FEMINIST POPULAR EDUCATION:
TRANSFORMING THE WORLD FROM WHERE WOMEN STAND

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by
Suzanne Doerge

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I. PURPOSE

In the fall of 1990, as part of a practicum at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education, I began working with a coalition of Latin American women. We were to prepare a weekend workshop, on violence against women, for the Latin American community in Toronto, utilizing popular education methodology.[1] Having focused my academic studies, so as to reflect upon my experience in feminist education in the United States and popular education in Nicaragua, I had some preparation for the task. However, it was the six months of working together to plan, implement and evaluate the workshop, that deeply challenged and developed my own understanding of popular education with, by and for women. In seeking to develop an educational process that begins with women's experience, we found that popular education, as it is generally conceived, was not adequate. As we gathered around each other's kitchen tables week after week, to listen to each other, to share stories and debate political perspectives, to laugh, cry and become angry, we began to experience and develop a methodology that facilitates social transformation from where women stand - feminist popular education.

In reflecting upon this experience, I turned, in my studies, to the writings of Latin American women, who have been conceptualizing and practising a feminist popular education. Although they began a Latin American Women's Network, *Red de Educación Popular entre Mujeres de CEAAL*, in 1982, that currently is present in 20 countries and brings together 360 groups and institutions, their writings and publications have received limited attention. The organization, CEAAL, the Council of Latin American Adult Educators, with whom they are affiliated, has not seen the need to incorporate a gender perspective into all aspects of popular education (Red, 1990). It is still the writings of Paulo Freire and other male popular educators who tend to be published and quoted in the international literature on popular education.

The conceptualization of feminist popular education is extremely important for me, as a woman, as a feminist and as an educator. Although I have worked for several years utilizing and teaching popular education methodology, I have often felt that my experiences, as a woman, have

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[1] The practicum was part of a training program, sponsored by the Moment Project of the Jesuit Centre for Social Faith and Justice, on the animation of Naming the Moment (NTM). NTM is a methodology, developed for the Canadian context, that utilizes popular education to facilitate a conjunctural and structural analysis of a social problem, in order to build coaltions and identify effective political action (Barndt, 1989). This is one of several Canadian initiatives in adapting popular education methodology to the Canadian context. See also Rick Arnold *et al*, 1991.

not been included. Looking back on my own educational work in Nicaragua, I, also, recognize, that in spite of having years of experience in facilitating feminist education, when utilizing popular education methodology, I was often blind to the needs of women, as well as to their way of perceiving the world and transforming it.

In addition, I intuitively believed that popular education, over-emphasized the rational and de-legitimized other ways of learning about the world. I knew that my own process of conscientization, from being a young teenage woman, who would have preferred to have been male and adamantly supported U.S. military involvement in Vietnam to being a feminist, striving to live in solidarity with the Nicaraguan revolution, had been a process that involved more than my intellect. Although I was made to feel that I was politically naive to believe so, I knew that my feelings, senses, body, relationship to nature and, even my spirit, had in some way been an integral part of my own transformation and commitment to political struggle. To fail to incorporate these elements into a liberating education seemed, not only to ignore the way that women and others tend to learn about the world, but could lead only to a limited and fragmented social transformation.

In this paper, I will speak from my own experience, and draw upon the theory and practice of women in Latin America, as well as other men and women, in order to conceptualize a feminist popular education. Recognizing that any methodology would need to be adapted to specific cultures, I will be focusing here on its application in the Latin American political-cultural context. Speaking as a white, middle class, woman raised in the United States, I realize that my understanding of the interests and experiences of Latin American women is limited. However, in the writing of this paper, I hope to make use of the privileges that I have of speaking both English and Spanish, and of having lived in both Latin America and North America, so as to further facilitate an exchange of theory and practice between women in the North and South. In so doing, I hope not to speak <u>for</u> Latin American women, but join <u>with</u> them and other feminists in conceptualizing an educational methodology that will further the growing and diverse women's movement around the globe.

Toward this end, I will seek to define feminist popular education and the role of the educator, as they differ from popular education. I will illustrate why popular education must broaden from its unidimensional focus on class, incorporating gender and other oppressions, in order to challenge the complexity of power relations in society. This, in turn, leads to a discussion of new elements that women, as one of several emerging social subjects, are bringing

to an understanding of social transformation, such as; an emphasis on "daily life experience," gender identity, breaking the personal-political divide and redefining power. In order for these elements to be effectively incorporated into feminist popular education, it is necessary to develop a process of conscientization that breaks with all patriarchal dualisms. Such an integrated critical consciousness includes all aspects of integrated beings: mind, subjective, body and spirit, including our relation to nature.

This evolving theory and practice of feminist popular education has implications that stretch beyond particular workshops with women. Feminist popular education is transforming the world from where women stand. It is, as with popular education, also a theory and methodology for social movements, community development and research. Feminist popular education can offer many insights into the research, implementation and evaluation of a Gender and Development (GAD)[2] approach. Feminist participatory research, coincides with feminist popular education, given that both strive to make women agents for social transformation (Maguire, 1987; Pineda, 1986). The experience and conceptualization of feminist popular education both enriches and draws upon the women's movement, Gender and Development (GAD) theory and feminist participatory research.

Finally, feminist popular education seeks to bring this gender analysis to all forms of popular education: literacy, health education, development education, union education, etc. It is an essential contribution to what some popular educators have called "Integrated Popular Education" (Jara,1988:64). In order to be integrated, more elements need to be introduced that come from the interests of other social actors. Given that feminist analysis is increasingly seeking to understand a multiplicity of oppression, feminist popular education is a good location from which to begin to further this process of integration. It is hoped that this, in turn, will lead to a broader understanding of social transformation and how it can be achieved.

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[2]. Gender and Development (GAD), which arose in response to the inadequacies of the previous Women in Development model, seeks to establish equal gender relations, by developing strategies that make women visible and address the causes of their subordination (Plewes & Stuart,1991).

II. RATIONALE - THE POLITICAL CONTEXT

> It is no coincidence that, in these ten years, in which we have strengthened as a women's movement in Latin America, we have done so in the face of economic crisis, hopelessness, the crisis of socialism and, with it, the profound questioning of paradigms for interpreting social reality and ways of doing politics in our continent (Adoum, Armas & Rosero, *Tejiendo Nuestra Red,* 1990:1).[3]

The contributions of feminist popular education to a process of social transformation are important at this historical juncture in Latin America. With the loss of the Sandinista election in Nicaragua and the outcome of Perestroika in Eastern Europe, the revolutionary paradigms, on which the Latin American left have based their politics, are in crisis. The vanguard style of leadership and practice of democratic centralism, that have characterized left parties, have been proven ineffective. At the same time, the ascendency of the neo-liberal model, which supports policies of structural adjustment[4], globalization and free trade, is dismantling much needed social programmes and causing an increasing majority to live below subsistence levels. In the face of these new conditions, Latin American popular educators are acutely aware of the need to integrate new elements into political thought and action (CEP Alforja, 1991).

During this same period, there is an emergence of new social movements, such as those of indigenous people, campesinos, women and the ecology movement, that are revealing new ways of reading and transforming the world. In organizing around the anniversary of 500 years since the Spanish conquest, indigenous people of the Americas have, for the first time, held gatherings on a continental level in Ecuador (1990) and Guatemala (1991). Given the current environmental crisis, new social actors are calling for a politics based on a non-dominant relationship to nature. All of these new actors, together with the women's movement, have tremendous potential for developing a new vision for constructing a more just society. However, as the Peruvian feminist, Virginia Vargas, states:

> ...to the extent that they do not have power in the public sphere, nor clear spaces in the traditional political games, this questioning is seen as secondary or threatening in the face of privileged personalities and politics (1989:3).

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[3]. *Tejiendo Nuestra Red* is the magazine distributed by the Latin American Women's Network.

[4] Structural adjustment refers to economic policies that international lending agencies are forcing on Third World countries, in order to gear their economies toward debt payment, through such measures as enforcing cutbacks in social spending, privatization, prioritizing export production and establishing free trade zones for foreign business.

It is for these reasons that feminists are seeking to integrate resistance to a multiplicity of oppression into popular education.

The Latin American women's movement has grown out of a long history of women organizing from their domestic role - in hiding combatants in their homes, to organizing barrios, to protesting the disappearance of their children. Even as women entered into political organizations and armed struggle, many only addressed the issues related to their class oppression However, in recent years, increasing numbers of women, throughout Latin America, are organizing around their own gender specific interests. As expressed by the Mexican anthropologist, Marcela Lagarde:

> Women are changing much faster than other groups and social categories, nevertheless, they are not perceived, not by others or themselves as the most changing social subjects in this historical epoch (1989:19).

Women leaders, some of whom identify as feminists, are developing in practice, a shared politics that goes to the very heart of what it means to create social transformation. It is "...perhaps one of the most daring and original expressions of a proposal for change...." (Tornaria, 1986:1). As in other parts of the globe, it is precisely because Latin American women have been primarily left out of the previous dominant paradigm, that they are well placed to assist in the current development of new paradigms.

In reference to the economic crisis, both men and women have suffered; however, it is women, with their responsibility for meeting the educational and health needs of children and the elderly, who have felt the greatest burden. In spite of efforts made in the field of Women and Development, since the International U.N. Decade for Women, women's condition and position in Latin America, as around the globe, has worsened. As DAWN, a collective of women activists, organizers and researchers observed:

> The almost uniform conclusion of the Decade's research is that, with a few exceptions, women's relative access to economic resources, incomes, and employment has worsened, their burdens of work have increased, and their relative and even absolute health, nutritional and educational status has declined (Sen & Grown, 1985:28).

According to Peggy Antrobus, this is in part due to the fact that structural adjustment policies are embedded in a gender ideology that exploits women's time, labour and sexuality (Plewes & Stuart, 1991:119). In addition to the consequent cutbacks in social programmes affecting women

, they are employed in extremely exploitive jobs found in *maquilas* or doing piece work in their homes. Beginning with the experience of poor and oppressed women can be a powerful vantage point for Latin American popular educators, as they seek to develop a politic, that begins with people's real needs, in order to achieve economic and social justice (Sen & Grown, 1987:23).

One of the greatest challenges for popular educators, at this political juncture, is coming to new understandings of how to create democracies that are truly participatory (CEP Alforja, 1991). It is a time for redefining power and strengthening civil society. As stated in a recent Alforja[5] document, such democracies would "...aim toward a utopia that appropriates new ways of assuming life, of relationship with nature and other human beings, beginning with what the popular sector perceives" (Ibid.). Given that women have been left out of many democratic expressions in society and that most Latin American feminists have come out of personal experiences in left organizations, where democracy was lacking, feminist popular education is particularly concerned with redefining power and deepening democratic practice. As women are increasingly becoming social agents in Latin America, civil society is further strengthened given that a new sector is involved in decision making and interaction with the state (Rosero, 1986:72).

With the rise of the neo-liberal model, this is a time of crisis in Latin America; however, it is also a time filled with great possibilities. As Oscar Jara stated, at an international popular education workshop that I attended in Nicaragua[6], the challenge of this moment is "...to create new paradigms that incorporate new elements which we were unable to see before because of our ideology". After more than ten years of practice and theorizing, feminist popular educators have much to contribute toward new visions and strategies for the development of a more profound process of social transformation.

III. FEMINIST POPULAR EDUCATION

A. DEFINITION

> For those of us working from the perspective of popular education among women, it is a challenge to develop a new perspective on action and reflection that incorporates the contributions of Latin American feminism, as well as those of popular education (Rosero, 1986:III).

