

SETTING THE STAGE: WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO BE A WOMAN OR A MAN?

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The true representation of power is not of a big man beating a smaller man or a woman. Power is the ability to take one's place in whatever discourse is essential to action and the right to have one's part matter. —Carolyn Heilbrun (1998: 18)

The Context: Situating Feminist Thought

What does it mean to be a woman or a man? This seemingly simple question has been a source of much contemplation and debate over many centuries, but whereas men as a group have had considerable power to define what being a man means in specific historical and social contexts, women have characteristically been more defined than self-defining. What distinguishes industrial from pre-industrial societies, however, is that significant numbers of women have sought to define for themselves what it means to be a woman.

To claim that relative to men, women have less power is not to say that women in the past had no power. To counter such an idea, one need only point to Sappho (born sometime between 630 and 612 BCE), who was one of the great ancient Greek lyric poets; to Egyptian pharaoh Hatshepsut (1508 BCE–1458 BCE), who greatly expanded her people's wealth by re-establishing trade cut off in earlier times; to Wu Zetian (625 CE–705 CE), who after the death of her second husband, Emperor Gaozong, crowned herself Emperor of China, thus interrupting the Tang Dynasty and creating her own, the Zhou Dynasty; to Elena Lucrezia Cornaro Piscopia (1646–1684), the first woman ever to receive a PhD; to Phyllis Wheatley (1753–1784), the first published African-American poet, who was sold into slavery at seven, and was by age twelve reading Greek and Latin classics; to Louise Arbour (1947–), a justice of the Supreme Court of Canada and Chief Prosecutor of the International Criminal Tribunals for the former Yugoslavia and Rwanda; or to Kim Campbell (1947–), the first female prime minister of Canada.

Women of ruling classes in many cultural contexts have wielded considerable political influence by virtue of their class and family connections, and even non-ruling-class women were able to exert some forms of power because their labour was central to economic production in the household. Nor can we say that all women passively accepted patriarchal control. Over the centuries, some women have resisted attempts by a father or husband, religious authorities, or the state to impose restrictions on their lives. In the Western context, however, one difference between the pre-modern and modern periods is that the position of women is no longer seen as “biologically predetermined” or “preordained by God.” Rather “the woman question,” as the issue of women's self-determination was first known, has entered public discourse, permeating all spheres of social, economic, political, and cultural life.

The hard-won gains over the course of the past three hundred years would not have happened if there had not been feminist movements to champion women's issues and women's rights. Western feminism, as an organized political force, has its origins in the industrialization and urbanization experienced first in seventeenth-century England. These experiences

can be seen as moments of awakening, where “the natural order” of things was disrupted. Women’s needs, issues, and desires became visible — perhaps for the first time in history. Yet, feminists have not spoken with a single voice — not now, not historically.¹

Steeped in the language of women’s rights, liberal feminists of the early twentieth century — the so-called first wave of Western feminism² — argued in favour of (formal) equal rights under the law including, *inter alia*, the right to vote, own property, have custody over children, and enter into financial transactions. Recognizing that women do not necessarily compete with men on a level playing field, the discourse of women’s rights was extended later in the twentieth century to include equal opportunities for women, contingent upon the state enacting social and economic reforms.

Marxist feminism draws on the work of traditional Marxist theory, particularly the *Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State* by Fredrick Engels (1972), in which he posits that women’s oppression was based on the sexual division of labour. Engels argued that capitalism benefits from this division of labour because women performed tasks necessary to reproduce workers — most of whom were men — on a daily and generational basis, while men were “free” to enter the paid labour force, where they exchanged their labour power for a living wage. But traditional Marxism could not explain why women do “women’s work,” nor could it explain various forms of male dominance expressed through violence and sexual assault. This “unhappy marriage of Marxism and feminism” (Hartmann 1981) spurred socialist feminists to combine the insights of Marxism with those of radical feminism, a theoretical approach that emerged in the 1960s.

