Being naughty: a play for justice?

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Abstract

The theme of the lecture is the highly serious one of social justice in education. It is a serious topic but it does not have to be solemn. This lecture explores how play and naughtiness have a serious use for those working for justice both in and from the institutions of education.

The lecture focuses on how play is a way of articulating the intersection of self-identity and social structure. While play can be both 'innocent' and 'naughty', it is the latter I focus on particularly. Drawing on autobiographical narratives, including my own, I discuss forms of play as ways in which education can help individuals to live well in an unjust world.

The oddness of being a professor

I begin with thanks and acknowledgements. Firstly, I want to say how sorry I am that these lectures are dedicated to Mike O'Neil, rather than inclusive of his contribution. I am sorry that our acquaintance was cut so short, especially when we had already established professional interests and colleagues in common, especially in connection with the Cape Coast University of Ghana. Secondly, I want to thank my colleagues at Nottingham Trent for making it a continuing personal and intellectual pleasure to be working here. Then there are my ex-colleagues, spread across at least three institutions, Canterbury, Oxford and Nottingham, who have sustained me in my professional and intellectual life in good times and bad. Some of you have also become close personal friends. The same is true of numerous informal conference networks: through action research, feminist research, social justice, philosophy of education and self-study. I must particularly mention colleagues who worked with me on the Social Justice project in 1994/5. And I must also particularly mention members of the British Society for Women in Philosophy.

It is hard to imagine what my professional or personal life would have been like without these women, except that it would have been very much the poorer. They have given me the space and freedom to develop intellectually sometimes by supporting me in the direction I'm going, sometimes by totally disagreeing with it, but always with encouragement.

I must say it is very odd being a professor. Then again I suppose everyone that becomes a professor is likely to find it odd. It's as odd as moving from being a baby at home to being a school-girl; or as moving from being a schoolgirl to being one of the teachers in the staff-room; or as moving from being a research student to being one of the lecturers. But actually - and this is relevant to my theme of justice - it is odder than any of these. There is an obvious normality about all the transitions I have just mentioned. Children do grow up and go to school and, thereafter, leave school and earn their living (*if* they are lucky. As a child of the sixties and full employment, I was). There is, on the other hand, an obvious lack of normality about being a female professor, even of education. Statistics show why: in 1993/4, in the pre-1992 universities and in England, just over 5% of all professors were women; and 16% of Education professors, that is, just 25 women (USR, 1994). And this when 65% of teachers are female (DfEE 1998). Things are a little better now, post 1992. In 1996/7 about 8% of all professors were women; and 20% of Education professors - 57 women. (And 67% of teachers are women.) So our own university is not doing too badly at all, since in 1998/9 three out of the four Education professors are women; and 22% of all professors are women.[1]

	1993/4 (pre-1992 universities)	1996/7 (all universities)	1998/9 (NTU)
Professors	5	8	22
Education professors	16	20	75
Teachers	65	67	-

Percentage of women professors in English Universities.

So it is odd me being a professor, and oddness can be disconcerting. But it can also be a source of laughter and enjoyment. Laughter and enjoyment is a way of dealing with the oddness, and is at least as useful as indignation, even if only as a supplement to it. Rena Uptitis (1996) describes something of this in her explicitly feminist, reflective self-study about 'Becoming a Dean' of the Faculty of Education at Queens' University, Ontario, which is two-thirds male. It is probably also significant that she was one of its younger members. One reflective journal entry includes:

> I'm fed up with budgets and talk of layoffs and voluntary workforce reduction plans. It feels as if nothing is voluntary in this game. I ache. ... None of my rules for coping are working. ... Worse yet, I feel that, by telling people honestly, what I know and feel, I've taken a course that is not the same as the path of other deans and department heads.

So she asserts who she is, and expresses her felt lack of fit with University management-as-usual:

> ... I decide to dye my hair purple. Just a small streak. And spend two days in the woods. When I write an email to a colleague about this plan, she writes back and I realise that she thinks I'm joking.