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[5]. Alforja is a Central American-wide network of popular education centres.

[6]. The conference, sponsored by Alforja, was a Methodological Workshop on Popular Education and Solidarity Education in Europe, Canada and Central America, held from October 1-5, 1991.

Feminist popular education is a creative synthesis of feminism and popular education that has evolved from the educational praxis of women across Latin America, and from other parts of the globe. In fact, it is development has arisen out of the contradictions that have existed between education among women and popular education. It is a process of conscientization[7] that seeks to transform the world from where women stand.

Many women doing education among women in Latin America view popular education with reservation, because it has grown out of popular movements with an androcentric bias (Viezzer, 1986:5). However, much of the educational work amongst women in Latin American *barrios*, coincides, in many ways, with the methods of popular education. Others, who are working with women, are uncomfortable with the term "feminist", because it is perceived as being an imported, European, bourgeois concept[8]. Consequently, other terms are used, such as "gender pedagogy" or "education amongst women". In this paper, I am drawing upon diverse educational experiences amongst women, regardless of the terms that are used to describe them. I, along with many women in Latin America, choose to call this education a feminist popular education, because it draws upon growing and unique Latin American feminisms that are increasingly grounded in the social, economic and political reality of diverse women throughout the region.

Upon incorporating a gender analysis into popular education, this theory and methodology becomes an essential tool for feminism. Popular education, which grew out of the writings of Paulo Freire (1970), has parallels with feminism in that it seeks to begin with the experience of the oppressed, enabling them to become subjects rather than objects, so as to transform their reality. In North America, popular education is sometimes mistakenly equated

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[7]. Conscientization is the English translation of the Brazilian term, *Conscientizacao*, that was developed by Paulo Freire to mean "...the process in which men [sic], not as recipients but as knowing subjects, achieve a deepening awareness of both the socio-cultural reality that shapes their lives and of their capacity to transform that reality" (Freire, 19985:93).

[8]. This distrust of feminism is, in part, due to tendencies within the feminist movement of homogenizing all women, regardless of their class, race, nationality, etc. However, this has been changing in recent years, as diverse women have contributed to a more complex understanding of women's oppression. In turn, feminist theory, that originated in the Western, industrialized countries, is being reshaped by third world women, as they assume a practise and theory that is unique to their reality. In fact, given the diversity within the women's movement globally, it is more correct to speak of feminisms.

with participatory education, because the student and teacher both are involved in the learning process. However, the participatory aspect of popular education is not the essential element, but rather, is a consequence of the political programme from which it is derived (Jara,1988:63). Popular education is founded in a commitment to transform unjust relations of power.

The word "popular" is a literal translation from Spanish, which refers to the *sector popular* in Latin America, who are the marginalized poor that comprise the majority of the population. Its use refers to the fact that popular education is founded in a class analysis, which considers the proletariat to be the motor of social transformation, and, therefore, has been directed toward work in the popular sector and popular movement. These roots have caused many popular educators to resist incorporating an analysis of gender, as well as other forms of oppression.

In contrast, although most education among women in Latin America is within the popular sector, feminist or gender education crosses class divisions. Given that women of all classes experience gender oppression, women outside the popular sector are also in need of liberating education and of taking political action against their oppression. Out of this contradiction between popular education, as it has been traditionally conceived, and feminist education, arise many of the theoretical and methodological aspects of feminist popular education that I will address in this paper.

As in the words of Rocío Rocero, the Coordinator of the Network of Popular Education Among Women, feminist popular educators:

> ...are struggling to achieve not only popular education amongst women, but to change the whole of popular education into a practice that questions all oppressive power relations (1988:11).

In so doing, the primary function of popular education becomes that of:

> ...strengthening those groups and sectors who develop systematic intentions for achieving a redistribution of resource and power control in favour of the subordinated sectors of society (Miño, Wappenstein & Rosero, 1989:14).

Feminist popular education begins from the *cotidiano*, a Spanish concept that literally translates to mean "daily lived experience", however its meaning is much more complex. The cotidiano is a key site from which to begin a process of conscientization with women, because it is the most immediate experience and most known. Since it includes our daily interaction with the world in all spheres of life: domestic, work, community, organizations, etc, (Miño, Roser & Wappenstein, 1989:17), by focusing on social relation in the *cotidiano*, all contradictions in society can be made evident. Although popular educators, in Latin America, have always recognized the importance of this dimension, it has often been neglected in practice (Leis,

1987:37). In contrast, feminist popular educators have placed great emphasis on beginning from the daily lived experience of women. In this paper, I will use the phrase "daily life experience" to refer to this complex set of norms, attitudes and relationships that we encounter everyday.

Feminist popular education begins from women's daily experience, in order to analyze reality and alter gender relations. Consequently, some popular educators would argue that such an education should include men, since they are part of gender relations. However, given the nature of women's subordination, in which our experience, opinions and ways of knowing have been devalued, there is a need for women to reflect and organize together in autonomous spaces. As other popular educators begin to bring a gender perspective into the theory and methodology, it will be important for them to develop methods for working with men and in mixed groups regarding gender issues.

Women's consciousness-raising groups, which took place in the 1960's and 70's, are the feminist educational experience in North America. that most closely parallels feminist popular education. This methodology was noted to have clear parallels with the Chinese revolutionary practice called "speaking bitterness" that was used in the 1940's, in which women were called upon to speak about their experience of oppression (Correia, 1988:46). Across North America, women gathered in each other's living rooms to share their stories and feelings, discovering patterns in their diverse experiences, so as to understand them as symptoms of a structural powerlessness and to be able to take political action. There can be no doubt that these educational experiences provided a foundation for the current feminist movement.

Feminist popular education in Latin America has drawn upon some of these experiences, while developing a more complete and complex model of education, grounded in the Latin American reality. Consciousness-raising groups often lacked any systematic analysis of other oppressions, besides gender, and were primarily comprised of white, middle-class women; conversely, feminist popular education seeks to incorporate all elements of oppression and has focused on the *popular sector*. Consciousness-raising groups would often emphasize group dynamics, role specific behaviour and relationship problems, without addressing systemic causes (Mies, 1983:127). Feminist popular education begins with these experiences of oppression as lived out through our emotions, body, minds and spirit in order to develop a politics that challenge unjust social structures of exploitation, such as gender, race, capitalism and relation to nature.

B. ROLE OF THE EDUCATOR

The role of the educator, as understood in popular education, offers valuable insights for education among women, however, in order for the women involved to become empowered, there are additional elements that femininst popular educator are introducing into the practice. A popular educator may be an animator of a workshop, a leader of a social movement/organization or a participatory researcher. In this paper, I will use the terms educator/participant, as inclusive terms for workshop animator/participant, leader/member and researcher/research participant. Popular education, in all these contexts, requires a horizontal relationship between the educator and the participant, in which both are subjects and learn from each other (Freire, 1970, Jara, 1988). According to Freire, even though the educator may be of a more privileged class, he/she can still live out an option for the poor, based on what Freire terms "class suicide" or an "Easter experience."

However, popular educators inevitably fall short of this ideal. I know from my own experience that it is easy to go into a situation with my own prefabricated ideas and not really be open to those of the participants. Often popular educators are removed in such a way that they do not really become involved in the lives and struggles of the group. This inclination toward a vanguard style of leadership is a consequence of a professionalism, in which educators become removed from the people with whom they are working. Oscar Jara (1988:59) stresses that the most important popular educators are the leaders of grassroots organizations, rather than specialists in popular education centres.

Some make the mistake of assuming that these vertical relationships disappear in education among women; however, such relationships can potentially become more pronounced if the educator does not recognize either her commonality with or differences from the women with whom she is learning and working. In order not to view the participants as merely learners, followers or research participants, the feminist educator needs to be in a constant process of learning with the participants about the gender oppression that she and they have in common. However, as in consciousness-raising experiences in North America, women have often made the mistaken assumption that this bonding among women occurs naturally without conflict. According to Marcela Lagarde, we are so alienated in our identity as women that, "the majority of us don't recognize ourselves in the women with whom we are working...." (1991:42). We can work for years, convincing ourselves that after having become a leader or educator, we no longer

share the same problems. The ones with the problems are the other ones, whom we are teaching, organizing or researching. We may speak in their name without recognizing ourselves in them.

Lagarde (1991:45) stresses that, especially in Latin America where the role of "mother" is so central to women's identity, it becomes very difficult to leave that role upon going into the public sphere. Consequently, in the work place and in political/educational work, women may behave as the "omnipotent mother" who smothers the participants, by protecting them and treating them like daughters who will never grow up. This also reinforces any tendency toward a vanguard style of leadership, in which women assume positions of power without enabling other, often younger women, to discover their own potential and assume the role of educator. This has many implications that I have observed in my own work. In the case of striving to do participatory research, the researcher may not allow women to really become co-researchers. In a workshop setting, the women participants may become like little chicks that are led from one activity to the next. In the women's movement, it is the more experienced women who are seen as the experts with the correct political line that others are expected to follow.

This is further complicated by the fact, that, as women, we tend not to trust women leaders. In the first place, we were not taught to be leaders and, secondly, our primary model has been the patriarchal, authoritarian style of unions, political parties and the church (Armas, Obando & Rosero, 1990:19). In turn, having internalized what Freire terms the "little dictator" (Freire, 1970), some women, upon assuming a position of leadership for the first time, may use it in harmful and abusive ways, separating themselves from other women (Lagarde, 1991:37).

Just as women are taught to compete among each other for male attention, we compete with each other for power. As a consequence, women are more likely to accept leadership from women of another social group, be it class, race or nationality. In doing workshops with Latin American women, I was constantly aware that the participants were more likely to accept my ideas and directions than those of my Nicaraguan co-workers. At the same time, I realize, in myself, that it is less threatening to accept the leadership of a Latin American woman than one from my own culture. It is only as I connect with other women, based on our common experiences and struggles, that this competitiveness, so engrained in our identities, can be overcome.

In order to have an empowering, horizontal relationship between educator and participants, women, in the learning process, need to recognize their common oppression. The educator, along with the participants, must undergo a constant process of personal transformation.

For example, Kirby and McKenna's approach (1989:24) of "research from the margins" urges women researchers to keep personal notes of their own learning. Toward the same end, Mies (1983:136) suggests that the researcher/educator invite the participants to interview her. The Flora Tristan Centre for Peruvian Women, *Centro de la Mujer, Flora Tristán*, prepares their educators (*monitoras*) to share their own personal experiences in workshops and to speak in terms of "we women" (1987:21).

At the same time that a gender conscious educator is aware of her similarity with the other women, it is equally critical that she be aware of differences, based on race, class, age, life experiences, sexual preference, nationality, ideas, etc. Migaly Pineda, of CIPAF, a women's research centre in the Dominican Republic, stresses that the middle-class and more educated women have a role to play in the women's movement in terms of theory and academic knowledge (Pineda, 1986:2). However, she emphasizes that it is critical that such women, from a more privileged background, be careful not to impose their views of the world onto women from the popular sector or to expect that they assume their discourses. Nor is it helpful, when women of a more privileged class try to dress or behave like women from a more oppressed group. We each carry our privileges with us into any educational process. They will not disappear until all forms of subordination are eliminated.