Beginning with the insight that women as a group have been subordinated to men in every time and place, radical feminists argued that inequalities between women and men are grounded in the prevailing organization of procreation. Because women bear children and are physically weaker than men (at least by conventional standards of strength measurement), certain social relationships have emerged in order to ensure the survival of the biological family. Unlike anti-feminist arguments that insist that these biological relationships provide a justification for male dominance, radical feminist arguments maintained either that women’s ability to bear children is evidence of the superiority of women’s bodies (Firestone 1970; Griffin 1980; Rich 1976); or that the inherently aggressive testosterone-driven male body is the source of male dominance (Daly 1978; Dworkin 1974). Other strands of radical feminism, which could be more accurately termed cultural feminism, examined the institutional structures and familial arrangements that socialize girls and boys to become feminine and masculine (e.g., Gilligan 1982). In some cases, cultural feminists incorporated the insights of psychoanalytic theory while rejecting Freud’s view that “anatomy is destiny” (e.g., Chodorow 1978); others drew on existentialism and extended Simone de Beauvoir’s adage, “one is not born, [but] rather becomes a woman” (de Beauvoir [1952] 1974).

The insights and strategies of second wave feminism — the liberal, Marxist/socialist, and radical feminists of the 1960s — produced significant improvements in the lives of many women in Western societies. For example, more women entered the universities, and within universities, women’s and gender studies, as well as gay studies, native studies and black studies, among others, gained a foothold. Women won the right to earn equal pay for equal work, to work in an environment free from sexual harassment, and to enter into the professions (such as law, medicine, and engineering). Women were able to exercise more control over their bodies when they had access to birth control and abortion, could have drug-free births and/or have midwives attend births, if women so chose. Feminists also established rape crisis centers, shelters for abused women, and employment and mental health services aimed at the special needs of women. These accomplishments are impressive. But, as the

effects of the last decade of fiscal and social conservatism demonstrate, these hard-won gains can be undermined or reversed.

Feminism was arguably one of the most successful political movements of the twentieth century. But not all women benefited equally from the efforts of what we now know to be the concerns of white, middle-class women. Many women — poor women, lesbians, women of colour, women with disabilities, native women — felt alienated from the mainstream feminist movement. By the mid-1980s, many of the ideas of second wave feminism came under attack. At the centre of the debate was the assumption by the early feminist theorists that their experiences represented the universal experience of womanhood (i.e., “every woman is just like me,” regardless of race or class or age or ability or sexuality). Even the conceptualizing of feminism in waves would be criticized as Eurocentric since the timelines may not fit the historical experiences of different groups of women.

Women from marginalized groups began to explore their own experience, and these feminist theorists pointed to how race, class, able-bodiedness, and sexuality produce different configurations of oppression, forms of resistance, and strategies for change, as well as privilege, among women (Harding 1991; Hill Collins 1990; hooks 1989; Smith 1987). By theorizing “the personal is the political,” a rallying cry of the women’s liberation movement of the 1960s, these “standpoint” theorists were able to see the ways in which women could be members of both an oppressed and an oppressing group — sometimes simultaneously.

The period from the mid-1980s to the present has been widely characterized as the third wave of feminism. Arguing against essentialism, postmodern feminists eschew the notion of Woman as an essential, ahistorical, and authentic category (Butler 1990; Irigaray 1985; Kristeva 1982.) Rather than ask, “What is Woman?” which assumes that if we unpeel the layers of patriarchal practices, we will find the “true” and “authentic” Woman, postmodern feminists ask, “How did this category come to be constructed in the first place?” Using the tools of deconstruction, postmodern feminists seek to uncover the technologies of power that have been deployed to establish the “truth” about Woman. “The central project,” as Judith Grant observed, “is to investigate the mechanisms of power that have forged the female identity in order to resist identity itself” (Grant 1993: 131).

