

## INTRODUCTION

*Janice Wallace*  
*University of Alberta*

*Claire Lapointe*  
*Université Laval*

In 2004, the Canadian Association for Studies on Women in Education (CASWE) celebrated its 10th anniversary as an official association within the Canadian Society for Studies in Education (CSSE). We used that celebration as an opportunity to reflect on our past successes as well as the challenges that lay ahead for us as scholars interested in bringing to visibility the pedagogy, curriculum, philosophies, policies, and organizational practices that re/inscribe inequity based on gendered norms. It was at that time that the idea to edit a special edition of the *Canadian Journal of Education* (CJE) on the theme of girls and women in education began to take shape.

En effet, la publication d'un numéro thématique de la Revue canadienne d'éducation (RCÉ) sur le thème des rôles sociaux de sexe est apparue comme une manière appropriée de célébrer le dixième anniversaire de l'Association canadienne pour l'étude des femmes et de l'éducation (ACÉFÉ). Déjà en 1992, la RCÉ avait publié un premier numéro sur cette problématique, sous la direction de Linda Briskin et Rebecca Coulter. À ce moment, la recherche et l'action était orientées principalement vers l'accès aux systèmes et aux programmes de formation, la transformation des programmes à la lumière de l'équité entre les sexes, les défis posés par le climat existant dans les environnements d'apprentissage et les programmes d'études eux-mêmes.

This is not the first such issue on gender and education for CJE; in 1992, Linda Briskin and Rebecca Coulter co-edited a special edition that addressed issues of feminist pedagogy. They noted in their introduction that feminist research and action were focused on four main areas: access to institutions and programs, curriculum transformation, climate issues in educational settings, and pedagogy. CASWE became a reality two years after that edition was published and now, more than 15 years later, a generation of educators has been exposed in one way or another to scholarship, workshops, and articles in scholarly and professional journals that enable them to understand gender issues in education more deeply.

Quinze ans après la création de l'ACÉFÉ, on constate à quel point les résultats des recherches féministes ont aidé à transformer les contextes de formation, les pratiques d'enseignement et les expériences d'apprentissage des femmes et des filles au Canada et ailleurs dans le monde. Ce nouveau numéro de la RCÉ souligne aussi le fait que certains des défis documentés dans le numéro dirigé par Coulter et Briskin sont toujours présents. Entre autres, la recherche féministe a permis d'identifier la dynamique des liens qui attachent ensemble les problématiques de classe sociale, d'origine ethnique, de culture, de langue, d'habiletés cognitives et physiques et d'orientation sexuelle (voir entre autres Bouchard et St-Amand, 1996, 2005; Bouchard et al.; Mosconi, 1994; Cloutier, 2005).

Although the articles in this special edition reveal that many challenges in the four categories identified by Coulter and Briskin remain for girls and women in education, they also demonstrate that the social, political, and economic context in which women educators do their work has changed substantially. As a result, feminist scholarship has come to a more complex understanding of issues of access, curriculum, climate, and pedagogy for women and girls in education as they have become more conscious of how gender intersects with class, race, ethnicity, gender identity and sexual orientation, physical and mental ability, and language (e.g., Blount, 2003; Ng, Staton & Scane, 1995; Razack, 1998) within the conditions of globalization (e.g., Blackmore & Sachs, 2007).

Dans la Francophonie, les 10 dernières années ont été marquantes dans le champ de la recherche féministe en générale, et en particulier

dans ses applications en éducation. Des théories et concepts féministes jusque là pris pour acquis ont été questionnés à l'aune de leur caractère ethnocentrique, de leurs biais de classe sociale ou de leur acculturation à une terminologie anglaise dominante. C'est de cette réflexion qu'a entre autres émergé le choix du concept de rôles sociaux de sexe pour ce numéro thématique.

Researching and acting within this complex matrix of socio-economic and political challenges has tested the limits of dominant feminist research methodologies, such as critical and interpretive approaches, as scholars have explored the efficacy of post-modern, post-structural, and psychoanalytic approaches to gender issues in education. Indeed, this edition signals the changes and challenges to feminist scholarship as its format blurs the textual divide between hard copy and on-line access. Further, its authors address a broad range of issues and educational contexts in which women educators are engaged as well as the variety of methodological approaches through which they understand the meaning of gender and education in the lives of girls and women.