I need to say straight away that this 'fun' is a way of dealing with what feels risky, even dangerous and is a response to living with risk. As Uptitis comments in her article, 'Caring for the self is perhaps the most important and difficult challenge of this administrative position'. High visibility and difference mean high risk, both personally and professionally. Not belonging can lead to not being taken seriously and so to being unable to achieve anything very much. Dying her hair purple and spending two days in the woods is a response to a felt split of identity. It is a kind of play (that is, it is fun, unexpected, imaginative) but it is the kind of play that is a bit risky, maybe even a bit naughty. So it is a serious response, even though it is not a solemn one.

I start this talk in this personal vein, because I take it that this inaugural lecture is one in which I profess education in the sense that Wilf Carr meant it in his inaugural lecture (published as Carr, 1997). As he argued, Education professors giving inaugural lectures in these postmodern times, need, precisely, to profess: (1997: 325):

Their professorial authority does not so much entitle them to speak 'on' or 'about' education as oblige them to speak 'for' education ... to profess their belief in education as the human and humanising process through which we acquire a moral identity and become active participants in civilised human life.

I would add to this view that a satisfying identity and active participation in civilised human life are also political matters: of justice *in the process of* education and of justice *as a result of* education. Taking this view, I find myself professing - speaking 'for' education - from an autobiographical position in which I myself am an example of the significance of identity and justice. That is, I find myself with this odd self-identity (me! a professor!) as a result of the education system with its characteristic mixture of justice and injustice. At the same time my position within education is one which ought to make a difference to education, to the nature of that mix of justice and injustice, and to the chances of other little girls - and boys - becoming professors of education, cabinet ministers, captains of industry, poet laureates, Booker prize winners or wise, well-respected philosophers, if that is their inclination.

Fitting in with formal education

All stages of formal education provide a rich source of examples of fitting/not fitting for some, sometimes most, of the participants. By participants I refer both to teachers and students; beginning teachers and senior staff; small children and mature students; and to people like you and me, in all our lovely, gritty variety. In this lecture I am focusing on fitting in and belonging, in relation to identity and justice. I have chosen my examples accordingly.

To begin with the early years, Debbie Epstein (1993) reports how the attitudes of Year 1 children influenced who got to play with the bricks. 6-year-old Brian wrote with some feeling: 'I think it is no fair to hav girls times. bricks is for boys'. It took quite a lot of intervention on the part of the teacher through 'girls only' times and class discussions before any girls had the chance to produce brick buildings - rather good ones, as it turned out. This report resonates with Chetcuti's recent work in Malta, where male teachers and male students told her, in effect, that physics was for boys, though the girls thought they could do it and did do it as well as anyone.

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There are few gender differences in attainment in physics exams in Malta. There are other reasons for children 'not fitting in'. Tony Sewell (1996) analyses the dilemmas faced by the urban black boys in one secondary school who have to find ways of juggling their respect for education as the only means of social mobility with a machismo, anti-school peer culture which they identified as Black; and to do this in the face of their teachers' over-simplified assumptions about African-Caribbean subcultures and their relation to schooling. Asian children, girls and boys, have difficulties fitting in as a result of similar mutual misunderstandings. Two research reports - by Ghazala Bhatti (1995) and by Kaye Haw (1998) - describe the way teachers expect Asian girls to fit a single set of stereotypes at school: a future of mindless marriage and conformity. This stereotype rarely accords with the expectations of Asian parents which vary between individuals and communities, but which are much more likely to involve their daughters getting a good academic education which equips them to operate within their communities. The same gulf between home and school can make it difficult for the shameful number of children living in contexts of social disadvantage, in our rich, and increasingly unequal society[2]. Nixon *et al*. (1997) report research into the response of nine secondary schools situated in contexts of extreme disadvantage. Their analysis points up how schools who respond to their communities as culturally deficient damage children's chances of learning, in contrast to those schools who share power and responsibility with their constituent communities with both parties acknowledging their own need for change. Some children fit so badly that they are taken out of school altogether and labelled 'special'. These children are disproportionately black, male and poor (McNamara and Moreton, 1995).