Postmodern feminism’s focus on the meaning of Woman has necessarily led to examinations of the ways in which gender is constituted through language. For example, the modern Enlightenment concept of male and female as “opposites” is repeated in numerous pairings such as nature/nurture, nature/art, culture/nature, sun/moon, rational/irrational, reason/emotion and head/heart (cited in Grant 1993). At a glance, we can see the ways in which gender is deeply encoded in the English language. The inequities of power between ideas associated with masculinity and those associated with femininity are reflected in and reproduced in the ordering of the words and their valuation. Male terms most frequently are given priority in grammatical constructions (e.g., he and she, boys and girls, Mr. and Mrs., King and Queen), and where female terms are generally given priority (e.g., bride and groom, ladies and gentlemen) confining factors of pre-eminent status operating for a limited time or restrictive expectations of feminine behaviours are in operation. Moreover, the status of female terms in originally parallel male-female word pairs such as *governor* and *governess* or *lord* and *lady* tends to deteriorate over time (Schulz 1975). Thus governors remain powerful figures in every context, but the word *governess* came most often to denote a low-status educator and childcare worker; and while the term “cleaning lady” is now commonplace, the idea of a garbage lord remains risible.

Concepts such as Woman and Man, and masculine and feminine, can be decoded to reveal that they are historical and social rather than “essential,” “authentic,” or “natural”

categories. As a result, postmodern feminists have shifted the focus of analysis away from women to the study of gender, examining the relationships between women and men, femaleness and maleness, and femininity and masculinity, and intersections with other categories of social relations. Thus, it is now common to speak of masculinities and femininities, i.e., in the plural, rather than in the singular.

As well as deconstructing gender codes embedded in language, postmodern feminists also seek to uncover the silences in texts. This project was initially begun by modernist feminists who queried the absence of women from great bodies of artistic and intellectual work otherwise known as the canon in respective fields. Much of the early work of second wave feminism was centred on uncovering and recovering women's contributions to literature, the performing and visual arts, religion, and science. Later this analysis was extended to examine the very categories that have been used to evaluate women's (and men's) contributions to social, political, and economic life. For example, the concept of work was equated with paid labour, but when feminists examined the work that women do — much of it unpaid, domestic labour — they argued that this type of work has been undervalued and should be counted in measures such as the Gross Domestic Product (Waring 1999). Moreover, the re-evaluation of work has led writers to challenge the values underlying mainstream economics, arguing that economic well-being should not be only measure of “the wealth of nations” (Smith 1776), but should include measures of social well-being (e.g., the Human Development Index).

Postmodern feminisms are not without their critics. “Where do the lives of ‘real’ women, thinking, acting people who live in and construct the world of the everyday fit into the analysis of discourse?” ask materialist feminists (e.g., Harstock 1990). Women and men are living, embodied beings and not simply texts. What role do notions of agency and resistance play in the ephemeral, postmodern world of discourse? As well, since female liberation is understood as freedom from limiting discursive categories, what is the vision of a more just and equitable society for women? In response, many contemporary feminists adopted Donna Haraway's (1991) notion of “situated knowledges,” a concept that attempts to link a notion of subjectivity (thinking, knowing actors) that refuses the transhistorical category of Woman while simultaneously insisting that feminist theories and practices engage with the “real” world that exists outside of us. Standpoint theorists like Haraway argue that knowledge is always partial, multivocal, and historically contingent, but like the postmodernists, Haraway acknowledges the importance of “semiotic technologies” for making meanings in our everyday lives.

Since the 1990s, the issue of differences has become a central one within feminist theorizing, but it poses a new set of “dilemmas,” as McLaughlin (2003) has observed. On the one hand, recognizing difference can lead to a positive affirmation of individual and group identities. On the other hand, “recognition implies certain levels of fixedness in the needs and identities” (McLaughlin 2003: 12); that is, the recognition of differences may lead to new forms of essentialism based on a (negative) identity as victims of suffering and pain. As a result, “the very expression of identity becomes ‘invested in its own subjection’” (Brown cited in McLaughlin 2003: 12), having no way of moving forward. In response, many scholars have begun to analyze the production of identities. Thus the question is no longer “what are the differences between women and men, or blacks and whites, or homosexuals and heterosexuals?” but “what are the social, economic, cultural, and political conditions through which differences are produced?”