When the educator is women-identified, an educational process across differences becomes more possible due to what Mies (1983:121) calls "double consciousness". She concludes that, although women cannot fully identify with the specificity of another's oppression, be it race or class, etc, a woman is more sensitized to the psychological mechanisms of dominance because she has experienced them in her own psyche and body. In so doing, to be a feminist popular educator is to assume an on-going dialectical process of learning about "their" reality, "our" reality and the relationship between the two.

A feminist popular educator, in basing her practice on this dialectical relationship of specificity and diversity, can assume a relationship of sisterhood. Marcela Lagarde (1991:57), in her workshop with Nicaraguan women leaders (1991), stressed that sisterhood is a relationship based on the role of the sensitive, caring, collective mother (*madre afectiva*) rather than the omnipotent mother. It is a relationship of intimacy and mutual learning, in which one cannot hide one's competitiveness or the tendency to treat each other as enemies, but must name these attitudes in order to change them. This also means allowing new, younger and perhaps, less experienced leaders to emerge. It allows for alliances to be built between different groups of

women. The leader/educator is like a hinge that swings back and forth in a continual process of participation and consultation. As will be discussed in more depth in a later section of this paper, this depends upon and fosters the construction of new identities. Lagarde says that sisterhood becomes a way of living in which we become mirrors for each other, in order to claim the invisible, constantly changing images of ourselves. We allow each other to look at and hear from the other.

This relationship of sisterhood is carried out within a radical commitment to transforming life. We cease becoming the distant educator, when we become active in the actions, social movements and struggles of the educational participants (Mies, 1983:124). To do so, we identify common causes within this dialectic of specificity and diversity. Such a commitment of solidarity is extremely important in working with women across race, class and national boundaries. I know that in my own experience, I hesitated for years to address issues of gender oppression that I felt I shared with Nicaraguan women. I, as many international development workers, was paralysed by a fear of being "culturally inappropriate." However, given that I now realize that women across the globe are organizing to eliminate oppressive aspects of their patriarchal culture, it is in fact my responsibility, within a framework of sisterhood, to support them in that struggle. My role , as for any feminist popular educator working across difference, is to listen to women of other positions in the world, reflect upon our own privilege and oppression, and act, with these women, so as to transform myself and society.

C. DEVELOPING A MULTI-CENTRED ANALYSIS

1. INTERDEPENDENCE OF CLASS AND GENDER RELATIONS

In an effort to work effectively with women in the popular sector, feminist popular educators have placed primary emphasis on an analysis of the interdependence between class and gender relations. In so doing, women have been bringing a gender analysis to popular education. In recent years, as the women's movement in Latin America has diversified, it has become clear that women need to integrate other forms of oppression into the theory and practice. In this section, I will first illustrate the inadequacy of class analysis alone, then identify necessary changes in the methodology, in order to address the specificity of gender and other oppressions.

In recent years, some Latin American popular educators have named the importance of incorporating other oppressions, besides class, into the theory and practice of popular education

(Freire, 1985; Jara, 1988; CEP Alforja, 1991). However, a unidimensional focus on class contradictions has generally been maintained. With the exception of the work being undertaken by feminist popular educators, gender contradictions have continued to be submerged within class. Based on such a social analysis, women have been integrated into liberation struggles, social movements, parties, development and research projects at the high cost of not being able to name their own gendered subordination. This is, in part, due to a historical distrust, in the Latin American left, of any efforts on the part of women to organize around their specific gender interests, for fear that it will divide the "greater" struggle (Red, 1987:II). However, this ignores the fact that men and women are already divided by a patriarchal system, and that, it is only in challenging that system that men and women can ultimately be united.

At this point in history, capitalism and patriarchy are interdependent. In fact, it would be misleading to speak of them as two separate systems (Mies, 1982:38). Mies asserts that capitalism could not exist without women's unwage, invisible and exploited labour in the global economy. Since the Industrial Revolution, when production was separated from the home and the role of housewife was created in Europe, women's invisible labour in childcare and domestic tasks has made it possible for capitalism to pay the worker less, and, thereby, maintain a surplus. According to Dalla Costa, it is not possible to understand, and, thereby, alter exploitive relations of waged labour without understanding the exploitation of such unwaged labour (Mies, 1989:32).

As women have been integrated into production, according to the ever-changing Sexual Division of Labour (SDOL), their reproductive labour has not been alleviated so as to compensate for their time and energy. Instead, women have assumed a triple role of reproduction, production and community work (Moser & Levy, 1986:3). In linking, what Mies calls "housewifization" with the colonization of Third World peoples, she illustrates how capitalism would not be profitable without the non-wage labour of women, peasants, contract workers, slaves, and exploitation of nature. It is Third World, peasant women who have, therefore, suffered the greatest exploitation in the current capitalist-patriarchal system.

Within the new International Division of Labour (IDOL)[9], women are further exploited. In the Free Trade Zones around the world, where most multi-national corporations are located,

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[9]. In the old IDOL, which began in the colonial period, raw materials were produced in the colonies or ex-colonies, and transported to the industrialized nations to be manufactured. In the 1970's, as capitalists realized that the boom period, following WWII, was over, the new IDOL was brought into effect. Garment, textile, electronic and

70% of the labour force is comprised of women, mostly 14-24 years of age, who receive few , if any, social benefits, are underpaid and work in unhealthy conditions (Mies 1985:177). The power relations within a patriarchal family are merely reproduced on the shop floor, between female labourers and the male boss. Under these conditions, the feminization of poverty is increasing on a global scale; women in the industrialized north lose jobs as industries move south to employ women under even more exploitive conditions. These issues are of special concern for the Americas today, given U.S. plans for economic integration throughout the continent.

Given that socialist revolutions have not developed economic policies, based on an understanding of this interdependence between capitalism and patriarchy; they have not significantly altered women's condition or position in society. Although Engels recognized that the SDOL (Sexual Division of Labour) was the "first division of labour", he claimed that women would be emancipated as they were integrated into new relations of production (Eisenstein, 1977:14). The demand on women's labour and time in reproduction was not considered problematic by Engels. In Elizabeth Croll's studies (1981) of the socialist experiments in the Soviet Union, China, Cuba and Tanzania, she demonstrates how this blind spot blocks women's emancipation. Women were integrated into the liberation struggle and formal wage production in the early stages of the class revolution. However, they were later pushed back into super-exploitive, informal and labour-intensive sectors, according to the needs of the economy. Although programmes for socialized childcare were instituted, they were never given adequate resources to substantially alter women reproductive role. In addition, the relations of reproduction between men and women did not significantly change, given that women tended to staff the socialized childcare centres and men did not assume an equal responsibility in domestic labour.

These same dynamics have been duplicated in Latin America. In the case of the Nicaraguan revolution, which was a mixed economy, but drew upon socialist principles, women's condition was perhaps more transformed than in any other revolutionary experiment. Laws were changed, women held many positions in government, exploitation of women's bodies in advertising was banned, women gained the right to own land and there was an effort to provide socialized childcare. However, women's traditional roles were not altered; rather they became

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toy industries were moved to the Third World, where multi-national corporations could make higher profits by paying lower wages and fewer benefits.

politicized, as in the case of the "canonization" of the Mothers of the Heroes and Martyrs of the Revolution.[10]

When the revolution came under economic and military threat, gender interests were submerged for the "defense of the revolution" (Molyneux, 1985). Some of this was unavoidable due to the nature of the survival economy, however, even measures that did not require economic resources were no longer a priority (i.e. the media was no longer prevented from exploiting women's bodies, beauty contests were reinstated, and women addressing issues such as, violence against women or autonomous organizing, were silenced). As women were integrated into production and social movements, without altering relationships of reproduction, women assumed an increased triple role. Today, since the electoral defeat of the Sandinistas, the women's movement is the most dynamic sector in civil society. Women are protesting the structural adjustment policies of the new, neo-liberal government and organizing around specific gender interests.

Women's position and condition has only worsened through most international development efforts (Sen and Grown, 1987), including the Women In Development (WID) model, which has focused on "integrating women into development", rather than transforming development itself to address gender relations, and other fundamental relations of power (class, nationality, etc). WID projects attempted to integrate women into production through "income generating activities". At the same time, WID failed to recognize women's reproductive and community roles, as well as their unpaid productive labour, which is the backbone of Third World economies: fetching water, carrying wood, pounding grain, carrying for small livestock and producing subsistence crops (Sen and Grown, 1987).

Without taking gender relations into account in researching a development project, men are more likely to accumulate project benefits, because they are more vocal and their labour is visible (Maguire, 1987:63). In addition, in order for the benefactors of a development project to be agents or subjects, they need to participate in defining it (Jara, 1988:32). Thus, when development projects do not take women into account they are likely to fail (Plewes and Stuart, 1991:116). As the emerging Gender and Development model (GAD) seeks to transform gender

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[10]. The same could be said in other liberation struggles throughout Latin America, in the case of the Mothers of the Disappeared in El Salvador, the Mothers of the Plaza de Mayo in Argentina, etc.

relations, it will be successful to the extent that it incorporates an analysis of the interaction of capitalism and patriarchy, in the SDOL and IDOL.

To be effective, any popular education effort should integrate elements of reproduction, as well as production. In the case of research in a community, both reproductive and productive relations should be included. In planning a workshop or meeting, the demands upon women's time, given her triple role, should be taken into account. A project in Belize (Manicom, 1988:29) has, for example, discovered that, in order to guarantee women's participation, the educator needs to go to where women are working and join women in their tasks. Workshops should be planned so as to cooperate with the demands of women's daily lives.

Mies stresses that in the creation of new paradigms for socialism, it is necessary to struggle against all capitalist-patriarchal relations of power: between men and women, human and nature, head and heart and between metropolis and colony (1986:210). As feminist popular education begins from women's daily experience, so as to understand the ways that the capitalist-patriarchal system, is manifested in their lives, it is developing a theory and practice for a more complete social and economic transformation. Such a practice begins with making women's invisible labour visible and valuing the time, energy and skills that women contribute to the national and global economy. This, in turn, can translate into new definitions of work, visions of a more just economy and strategies for change.

2. GENDER SPECIFICITY

> Freire does not depart from taking androcentricity as the norm, and consequently, feminists need to do the work for women, that he did for men (Duelli Klein, 1983:102).

The androcentric bias that dominates social science has shaped the conceptual framework of popular education and, therefore, contributed to women's invisibility and subordination. Popular education, including social movements, research, development and workshops, has only recently begun to take gender relations into account. Terms, such as the community, the worker or the agricultural cooperative, are referred to as a homogeneous unit. In reality, it is usually the man's world that is described, contributing to the women's invisibility. To be successful, any educational experience must be based on and contribute to a gender consciousness, which requires identifying women's specificity and the nature of women's subordination within gender relations. In order to develop gender consciousness, feminist popular education is recreating old concepts and creating new concepts which will be discussed throughout this paper. Here, I will stress the

importance of gender specificity, as it relates to knowledge, "generative themes", "codes" and "*eje*" (guiding thread).

Popular education is committed to assisting people in the creation of new knowledge based on their reality, because knowledge is power (Duelli Klein, 1983) However, within patriarchy, it is men, rather than women, who have had the power to say what constitutes knowledge. Historically, a "male perspective" of reality has been put forward as the "human perspective" (Smith, 1974). According to Millman and Kantan (1975), due to this androcentric bias in social inquiry, the role of emotions is overlooked, only certain problems are selected, the focus is only on the visible, public and official players, and gender is ignored as an explanatory factor (Maguire, 1987:82). Given this world view, what men say and believe is considered more significant than what women say.