With increasing social, economic, and political globalization, feminist scholars are taking up gender issues in international contexts and exploring the complexity of their own position in taking on this kind of work. Janzen names her position as a white, middle-class, female educator and the effects of her perspective as she explores the challenges to her definition of education as enacted in working with women in Agabagaya, Africa.

Les autrices et auteurs qui ont contribué à ce numéro partagent avec nous les résultats de recherche menées un peu partout dans le monde. Par exemple, Zoundi procède à une analyse critique des positions fondamentales de la Banque mondiale en ce qui a trait à l'éducation des filles dans les pays en voie de développement. Il conclut que cette vision ne vise pas tant l'émancipation des filles et des femmes mais plutôt leur participation à l'amélioration de la croissance économique de leurs pays. Hedjerassi décrit le caractère du rapport au savoir philosophique de jeunes étudiantes de lycée en France. Elle constate que les lycéennes considèrent toujours la philosophie comme une discipline appartenant

aux hommes, mais qu'elles travaillent malgré tout ce champ du savoir afin de le transformer.

The effects of gender in the distribution of labour in educational organizations continue to be stubbornly apparent in the careers of women educators from early childhood to higher education. For example, Reynolds, White, Brayman, and Moore explore the continuing effects of sexist beliefs about women in administration on succession planning within the new discourses of managerialism in educational organizations. Lawson takes up the particular challenges of women administrators who are struggling to balance their commitment to educational excellence in high poverty schools and the needs of their own families. Langford's article offers a critical analysis of the tensions experienced by potential early childhood educators between the idealized public discourse of "making a difference" in the lives of young children and the continued marginalization of early childhood work and workers in public policy and practices. At the higher education level, Wilson, Gadbois, and Nichol's paper demonstrates that, while statistical information about access, retention, and promotion of women in the professoriate is essential information for holding institutions to account, the work of gender equality still falls on women's shoulders and has not been sufficiently taken up in university policies and practices.

La manière dont les rôles sociaux de sexe sont vécus et se reproduisent encore à l'école a retenu l'attention de Gaudet, Lapointe et Mujawamariya. Dans leur article, elles documentent la complexité des facteurs personnels, sociaux et éducationnels qui influencent le choix de programme d'études postsecondaire et de carrière des jeunes filles à la fin de leurs études secondaires.

The meaning of gender in the pedagogical contexts of schools is a complex matter that is explored by several authors in and through the voices of students. Moffatt and Norton explore how preteens talk about gender relations and discover that, although they hold complex ideas about the effects of gender, their notions of sexuality remain firmly heteronormative. Dentith's paper reveals that, although girls' access to male dominated fields of knowledge in science, mathematics, and technology has increased, their full integration remains elusive. Gibbons and Humbert analyse the disillusionment of many middle-school girls

with their physical education program and respond with helpful pedagogical strategies to mitigate the effects to their well-being of inactivity that is exacerbated by a sense of physical incompetence. Finally, Sinner, uses the aesthetic flexibility of on-line presentation to take a deeply personal journey through her own childhood art work to explore the power of art in gender identity formation.

Un peu partout dans le monde, les filles et les femmes ont parcouru un long chemin vers l'accès équitable à l'éducation et à la formation qualifiante. Malgré les ressacs récurrents et la résistance farouche opposée par plusieurs groupes masculinistes de diverses allégeances, la situation s'améliore petit à petit dans plusieurs pays et régions du monde. Il demeure toutefois que l'égalité véritable des filles/femmes et des garçons/hommes en éducation est loin d'être acquise et qu'il importe de continuer à documenter rigoureusement les différentes facettes des inégalités qui perdurent. La RCÉ publiera donc sans doute au moins un autre numéro thématique sur cette question dans le futur.

