have to concur with Lather when she admits that "from our extremely erratic data base—journal entries selected by instructors, it is difficult to make any broad generalizations" (p. 130). I am also in concurrence with her own admission that the data presented were largely "decontextualized" (p. 130), particularly because statements made by the women's-studies students who were the subjects of her research were not given in the context of their social backgrounds or any explicit discussion of the power relations that shaped their responses to the survey and research design. With a surprising lack of sensitivity to the problematic power relations and ethics of instances in which she simultaneously graded and researched her students and used male and female graduate students to read and analyse personal journal entries of her women's-studies students, Lather proceeds to evaluate whether or not and why it is that students "stay dumb" in relation to a feminist curriculum (p. 123).

It can hardly be said that such power relations readily facilitate democratic or egalitarian reciprocity between a researcher and her subjects/students. As in the case of the student teams of researchers, it is not clear how or whether Lather made adjustments for such power imbalances between herself and her students as research subjects. Did the women's-studies students have the opportunity to refuse to consent to being research subjects? Were they informed that male doctoral students, for example, would be reading and analysing their personal journals for the class? What does informed consent mean in the context of being graded? Did the class members surveyed get to challenge the questions or the formulation of emergent hypotheses Lather and her research teams generated to explain their relationship to feminism as it was presented in the women's-studies course? Could they challenge how their reactions were interpreted by Lather or her research team? How did Lather avoid the problem of impression manage-

ment, that is, of the students saying what they believed she or other researchers wanted to hear in order to fulfill course requirements?

In contradiction to her own earlier call for "openly ideological research," which avoids theoretical imposition on the researchers' part, Lather does not appear to scrutinize reflexively any of the interests or power relations built into the survey or the analysis of the data she reports in this chapter. Indeed, she tells readers that on one occasion she presented to the students a chart she designed, entitled "Stages of Feminist Consciousness," with a series of questions regarding her own theoretical suppositions concerning the nature of "oppositional knowledge" (p. 163). While prior theory on the part of researchers is unavoidable and not necessarily always in-and-of-itself impositional, her diagram presented students with several forced-choice, erroneous binary oppositions, such as "ignorance/oppositional knowledge" and "liberating/anger/action," which corresponded to "rejection and acceptance," respectively. These categories constituted mutually exclusive choices with which her students were presented concerning their responses to the women's-studies curriculum. But these dichotomies do not seem to have been influenced by any reciprocal dynamic or mutual negotiation over their meaning which may have occurred between Lather and her students as the latter's responses emerged over the term. Thus, what emerges is a self-confirmed, if not *a priori*, theory of her students' progression into and/or resistance of feminist consciousness as it was "given" or presented in the women's-studies curriculum (p. 127). Yet such a theory seems to bear many affinities with the notion of false consciousness which Lather earlier rejected.

With no lack of authorial authority, Lather then divides the analysis of the students' responses into four reified "narrative tales," presumably to illustrate the multiple or allegedly postmodern ways of representing their diverse perspectives without collapsing them into one. She calls these tales "realist," "critical," "deconstructive," and "reflexive" as if to suggest that such activities are somehow separate ways of knowing or are distinct forms of representation of the social world. However, any form of critical pedagogical practice ought to involve elements of reflexivity, deconstruction, critique, and realism, if analysis is to be useful in understanding systemically produced oppressions and the resistance to such understanding both students and teachers may confront. I was also struck by the fact that the women's-studies students did not seem to control the nature of their participation in the construction of the four narrative tales Lather uses to represent their reactions to the course. Indeed, the four tales ultimately followed the impositional and institutional logic of one singly-authored tale—indeed, a tale, summed up both by Lather's query or phrase "staying dumb" and the title of her book, which proposes rather inadequately and condescendingly that resistance to understanding women's oppression may be the result of a voluntarist individual choice. This is a wholly problematic explanation for two reasons. First, it ignores the issue of why it is at this historical moment that academic and theoretical feminism might be resisted by some students whose backgrounds have not always benefited from the largely white, middle-class, and ethnocentric

versions of feminism that have pervaded the academy and many women's-studies programmes. The absent texts and silenced voices of those students speak more loudly and more eloquently about empowerment than do the theories and diagrams of the author. Second, a voluntarist approach to resistance cannot explain why it is at this historical juncture that some relatively privileged groups might find it to be in their ideological interests to appropriate the language of the women's movement or other social movements for equality, claiming (*erroneously and defensively*) to be victims of "reverse discrimination" and/or racial and sexual oppression. Feminists cannot afford to accept a voluntarist explanation of resistance because it abandons ideological critique, which is a crucial resource in analysing and combatting the structural bases of anti-feminist as well as other backlash discourses.