This approach was taken up by postcolonial feminisms, and its more recent iteration, transnational feminisms. Writers from and about the Global South, such as Gayatri Spivak (1990), Jacqui M. Alexander and Chandra Talpade Mohanty (1997), and Trinh T. Minh-ha

(1989) have made important contributions to the understanding of differences by linking the production of difference to global economic pressures (e.g., migration and the transfer of capital on an international scale), colonization and decolonization, nationalism, and cultural movements. These processes and institutions shape women's and men's lives — although not necessarily in the same ways.

The return to materialist analyses has also informed theorizing about “the cultural turn” in feminist theory, and particularly the analysis of discourse. Adopting the analyses of Michel Foucault, feminists have understood discourse as the matrix of texts, the specialized languages, and the networks of power relations operating and defining a given field. Discourses can be identified by their systematic re-presentation of ideas, opinions, ways of thinking and behaviour, which in the case of dominant or hegemonic discourses, are considered “legitimate,” “natural,” and/or “normal.” These analyses have shifted away from studying discourses as a thing or as an object, to examining discourses as sets of discursive practices; that is, investigations focus not only on the content of a text, important as it is, but also on who produces the text, the conditions under which it is produced, and its reception. Thus the distinction between context (often represented as the social, economic, and/or cultural background) and text (the content) has been blurred. Instead, the material conditions and cultural expressions are interwoven through the networks of power relations operating and defining a given field. As a result, not only are the material effects of discursive practices acknowledged but so too are the discursive effects of material practices (Alarcón et al. 1999 cited in McLaughlin 2003: 13). For example, most women have been involved in cleaning, cooking, and caring for children, but until the 1970s, these activities were not seen as work. Rather they were understood as part of women's natural role, and as a result, were either not acknowledged or undervalued. However, with the rise of the feminist movement in the late 1960s, these material activities were translated into the discourses of work (for example, domestic labour, household labour, or unpaid labour), and as result, cleaning, cooking, and caring for children were seen in part as “work,” thereby acquiring an economic value. This redefining then enabled women to lobby for remuneration in the event of a divorce, to qualify for insurance benefits in the case of an accident, and have this work enumerated in the census and a measure of the Gross National Product.

We return, then, to the question, what does it mean to be a woman? The ways in which feminists have thought about “the woman question” demonstrates the complexity of this issue: a variety of approaches have been taken over the last three centuries, which reflect competing understandings of power, resistance, and agency. There are no easy resolutions to these debates, but rather than interpret these competing views as “problems” for feminist theory, we might embrace them as opportunities to think creatively and critically “outside of the box.” We invite you to join the conversation!

What about Men?

“So what about men?” you might be asking yourself? Isn't the section entitled “What Does It Mean to Be a Woman or a *Man*?” If the “woman question” has been debated over the centuries, the corresponding question, “what is a man?” has not engendered the same kind of discussion. For a long time, thinkers drawing on biological and anthropological models, naturalized and failed to submit to critical inquiry men's position as the dominant group; their superior position vis-à-vis women was deemed the “natural order,” as were inequalities between men based on class, race, able-bodiedness, sexuality, and age.

From the Enlightenment period to the twentieth century in Western industrialized cultures, “Man” has stood for the rational, knowing subject who represents the universal

(as evidenced in our language in concepts such as mankind, “you guys,” or in occupational titles like *policeman* rather than *police officer*, or *chairman* rather than *chair*). Men have also represented the norm by which women are measured — whether we are talking about men’s intellectual prowess, their political, economic, cultural, or social accomplishments, or their physical strength.