Things are not much better for adults in higher education. Statistics show that (EOC, 1998):

> Young men are more likely to study mathematical sciences, agriculture or engineering and technology and young women are more likely to study subjects allied to medicine, the social sciences or the creative arts. Hairdressing, secretarial studies and health and social care are known as the three 'women's areas' in further education.

Ethnicity remains a factor in subject choice. There is continuing concern about the under-representation of ethnic minority people in teacher education[3]. Meanwhile in pharmacy, for

instance, there is a high proportion of ethnic minorities. The proportion of students in Higher Education from a unskilled working class background has hardly changed this century.[4]

There is a wealth of evidence pointing to how the actual subject matter of higher education fits some learners better than others. To take one example, philosophy is constructed by and for males even though in its own self-description it is about all of humanity. Feminist philosopher, Judith Hughes points out how women and children are just two of the groups against which the man of philosophy defines himself. In her article 'The Philosopher's Child', she says (1988: 72):

> Children have served philosophy very well. That is the first thing which anyone surveying the literature would notice. Along with a selection from a list including women, animals, madmen, foreigners, slaves, patients and imbeciles, children have served in that great class of beings, the 'not-men', in contrast with which male philosophers have defined and valued themselves. ... That is the second thing to notice; the philosopher's children are boys.

Another feminist philosopher, Adriana Cavarero talks of the 'self-absorption of brainy intellectual men' (1995: 56, 50).

Recent conference papers document the way many - perhaps most - teachers in schools and in higher education do not fit very well either. Max Biddulph's research points to the difficulties experienced by gay, bisexual teachers (1998). Sneh Shah's research reports on young Asian teachers' problems in their first jobs (1998); and Richard Smith analyses how he feels erased as a university teacher of education by Dearing's refusal to acknowledge the importance of the relationship between teachers and learners (Smith 1998).

I said that these examples are not just picked at random. They could not be so. On the contrary, they point to the contribution of education to the construction and maintenance of self-identity and how it is constrained by power structures, prejudice and stereotyping. So my examples are about the educational significance for self-identity of students and their teachers of social class;

of gender; of sexuality; of being 'special' that is, different from the norm; and of being seen by dominant groups as of an alien colour, religion or cultural heritage.

'World'-Travelling and models of self, justice and education

I am now going to discuss 'fitting in' in terms of the concept of 'world'-travelling. I begin by explaining this in the words of one of my black colleagues in the Social Justice project.[5] These comments were made in the context of teaching Year 6 black children in inner city Nottingham.

> Yes, I think you have to be a certain kind of person, unfortunately, as a black person to get through. You have to be. You need to be very careful about every step you take - and not fall into the traps. It's easy to get angry about things and act in a certain way that gives everybody an impression. ...
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> What I'm looking for in a good school is a school where people can feel valued for whatever things that they can contribute to the school, and where people feel comfortable about being in that school, and feel they can be themselves. So they don't have to hide what they eat. Or they can't talk about certain things because someone's going to pick on them. ... I want people to feel comfortable about the way they dress if they wear the dread locks, or if they wear their hair in wraps, or whatever.
>
> But - if [[the children] come into conflict about something, where someone might say, 'Why is your hair like that?' Rather than getting aggressive and falling into the trap, you can say it in a polite way. I say [to the children], 'When I'm at home, when I'm with my family, I don't talk like I do at school.' I say it's knowing how to behave in different places. Like if you go to a place of worship you behave in a certain way. If you go to a library you behave in a certain way.
>
> These children then can mix with a variety of people from so many different backgrounds that they are at an advantage. When they go to places like

Nottingham High School - I've got kids that have been going for exams. One of them was saying to me, 'Well, when we were there, we were lining up, there were people there who were very nervous. They were looking at me. I was the only black person.' I said, 'Well you shouldn't feel nervous about that.' She says, 'Oh, no, I wasn't but my Mum was.' I say that the people at the High School are the ones that are frightened; they're at a disadvantage because they cannot mix with our children. Whereas our children can mix with them, and more. So I say, 'What you've got, you've got more skills than those children'.
(Conversation transcript, 1995)

