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Choosing psychology* or *Not throwing the baby out with the bath water

[pp. 47-61]

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Beginnings: disillusion and discontent

How many budding psychologists go into the discipline with the misconception that it is about people, perhaps about women, only to find themselves immersed in an undergraduate, syllabus which concentrates on topics such as perception, learning, memory and meta-cognition, at the expense of anything more directly human? As a 'naive subject', in what appeared to be an experiment to see how infrequently psychology undergraduates would question the divide between their expectations and the harsh 'scientific' reality of mainstream psychology, I was disheartened and disillusioned. Positive reinforcement was meted out for acquiescence and acceptance of the principles of scientific rigour. The course was taught entirely by men, and was based solely on hypothetico-deductive analysis. It also seemed to be centred on the premise that undergraduates should be seen and not heard, and certainly should not disturb the academics' valuable research time with questions about the relationship between experiments on rats and psychological theory, or insight into how the disparate pieces of knowledge imparted fit together to make 'psychology'. In my frustration, I did try to leave: but I was told that transfer to another course was impossible, I must persevere. many undergraduates find psychology difficult or boring at first, you'll get used to it'.

I did persevere - while being made to feel that my discontent was due to my own inadequacy or lack of persistence, rather than any objective reality. It was perhaps the anger at this assumption that fuelled my motivation.

Positivism and science: no mention of women

I became a student whose life outside the psychology department was more important: one way of copying with the feeling of alienation [48] towards psychology was to ignore it altogether, splitting it off into a compartment labelled 'endurance'. I produced satisfactory lab reports as required detailing the likes of reaction times in student volunteers, or the methods employed in validating an attitude questionnaire, while envying students on other courses who seemed to be studying something of interest and relevance. Why was it that sociologists, film theorists, or literature students could enjoy theoretical discussions about feminism and culture as part of their course, while I had to concentrate on mapping the layout of the brain? My exam answers on memory, physiology, perception, motivation in the rat, etc, were passable, if not stimulating. Psychology had become something that was to be consumed, rather like bran at breakfast, not for enjoyment or pleasure, but by necessity. The total absence of female staff members, and consequently female role models, contrasted sharply with the preponderance of women undergraduates. Where did they all go after qualifying? Psychology itself seemed to be a discipline taught by men, who discussed the work of other men, of real 'scientists': women were

not merely marginalized, they appeared to be completely absent from the field. In quoting references, such as Wilson (1982), it was assumed that the person was a man, and in discussion the author was always referred to as 'he'. Imagine my surprise (and chagrin) years later to discover that many of these authors were women!

In my second year as an undergraduate I embarked upon what I anticipated to be the joyless task of a methodology essay, but while in the bowels of the university library I came across a paper that was a revelation: it was interesting, of relevance and had women as its central topic - a paper on the menstrual cycle. You may laugh at the very idea that menstruation could be the subject of serious study, as many have since, but this was a milestone in my career. At last psychology had something to say that seemed to be of relevance and importance, something which was of even greater interest than my burgeoning social life. Further examination of the literature convinced me that psychology could be both legitimate (in terms of being published in 'eminent' journals) and of direct relevance to women's experiences. I was later to challenge this version of legitimacy which heartened me earlier in my career, but at the time it validated and stimulated my interest in a psychology *of women, for* women. I was also heartened to discover that many of the authors in this field were women: almost the first evidence that it was not necessary to be gendered male in order to have a career as a psychologist.

My depth of interest in the subject of menstruation, seen almost as a form of deviance by some, was of sufficient endurance to lead me to carry out three years of postgraduate research on the subject, with the aim of achieving a PhD, as well as (in my naivety) producing some [49] world-shattering piece of scientific knowledge. I was soon to learn that the latter is the exception rather than the rule, and if achieved invariably takes much longer than the prescribed three years of postgraduate study. Yet this myth persists, and leaves many post-graduates feeling inadequate as 'scientists', and must significantly contribute to the abnormally high drop-out rate in PhD students. This position is possibly more acute for postgraduates who choose to study the psychology of women, or to question traditional orthodox methodologies by using a feminist analysis, thereby finding it more difficult to be accepted as 'scientists'. This is illustrated by analyses of citations, a method of evaluation of worth which continues to be supported (Furnham, 1989), yet which indicates the limited impact of feminist psychology on the mainstream (Unger, 1982a, 1982b). As feminist psychologists are judged as not having made a significant contribution to psychology, it would not be surprising to find that feminist PhDs are less likely to be completed.