Even within feminist theory, until the late 1980s, men’s experiences as gendered beings were not subjected to scrutiny and deconstructed in the same way as women’s. Collectively and individually, men represented “Man” — the embodiment of patriarchal oppression of women — although there was some recognition, particularly in Marxist/Socialist feminist theorizing, that all men were not created equal. However, beginning in the 1970s and gathering momentum in the late 1980s, men’s studies has become a distinct area of scholarship. Initially inspired by feminist writers and drawing on sex role theory (popular at the time), these studies drew attention to the gap between the normative elements of the male sex role and the lived experiences of men (Kimmel and Messner 2010: xv). Not surprisingly, most men could not attain the ideals prescribed by male sex roles. Moreover, once men’s studies exposed its ideological underpinnings, which served to justify male dominance over women, the concept of sex role could no longer be defended as a scientific concept.

In the late 1980s, research on men and masculinity went into two distinct directions. The first was the mythopoetic men’s movement prominently represented by Robert Bly’s (1990) bestselling book *Iron John*. Drawing on mythology, shamanic rituals, and drumming, Bly was instrumental in the establishment of men’s groups that sought to reclaim men’s “authentic” masculine souls and get in touch with emotional experiences which otherwise had been buried under traditional (i.e., patriarchal) forms of masculinity. The intent of the mythopoetic men’s movement was to critique patriarchal views of masculinity, but its essentialist and universalizing assumptions not only undermined this critique but were appropriated by organizations like the Million Man March and the Promise Keepers to re-establish patriarchal control within families.

These initiatives took place largely outside of the academy, but within scholarly research, men’s studies has moved to the social constructionist frameworks also being adopted by many feminists at the same time. This new scholarship represented “[a] challenge to the hegemonic definition of masculinity, [and it] came from men whose masculinity was cast as deviant: men of colour, gay men, and ethnic men” (Kimmel and Messner 2010: xvii). This research studies the construction of men as gendered beings who, although they as a group have power relative to women, are also hierarchically organized based on class, race, ethnicity, sexuality, age, and ability. These scholars speak of “masculinities” rather than “masculinity,” just like most contemporary feminists eschew the respective singular “femininity.” Researchers in men and masculinities examine the meanings of masculinity, how masculinity is organized and institutionalized, as well as the ways in which men resist patriarchal forms of masculinity. Thus, Simone de Beauvoir’s famous adage can be rewritten to include men: “Men are not born, [but] rather made.” Like women, men “do,” or perform, gender (Butler 1990) in ways that intersect with other social relations, producing complex experiences and understandings of what it means to be a man.

Part I A – Pedagogy

“Knowledge is power” is the theme that informs the chapters in Part I of Section I. Feminist pedagogy is important to the creation of new knowledge for and about women and gender relations. Knowledge not only gives us the tools to understand the worlds we inhabit, but also empowers women and men to think critically. In a 1977 speech to the Douglass College

Convocation, Adrienne Rich urged the female graduates to “claim their education” by “refusing to let others do your thinking, talking, and naming for you” (Rich 1979: 233). We strongly endorse this view, as does Lillian Allen, who, in “Feminism 101” rewrites Rebecca West’s famous quip, “I myself have never been able to find out precisely what feminism is: I only know that people call me a feminist whenever I express sentiments that differentiate me from a doormat.”

While feminism is often presented as a political movement with its roots in the late nineteenth century, some women, as shown earlier, have resisted patriarchal expectations for women. In her poem, “A Piece for a Sampler,” Deborah How Cottnam, a New Brunswick teacher of girls in the late eighteenth century, subverts traditional expectations of femininity associated with the domestic arts and embroiders a new picture for women, urging them to “Expand [their] Genius in its prime” since “How transient Youth, & Beauty are.” In “I Am Invited to Women’s Studies Class,” second wave feminist Jeanette Lynes bumps up against a new generation of female students who have grown up in a world in which feminist ideas have been part of the culture (even if uneasily so). Compared to these savvy young third wavers, Lynes’s experiences at the same age conditioned her to “being bauble, accessory to patriarchy.” Still her poem cautions women against turning on one another because of the imprinting they may have taken from patriarchy.