In connecting this teacher's words with the concept of 'world-travelling', I am relating them to some ideas of Maria Lugones, a philosopher in the United States. In an article called 'Playfulness, "world"-traveling and loving perception' written in 1989, Lugones discusses a sort of forced flexibility between contexts, which is what she terms 'world'-travelling. Lugones writes from her own position as an Hispanic American woman philosopher. In this article she introduces her concept of a 'world': 'a real place inhabited at present by some flesh and blood people', including 'the description and construction of life' of the people in it (1989: 281). She analyses what it is for her to live at ease in the different worlds she inhabits, some of them Latin-American and some of them Anglo-American; some of them female, some of them mixed sex. She notes that in the Anglo worlds she is a serious person, while in the Latin-American ones she is playful. She makes this, the personal characteristic of being playful or not, the centre of her analysis.

I find this concept, 'world-travelling', to be a very useful one[6]. It is easy to recognise it as descriptive of the situation of the Nottingham children. On the other hand, think what it takes to be 'at ease' in these different worlds. Think of the degree of maturity these ten year olds are being asked to show in order to be at ease in both worlds, and to deal with the reactions of the inhabitants of both worlds to their travels. My concern is that if they are asked to use this strategy all the time, then they are being asked to show an unhealthy degree of maturity. Ten year olds are just in the process of developing their identity. They need to be children, not premature adults. They need to be able to take risks and to use the creative, imaginative play

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characteristic of children and young people as they learn to be themselves. At the end of the lecture I shall say more about this, in relation to what else teachers and schools might do.

I want to use Lugones' concept but also widen it to develop other suggestions for children like these, to express themselves in the worlds in which they find themselves. I shall widen the concept by arguing (1) that a world may not be an existing physical place of the kind Lugones specifies; and also (2) that world-travelling may not be a continuing movement back and forth between worlds. In doing this I shall demonstrate that world-travelling is commonplace, since it is familiar to anyone who has been 'Other' for any reason: migration, class, race, religion, gender, sexuality, disability, or any combination of these. I shall also point out it is a familiar experience to those who have become 'Other' as the result of a process of politicisation, such as becoming feminist.

Consider part of my own autobiography from a world that no longer exists: colonial Africa.

Let me tell you where I come from. When I was a child I lived in East Africa in the country now called Tanzania. It was a colonial childhood. My father was in the British Administration of the country. I was the third generation on my father's side, and the second on my mother's, to be born out of England, and to be born in a different country from my grandparents. My mother and father were born and brought up in South Africa and my paternal grandfather was born in India. To continue this story of migration, my paternal grandmother was from Scotland, my paternal great-grandfather from Wales. Of the last three generations, only my mother's parents were born and raised in England, the country I have always regarded as my own - although I have a Welsh name and now call myself 'British'. My brothers, aunts, uncles, nephews, nieces and cousins are citizens of countries in four continents.

This is not just a story of geography or citizenship. It is also a story of different migrant cultures and the movement from one to the other. I notice that as a small child of four or five I must have been actively working to understand the social position of my family in my world of colonial administrators, in spite of my parents' principled resistance to the enterprise. I asked

my mother 'Who is higher, Daddy or Mr Clarke?' My mother, understanding very well what I meant, tried to head me off by answering in terms of physical height. I relapsed into silence, wondering why she couldn't understand such an obvious question. I wondered: Had I perhaps mis-phrased it? When I was ten I moved to England. Not surprisingly, I did not understand the class system very well, nor the politics it engendered. Here my parents were of limited help because they did not relate to it particularly clearly either. In fact British politics in general were not of great interest in our household. On the other hand, for me as a young teenager, South African politics had a peculiar salience. My mother expressed horror at Sharpeville and admiration of the young Mandela, and did so with a feeling that British politics did not arouse.