Each article takes its readers into familiar locations for feminist scholarship in education but sharpens the focus as they look to how being female continues to be a complex issue in schools, education systems, and other educational locations that often carries with it inequity based on gender. The authors also point to the nuanced forms of inequity still experienced by women and girls despite the provisions of equity policies and a long history of advocacy by women educators for access to equitable educational opportunities for all students. As this special edition demonstrates, however, the work of feminist scholars continues to point to the ways in which gender – especially as it intersects with other forms of oppression such as class, race, gender identity and sexual orientation, mental and physical ability, and language – acts as an important organizer of social, economic, and political activity in education and the status and privilege that is attached to that activity in Canada and around the world. These papers also demonstrate that feminist scholarship is characterized by praxis – deep engagement and advocacy, informed by theory, for change in policy and practice on behalf of women and girls in education. That is, like each wave of feminist scholars before them, the authors in this special edition respond to the particular configuration of inequities they face, challenge the

inequities they observe, and change possibilities for girls and women in education.

#### REMERCIEMENTS/ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The production of this special edition has been both delightful and painful: a delight because of the quality and depth of scholarship that is represented here and painful because the large number of submissions meant that some very difficult decisions had to be made about which manuscripts would be included and excluded. In the end, we hope that this edition builds on past feminist scholarship that continues to support our work as well as represents the very fine work that continues to be undertaken by both seasoned and beginning scholars who care deeply about and advocate on behalf of girls and women in education.

Nous voulons remercier toutes les personnes qui ont participé à la réalisation de ce numéro thématique. Personnellement, je remercie tout particulièrement Janice de m'avoir invitée à y collaborer en tant que co-rédactrice invitée. Janice, ce fut un plaisir de travailler avec toi.

Of course, this edition would not have been possible without the work of almost one hundred reviewers who provided helpful advice to all of those who submitted manuscripts. Sam Robinson, the editor emeritus of CJE who undertook editorial support for this special edition, was remarkably patient and generous with Claire and me as we worked through the long process of fitting together the pieces of the editorial process. Each of our faculties and departments was also supportive in providing the time and material support when necessary for us to take on this task. Most of all, though, we thank our sisters in CASWE who encouraged, listened, and provided unflagging support each step of the way. To all of you and to my delightful co-editor, Claire: *Merci!* Thank you!

#### REFERENCES

- Blackmore, J., & Sachs, J. (2007). *Performing and reforming leaders: Gender, educational restructuring, and organizational change*. Albany, NY: SUNY Press.
- Blount, J. (2003). Homosexuality and school superintendents: A brief history. *Journal of School Leadership*, 13(1), 7-26.
- Bouchard, P. et St-Amant, J.-C. (1996). *Garçons et filles. Stéréotypes et réussite scolaire*, Montréal : les éditions du remue-ménage.
- Bouchard, P. et St-Amant, J.-C. (2005). Les succès scolaires des filles: des lectures contradictoires. *Éducation et Francophonie*, 33(1). Revue disponible en

ligne à <http://www.acelf.ca/c/revue/sommaire.php?id=17>. Consultée la dernière fois le 21 février 2008.

- Bouchard, P., St-Amant, J.-C., Gauvin, M., Carrier, M. et Gagnon, C. (2000). *Familles, école et milieu populaire*, Sainte-Foy : Centre de recherche et d'intervention sur la réussite scolaire, série Études et recherches, 5 (1).
- Briskin, L., & Coulter, R. (1992). Feminist pedagogy: Challenging the normative. *Canadian Journal of Education*, 17(3), 247-263.
- Cloutier, R. (2005). Les rapports sociaux de sexe, les appartenances de classe et de race et la réussite en enseignement postsecondaire: l'état de la question. *Éducation et Francophonie*, 33(1). Revue disponible en ligne à <http://www.acelf.ca/c/revue/sommaire.php?id=17>. Consultée la dernière fois le 21 février 2008.
- Mosconi, N. (1994). *Femmes et savoir. La société, l'école et la division sexuelle des savoirs*, Paris : L'Harmattan.
- Ng, R., Staton, P., & Scane, J. (Eds.) (1995). *Anti-racism, feminism, and critical approaches to education*. Toronto: OISE Press.
- Razack, S. (1998). *Looking white people in the eye: Gender, race, and culture in courtrooms and classrooms*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press.

March 31, 2008