Splitting: science or feminism?

As a fledgling psychologist I found that my PhD subject, menstruation, was seen as an object of mirth or disbelief. As the only postgraduate in the department I had no peers to validate my work, or to provide feelings of legitimacy. I found the academics were engrossed in those traditional established areas of psychology: perception, cognition, or the study of hemispheric differences. In moments of weakness I began to wish that I'd chosen such a subject myself: that I could be accepted as a 'real' psychologist. I couldn't contribute to discussions about the possibility of producing 3D images on computer, or the extent to which lists of synonyms could be generated at random. I would now say 'so what!', but as an isolated woman postgraduate I was being continuously presented with the message that my own work was marginal, of little relevance and hardly worthy of inclusion in the discipline of psychology. How many other women are persuaded against studying the subject of their choice, of studying women, or of

studying psychology with a feminist content? I felt that I was the skeleton in the cupboard for the department, to be kept out of sight and, preferably, out of mind.

I'd like to say that I ignored the prevailing disapproval and devaluation of my work and produced a PhD based on feminist principles, which pushed forward the frontiers of knowledge about women's experiences of menstruation. But I didn't. I carried out an empirical positivistic PhD studying physiological change, performance on computer tasks and mood during the menstrual cycle. The data produced from my enquiries was subjected to extensive and elaborate [50] statistical analysis. Although I spent many hours with the individual women 'subjects', I did not collect their comments or opinions in any systematic way: this was seen to be of secondary interest to the 'objective' information I could obtain from the computerized tests. Interview material which I collected in the earlier days of research was seen to be of little relevance to the study and definitely not to be included in the thesis in any form. From a starting point wherein I wanted to learn about, and ideally add to, our understanding of women's experience of menstruation, I had evolved a series of experiments in which menstruation had become a variable on a par with stressors such as sleep loss, heat, noise, etc. It had become rationalized, compartmentalized as a stressor, and thus devalued. I knew in myself that women's experience of menstruation could not be meaningfully conceptualized in this limited way, given the negative social constructions of menstruation and the ease with which much unhappiness and discontent is attributed to it (Koeske, 1988). However, if I addressed these, more pertinent, issues, I was warned that I would not achieve the PhD in the specified three years and thus not be a 'good' psychologist. So I continued with my stress paradigm research, splitting off the feelings of unease with the type of work I was carrying out, and filing them away for later.

One could argue that my espousal of the (albeit temporary) mantle of 'rational scientist' was a necessary and effective compromise, as it allowed me to achieve the qualification I desired: I now see it as the outcome of successful brainwashing. A strong phrase perhaps, but I was the victim of a discourse which defined psychology in a limited positivistic way and decreed that all other types of investigation were invalid and therefore illegitimate. The purpose of my investigation had become solely the achievement of a PhD: that was seen as success within the academic game. The content of the work did not have to be particularly meaningful - in fact it seemed to me that the more removed from human experience (and particularly women's experience) the research was, the more acceptable it was. When I was undergoing my PhD viva the couple of pages I had included at the end of the thesis on the wider social and political implications of menstrual cycle research were the subject of much scrutiny. I was informed that to receive the qualification I would have to justify my comments and conclusions with reference to research - or take them out of the thesis (I did the former, reluctantly).