I also had to learn a new everyday culture: What was Wimbledon? What was the top ten? I pretended interest and kept my mouth shut until I gained enough knowledge to pass. Much of my own childhood culture of, for instance, turning pumice stone fragments into boats in the irrigation furrows, or explorations in the coffee plantations became something peculiar to me, which bore little relation to life in England. I don't remember missing all that earlier life; it was, rather, that it became irrelevant, out of place and unspoken. For a short time, I invented a more exotic set of stories to please my new friends, who expected Africa to be more extraordinary. Then I 'became' English. It was much later that I learnt to acknowledge and use this past (as I am doing now, in this lecture).

I have been describing a kind of world-travelling: a forced movement from one 'description and construction of life' to another, where each world knew only a few stereotyped generalities about the other. As with any personal account, my autobiography of migration is unique. At the same time, it is ordinary. Migration across countries, societies and continents has become ordinary. A few decades ago poor people were encouraged to migrate to countries with fast-growing economies. They were joined by refugees from wars and cold wars. Although immigration controls have tightened, migratory pressures of poverty and war ensure that the peoples of the world continue to move across it. Visible minorities can be seen in most European capitals, many of them born in Europe of migrating parents or grandparents. Alongside them are the less visible minorities from Australia, Europe, New Zealand and North

America. A marker of this is that in many inner city London primary schools, the English language is used alongside twenty or thirty other languages, including Polish and Greek as well as Hindi and Yoruba. Many migrants (adults and children) are like me rather than like Lugones, in that, like colonial Africa, their previous existence has gone for ever. They cannot make movements back and forth between the worlds.

There is yet a third way of world-travelling: a kind of travel precipitated by informal kinds of learning as an adult. I shall use myself as an example again. My world would have been different if I had not been privileged to belong to a number of informal and educative groups during the last couple of decades (as I pointed out in my opening remarks). They are small groups, so obviously not everyone belongs to them. Others still live in the world that I left. I meet them everyday. I work with them; I read their books and I am subject to their funding structures. To take the instance of belonging to the 'women in philosophy' group: coming to be a feminist philosopher has meant world-travelling in that it has irrevocably changed my 'description and construction of life', to use Lugones' words. I have travelled from one world to another. More accurately, it has been a journey through a series of worlds. But I continue to live and work with people who have not made the same journey, and with whom I must engage. I have memories of the old worlds.

To recap: world-travelling is a way of understanding that there is more than one world in which we live and act, and what it is to move between these worlds. This can be a fairly literal movement backwards and forwards between two geographically identifiable places which stay reasonably stable, as Lugones describes it. It can also be a result of a temporal movement in which an individual's world suddenly, and irrevocably gives way to another one in which the existence of the first is barely acknowledged. However the first world cannot but retain some influence on the self. Finally world-travelling can be a perceptual movement, as a result of learning, in which a world-traveller has to live and work with people still living in the old, remembered one.

The theory of world-travelling combines with the many examples of 'not fitting in' to indicate connections between self-identity and justice. Those that do not fit in are compelled to do some world-travelling, and this has an effect on the kind of self-identity they develop. The examples showed how not fitting in is often related to issues of justice. Seemingly a model of self-identity has to take such constraints into account. Conversely, a model of justice will surely need to be broad enough to deal with this relationship. So I need to be explicit about how this might work. I shall be very brief and assertive.

A concept of self

In previous work I have developed a theory of self which I call a patchwork self: that is, it is neither a unity nor fragmented (Griffiths, 1995, 1998). It is a patchwork in which new patches join, adjoin or obscure what is already there, changing it in the process. It is never possible to throw away the whole construction and start again. World-travelling constrains what kind of patchwork is constructed. (This is different from Lugones who argues for an unconnected plurality of selves.) The idea of a patchwork self sheds light on the relation of self-identity to questions of justice, since some of the patches are formed precisely by the nature of the society as a whole: its power structures with their accompanying dominant stereotypes.

A concept of justice

At its broadest, justice is a concept that expresses our wishes for 'the highest degree of happiness for the community' (Plato, in *The Republic*); for the good life 'which is the chief end, both for the community as a whole and for each of us individually' (Aristotle in the *Politics*). Such a definition relies on equal distribution and the application of the law, but is greater than either. Surely we cannot live happily and well, either as individuals or as a society unless there is room in our lives for passion, laughter and risk. As Robin Richardson puts it: hope, love and rejoicing create justice, and justice makes the world safer for hope, love and rejoicing. 'Justice and joy: each is the ground and the fruit of the other' (1996: 20). This is why the small stories are as important as - more important than - any grand narratives: they tell us of everyday happiness and good lives (Smith, 1998).