Thus, Lather's chosen approach of borrowing eclectically from conflicting political and theoretical traditions, without in the end acknowledging that her text *does* give voice to certain positions rather than to others, equates relativism with the means and ends of liberatory pedagogy. We might note, with irony, that while Lather joins many other feminists and leftists who beat a hasty retreat into theories of the fragmented subject, thus questioning whether any group can ever justifiably advocate or speak on behalf of another's oppression, the regnant Right is not paralyzed by such uncertainties and contradictions. Instead, the Right consolidates its popular support by eroding any basis for distinguishing between the claims of systematically oppressed and privileged groups, particularly those claims to belong to one or more oppressed groups. It would seem, then, that a critical task of empowering pedagogy and research would be to engage all educational participants (researchers, teachers, and students) in scrutinizing conflicting claims as to who belongs to what oppressed groups—for example, the claim of white supremacist David Duke to be racially oppressed or the claim of one of Lather's own white male doctoral students who, upon analysing the women's-studies classroom dynamics, concluded that he, like other white male students who took women's-studies classes, was a subject of "reverse discrimination" and marginalization (p. 148). But while Lather, like many other feminists and leftists, is rendered cataleptic by the possibility of having to prioritize whose voices we shall join in dialogue as well as who legitimately can call themselves oppressed, the Right, as I have said, does not languish in such paralytic guilt.

Lather concludes her book much as she begins it with the acknowledgement that she has chosen a path of "deliberate ambivalence" in relating her own version of postmodernism to the project of emancipatory pedagogy (p. 163). She defends the indeterminacy of her political stance as a measure of her ideological and political openness to oppositional theory and practices within education. But if, in the final analysis, all we as radical "intellectual workers" offer to confront the forces of reactionary conservatism is "deliberate ambivalence," then our scholarship may be only as effective in aligning with oppressed groups' struggles as is the disappearing ink with which we write and the multiple and indecisive voices in which we speak.

NOTES

1. Nancy Fraser, *Unruly Practices: Power, Discourse and Gender in Contemporary Social Theory* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1989), 69-92, esp. 69. See, in particular, chapter four, "The French Derridians: Politicizing Deconstruction or Deconstructing the Political?"
2. Thomas McCarthy makes this point well in his essay, "The Politics of the Ineffable: Derrida's Deconstructionism," *The Philosophical Forum* 21, 1-2 (Fall/Winter, 1989-90): 146-67, esp. 149.
3. James A. (Tony) Whitson, "Post-structuralist Pedagogy as Counter-Hegemonic Praxis (Can We Find the Baby in the Bathwater?)," *Education and Society*, 9, 1 (1991): 73-86, esp. 74.
4. Ernesto LaClau, "Politics and the Limits of Modernity," in *Universal Abandon? The Politics of Postmodernism*, ed. Andrew Ross (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1988), 63-82, esp. 65, quoted in Whitson, p. 74.
5. Perhaps one of the reasons Lather's book seems so cluttered and confusing is that she too often substitutes jargon for clarity of expression and sustained argumentation. In this, of course, she is by no means alone in the world of contemporary scholarship. As a feminist materialist analysis of the present conditions under which we labour would note, untenured professors are subjected to the double-bind of the rationalized demand to produce increased numbers of "juried" publications. Intensified and rationalized conditions for scholarly labour often encourage hasty production rather than careful and accessible analysis. While such a condition affects both men and women, it confronts feminist scholars, in particular, with several gender-specific conundrums. It is well known that patriarchal and other kinds of hegemonic standards still define what kinds of epistemologies and methodologies are legitimate. Feminist scholars, like postcolonial scholars or scholars in other non-traditional areas of epistemology, politics, and methodology, often bear the additional burden of demonstrating our academic legitimacy by showing how we can use and cite certain "fathers" of theoretical traditions even as we refute and offer alternatives to them. Thus, it is economically reductionistic, if not insisterly, to argue as does Minette Marcroft's review of *Getting Smart* that the "overriding logic of [capital] accumulation" drives Lather to litter her book with a "tissue of citations, an endless list of quotes from every possible source on the postmodern with little connecting text or argument to articulate the often contradictory relations between the voluminous theories it cites" (p. 5). See Marcroft's "Running on Empty: The Failures of Postmodern Pedagogy," *AfterImage* (Nov. 1991): 5, 17, esp. 5. Clarification mine. Marcroft criticizes Lather for paying too much homage to the "theory boys" of critical theory as well as for participating in a form of relativism she calls "extreme eclecticism" (p. 5). But it is clear that many of the "theory boys" function as an auto-referential bunch, who cite only each other or who legitimate serious feminist work only when it benefits their own careers. One can easily see how a feminist could, in the attempt to show how she can master "grand theory," unwittingly reproduce capitalist patriarchy's worst standards of scholarship. In the end, a good deal of the work by male critical theorists, such as Giroux and McClaren (and I would add Cherryholmes and Aronowitz) is every bit as susceptible to the criticism Marcroft makes of Lather. It makes sense to situate the way in which feminist scholars are rendered much more vulnerable (out of material necessity) than are their male colleagues to the patriarchal aspects of intensified scholarly production. At the

same time, feminist work is often subject to much more scrutiny and criticism for internalizing those standards than is the work of radical male scholars, whose auto-referentiality and deference to one another gets rewarded for being original and seminal theory rather than treated as a lack of engagement with feminist work. That is not to say, however, that *Getting Smart* is free of the problems Marcroft mentions, namely of taking postmodernism to its relativistic extremes.

6. Patti Lather, "Research as Praxis," *Harvard Educational Review* 56, 3 (Aug. 1986): 257-77.