At this point the most likely outcome would have been to leave psychology, disenchanted again, to embark on a career which did not involve such splitting of my interests. Perhaps this is why there are so few women visible within psychology - they are gradually squeezed out, refusing to compromise any longer. If I were an orthodox, [51] rational, highly motivated (male?) scholar, I would probably have sailed on into an academic career of some sort, devoting the rest of my time to perpetuating the system within which I had been schooled. What prevented either of these outcomes, and what still keeps me committed to psychology, was the involvement with other feminist psychologists, my involvement with 'Women in Psychology' (WIPS), the struggle towards the formation of the Psychology of Women Section (POWS) of the British Psychological Society and the continuing moves to establish the legitimacy of the Psychology of Women within the mainstream. Yet I sometimes feel a sense of *déjà vu,* when the distance

between my earlier expectations and the reality of 'hypothetico-deductive' psychology is now reflected in the distance between my feminist beliefs and the dominant discourses within psychology in Britain today. Despite this, I strongly believe that feminists can gain much from psychology, as well as contribute much to it as a discipline. I believe that it is more important for us to work within the discipline than to leave it when disillusionment strikes, and although I respect the actions of those women who do leave, for me, that would be 'throwing the baby out with the bathwater'.

Women challenging: providing an alternative discourse

I am not going to chronicle the formation of the Psychology of Women Section in this account: it is described by Jan Burns and Sue Wilkinson in their chapter. However, my involvement with other women in this particular venture has been one of the major factors which has convinced me that it is possible to be both a psychologist and a feminist, and that change is not totally out of reach.

My discovery that there were many women psychologists, indeed feminist psychologists, carrying out research which was based on women's accounts, on feminist (or new paradigm) methodologies, was as important a revelation as my first reading of the paper on the menstrual cycle as an undergraduate. At successive conferences I met women researching areas such as gender identity, discourses surrounding sexuality, adolescent women's accounts of unemployment, and post-natal depression. For the first time I realized that I had nothing to be embarrassed about in my choice of PhD topic: the opposite, others were interested in it! However, I *did* feel some unease about the fact that my research was so positivistic: that I had not had the courage of my convictions and used women's accounts as a central component in my PhD. Yet I was relieved that my research had anything to do with women at all, as other women reported that they had been pressurized into researching topics much further from their interests than mine. Yet I still experienced a feeling of 'if only . . ': if only I had had a [52] feminist supervisor; if only I had met other women in the same situation as myself earlier; if only I had persevered with my original interests; if only there were some forum, such as a BPS women's section which would have made meetings possible...

How many women have echoed these words, and then disappeared from the face of psychology? 'Psychology has nothing to offer us,' they say. 'It is a reactionary discipline, based on patriarchal assumptions, reinforcing women's oppression.' This is not surprising: in its drive to be accepted as a science psychology acts to isolate further those women who wish to carry out research using feminist paradigms. Women psychologists may find it easier to dismiss psychology, and to carry out their research or practice within other disciplines which are apparently more accommodating, such as within women's studies. Yet this perpetuates the system as it is, because these women are not available to become PhD supervisors for other women, are not affecting the structure of psychology as a discipline, are not publishing within mainstream psychology. This allows their work to be seen as marginal, as not being 'real' psychology. It also makes it much more difficult for other women coming after them to train in new paradigms of research, or to challenge the male-orientated structures, as the role models, mentors and precedents are not available. This is of the utmost importance, as it has been argued (Crane, 1972) that one of the reasons for the failure of theoretical frameworks is the absence of new individuals who acquire and retain their perspective.

It may seem that I am suggesting that feminist psychologists should become extremely

altruistic: enduring conditions of difficulty and alienation (as outlined by other authors in this book) for the sake of other women, or for the state of feminist psychology as a whole. I would like to turn the argument round and say that challenging the orthodoxy, working with other women *within* psychology can be both personally rewarding and motivating, as well as ensuring that feminism is allowed to make an impact on psychology.