A concept of education

Given this understanding of self and justice, what kind of education is needed? Some professing is in order here, about the proper nature of education. Education is about learning: it is about the learning of individuals, in the full appreciation that such learning has an inescapable significance for society as a whole, including its constituent groups and communities. Since it is about learning it is about what is learnt: wisdom, understanding, skills, scholarship and how these are generated through the pleasures of creative imagination. This is learning of a far higher standard than the standards currently held up by policy makers - and a lot more fun. Such learning embraces and includes, but far exceeds, the narrow vision given us in managerial vocabulary: the basics, the bottom line, performance indicators, targets, quality control, quality assurance, auditing, inspection, bench marks and the like.

World-travelling and play

What are teachers, schools, university lecturers, and education policy makers to do? How can they act so as to help rather than hinder the efforts of their students to be at ease with themselves, to learn, and to contribute to a just society? And how can they do that in the messy imperfections of everyday life: today, tomorrow and next week? As the UNICEF motto has it: the child cannot wait. I want to argue for ways in which education institutions, with all their imperfections, can help their students cope with injustices in such a way that they can grow and learn into increasing justice in and from their education. At this stage, I return to the possibilities of play mentioned earlier by Lugones.

Play and playfulness

I am indebted to Lugones' article not just because it introduces the idea of world-travelling but also because it introduces the idea of play that I work with in this talk. I want to criticise and extend her analysis of play, as I did for the concept of world-travelling. I think she is implicitly working with two ideas of play, even though she only acknowledges one of them as valuable, and is, I argue, working with an unacknowledged ambiguity in the concept of play as, on the one hand the play of good children, playing by the rules, under the benign and protective care of

adults. On the other, people at play are imaginative and creative. So it is not surprising that they seek out what is new, strange, secret, forbidden, defiant of authority: in a word, what is naughty. I think the transition between the two is gradual, and well encapsulated in Mae West's famous saying: 'I was Snow White, but I drifted.'

Lugones advocates playfulness as an attitude which should animate world-travelling. She describes playfulness as fun, not necessarily rule-governed, undertaken in a spirit of 'openness to surprise', to 'being a fool', to 'not worrying about competence, not being self-important, not taking norms as sacred and finding ambiguity and double edges a source of wisdom and delight' (1989: 288). This is where her argument begins to go wrong. This carefree attitude was not possible in the very case she began by considering: travelling to the world of Anglo academic philosophy. That was an episode of world-travelling to a place where such lighthearted playfulness was not a good idea. As it would not have been for the black children taking the exam at Nottingham High school.

However her argument works better for naughtier playfulness. Consider the examples that she uses. These examples do not fit her descriptions of carefree ease and health. She talks of how women of colour refer 'half jokingly' to schizophrenia in travelling between worlds. She describes how the ambiguity inherent in an intentional animation of a Latin-American stereotype is funny and is also survival-rich (1989: 285):

> So we know truths that only the fool can speak and only the trickster can play out without harm.

These examples surely show the double-edge of play. These examples are all too clearly born out of pain and difficulty, even though all of these kinds of play can be fun, and not dependent on previous pain. They are, literally, child's play: playing a role, animating stereotypes, and saying or doing something acceptable only because it is play.[7] Against her own argument, Lugones is drawing attention to the importance of the loss of innocence, to the other edge of the double-edge: to ways of dealing with the pain of pretence and of living 'as if': to the way that though role-play and foolery can be can be done for fun, playfully, they are also done out of necessity. In *The Web of Identity* (Griffiths 1995), I draw attention to the implications for self-

identity of black people '*acting* white', and girls in secondary schools trying to play the exacting *role* of being neither a slag nor a drag.