As women gather to reflect upon their own daily experience, so as to name the world from where they stand, women are creating a "women-centred knowledge". Such a new knowledge is critical not only for women's emancipation, but is a vital component of social transformation. In the workshops that I helped to facilitate in Nicaragua, we were often affirming the valuable knowledge that women have acquired due to their role in society, such as; healing with medicinal plants, midwifery, economic survival and human relations. Through the practice of feminist popular education, women are developing new knowledge about power, democracy, human rights, the importance of the subjective, etc.

Beginning from women's daily lived experience, in order to create new knowledge, "generative themes" specific to women's universe need to be identified. Generative themes are themes that are so filled with meaning for people that they in turn generate more themes, which in turn call for action (Freire, 1970). In order to address women's specificity, generative themes need to be selected that determine women's alienation, because these are key to understanding the unequal dynamics in gender relations. However, it would be a mistake for the educator to assume that all women, regardless of their class, race, sexual preference, nationality, etc, share the same interests and will, therefore, begin with the same generative themes.

In the selection of generative themes, it is helpful to distinguish between what Maxine Molyneux calls "practical gender interests" and "strategic gender interests" (1985:232). Practical gender interests are those which "...arise from the concrete conditions of women's positioning in the gender division of labour". Women are able to identify these interests without any social

analysis because they are a response to an immediate need such as health care, food, transportation, etc. These arise from the concrete conditions of gender brought about by the SDOL and are also related to class. Historically, in Latin America, women have initially become involved in political struggle out of their practical interests: protests against high prices, food shortages and disappearances or assassination of their children. Popular education with women in Latin America often focuses only on generative themes that arise out of practical gender interests, such as, health prevention and food preparation; however, in order to challenge gender relations, these themes must also become linked to strategic gender interests.

Strategic gender interests are formulated from an analysis of women's subordination and identification of an alternative, more equal and satisfactory organization of relations between men and women. From strategic interests it is possible to identify gender specific themes, that have been kept invisible, such as: the SDOL, political equality, violence against women, sexual pleasure, freedom of choice regarding childbearing, etc. However, these strategic interests can remain abstract, if they do not coincide with practical gender interests (Vargas, 1989:82).

The challenge, in education among women, is to identify a methodology that facilitates a dialectical relationship between practical and strategic gender interests. This is done by beginning with generative themes, that are named by the women themselves out of their practical gender interests. Through a process of reflection, these themes become understood in relation to their gender specificity and subordination (together with class and race), which, in turn, lead to the identification of strategic gender interests.

For example, if a group of women, from the popular sector, identify their major problem to be their inability to adequately feed and clothe their children, this is a generative theme, which arises out of their practical gender interests. As part of exploring the problem, women could be asked to describe their domestic tasks (because it is the reality closest to the women), the amount of hours they require and their value to the family and society, thereby, identifying these tasks as work. Then, women can do the same analysis with their remunerated labour. The Flora Tristán Centre has found that in analyzing these two types of work , it is possible for women to realize how the sexual division of labour, and possibly the IDOL, affects their lives (Centro, 1987). Consequently, in exploring options for feeding and clothing the children, the women do so based on an articulation of practical and strategic interests. The Flora Tristán Centre, incorporates a similar articulation between practical and strategic gender interests, in their workshops on sexuality, by incorporating themes of right to birth control and sexual pleasure, with women's practical interests of having fewer children.

It will not always be easy, however, to develop generative themes, so as to address both practical and strategic interests. In some cases, the practical and strategic may be in direct conflict (Vargas, 1989:82). For example, the strategic interests of leaving a situation of domestic violence may clash with a woman's practical interest of assuring subsistence for her children. This, in turn, relates to Freire's assertion that conscientization must be based on "favourable material conditions", in a given historical moment (1973:19), or at a given point in an individuals lifetime. It is critical that the popular educator recognizes this contradiction and helps the participant(s) to identify alternative strategies that are possible, which will enable practical needs to be met along with strategic interests.

Upon identifying themes, it is necessary to develop "codes"[11] that draw upon symbols and ways of communicating that are part of women's daily experience. Patricia Maguire (1987) observed that in Freire's drawings of people's daily experiences, which he used as codes for conscientization, it was men's culture that was depicted, to the exclusion of women. Many popular education techniques can be adapted, while entirely new ones are being created, so as to utilize symbols with which a given group of women identify. For example, the CEASPA women's project has developed a code which is the drawing of a woman's body, in order to analyze how women are socially constructed in society (Arce, 1991). In some educational situations, there may not even be a need for a code, in fact, a code may get in the way, if women are prepared to dialogue directly with one another.

In an effort to design workshops that will assist in the exploration of themes and reading of codes among women, it is important to create an atmosphere that affirms women's knowledge. Toward this end, the women's project of CEASPA in Panama has found it helpful to utilize a "guiding thread" (*eje* in Spanish), an approach that flows throughout the workshop, of "increasing appreciation for women" (Arce, 1991). In so doing, they incorporate techniques that increase women's self-image, through affirming her ideas, feelings, body and spirituality. At the same time, as women share their problems, they realize that they are not alone or crazy. Such a collectivization of experiences, leads to an understanding of how their experiences are socially constructed by patriarchal society. In affirming one another and naming the social causes of their problems, women become empowered to work to transform their reality.

It is in reconceptualizing popular education from the standpoint of women, that it becomes possible to use the methodology to address women's specificity. However, an identification of women's specific gender interests needs to be interconnected with interests that arise from other oppressions. In so doing, it becomes possible for women to begin to relate as women across difference.

3. INTERACTION OF MULTIPLE OPPRESSIONS

> ...there can be no liberation for women unless there is also an end to the exploitation of nature and other peoples. On the other hand...there will be no true national liberation, unless there is women's liberation and an end to the destruction of nature (Mies, 1986:223).

> Your dark eyes meet mine of blue here in the stairwell of this cheap hotel, as two gringo men with military haircuts stick a bill in your hand, and escort you to the door for a job well done.
>
> (Journal: Honduras, May 1984)

The emergence of new social movements in Latin America is calling for new ways of doing politics (Amparo & Rocero, 1991:3). Their very existence has called into question old paradigms and the logic on which society is based. Some of these movements, such as, indigenous, ecological and gay rights movements, share common concerns with the women's movement. As they each bring new complexities to political analysis, they are the bearers of a new social order, not one that is predetermined, but one that is created through the actions of new social subjects in society (Vargas, 1989:118). There is no longer just one social subject who acts in the name of the oppressed, but a multiplicity of subjects, each acting from their specific oppression to transform their situation (Ibid.,77).

To recognize the role that diverse social movements play in social transformation, it is necessary to recognize that they are more than pre-political expressions that will later be incorporated into a political party or class analysis (Vargas, 1989:78). In Latin America, some popular educators have begun to recognize the importance of including other oppressions in an "integrated popular education" (Jara, 1989), while in Canada, popular educators have placed

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[11]. Codes or tools are symbolic representations of people's daily experiences, such as drawings, skits, stories, songs or games, that enable the participants to reflect upon their

considerable emphasis on such an integration, especially in regard to race and ethnicity (Arnold et al, 1991; Barndt, 1989).

Feminist popular educators, having initially focused on the interdependence between patriarchy and capitalism, are now seeking to reshape their theory and practice to create a politics that understands women's oppression in interaction with multiple oppressions, such as: ethnicity, race, class, nationality, age, sexual preference and the environment. Just as women of colour, and other minority groups, are reshaping feminism in North America, Latin American feminism is seeking to create new spaces for diverse voices and political agendas. A document entitled, "Feminism in the 90's: Challenges and Proposals," which originated at the Fifth Latin American and Caribbean Feminist Gathering, cites the first focus of work, as that of addressing diversity in the movement. The theme of the Nicaraguan national women's gathering, held in January of 1992, was theme was *Unidad en la Diversidad*, Unity in Diversity. It is only as feminist popular education develops a multi-centred analysis which incorporates these different oppressions, that it will be possible to understand a given woman's overall experience of oppression.

Mies refers to these different oppressions as "colonizing, dualistic divisions" which are the basis for exploitive polarization between parts of the whole:

> ...between human and nature, men and women, different classes and different peoples, but also, between different parts of the human body, for example, between 'head and the rest', between rationality and emotionality (1986:210).

Within patriarchal society, a model of domination is constructed around these divisions, in which each part has a place in the hierarchy. These divisions are so embedded in society that it is considered natural for one group to have power or privilege over another. Consequently, dealing with difference becomes threatening, because it involves winning or losing ones position or privilege in the hierarchy (Bunch, 1987:337).

Even when a person who holds power is invested in sharing power with someone from an oppressed group, deep emotions of fear are stirred up. In my own process of beginning to name my privilege, as a white, middle-class, U.S. born woman, I underwent strong feelings of guilt, fear and self-hatred, that I had to move beyond, in order to assume a position of solidarity. At the Flora Tristán Centre, they have found that, although they place primary emphasis on women's commonality, it is the discussions around difference that always stir up the most emotions (Hee

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own reality.

Pedersen, 1988:230). Charlotte Bunch (1987:150) asserts that such fear and distrust of difference are used to keep us in line. In order to not become blocked by such emotions, an educational experience among women, needs to take place in an environment of trust, honesty and genuine sisterhood.

When popular educators make the mistake of ignoring inequality between group members, the participants become alienated from each other and it is impossible to explore the complexity of a given issue. The analysis and resulting action can be much richer, when the popular educator draws upon the heterogeneity of the group.[12] At a workshop on Feminist Participatory Research in Uruguay (Rosero, 1986:61), it was stressed that women of more privileged positions could learn important liberation strategies from women who live in conditions of greater subordination.

Indigenous women, who suffer a triple oppression as poor, women and native, recently challenged the feminist emphasis on autonomous organizing, when they declared, at the First Continental Gathering of Indigenous People, that, given the nature of their culture, women do not need to organize separately from the men (Aduom, 1990:16). Likewise, strategies for liberation will differ between a Guatemalan woman, living under extreme conditions of state repression and a Costa Rican woman, living in a liberal democracy. Such differences, must not be ignored in an educational process, but must be approached with the confidence that "...a common project exists which can concretize multiple action strategies" (Armas, 1991:6).

This can be possible through the use of what Freire calls "dialogue", "...an encounter between two men [people], mediated by the world, in order to name the world" (1970:76). Such a dialogue is not possible, if one person wants to stop the other from naming the world. Although genuine dialogue supposedly occurs in popular education, I have witnessed many situations, in which those with more power and privilege in a group end up naming the world for the "others". Bell Hooks (1990), an Afro-American author, describes her experience of this, when she says that those in the centre, whites in this case, name her reality for her, while she stands, silenced, in the margins. In order for genuine dialogue to take place, those in the margins should be encouraged to speak for themselves. With regard to the more privileged, Hooks says:

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[12]. The NTM methodology seeks to draw on this richness by recognizing the diversity within a group in the first phase of the process, "Identifying Ourselves". The challenge is to then encourage the expression of those diverse voices throughout the workshop (Barndt, 1989).

> They did not meet me there in that space [the margin]. They met me in the centre. They greeted me as colonizers. I am waiting to learn from them the path of their resistance, of how it came to be that they were able to surrender the power to act as colonizers....(1990:151).