The power of knowledge to transform an individual’s life in the face of, and in spite of, the trauma of childhood sexual abuse is poignantly recounted in “Once Upon My Mind.” The author demonstrates how a child subjected to repeated abuse will struggle to make sense of what is happening to her, and she reports that “Reading my books became my lifeline to society, my umbilical cord to the world outside my tattered body.” Reading didn’t stop the abuse, as the author observes, but reading helped heal her “damaged psyche.” The new knowledge thus garnered also gave the author the courage to write about her horrendous experiences and can offer hope to other victims of childhood sexual abuse.

Education is highly correlated with income, and is an important pathway to empowerment for women and men. From 1999 to 2009, women in Canada have consistently earned more bachelor’s degrees than men (14.6 percent of all women compared to 13.1 of all men in 2009). Although more men than women continue to earn degrees above the bachelor’s (6.9 percent of all men compared to 5.7 percent of all women in 2009), women have made great strides over the past decade given that in 1999 just 3.7 percent of all women earned a degree above the bachelor’s compared to 5.8 percent of all men (Statistics Canada 2010: 125). Moreover, since the 1970s, feminist research on educational attainment and gender barriers — over-representation of male figures in textbooks, males’ and females’ different learning styles, and a masculinist-oriented curriculum — has had a significant impact on educational practices. So much so that some critics now argue that “girls rule in school.” In his chapter, Bernie Froese-Germain examines the explanations for the media panic about boys’ underachievement and the “boy turn” in research and policy related to gender and education. He concludes that there is a need for a more nuanced understanding of the ways in which gender relations inform curriculum, pedagogy, structures, and research programs in order to “make schooling more inclusive and equitable for boys, girls, and *all* children.”

“Why can’t *they* fit in, and just be like *us*?” is a common question implied if rarely directly posed by dominant groups. The assumption underlying this thinking is that the “Other” needs to be “fixed” in some way. Carol Schick and Verna St. Denis end Part I by arguing that changing thought patterns and cultural climates require a critical focus not only on the actions of others but on ourselves as well. In a university-level course on anti-racism, students

learn not only what barriers prevent Aboriginal students from reaching their full potential, but also how taken-for-granted aspects of whiteness perpetuate those barriers.

Part I B – History

Two of the main questions that inform Part I B are “Whose stories get told when recounting the histories of ‘Canadian peoples’ (or to put the matter another way, what has the national pedagogy, the teaching about the nation, been)?” and “How does that pedagogy need revising? Not that long ago, virtually no history of women or gender relations, or of Aboriginal peoples and visible or sexual minorities from marginalized peoples’ perspective existed. Since the 1970s, the writing of women’s history, as Franca Iacovetta observes in her chapter, has shifted from reclaiming women’s history by focusing on great women and their contributions to producing histories that “sheds much light on the ordinary people’s lives and tribulations.” These histories have not only expanded the number of subjects studied by historians, challenging what constitutes history, but as Iacovetta argues, they have “offered compelling critiques of the dominant liberal, elite, white, masculine, and nationalist meta-narratives of Canadian history.” Examples of discrimination — of which there are many — can no longer be represented as rare deviations from an otherwise exemplary record of “peace, order and good government.” The myth of Canada as the land of “the strong and free” is no longer defensible; rather the nation-state of Canada was built on structural inequality and the oppression of Aboriginal peoples and racialized minorities, as well as women, sexual minorities, working class people, and those with disabilities.

Since the late 1980s, women’s and gender histories have been extended to include critical race analysis, as well as a sharper view of the intersections of nation building, colonialism, and empire in the building of what most now know as Canada (but is alternatively understood by some Indigenous peoples as part of Turtle Island). Of course, the impact of these processes has been uneven, with benefits accruing largely to white settlers with devastating consequences for Aboriginal peoples and other racialized groups. In her chapter, Iacovetta traces the historiography of women’s history and gender history, as well as exploring the debates about the desirable focus of Canadian history and the backlash against feminist and other critical analyses.