Lugones' examples can be put into a wider theoretical context. The ludic lightness of postmodernism has often been criticised for its distance from material realities faced by oppressed people. But as so often, postmodern theory has an interesting two-way relationship to feminist theory, drawing from it and in turn influencing it. I'm using Lugones' theory, because I find her so helpful. But I would note here that play in its various forms has been advocated by a number of feminist theorists working within some form of the postmodern. MacLure (1996), influenced by Derrida but drawing particularly on Donna Haraway (1991), also refers to the tricksters and jokers of transgressive practices of the self, in her article about teachers making the transition to becoming researchers in the academy. From a feminist perspective, the focus on play seems to have arisen precisely out of the difficulties faced by dealing with difference. Further the interest seems to focus on a kind of non-innocent, though ultimately moral, play. This lack of innocence is signalled by the use of words familiar in postmodern theory: words like trick, transgression, trespass, irony and border crossing.

Let me tell you another story about myself. It concerns the time when I began teaching in Higher Education in this country. I had just got my PhD; I had been given a temporary contract; jobs in HE, especially for philosophers of education, were in short supply. I really tried hard to be good. And at the end of the first year I really thought I was managing it.

I dressed respectably like everyone else. I was respectful to my superiors. I tried to keep my mouth shut except when I was expected to speak. I read all the documents for the courses and the committees. I prepared my seminars to conform with the overall plan of the course as worked out by their (invariably male) course leaders - including putting a women's view when I was asked to. Mind you, it was just about then that I came out - to myself - as a feminist. And I was just starting to write and research from an explicitly feminist perspective. And I was pretty excited about all that, as you can imagine.

*What happened? At the end of year staff party I was taken on one side by a well-intentioned and kindly member of staff who told me that I was upsetting the management by being too radical, too feminist, too clever by half, and generally trouble. And that if I wanted to prosper I would do well to tone it all down. He meant well, of course. But the trouble was that I **had** been toning it all down. The only strategy it seemed to me then - and I still think this was right - was to be hung for a sheep rather than as a lamb. Or, rather, to be a sheep in wolf's clothing. Because, you see, I **am**, I think, a good middle-class girl, after all. I like respecting my superiors, being part of the group, teaching as well as I can and being properly prepared for committee meetings.*

In retrospect, it was then, probably, that I began building up my naughtiness skills and competencies at an adult level. This did not signal an abrupt change of character. I just wanted to be me, after all, to do the things I valued and to do them well. As we all do. But I think I could see more clearly than I could before that trying to look like one of the crowd wasn't going to do it. I wasn't one of the crowd and I wouldn't be able to pass as one. But I could play with the difference. I could see how I was viewed and work with that. I could think of various ways of being able to activate stereotypes, my own and some of my colleagues, in order to advance education and justice. One ally in this was Sister Mary Jadwiga, my colleague at Christ Church College, Canterbury, who could activate a nun's stereotype most wonderfully. Other allies were - still are - my many close colleagues and friends in what is now the Society for Women in Philosophy, who have taught me all kinds of games to play, as we find ways of making a space to do serious philosophy as women. I think for instance of: a tour of Northumbrian Castles in role as 'visiting academics'; of ways of using "the self-absorption of brainy intellectual men" for our own ends; of the uses of home-made headed notepaper for getting taken seriously; and many more that I am certainly not going to make public!

Naughty play and its possibilities

So far I have been talking rather abstractly of play that can be usefully naughty. It is time to be more explicit and precise. I suggest it is helpful to think of four categories (at least). They are: role play, playing with stereotypes, playing for laughs and playing with ideas. These four

categories are not meant to be mutually exclusive. Rather I think of them as lenses which will focus on particular kinds of activity. Sometimes two lens or three lenses will focus the same activity. I need hardly say that none of these need be naughty at all - but it is the naughtier examples I want to point up. I return here to the examples of fitting with which I began.