She calls upon those in the centre, to join women in the margins, which is a site of resistance from which to act in solidarity. In order for genuine dialogue to occur across difference, the educator or participants with more privilege must be willing to name their own privilege, as well as seek to understand the reality of the oppressed, so as to make it possible for both to name reality and act together for transformation. As Freire stated, "When two "poles" of the dialogue are, thus, linked by love, hope and mutual trust, they can join in a critical search for something" (Freire, 1973:45).
In feminist popular education, this becomes possible between diverse women, once they stand on common ground, as women-identified in a spirit of sisterhood.

Through such dialogue, we can begin to see that women's subordination takes on different shapes depending upon the other oppressions experienced by a given woman. It is not merely a matter of adding up specific oppressions, but taking into account the complex interaction of different relations of power in a given woman's life or in a given social problem (Lagarde, 1990:11). For example, an indigenous, Bolivian woman living in poverty in the countryside does not experience her oppressions separately - one indigenous, one Bolivian, one woman, one poor and one campesina -instead she lives the interaction of all of these. Such an interaction of dominant forces is present in the growing international sex trade, where sexual and economic exploitation are interconnected with militarism and racism. As Bunch points out, "It is impossible to work on one aspect of this issue without confronting the whole socioeconomic context of women's lives" (Bunch, 1987:335).

In the workshop on violence against women in Toronto, we discovered that we could not just name violence as a monolithic block, instead, we utilized different techniques to help us name how we, as women, experience violence because of our race, religion, class, nationality and immigration status. In so doing, we looked at the interrelation between violence against women, and these different systems of oppression. Given this complex web of power relations, it is not possible to dismantle one form of oppression without dismantling the whole (Ameen et al, 1990:61).

In order to address multiple oppressions in a given workshop, generative themes and codes need to be developed that incorporate different ways of perceiving reality and different power relations. A technique, which I have found useful in this regard, that was developed by people doing anti-racist work in Toronto, has proven very helpful in the work that I have done with women in Canada: the power flower (Arnold et. al, 1991). The participants are invited to write their identities on the inside of each of the petals, and then write the dominant identity on the outside. This enables the group to name their location in different relations of power and discuss how the experience of these different oppressions impacts upon a given issue, or, in this case, on a woman's life. I include a drawing of the power flower, because it is a visual representation of the complex, interaction among oppressions (See Appendix 1).

In order to draw upon the diverse experiences of women in an educational process, it is critical that an educational environment be created which recognizes the right to think and to feel in different ways. A given individual and specific groups of people learn in different ways due to their socialization. Culture, with its language, symbols and myths, plays a significant role in the shaping of how we perceive the world. Freire (1970) falls into the trap of thinking that there is only one way to understand the world, when he speaks of illiterate people, as being pre-critical human beings. I also suspect that his definition of 'magical consciousness'(1973), denies the fact that different people, including women, indigenous and campesinos, have different world views.

In work with indigenous women in Ecuador, Grijalva recognized that "...the reality of the indigenous is totally distinct from that of the mestizo" (1987:11). Indigenous women communicate more with the use of symbols than words. Likewise, research with women in the United States, has shown that women, at least in the sample included in the study, tend to learn differently than men (Belenky et al, 1986). In popular education, it is important to utilize techniques that draw upon the ways that a specific group tends to learn or, since diversity is always present in a given group, incorporate different ways of learning, such as, creativity, symbols, intuition, abstraction, feelings, senses, stories, body movement, etc. Such methods can be even more effective, if they are expressions of a given people's culture, which is a site for reclaiming identity, acquiring strength and resisting (Simon and Giroux, 1989).

By undertaking a critical reflection process that addresses the interaction of different oppressions, draws upon the richness of the diversity in a group and utilizes diverse ways of knowing, it is possible to arrive at a multi-centred analysis that leads to transformative action. When possible, proposals can be identified that bring together different groups of people, or there

may be multiple action strategies assumed by different groups around the same issue. Each group should develop proposals that draw upon their specific interests, while not losing sight of the whole. Feminist popular education begins from the standpoint of women, but with an awareness and politics that reflect the interconnected nature of all oppressions. The Latin American Network on Popular Education Among Women has cautioned against the women's movement becoming isolated. In addition to forming autonomous women's groups, they urge women to integrate into other social movements, so as to put forth a feminist agenda and learn from other social sectors (Rosero, 1986:43).

As feminist popular education develops a theory and practice, based on an understanding of how the specificity of women's oppression is an expression of multiple oppressions, it is contributing toward defining a new political project. Out of such practice, women are developing new visions of power relations, democracy and social transformation. In so doing, they are laying the initial blocks for the construction of a democratic world, in which:

> ... it would be possible to live together with difference and diversity, where multiple proposals would be valid and where difference is not a cause for subordination (Rosero, 1986:65).

D. INTEGRATED CRITICAL CONSCIOUSNESS

1. DECOLONIZING THE MIND

Prior to the 16th century, there existed a more holistic way of viewing the world, in which most people lived with an understanding of the interrelatedness between all aspects of life. The creation of knowledge depended upon a union between the subjective and objective; the sacred and the secular (Berman, 1981). With the arrival of the Scientific Revolution, and the influences of men, such as Galileo, Newton and Descartes, an alienated consciousness became the dominant way of relating to the world (Ibid., 1981). Reason - "...a mode of cognition that disallows gestalt sensibilities, feelings or subtle perceptions called intuition" (Spretnak, 1991:119) - became the only valued way of knowing. The world was split apart in order to be "scientifically" studied, creating dichotomies between parts of the whole: human-nature, mind-body, man-woman, objective-subjective, matter-spirit, reason-emotion, etc.

According to Ynestra King (1990:107), such dualism within Western patriarchy opened the way for the systematic denigration of nature, women, working class people and people of colour. The pole of these dichotomies, more closely associated with women - body, subjective,

emotions and nature - was considered inferior and, even, dangerous if not controlled. As this new paradigm came into dominance, much of women's knowledge in the west and the knowledge of non-western cultures were subjugated and destroyed (Shiva, 1989:21). Capitalism has depended upon this patriarchal dualistic paradigm, in order to justify the exploitation of workers, women, nature and Third World people.

The process of conscientization in popular education, seeks to disrupt some of this dualism through dialectical reasoning. To view the world dialectically is to understand reality as constantly changing, due to the contradictions within it. What have been understood as opposites in a dualistic framework are, in fact, two sides of the same coin in a constant state of unity and contradiction, which generate energy to create something new (Leis, 1987:62). Dialectical methodology, the movement from action to reflection to transformative action, is a never ending spiral caught in this dynamic of change (Nuñez, 1985:46). However, Charlene Spretnak (1991:153) asserts that the concept of "dialectical" is still tied into a dualistic view of the world, and that what is needed is a more complex "multilectical" understanding of relationships. I am referring to dialectical relationships throughout this paper, however, the limitation of the concept needs to be recognized.

Conscientization, as it has been understood in popular education, is still framed, like the scientific methodology in which it is grounded, within the patriarchal dualistic paradigm. Rational reasoning is considered to be the highest way of knowing, while other ways of knowing, such as; emotion, intuition, spiritual, physical, are considered inferior. Raul Leís states, for example:

> To know means to pass from sensorial knowledge (sensations, perceptions) to rational knowledge (concepts, judgements, reason). Rationality synthesises the data provided by the senses, ordering it and elaborating it (1987:18).

This is not to say that abstraction, systematization and rational thought are not necessary in conscientization; they are an integral part of the process. However, I am objecting to the hierarchical dualism that is maintained, and the viewing of other ways of knowing as inferior. For example, how often have a woman's feelings or intuition of her body been ignored by scientific thought in a way that has denied her own knowledge? According to Ynestra King what is needed is:

> ...a new way of being on this planet with a sense of the sacred, informed by all ways of knowing -intuitive and scientific, mystical and rational (Diamond and Orenstein, 1990:120).

Such an integration calls for a whole new understanding of scientific thought.

While Feminist Popular Education draws upon dialectical reasoning, it also calls for a new critical consciousness that leads to the reclaiming of the human being, as an integral human being. Rocio Rocero, coordinator of the Latin American Women's Network, calls for "...a conception of liberation that assumes all dimensions of human life, among which are the subjective and religious dimensions" (Rosero, 1986:78). The Tribune, an international women's journal, stresses that popular education must integrate these other elements, in order to identify and develop strategies for changing physical, emotional and spiritual oppressions (Walker, 1988).

Women have been developing a more integrated critical consciousness in their practice and in their reflection on their daily lives; in moving from the private to the public; from the most intimate to the global, they have drawn upon the subjective, bodily and spiritual aspects of knowing (Lehmann, 1990). Such an integrated process of conscientization draws upon the consciousness raising experience in North America, which literally referred to "raising up" from the individual and collective subconscious, that which patriarchy has denied. In so doing, woman's knowledge is being recreated.

This means that the movement from action to theory to transforming action is not a movement from a primitive sensorial knowledge to an enlightened rational knowledge; instead, the rational, the subjective, the body and the spirit are an integral part of the entire process of action-theory-action. Such an integration is not only a more realistic understanding of knowledge as it can never be totally objective and separated from the knower but, also, facilitates the development of theory and action that is more whole and, consequently, more transformatory.

2. VALIDATING THE SUBJECTIVE

> Can these strong emotions extend beyond myself to make any change? If a reporter, or so many men in my life, were to read these pages, they would think them naive. They would want only facts, figures and names. They would say in such issues, there is no space for emotion. But these feelings run so solid and deep inside of me, they must be right.
>
> I have felt the emotion of the Central American people in their struggle to be free. That too is fact. It is these emotions that will continue to create a force that will one day turn all existing facts on their heads. Yes, this can change the world, as it bonds with kindred spirits to spread the good news, demonstrate in the streets and carry us into a new tomorrow.
>
> The women are bringing this to the revolution.

(Journal: June 1984, upon returning from six weeks in Honduras and Nicaragua)

Feminist participatory researchers, Patricia Maguire, from the United States (1987:86), and Leonora Aída Concha, from Mexico (Rosero, 1986:32) assert that reality is more than quantifiable and objective facts. Such data only becomes relevant when it is interrelated with other aspects of reality - such as intuition, emotion and aesthetics. At the same time, feelings and intuition alone are not sufficient for naming reality (Ibid. 1986:35 and Belenky, 1989:54). Conscientization, instead, requires a weaving together of the subjective and abstraction throughout the process of action-theory-action. For these reasons, Hee Pederson asserts, "It is urgent to incorporate into political action, in a systematic way, this factor [the subjective] that until now has not been recognized." (1988:229)

Freire, also, speaks of the importance of emotions in the process of conscientization, when he states:

> Consciousness also involves an excruciating moment, a tremendously upsetting one...the moment he [sic] starts to be reborn (1971:8).

However, it is feminist popular educators who are systematically incorporating the subjective into the educational process. Such strong emotions can be a force toward transformation, as Freire suggests, or, they can become immobilizing.

To help women express their emotions, feminist popular educators have used such techniques as theatre, collective poetry writing and drawing. Educators in the Dominican Republic have found that drawing is particularly effective, because women can often express in a drawing what they may be too fearful to say (Manicom, 1988:29). Flora Tristán has found that, in order for women to deal with intense emotions, it is necessary that an atmosphere of confidence and respect be created in the group (1987:12). This is facilitated, in their work among women, by assuring that adequate spaces are created for sharing and utilizing games that help women to share their feelings and their laughter. Through such a process, they have found that groups become, "...more creative and advance in ways not possible with intellect alone" (Ibid.,10). This is also the case with the women's groups facilitated at the Casa Sofia in Santiago, Chile (Lehmann, 1990).