Most Canadians prefer to distance themselves from the slavery that figures so prominently in U.S. history and the current collective consciousness. We are generally happy to celebrate the fact that many towns and cities in Canada were destination points for the Underground Railroad, but are shocked to find out that slavery was practised in Upper and Lower Canada until the early 1800s. In her poem “Confessions of a Woman Who Burnt Down a Town,” Afua Cooper explores the suffering of Marie Joseph Angelique, a Black slave woman, and the ordeal of her trial and sentence to torture, mutilation, and burning alive (the latter two punishments were ultimately commuted to a June 1734 hanging alone) when she was charged for burning down much of Montreal two months earlier.

Canada was built not only on the backs of Black slaves, but also on the backs of many ordinary women and men, especially from racialized groups. Building a transcontinental railway was Sir John A. MacDonald’s dream connected to his bid to unite Canada in the face of U.S. expansion in the west, but completion of the railway was also the condition for British Columbia entering into Confederation in 1871. The project was rife with controversy over competition for the lucrative contract and the generous terms ultimately awarded to the Canadian Pacific Railroad, as well as tension between prairie regional interests and the national government (Lavallée 2011). What wasn’t of concern, at least to these national leaders, was the appalling conditions under which approximately 7,000 Chinese male mi-

grants worked to build the railroad. Not only were the Chinese workers paid less than their white counterparts, but an estimated 600 to 2,000 Chinese workers died between 1880 and 1885 while working in what today would be considered criminally unsafe conditions on the railroads (Library and Archives Canada 2009). To add insult to injury, after the railroad was completed, and in order to discourage Chinese remaining or immigrating to Canada, such workers had from 1885 to 1947 to pay a head tax. One of the consequences was that wives and families of immigrant male workers were left behind in China.

On July 1, 1923 (Canada Day), the federal government passed the *Chinese Exclusion Act*, known as “humiliation day” among Chinese Canadians (Munroe 2011). As a result, according to the *Canada In The Making Project* “only fifteen Chinese immigrants were allowed into Canada between 1923 and 1947 when the law was revoked,” and the Chinese population in Canada dropped from 46,500 in 1931 to about 32,500 in 1951 (Munroe 2011).

Not until 2006, when Prime Minister Harper, as Sandra Ka Hon Chu observes, offered “an official apology and symbolic redress payments of \$20,000 to surviving head-tax payers and persons who had been in conjugal relationships with head-tax payers deceased by 2006,” did Canada move to acknowledge the systemic racism of its erstwhile policy. But, even then, Chu argues in her chapter, the emotional suffering Chinese women endured as a result of long periods of separation was not compensated for, and their full Canadian citizenship rights denied. Chinese women’s experiences were “largely conflated with those of Chinese men,” Chu explains, while harm and discrimination were constructed around the financial disadvantages accrued rather than the emotional injury incurred.

Not everyone, of course, suffered in such ways in the building of Canada. Members of white settler society, particularly those of Anglo origins representing the Empire, typically enjoyed a privileged life. However, motivated by many concerns — women’s rights, particularly the right to vote; high rates of infant and maternal mortality; fears of “race-suicide” and grinding poverty brought about by rapid industrialization and urbanization — many upper class women sought to improve the lives of women and girls. The National Council of Women of Canada (NCWC) was one organization formed with such an aim. Established at a public meeting of 1500 women on October 27, 1893, that elected Lady Aberdeen, wife of then-Governor-General of Canada (Lord John Campbell Gordon Aberdeen), its first president, the NCWC contributed to the passage of the *Act to Confer the Electoral Franchise Upon Women* at the federal level in 1918. It was also instrumental in the establishment of many Canadian institutions — some of which, including the NCWC itself, continue today. The photograph of the NCWC founders included in this section on history is a tribute to the organization’s accomplishments, but the image simultaneously re-presents the embodiment of class, gender, and race power at that era. Look at the image carefully, and ask yourself who is present and who is not? Why are Lady and Lord Aberdeen at the centre of the image, and why is Lord Aberdeen even included in the photograph? Can you attach any meanings of Empire to the conservatory in the background? And what might the dog lying at a woman’s feet, and another being held, symbolize?