Psychology may, in its present form, represent much of what is anathema to feminists. The recent changes in the structure of psychology in Britain, with the introduction of the Register of Chartered Psychologists, are seen as further movement down the path to a regulated profession which is alienating to feminists. The BPS has the power to define what *is* psychology, in order to decide who may, or may not, call themselves Chartered Psychologists. One of the ways in which psychologists are judged to be 'legitimate', and thus eligible for chartering, is the presence of publications in established or 'eminent' refereed journals. The definition of 'eminent' is, as yet, limited - the likes of perception and behaviour therapy journals being acceptable, whereas psychology of women or feminist journals may be scrutinized [53] or seen as marginal. Only by challenging this and producing equivalent publications in feminist psychology can these definitions of legitimacy be changed. Alternatively, feminists may choose to challenge the very nature of publication as the major criterion for acceptability as a psychologist, through revaluing the work which is a more accurate reflection of feminist psychologists' activities, such as teaching or clinical practice.

These current trends could result in further limitation on what is seen as legitimate psychology, with feminist theory or practice being left out in the cold. Or it could result in a growing acceptance of ways of working which are more feminist in orientation, among other changes, and an acceptance of new ways of working within the mainstream.

There is a precedent here within British psychology, in the experiences of social psychology as an established discipline. Now firmly part of the mainstream, social psychologists were previously a 'persecuted minority within the psychological hierarchy' (Robinson, 1989). It has been suggested by Robinson that there were three main reasons for the maintenance of high morale in social psychology, which must have largely contributed to its establishment and continuation: the fact that social psychologists in Britain knew each other, that they saw themselves as pioneers and that the discipline was popular with the students - thereby creating demand (Robinson, 1989, p.22). Surely this parallels the situation in feminist psychology, or the potential situation if feminist psychologists become more visible. While we may not want the fate of feminist psychology to mirror that of social psychology, through becoming diluted in the process of assimilation, we can see that it is possible to move from a position of powerlessness and marginalization to a position of acceptability, in a relatively short time.

How can this visibility be achieved, you might ask. Change needs to take place at both an organizational level and at the level of publication (see Wilkinson, 1987, for a more complete analysis). Change is slow, but not impossible. In 1985 when the first meeting was held to lobby the BPS for a women's section, many people from whom one would have expected support said that it was a wasted effort because it would never succeed. The BPS is an immovable object, we were told, you'll never gain acceptance. A piece of more insidious advice was provided by those who warned against any association with a women's section, as it might be seen as feminist, as political, and thereby would exclude one from future academic appointments. Is this chapter going to put me in further danger of such an outcome - should I not become a secret feminist? I was told (by those with more sense and caution, as well as power) that I would be far better employing my energies in more established areas of psychology, where one would not [54] be

associated with such controversy. Is this not a parallel to advice given to earlier social psychologists?'... my brain was not pure alpha, but it deserved a far better fate than to waste its capacity on social psychology' (Robinson, 1989, p.22).

Despite fatalistic warnings and rejections many feminists *are* active within psychology. Significant change is taking place, as is outlined elsewhere in this book. Now there is a BPS Psychology of Women Section with over 350 members. Although the psychology of women and feminist psychology are not totally overlapping categories (Unger, 1982a, 1982b), an important function of a section is to encourage and provide a forum for feminist analyses. The section has a twofold influence: ensuring that structural and organizational development cannot exclude women, or alternative methodologies, through having representatives on many of the BPS committees and boards, as well as making visible research and theory which is women-centred, through presentations at conferences, feminist invited speakers and publications.

Feminism and psychology: uneasy partners?

Feminist psychologists may agree on the need for women-centred psychology, but they often disagree on the meaning of 'women-centred'. Some writers seem to be arguing that it means all of women's experiences should be seen in a positive light. An example from my own research is the suggestion (Delaney et al., 1976, p.24) that feminists should deny *any* effects of menstruation and reconceptualize menstruation in solely positive terms. To me, this seems to be denying that women are possibly affected in any way by menstruation. This would therefore be defining my own research interests as unacceptable. Others seem to go even further, suggesting that it is not acceptable for feminist psychologists to carry out research into experiences that are unique to women, either because this may act to reinforce beliefs that women are 'different', inferior or weak ('victims' of their biology) - or because it may imply that any differences between women and men are reducible to biology alone.