As a woman begins to cry over her experiences of oppression, it is important not to reinforce the role of the victim, but to accompany her in the grief, in such a way that reinforces her ability to become an agent of change in her own life and in society (Ibid.,22). This is not possible through only sharing feelings, but requires that information from outside the group

experience be presented, as well. As we discovered in our workshop on violence, in Toronto, we needed to begin from our guts and spiral out from there, while adding new information so as to understand the causes of violence and how to transform them. One year after the workshop, our emotions and personal experiences continue to be an integral part of any action planning undertaken by the group.

Given women's isolation, the collective sharing of experiences is a critical aspect of women's conscientization. To this end, it is important to recognize the role that gossip or *chismes*, in Spanish, plays in women's lives (Belenky, 1989:116). Gossiping can be petty and destructive, however, it is the way that women, in our state of subordination, have come together to talk over kitchen tables, fences and market baskets, to break out of isolation. This subversive form of communication can be a valuable tool in any educational process. In Chile, women in the popular sector, have broken their isolation by gathering in small groups to share stores (gossip) and sew arpilleras.[13] By coming together to share their feelings and intuition through the process of creating art that portrays their lives, they are able to, "...interrupt their solitude, break with the routine of obedience to their husband, father, son and Pinochet, for a few hours" (Armas, 1991:19).

3. RECLAIMING THE BODY

> So after years of rebelling from society's expectations of female beauty, I began to celebrate the flow of my long, golden strands as they swept across my skin and flew into the air. And my eyes, I claimed their blueness.
>
> But now, as I walk these streets, Mexican men want to own these parts of me. They want to hang my body on the paper calendar over their bed. They want to use my blue eyes to sell their beer and shampoo. They honk at my light hair and white skin. They yell at my body from street corners.
>
> I fasten the last button on my skirt and the top one on my shirt. I walk with less freedom, so as to lessen the swaying of my hips. I make my face cold and hard knowing a smile will only attract more attention. I can only say *Buenos Días* to the women and children, because the men want to possess this body that I had come to own. (Journal, Mexico, January 1982)

Although my own political awareness has been enriched by reading and absorbing factual information about injustice in the world, it has been the process of physically locating myself in

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[13]. Arpilleras are appliques, made by women in the popular sector, utilizing scraps of cloth, in order to portray life, repression and resistance in Chilean society.

different positions and places that has often triggered powerful experiences of conscientization. As the body absorbs smells, sounds, textures, discomfort and pleasure, it joins the mind, emotions and spirit in the reading of reality. In this moment, as I sit here exhausted, but excited, by two young lives kicking in my womb, my process of reflection is affected. To date, most of the writing about critical consciousness has been disembodied; however, the body is a key site from which to begin a process of conscientization.

The body is key because it expresses with extraordinary detail the signs of our social conditioning. "It is an open window to our identity" (Rodó, 1987:109). Through its language, the body expresses the dominant norms and ideologies to which it has been submitted. According to the Nicaraguan sociologist, Orlando Nuñez, it is the site where "...class domination, sexual oppression and social identities of men and women are connected" (1988:267).

In the case of Latin America, the violent conquest that took place 500 years ago involved not only the robbing of land and genocide of indigenous people, but also the conquest of women's bodies, through rape and subjugation of their sexual pleasure. According to anthropological sources, the indigenous cultures, prior to the conquest, although not free of patriarchy, did value sexual pleasure and the procreative power of women's bodies (Marcos, 1989). The *conquistadores* and Catholic priests brought with them the mysogynist, dualistic mind-body split, that had become prevalent in the European church and society. During the same period as the conquest, the attempted destruction of women's knowledge about the body was being carried out across Europe, through the burning of "witches." In Latin America, the symbol of the Virgin Mary was implanted on the culture, creating a dichotomous split in women's sexuality between the "virgin" and the "whore." (Rodó, 1987:112) The mestizo race, mixture of indigenous and Spanish blood, that would come to populate the continent, was created through this violence against women and subjugation of sexual pleasure.

Today, in Latin America, as around the globe, violence and coercion continue to be the mechanisms for controlling women's bodies, regardless of class, race, nation, capitalist or socialist system, first or Third World (Mies, 1986:25). Women have never been defined as free historical subjects, because their labour, emotionality, offspring, bodies and sexuality have belonged to their husbands (Ibid., 169). According to Susan Griffin (1990:93), the objectification of women's bodies, through male control of reproduction, pornography, the sex trade, violence and the split between "virgin" and "whore", has caused sensual pleasure to be stripped of its ontological

meaning, which, in turn, makes it possible to wage war against a people. It is this alienation from our bodies, according to Paula Gunn Allen, that creates a people that:

> ...is going to misunderstand the nature of its existence and of the planet's, and is going to create social institutions out of those body-denying attitudes that wreak destruction, not only on human, plant, and other creaturely bodies, but on the body of the Earth herself (1990:52).

The body is a powerful site for women's conscientization, because our bodies are not only sites of domination, but are sites of resistance as well. In the ten years of the Nicaraguan revolution, women came to understand themselves differently, as they broke social norms with their bodies by sitting on tractors, hitchhiking around the country, wearing military uniforms and standing before large groups to speak. Orlando Nuñez (1988:166) speaks of the importance of women reclaiming sexual pleasure in the Nicaraguan revolution, because it has a "subversive potential." He calls on revolutionaries to realize that the struggle for freedom cannot only be accomplished through altering relations of production, but must also include altering an internalized system, sexuality, that is in the "...deepest place in the mortal soul of mortals...." (Ibid.). This requires the creation of whole new relationships, that begin with women naming the contradictions present in our own bodies.

The body is also a critical site for conscientization, because it is a source of knowledge. According to Wilhelm Reich, "Put your hands on the body and you put her hands on the unconscious" (Berman, 1991:175). He points out that we trigger different memories, when we assume different bodily postures, such as, remembering a dream by lying in the same position. Given that much of our experience of oppression is buried in the unconscious, tapping that source can provide insights into what we have been conditioned, as well as how to work for change. This is only possible when we are able to reconnect the mind and body. It is for this reason that techniques, such as body sculpturing[14], can be so effective in popular education. However, in tapping the unconscious on an issue like violence against women, strong emotions may emerge for those in the sculpture. It is critical that an atmosphere of trust is established, which allows for an emotional, as well as abstract reflection of the sculpture.

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[14]. Body sculpturing, which originated with Augosto Boal's work in "Theatre of the Oppressed", is a technique in which the participants pose their bodies so as to represent different actors or relations in a particular social issue. As more people join the sculpture, it becomes possible to analyze relations of power and possibilities for change.

Some feminist popular educators have criticized the use of games in work among women, out of a concern that it reinforces women being treated as children. However, I have found in my own experience that games have played a key role in helping women to disrupt their own conditioning, by assuming a new body posture in a playful way. An example that I have often witnessed is that of a campesina woman playing a game in which she becomes "it" and must go to the front of the circle to call out the next command. She is scared to do so, as this may be the first time in her life when she has stood up in front of a group, but since it is a game, she can giggle out her nervousness and call out the command. After the game, I watch her retake her seat. There is a sparkle in her eye, that tells me something has shifted inside, she has disrupted her own learned oppression with her body. Often, such a woman, then begins to relax and participate more fully in the workshop.

Feminist popular educators in Latin America are incorporating themes that will lead to a body consciousness, such as: reproductive rights, sexual pleasure, violence and knowing our bodies. In addressing such issues, it is vital to utilize techniques that incorporate women's bodies in the learning process, such as: massage, relaxation, movement, mime, dance, games, sculpturing, etc. In the sexuality workshops that I helped facilitate with CISAS[15] in rural Nicaragua, we would have the participants begin with relaxation exercises to soft music. Once again, something visibly shifted as women assumed new postures and took time, for perhaps the first time in their lives, to appreciate and be good to their bodies. Those moments did much more to develop a critical consciousness, than all the hours sitting and talking in uncomfortable chairs.

It is as women develop a body consciousness through accepting our bodies just as they are, discovering their potential for pleasure, and learning ways of listening to them to be healthier, that we can break the mind-body dualism. In so doing, the process of action-reflection-action becomes lived in our bodies, as well as our mind, feelings and spirit, resulting in a more integrated conscientization.

4. RECONNECTING WITH THE SPIRITUAL

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[15]. CISAS, Centre for Information and Advisory Services in Health, is a popular education centre in Managua, Nicaragua, where I worked for two years, training community leaders in popular education methodology.

> ...a politics that does not express itself culturally and spiritually is necessarily weakened.
>
> (Bunch, 1987:53).

It is in such moments when we are able to connect with the sacred whole that is in and around us, whether we call it God/dess, Energy, Life Force, Earth, Cosmos or the Light, that we can achieve critical insights which move us along the spiral of reflection and action to new levels of critical consciousness. In my own life, I have experienced these moments of conscientization in many ways: in the awe of the woods, in the magic of dance, in the profound silence of a Quaker meeting, in the union of love making, and in communion with others in political struggle. It is a deep well from which we can draw clarity for reflection and strength for action.

Freire's use of concepts such as love, hope and conversion are due to the influence of liberation theology in Latin America. Liberation theology has begun the process of breaking the dualism between the profane and the sacred, in asserting that liberation is not only a political term. As people have gathered in Base Christian Communities, throughout Latin America, they have grounded their faith in history by theologically reflecting on their material conditions. In so doing, they have begun to reunite the spiritual and material, the historical and the mystery. However, most popular education, based on the concept that materialism is the sole driving force in history, has not maintained this spiritual thread in the theory and practice of popular education.

By not incorporating the spiritual into the process of conscientization, not only is the process incomplete, but the world view of different people's is considered primitive and irrelevant. This is especially the case, in Latin America, regarding educational work with indigenous people and campesinos. Grijalva writes of her realization that, in doing health education with indigenous women in Peru, they needed to begin from the perspective of humans within the greater cosmos (1987:128). Likewise, popular educators would be mistaken to tell the Mayan indigenous, for example, that he/she should not pray to the earth as they plant each grain of corn. Instead, it is important to enter into a genuine dialogue, in which learning is genuinely mutual. In so doing, such people can enrich science and political thought with an understanding of the connection between the spiritual and material, human and nature.

The earth-based spirituality, being expressed by creation spirituality, ecofeminism , indigenous and Third World people, is enriching feminist politics by calling for a transformation in our relationship with the earth. Griffin (1990:88) asserts that this begins by recognizing that the Earth has a consciousness of its own and must be treated with reverence and respect. The

inspiration for transformation comes with a deep connection to the earth that many people have experienced, if only in their childhood before it was unlearned. Charlene Spretnak states, "these are the precious moments, we need to acknowledge, to cultivate, to refuse to let the dominant culture pave them over any longer with a value system made of denial, distancing, fear and ignorance" (Ibid.,7).

A deep sense of connectedness is also found among people in political struggle. What Charlotte Bunch calls a "life force" is that which "...makes us first rise up against our oppressor, and is also released by the act of the rising up" (1987:275). In the midst of struggle, we discover this life force within ourselves, and among those with whom we are together in the struggle. During such time, we experience it as a "flowering of creativity, joy, trust and love that we never knew before..." (Ibid.). This source of strength that enables us to feel a oneness with the struggle and with each other is akin to what the Latin American left calls "la mística revolucionario". Although this strong feeling of commitment to the struggle is usually attributed only to a shared ideology, it is also full of spiritual energy that has enabled revolutionaries to assume tasks that seem physically and emotionally impossible. This life force or *mística revolucionario* is what keeps a people going, against all odds.