Judge Emily Murphy, Henrietta Muir Edwards, Irene Parlby, Nellie McClung and Louise McKinney all had connections to the NCWC (Griffiths 1993); they also constitute “The Famous Five” who challenged existing laws that deemed women not to be persons. How did they find out women were not legally persons? Emily Murphy, a self-taught legal expert, became the first female magistrate in the Empire when she was appointed to the Alberta Bench (Jackel and Cavanaugh 2011). But on her first day of work, Eardley Jackson, a lawyer, challenged Murphy’s right to be there since women were not deemed persons under the *British North America Act* (BNA). After a thirteen-year battle, the Famous Five appealed to

the Judicial Committee of the Privy Council in London, England, “the true Supreme Court for Canada at that time,” and the Privy Council found on October 18, 1929, that women were, in fact, “persons” under the BNA Act (Alberta Heritage 2004).

On October 18, 1999, a bronze statue of the Famous Five on Parliament Hill in Ottawa was unveiled to commemorate the seventieth anniversary of the Person’s Case. The statue was intended to commemorate the Famous Five as nation-builders, but it was embroiled in controversy because Judge Emily Murphy was a strong supporter of eugenics, and lobbied for Alberta’s *Sexual Sterilization Law* (1928). The legacy of that law was still being felt by its sterilized victims, including Leilani Muir, who successfully sued the Alberta government in 1996 for procedural negligence and damages. After the Muir decision, a class-action lawsuit on behalf of sterilized victims followed soon after. In light of the history of the Famous Five and this contemporary controversy, how do we “read” the statue?

The statue invites individuals to sit at the table with the Famous Five and imagine themselves as feminist nation-builders. Tracy Kulba (2002) asks, in her analysis of the statue and the statue controversy, “What kind of feminist, and what kind of nation-builders do we want to be?” Senator Lillian (Quan) Dyck, who is of “mixed Chinese and Cree Indian heritage, and [has] encountered racism all [her] life,” finds the Famous Five statue a place of solace, comfort, and inspiration. The photographs of Senator Dyck dancing, sitting, and having tea with the Famous Five enables us to re-imagine Canada as a nation in which our differences enrich and enhance what it means to be a Canadian. In embracing the Famous Five, Senator Dyck signals both the continuities and discontinuities between first, second, and third wave feminisms.

Much has been made about the tensions between so-called second and third wave feminists, but as the interview between then 84-year-old Doris Anderson, “one of Canada’s best-known feminists,” and well-known third waver, Lisa Rundle reveals that many of the same issues — inequality in pay, need for a universal childcare program and better access to safe, legal abortion — beset both generations. After four decades of activism, Anderson declares that she “Still Ain’t Satisfied!” In her interview with Rundle, Anderson reflects on her career as a former editor of *Chatelaine* at a time when women couldn’t get a legal abortion or information about birth control, and child abuse was a dark secret. Anderson boldly went where few women went before, engaging Canadian women with issues that mattered deeply to them — while offering “10 Ways to Dress up Hamburger!” Anderson recalls the optimism engendered by the establishment of the Royal Commission on the Status of Women, but the former president of the National Committee on the Status of Women and of the (now defunct) Canadian Advisory Council on the Status of Women, laments the lack of progress in producing equality between women and men. In Anderson’s view, gender equality will come more quickly if there is proportional representation of women and men in Parliament. What do you think?

After reading the chapters on women’s and gender history in Canada, we hope that you are interested in learning more about the diverse contributions that women and men have made in the pursuit of equality relations. Take the test “So You Think That You Know Canadian Women’s/Gender History?” as one measure of your knowledge! (Short answers to the history test appear in Chapter 13. More detailed answers and more questions can be found on the *Gendered Intersections* website: fernwoodpublishing.ca/gi2.

Part I C – Gender and Difference

In the so-called first and second waves of feminism, women organized around the assumption that they had a common identity based on similar gender experiences. But feminist