However, as Sayers argues, this negates important areas of women's lives:

> The denial, on grounds of abstract principle, that menstruation has any negative aspects... does not. . . as is sometimes implied, necessarily serve the interests of women... Much of the scientific and often feminist-inspired research into the actual, as opposed to the assumed, effects of menstruation has been extremely useful in this way to the cause of women... however, it is also essential to acknowledge that biology (menstruation, in this case), does have real effects on women's lives. (Sayers, 1982, p.123) [55]

Women's experiences have been ignored or denied by psychology for too long. If we shy away from studying certain aspects of women's experiences which may have some biological component (or have traditionally been conceptualized in a purely biological framework) on the basis that we may reinforce inequalities, we are reinforcing the dictum that women's experiences are less relevant and not appropriate as subjects of serious study or research. We are also perpetuating the systematic devaluation of research that cannot generalize to men as it is 'only' based on women (Bernard, 1973). This acts to reinforce the belief that the male is the norm and that women's experiences are only conceptualized in terms of deviation from that norm. It is important to validate women's experiences, and to do so within the mainstream, so that perception, cognition, etc, are not seen as being more valid as subjects of study than women's specific experiences such as menstruation, pregnancy or menopause. It is this belief that has

motivated me to stay in psychology - as well as the belief that psychology has much to offer to feminist analysis.

My earlier frustration at not being able to present women's accounts in my PhD thesis was assuaged when I was asked to write a book (Ussher, 1989) which concentrated on those very feminist arguments which the traditional PhD excluded. Traditionally, women's reproduction has been seen as a burden or illness, acting to make women weak or unreliable. Conversely, reproduction has been completely ignored in studies of life-cycle development. In developing a feminist analysis of reproduction it is important to refute many of the myths pertaining to women's bodies, as well as to acknowledge the real effects of menstruation, pregnancy and menopause during the life cycle. A psychological perspective on women's sexuality and reproduction is not only relevant and pertinent, but I would say essential to this analysis. Traditional, empirical research has its place in being able effectively to reinforce the arguments that women are not inevitably debilitated by their reproductive system, as is suggested by 'raging hormone' theories. Other types of psychological investigation-such as discourse analysis (Hollway, 1984) or Q sorts (Kitzinger, 1987), as yet underutilized in this area, can develop the role of psychology still further. Thus a feminist analysis of the effects of social constructions of menstruation, pregnancy and the menopause on women's identity can very usefully draw on psychological research. If a psychological approach to this issue had been deemed irrelevant, and thus dropped, the arguments would have been less well substantiated, perhaps less meaningful. As with a growing number of similar volumes (Kitzinger, 1987; Squire, 1989; Wilkinson, 1986), a feminist analysis has been produced within mainstream psychology: published by an established academic publisher - as, indeed, is this very book! It is important not [56] to underestimate the significance of this. Giving women's writing 'respectable' outlets provides a psychology from a feminist perspective for the undergraduate audience as a matter of course, and hence ensures its visibility within the discipline.

Clinical psychology: pathologizing or emancipating?

It is not only within academic psychology that dilemmas and compromises take place: practitioners are equally affected. As a clinical psychologist I have experienced a repetition of the splitting between feminist ideology and established practices. I was required to train and work within a system which traditionally pathologizes women, treats them as patients, and is orientated around changing the woman to fit in with the system. My motivation in training as a clinical psychologist was largely centred on the belief that direct work with individual women was the way I could most usefully develop as a feminist psychologist (as well as for the more pragmatic reason that there are many opportunities for career development in clinical psychology at present). I felt that I would be carrying out work that had direct benefit for women, rather than merely seeing women as the subjects of study. I also wanted to escape from what felt like the claustrophobic stupor of 'scientific' academia, to stop banging my head against the proverbial brick wall. But how wrong I was: it was 'out of the frying pan, into the fire'.