Marcela Lagarde takes this spiritual connection one step further, when she speaks of those moments of "extraordinary communion in movements, organizations, insurgencies and revolutions" (1991:21). These "oceanic feelings", as she calls them, are "...like being immersed in the ocean: an excitement of being with and being part of, of having a place in the world." (Ibid.) In the case of demonstrations or other group experiences, these feelings are heightened, as bodies touch, shout, look and move with each other. One of many experiences that I can cite, in my own life, was in joining in a demonstration of Nicaraguan youth, after the contra killed young Sandinista soldiers from the town:

> Swept by an energy that I have never felt before, I swam in the crowd as it filled the streets and spilled over triumphantly into the side walks. Young people leaped from their houses to join in. Swelling, stretching. Young women raise their strong voices. Young *compañeras* and *compañeros*, arm in arm, sing and shout.
>
> This is the forward, unstoppable energy of the Sandinista youth, bursting into a run, hopping with laughter, endless surge of determination. I remember the book of Omar Cabezas describing the rhythm of the march that causes one to raise above fear: feet and voice, feet and voice, feet and voice. We could march to the border. We could march to the White House.
>
> Take my hand Tina or, if the pace becomes too fast for your four-year-old legs, I will carry you a while. I could lift you into my arms so you could see, just as I would love to lift up my nieces and nephews, so they to could be strengthened by this moment for years to come. Raise your fist into the air, "*Poder Popular!*".
>
> I will go on marching with you long after I leave here. Many of us will march for you, with you, behind you for many years to come. Take my hand, Tina. The march has just begun.

(Journal: Estelí, Nicaragua, May 1984)

At such moments, according to Lagarde, the leader/educator has a critical role to play in helping the group to transform this "erotic energy and desire to change the world" into concrete action (Ibid., 22). These deeply felt spiritual moments need to be incorporated into the educational process, because they create an incredible lucidity that can be very useful in reinterpreting the world (Ibid.,23).

In our workshop on violence, we experienced one of these moments, as we stood in a circle weaving a web with yarn and describing how the world would be without violence against women. As each person spoke, often with tears, from a place deep within, the very threads of the web shook with the intensity of what we felt. That moment of communion was as important as all of the previous analysis, because it provided us with a clarity and strength to work for transformation in our own lives and in society.

This spiritual connectedness is also being strengthened by Latin American women, who are seeking to transform liberation theology, in ways similar to the transformation that women are bringing to popular education. Feminist liberation theology begins from the daily experience of women living poverty (Tamez, 1989:vii), bringing a class and gender analysis to theological reflection. Mary is being reinterpreted as a strong woman, with her own free will (Ibid.,34), who is, in fact, a goddess. Women are seeking to liberate sexuality, pleasure and the body from the patriarchal dualism of Catholicism, that has held them captive since the conquest. In the words of the Mexican theologian, Elsa Tamez:

> It must be recognized that religious experience is neither essentially masculine, feminine, nor essentially asexual...Indeed, we have come to grasp that sexuality can contain a special experience of spirituality, or the encounter with God (1989:30).

These examples of spiritual connectedness are not of the type of spirituality that remove us from the problems of the world, but, instead, are deeply immersed in all aspects of ourselves (body, mind, emotions), the world and the cosmos. This is not a spirituality of escape into serene isolation from the world, but, instead is grounded in history, while not losing a sense of mystery. Spretnak, calls it a "state of grace" in which one's consciousness is expanded to take in the unbroken whole of one's surrounding, "a consciousness of awe." (1991:26) As women integrate spirituality into the process of reflection and action, we move beyond the patriarchal dualism of human and nature, man and woman, material and spiritual, body and spirit.

Some feminist popular educators, although they may or may not use the term spiritual, are incorporating this dimension into their practice. The Women's Programme of CEASPA, in Panama (Arce, 1992), uses an exercise called, *El Aquellare* (witches coven), in which the women gather in a circle with soft music, lighting and incense to share stories. Afterwards, they conduct a ritual of burning any bad omens in a fire. The Casa Sofía, in their work in the popular sector in Santiago, Chile, use relaxation and visualization exercises with images that unite women with their bodies, nature and the universe (Lehmann, 1988). An experience of this spiritual connectedness is also possible by drawing upon cultural traditions, such as dance, art, poetry, ritual, symbols and music. It is brought into an educational experience as we integrate our bodies, our deepest feelings, silence and nature into the process. It is as this spiritual consciousness is combined with the intellect, the subjective and the body throughout the process of action-reflection-action that we move toward an integrated critical consciousness which will lead to a more whole transformation.

E. WOMEN AS SOCIAL SUBJECTS

1. RECONSTRUCTING IDENTITY

Due to the artificial division and hierarchy that capitalist and socialist systems have drawn between wage-workers and non-wage workers, women, in this historical epoch, have only been considered social agents of change as they entered into visible, wage labour (Mies, 1986:32). During this same period, the 'housewifization' of women, accompanied by enforced heterosexuality (Bunch, 1987:176), has taught women to identify with men, in order to attain any power. Consequently women's own identity and sense of agency has been denied (Armas, Obando & Rosero, 1990:35).

During the conquest and colonization of Latin America, as in other colonized parts of the world, this became even more pronounced as indigenous women had to deconstruct their own identity, causing a part of themselves to die, in order to assure the assimilation, and consequent survival, of themselves and their indigenous or mestizo children (Lagarde, 1990:61). Being given the task of creating the new world, through the raising of children, they had to:

> ...unlearn great expanses of their culture and learn concepts, ways, beliefs, values, norms and the language of the new society (Ibid.).

However, throughout history, many women have resisted all of these patriarchal attempts to negate women's identity, as they continued to associate with women, refused to speak the new language and taught traditional customs to their children. It is as women today seek to take their

lives into their own hands, in all spheres and dimensions of their daily lives, that they are reconstructing identity and affirming their role as social agents of change.

Given this history of patriarchal destruction of women's identity, feminist popular education places great emphasis on the construction of a new identity, in order to affirm and promote women's role as social subjects capable of altering unjust relations of power. According to Lagarde, it is a societal transformation that begins with a profound transformation within women themselves:

> To transform the feminine gender into a historical subject requires dismantling all the mechanisms that reproduce dependency, learned impotence and voluntary servitude -all these structural elements of power within ourselves (Armas, Obando & Rosero, 1990:36).

Such a process is vital for social transformation, not only because of the influence women can have within the public sphere, but also because, given their current role of childrearing within the private sphere, they are the recreators of the capitalist-patriarchal-racist ideology upon which society is based.

In a world where women have been devalued and fragmented, it is essential that women establish autonomous spaces where they can explore their identity with one another. Given that women have been divided and taught to see each other as competitors, the very act of meeting together, without permission, is an act of agency. Such experiences are especially critical among diverse women, so as to be able to establish women-identified alliances across differences. Such alliances will only be effective, if women are simultaneously aware of their common identity as women and their differences based on other social identities of class, race, nationality, age, sexual preference, etc.

In order for women to begin to piece our fragmented identities together, it is necessary to uncover our own buried history. Indigenous women, at the Continental Gathering in Ecuador, expressed their commitment to collecting the legends, myths and stories of women's culture in native society (Armas & Rosero, 1991:21). Such a process requires, not only the uncovering of our buried histories, but a new understanding of history itself, as a dynamic, spiralling phenomena that we live in our own minds, bodies, emotions and spirit today. To this end, Mies (1983:132), in her research with women, utilizes the technique of helping women socialize their own life stories, through tape recordings and writing them down. Women in the Dominican Republic reported utilizing different codes, such as theatre, social drama, poetry writing and drawing, to help women share their life stories (Manicom, 1988:29). In so doing, women come to appropriate

their own history and, thereby, arrive at a deeper understanding of social forces which have enforced their dependency.

In our workshop in Toronto, we discovered that in documenting the history of violence against women in Latin America and women's resistance to it, we needed to draw time in a spiral rather than a finite line. A spiral revealed that violence and resistance go back further than we can see and move forward into our own lives and beyond. The group found that their own stories as Latin American women, including the workshop itself, needed to be written into the spiral, given that they had lived the history in their own mind, body, emotions and spirit. The spiral came alive with emotion and a sense of connectedness, as each participant called out the names of women in their lives and in history who have resisted violence. Then, as is the Latin American custom, we shouted "Presente!", calling forth the example of those women, as a source of strength, for the present struggle against violence.

The silent, empty spaces in the spiral said a great deal about how little, we, as women, know of our own history. The participants were much more aware of historical events of violence and resistance, as they related to class, nationality or race, rather than gender. In subsequent workshops, we have found that it is essential to dedicate some time in the workshop for participants to study the limited, written history available about the evolution of and resistance to patriarchal power. It is as women remake history out of our own subjective experience, enriched by a growing body of literature, that we reclaim our culture, identity and agency.

The Flora Tristán Centre, as well as many other women's programs (Arce, 1991; Lehmann, Moran & Hingston, 1988), places emphasis on the importance of increasing self-esteem, on both an individual and collective level. As Hee Pederson writes:

> The sensation of feeling like an active and decisive person, being reiterated by many participants, constitutes the foundation for whatever change (1988:23).

Such a growing sense of autonomy can be nurtured through valuing women's ability and labour, as well as affirming women's ideas, feelings, intuition, bodies and spiritual connectedness. Through the social analysis of women's experience, women come to realize that it is not due to their own inadequacy that they are unable to fulfil the "triple role" and be both the "virgin and the whore"; but that the patriarchal system has socially constructed the impossible. Belenky and her co-researchers (1969:68) found that women, in their U.S. sample, hear a "small voice" inside when they begin to believe in themselves. It is this "small voice" that feminist popular education seeks to affirm as a hallmark of women's sense of agency.

Women's identity is not only based on self-esteem and being valued, it is also the construction of "...new symbols of assuming power, participation and freedom" (Miño, Wappenstein & Rosero, 1989:15). It is the establishment of a whole new culture, in which, according to Patricia de Rivas:
"...women are able to assume autonomy and pleasure, as well as live as a subject with projects and goals of their own respecting their needs and desires" (Rosero, 1986:34). This, in turn, facilitates a process toward social transformation, as women live out their new identities in the private and public sphere.

2. POLITICIZING THE PERSONAL, HUMANIZING THE POLITICAL

> To politicize the private in this way, we are conceptualizing, amplifying and re-articulating the political, bringing to light other contradictions which also move history, but due to ignoring them, we restrict ourselves to travelling down blind alleys. (Vargas, 1989:25).

As feminist popular educators begin from the individual, daily and personal experience of women, they are developing a critical aspect of the theory and practice of popular education, that, until recently, has been neglected (Leis, 1987:37). At the international popular education workshop, that I attended in September 1991, there was a recognition (in reflecting upon the current crisis of socialism) that, due to not having sufficiently integrated these aspects into the practice, popular education in Central America has fallen into beginning the educational process from a prescribed ideology, rather than from people's daily experience[16]. This is, to a large extent, due to a tendency within Marxist practice (in spite of the fact that Marx, Engels and Lenin all referred to the individual and daily life of the worker) to flee from the subjective and individual experience, viewing them as only liberal and bourgeois concerns (Nuñez, 1988:131). Marxist practice and popular education have traditionally over-emphasized the social and collective (class, masses, popular sector, the people) and focused on the "great battles", assuming that the individuals, with their daily struggles, would follow (Ibid:131). In so doing, Orlando Nuñez points out that they have ignored the dialectic between the individual and the social. In contrast,

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[16]. In reflecting upon why the Sandinistas lost the election in February 1990, popular educators and other political analysts are recognizing that in seeking to develop a critical consciousness among the people, there was an over-emphasis placed on ideology, at the

feminist popular education has placed emphasis on this dialectic, so as to break the patriarchal dualism of private-public and personal-political.