On my first clinical placement I saw a woman client, whom I shall call Helen, who was referred for agoraphobia. She experienced severe panic attacks upon leaving her home alone and could not travel any distance on the underground train. I was told that this was a 'straightforward anxiety management case', and prepared to 'treat' Helen with systematic desensitization (Wolpe, 1978), a form of behaviour therapy, as instructed. Yet when evidence of physical and sexual abuse of Helen on the part of her husband emerged, I was informed that it was not relevant to the

referred problem and should be ignored. Discussion with my supervisor precluded any investigation of the ethics of continuing to treat Helen with a behavioural programme in these circumstances, or of alternative ways of working. As Helen's husband would not attend for 'couple' therapy, and Helen did not spontaneously express any wish to leave the violent relationship, I was informed that the most positive outcome was to help her to deal with the situation, conquer her fears, and that if she didn't like it, she wouldn't stay.

Thankfully, not all clinical psychologists react in such a manner as my supervisor: but in their quest for acceptance as 'scientist practitioner', many would adhere rigidly to their 'scientific' principles [57] in therapy, noting the apparent effectiveness or ineffectiveness of one aspect of treatment, while ignoring the oppression experienced by their women clients. It is perhaps remarkable that a profession which is largely made up of women (with the exception of the top of the hierarchy) and which works with far more female than male clients, routinely fails to address the position of women in relation to a patriarchal mental health service, or the more general question of gender in clinical practice. If these issues were addressed, psychologists might look beyond their scientific rigour for explanations of women's distress. As Penfold and Walker argue in relation to psychiatry:

> There is little within the traditional discourse to build upon. What we as women know about ourselves we know from each other, from our novels, diaries, poetry, films, art, the work of our scholars, and from the sharing of the struggle towards a 'common language'. Those engaged in formulating knowledge of women will have to be prepared to tap these resources as well as their own clinical experience if their work is to prove itself relevant to women's needs. (Penfold and Walker, 1984, p. xi)

Mental health practitioners have often been grouped together under one umbrella by critics, the assumption being that psychiatrists and psychologists are equally guilty of pathologizing women, of attributing problems to the woman herself rather than taking a wider view which acknowledges the social and political context of women's lives. Yet while antipsychiatry arguments (Szasz, 1973) or social constructionist arguments (Laws, 1985) of women's mental health problems provide explanations that avoid biologically reductionist assumptions for *why* many women are distressed, they are of little help to the individual woman who feels that she is depressed. Theoretical analysis of the root of women's distress is vital to a reconceptualization of working practices in clinical psychology, and cannot be underestimated in its importance. However, there are many women who need direct help, which cannot be provided merely by reframing their problems as being the result of oppression, or theorizing about definitions of femininity as pathological. Clinical psychologists are in a position to provide direct work with women in this position, enhancing their power and responsibility, through providing therapy based on feminist principles, while avoiding pathologization or blame.

Clinical psychologists are not necessarily constrained by the medical model, and are increasingly challenging and reviewing the old concepts, developing new ones which serve rather than rule our thinking. Psychologists can concentrate on what a woman *has* achieved, such as managing to cope with young children in a difficult situation, rather than what a woman *hasn't* achieved, such as leaving a violent husband, even if they cannot counter existing oppression. More [58] equal relationships in therapy, and open case-note policies, will challenge the role of woman as helpless patient and encourage self-advocacy. Primary care and community interventions, such as the Newpin befriending project in south London or the White City project

(Hunt, 1986), can provide early intervention work for women in a way which is accessible and 'user-friendly'. Providing women with child management support, which does not 'blame' the mother for her difficulties, can increase self-esteem and feelings of competency which have direct benefits for mother and child. Validating the reality of a woman's perceptions, rather than changing them to fit in with her environment, can promote change without pathologizing the woman. As Christine Adcock and Karen Newbigging agree in their chapter, psychologists can also challenge the ideological basis of mental health practices which define women as ill if they do not fit in with the system, locating the problem within the woman, while ignoring the socio-political forces which create much of the discontent. Feminist clinical psychologists in policy-making positions can begin to alter the basis on which mental health services are provided. Through acknowledging the importance of gender in clinical practice, the medicalization of women's experiences can be avoided.

Paradoxically, I feel that I have only been able to carry out feminist therapy and be truly reflexive in my current clinical work, which is within an AIDS setting, for despite my expressed wish to work with women, I find myself working with a totally male client group. Other feminist clinicians have commented on the compromise they consider this must entail. However, I find that my therapy is truly empowering and egalitarian for perhaps the first time. This particular client group is generally articulate and politically aware and would reject any intervention which was not empowering. Perhaps if we can equip our other client groups with knowledge about the types of service they can receive, as these gay men have been equipped through their own networks, it will be more possible to practise feminist therapy through the demand for it. One of the reasons that it is possible to work in this way in my present setting may also be because there are no established practices or precedents in this area of clinical psychology. As AIDS is a new area for clinical psychology, there is little resistance to innovation from those who would normally dictate practice, and the very nature of the work means that it must be innovatory. Perhaps it is also because only now do I have the courage of my convictions. What it does suggest is that it *is* possible to carry out feminist therapy routinely in a National Health Service setting, thus not inevitably having to compromise principles in practice. [59]

Future struggles

Although there are many pitfalls and stumbling-blocks inherent in working within psychology, I believe that it is possible to work in progressive ways in order to achieve disciplinary change, and to have feminist practice accepted as legitimate. This is not an easy prospect, but it can be both personally and professionally rewarding. Organizing with other women is potentially the most productive route, and is outlined later in this book by Sue Wilkinson and Jan Burns. But this is not without pitfalls, as we need to develop new practices in this area too. We may reject the traditional structures for organizing and decision making as being patriarchal and elitist, but are we able to forge new pathways in women-centred organizations, in order to avoid the problems of women in power becoming the new 'academic gatekeepers'? The need to find new ways of working, new structures for 'success', new ways of dealing with conflict, is a problem which is not unique to women in psychology:

> Because of the revolutionary nature and vision of feminism, and women's basic naivety, many women suffered their first defeats with surprise. . . women were very critical of the 'female' rules of handling conflict, such as politeness, tears and evasion. They were equally

critical of the 'male' rules of handling conflict, such as logical or 'objective arbitration, compromise or violence'. (Chesler, 1972, p.274)

Reflexivity in research and practice is advocated by many feminist psychologists (Wilkinson, 1987): I would argue that reflexivity in our activities within psychology, our activities with other feminist psychologists, is also vital. It is possible to work within psychology without compromising everything, but more difficult if individual women are attempting to do this alone. Rejecting old ways of working also involves rejecting the traditional elitist structure of systems within psychology: not working solely for our own advancement, but working with other women towards change and the development of new practices. We cannot always expect to share the same goal: there will be continuing arguments about the relationship between feminism and psychology, the ethics of having to compromise on some levels in order to advance on others, the question of integration or separation, the very nature of feminist research within psychology. Jan Burns discusses some of these issues in more detail in her chapter. However, this situation is healthy, as disagreement and debate should result in activity rather than stagnation and isolation. As Unger has noted:

> 'Those who identify with the psychology of women comprise the largest body of socially aware critics within organized psychology. Criticism of ourselves as well as of others will not destroy us. Refusal to do so may' (1982b, p.132). [60]

When I think back to myself as an undergraduate, when psychology equalled rats and pigeons, I am convinced that it is vital to open up the debate about feminism and psychology to those in a similar position. If more women undergraduates were involved in the discussions they might see a future in psychology, rather than opting for other professions, as many do at present (Ball and Bourner, 1984). Psychology can add to a feminist analysis in research and offer individual women in distress an alternative to the medical model. We can provide alternatives to hypothetico-deductive models, which are more meaningful for women, and perhaps see psychology as something that can add to a feminist perspective, rather than be at odds with it. In *not* throwing the baby out with the bathwater we can integrate a psychological perspective into feminist analyses. as well as having a direct effect on the future of psychology in Britain as we become accepted as 'real' psychologists.

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