As women begin their reflection from their daily life experience in the private or personal sphere (relationships, sexuality, domestic, etc.), they are analyzing the world from where women stand. It is a "revolution of daily life" that seeks to not only alter the private sphere, so as to be more equal and democratic, but give as much value to the private, as to the public (Tornaria, 1986:62). In so doing, they are making visible a multitude of contradictions (reproductive labour, invisible labour, sexuality, sexual preference, violence, etc), that were previously ignored in political-economic-social analysis. These newly identified themes, being addressed in feminist popular education, become touchstones for creating a new ideology. In transforming daily life experience, such as; relations with partners, children, neighbours and the community, women become motors of change for the whole of society. The personal is converted into the political, as women bring these issues into the public debate.

By politicizing the personal or private sphere, women are humanizing the political or public sphere, as the human being becomes more valued and individual experience becomes part of social transformation (Vargas, 1989:79). Vargas asserts that this requires incorporating the subjective and personal change into the process of becoming social agents (Ibid:79). For example, a political organization working against state violence and for democratization has a responsibility to assure that their members are not perpetuating violence or undemocratic practices in the home. Are the men beating their wives? Are the men sharing in the domestic labour? As goes the slogan in Chile, "Democracy in the country, democracy in the house". In turn, as women move into the public sphere, it is not sufficient that they merely fit into any current unjust relations there, but seek to transform the relations and ways of working, so as to break with patriarchal notions of domination and power. Thus social change no longer occurs only in the abstract, but begins with our own individuality, so as to generate a new "social individuality" (Ibid: 82).

Vargas emphasizes that the phrase, "personal is political", refers not only to relations of power in the personal sphere, but that these relations in the personal sphere begin an endless chain of dominating relations in other aspects of society (Ibid: 25). At the same time, indigenous women at the Continental Gathering spoke of how this chain flows from public to private as well,

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expense of ignoring the *cotidiano*, people's daily lived experience (i.e. people's material needs to feed their children and the emotional pain of continuing to send sons off to war).

when they described the impact on their lives, when indigenous men are forced into military service, taught violence and anti-women values, and then return home to abuse their wives (Adoum, Armas & Rosero, 1990:19). It is on the issue of violence against women, that this chain reaction has become more understood in recent years. An international campaign, to recognize different forms of violence against women (wife abuse, bride burning, sex trade, infanticide, etc.) as violations of human rights, is boldly breaking the division between the private and the public (Bunch, 1990).

Others are emphasizing that development strategies cannot significantly improve women's situation, unless violence against women is addressed (Carrillos, 1990). Consequently, in undertaking research to assess development needs for a given community, it is not adequate to only examine dynamics and needs outside the house, but, also, the dynamics inside the house and the relation between the two, need to be observed. It is as educators begin with women's daily lives in the personal sphere, that it is possible to analyze this dialectic between the personal and political.

Based on an understanding of the relationship between the personal and the political, the very concept of politics is broadened. New spaces for social transformation become evident, as the private and individual, as well as the public and collective, become arenas for change. Social transformation no longer only occurs in "great battles", but is also a permanent action of daily life, undertaken by multiple social subjects (Miño, Wappenstein & Rosero, 1989:17).

It is for these reasons that feminist popular education places great emphasis on valuing women's daily experience in the private realm. It is as women begin with the reality closest to them - their feelings, body, sexuality, relationships, home - that we are able to read the world from where we stand. Through the collectivization of daily experiences, enriched by the different experiences of diverse women and outside information, women are transforming the personal and the political in their daily lives.

3. REDEFINING POWER

In beginning the educational process from women's daily lived experience, it becomes evident that power is present, not only in the struggle for state power, but in all interpersonal relations in our daily life (Vargas, 1989:3). In beginning to understand power in this way, it becomes more clear that women also hold power. In fact, in Latin America, where the role of

mother is so central, some even speak of a matriarchy. However, one must differentiate different powers by asking, "power in what space and for what?" (Lagarde, 1991:1). Lagarde points out that there currently exists a sexual division of power, in which men hold most of the power in the public sphere, which is a power of action, competition and decisions on a large scale. Women, on the other hand, hold a small subordinated power in the private sphere of organizing the house and raising the children, the power of emotional bribery, manipulation and seduction. These two realms of power are not equal or comparable, but are, rather, the relation of power to the lack of power (Ibid:2).

However, at the same time, women have patriarchal power over others. Women are oppressors of their children, and other adults of less powerful classes, races, etc. In Latin American, women, from the more privileged classes, have this "power-over" the women who clean their homes. These *domésticas,* who are usually women from the poorer sectors, countryside and/or indigenous population, are frequently subjected to physical, economical and sexual abuse. Likewise, as mentioned in the previous section about the educator, when women hold power for the first time, they, like any oppressed group who have new power (Freire, 1970), often assume a patriarchal power. As Starhawk states (1990:76), "[W]e internalize the system of domination. It lives inside us, like an entity, as if we were possessed by it".

As women begin to examine these power relations as evidenced in their daily lived experience, the multi-dimensional aspects of power become more evident. It is not true, as dualistic logic leads us to believe, that some have all the power, while others have no power (Lagarde, 1991:3). Such logic leads to the conclusion that power cannot be shared, because it must be either taken or lost. By seeing power in all its totality, it becomes more possible to dismantle unjust power and share power based on a new conceptualization of power.

Feminist theory and practice is revealing a new concept of power that is not based on domination (Vargas, 1989:3). Instead, it is a synthesis of many powers: the power to exist, to decide, to be different, to convince, to act and to transform. It is a "power-from-within" (Starhawk, 1982:94), and "power-to", rather than a "power-over". As women begin to respond to that "small voice" (Belenky, *et al,* 1989:68) from within to make changes in their personal life, they are taking political action based on new found power within. However, it is necessary that women collectivize this experience of new power and take it into social movements and other spheres of public power, so as to create new relations of power there as well.

Given women's subordinated power and denial of agency in the public realm, autonomous spaces are necessary not only as sites where women can affirm their "power-within", but also as places were analysis and action can be developed. For this reason, autonomy is not a goal in itself, but a means by which women are more likely to develop proposals, that are not copies of other social movements, but that respond to women's practical and strategic gender interests (Armas, Obando, Rosero, 1990:17). As the women's movement has grown through the expression of women from different classes, races, ages, nationalities, etc, it is also important, given unequal power relations among women, that autonomous spaces be included for different sectors within the women's movement. This furthers the development of a women's movement that is a Mies describes:

> As there is no centre, no hierarchy, no official and unified ideology, no formal leadership, the autonomy of the various initiatives, groups, collectives is the only principle that can maintain the dynamism, the diversity, as well as the truly humanist perspective, of the movement (1983:41).

At the same time, women at the Fifth Latin American and Caribbean Feminist Gathering (Armas & Rosero, 1991:9) warned that the women's movement should avoid a "defensive" autonomy, because it would limit the audacity and creativity of political action. It is, instead, from these autonomous spaces that women relate to and negotiate their own proposals with traditional political actors (state, parties, unions, etc.), as well as new emerging actors in other social sectors (Tornaria, 1986:5). A further challenge for women is to not only participate in such autonomous women's organizations, but to be active participants in other organized sectors, in order to put forth feminist proposals (Vargas, 1986:20) and continually broaden the feminist agenda.

The building of alliances between different groups of women, as well as between women's groups and other social sectors, is critical in order to construct new relations of power. The key is for each group to be grounded in its own identity, as a gender, race, nationality, etc, and from there find points of commonality, that can be translated into concrete action (Armas, Obando & Rosero, 1990:17). Such alliances may translate into multiple actions strategies, which can be effective in dismantling diverse expressions of unjust power.

It is through the development of these new relations of power that the women's movement in Latin America and feminist popular educators are contributing to a deeper understanding of democracy. The challenge is to create transformative action in daily life, so as to open spaces for developing deeper democracy in the wider society (Ibid: 49). In so doing,

Latin American women are addressing the specific ways that they have been excluded from democracy regarding such issues as women's rights as human rights, reproductive rights, socialization of domestic labour, equal right to land, just pay, etc. In developing alliances with women across different social sectors and with other groups representing different interests, civil society is strengthened, so as to be better able to challenge state power. In this way, the building of democracy becomes the permanent expression of multiple social actors in a state of permanent aspiration for more just relations of power.

IV. CONCLUSION

In this paper, I have sought to provide for English-speakers a glimpse at the rich process of practice and reflection being undertaken by Latin American women in the development of Femininst Popular Education. At the same time, I have drawn upon the writings of other feminists and my own experience, as a woman, as a feminist and an educator, in order to further conceptualize this education with, by and for women. It is as women reach across borders to learn from one another that we can hope to enrich, not only our own knowledge, but the process toward transformation for women and society as a whole.

Femininst popular education is a dynamic and evolving process of conscientization that begins from women's daily lived experience (*cotidiano*) in order to reflect upon the world and change it. It is transforming the world from where women stand. As women begin to share, based on their commonality as women, the elements of reality that have been hidden by an androcentric world view become visible.

Although feminist popular education grew out of the effort to combine a gender analysis with the class analysis predominant in popular education, educators working with women are recognizing that this is not sufficient in addressing the interests of diverse women. Other experiences of oppression, such as, race, age, nationality and sexual preference are reshaping the practice and theory. In beginning with women's commonality, while being simultaneously aware of the multiple power relations present in different women's lives, it is possible to undertake a process of action-reflection-action that draws upon the interests and richness of diverse women.

In order to create a less fragmented and hierarchical world, it is essential that feminist popular education seeks to break the patriarchal dualisms that have kept women, Third World people, people of colour and nature subordinated. Toward this end, the concept of

conscientization needs to be broadened in order to promote a integrated critical consciousness. The process of abstraction is an essential element of conscientization, however it can never be separated from our subjective, physical and spiritual aspects of being. In bringing all parts of ourselves - mind, heart, body and spirit - into the dialectical spiral of action-reflection-action, we become more integral human beings, capable of a more enduring social transformation.

It is as women undertake such a process in their daily lived experience in the personal and political sphere, that they are affirming their role as social subjects. Given that women's culture, identity and history have been buried by patriarchy, the construction of a new identity is essential to becoming social subjects. As women transform their own personal lives, they are not only politicizing the personal, but humanizing the political. This leads to the promotion of new power relations that are not based on domination, but based on an enabling power to name and to act. As different oppressed sectors join together to build alliances and social movements based on this power, democracy is strengthened. The process of social transformation, in turn, is no longer a sudden act, led by a few, but, instead, a permanent aspiration undertaken by multiple social actors.

As I have sat here at my computer in Toronto writing this paper, I realize how far removed I am from the daily experience of the women picking coffee in Nicaragua or living under the recent military coup in Peru. Just as I have sought here to begin this reflection based on my own lived experience, it is essential that this conceptualization of feminist popular education be returned to the practice, in order to be reflected upon again. There are countless Latin American women undertaking this on-going process of action-reflection-action with their own educational work among women. I hope that this paper conveys the richness and importance of their experience.

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