Role play: This is one way of doing schizophrenic travelling between worlds. Think of those black children in Nottingham; think of gay/lesbian and bisexual teachers trying to pass in the staffroom. Somehow they survive, with fancy footwork, ducking and weaving; but this can be playful rather than desperate. Think of Rena Uptitis dying her hair purple. Similar, apparently small, expressive acts by black children and by closeted teachers can be ways of playing with the role, so that it is not schizophrenic, only naughty. An alternative is to flout the rules, to play out of role. This is trespassing beyond the boundaries, and then claiming the space. Those infant girls did this when they claimed the building bricks were for girls too. Similarly, Hilary Rose reports some helpful overstepping of the mark at Bradford university by one of the administrators. She had just got her chair there and found it difficult fitting in. As she reports, one of the university administrators:

> was trying to explain to me in my first weeks which of the suits was the Chancellor. Finally he said 'Oh you know - the one who is always trying to grope you.' It was not very correct but we both giggled insanely. (1998: 112)

Playing with stereotypes. Lugones talks of activating stereotypes. One way is to re-claim them in some form. I mentioned Bhatti's and Haw's research on young Asian people. There is some research by Ben Rampton showing how Asian adolescents in the Midlands deliberately put on strong 'Indian English' accents as acts of resistance. Similarly, African Caribbean adolescents may deliberately use Creole rather than Standard English.

Alternatively, stereotypes can be refused while drawing attention to their being activated. I mentioned Sneh Shah's research on the difficulties young Asian teachers experience in their first job. One of the Social Justice group, Prakash Ross, explains how he dealt with being new in a Nottingham staff room.

> I'd been there about three weeks, four weeks. ... there was a little group of people just didn't know how to handle me, didn't know where I was coming from. They were very, very, very careful of me. So I sat in the staff room eating my sandwiches. I always made a point of coming into the staff room and having them. ... They were talking about a staff hockey match. This guy turns round and says 'You must be good at hockey. You could be in the team, couldn't you?' I said, 'Why did you say that?' He said, 'Oh, where you come from, you're all good at hockey.' I said, 'Oh? Where do I come from?' He said 'Oh, India.' I said 'Well, I come from London.' He said, 'Oh, well, that's near enough.'

Which meant that everyone laughed and things began to get better for him.

> It was very funny, or I found it so. Really embarrassed him. ... In the end he asked me to come home with him. (Conversation transcript, 1995)

Playing for laughs: Irony is one strategy. Think of the remarks I quoted by Judy Hughes, a philosopher herself, about philosophers and their 'not-men': children, women, imbeciles. Other strategies include: playing the fool or playing tricks.

Playing with ideas: It is possible to play one world against another. Kaye Haw describes young Muslim women 'dancing with the discourses' of their different worlds at school and at home. There are opportunities in entertaining forbidden fantasies; in putting on imaginative performances; and in dreaming up, and then doing, the unexpected.

Lessons for educators.

I will list some conclusions that educators might draw from these ideas - given that it is the business of teachers to encourage play but also to stop children being naughty! Given that play is to do with the development of imagination and creativity, it is always liable to turn naughty. Clearly, I am making suggestions about the art of teaching: about the exercise of intelligent judgement and practical wisdom.

- *Safety to explore identities.* This would mean there was less need for the kinds of maturity that those inner-city Nottingham children needed. Moslem schools and girls' schools might have their place here. So might Saturday schools.

- *Food for the imagination.* Children need to develop their ability to play. They need to be given the stories, pictures, dances, space and materials for play. Play is play as I pointed out above: whether it is role play, the activation of stereotypes, playing for laughs, or playing with ideas. None of these need be naughty. But the ability to do them will stand children in good stead when they have the need. This is about encouraging play for its own sake not just as a vehicle for saleable competencies[8]

- *Telling truths about admirable lives*. Children need to know that their heroes and role models were not paragons of virtue. Rather they did what they did because of their mixes of perfections and imperfections, their patchy selves and creative vigour.

- *Understanding the complexity of patchy compromises.* Teachers, governors, policy makers and anyone describable as managers need this kind of understanding. And they need to impart it to children too. It is likely that such an understanding would lead to a loosening of tight, inflexible requirements to conform to just one model of behaviour.

- *Moral imagination.* Telling the difference between being naughty and being bad requires the exercise of imagination. This is an ethical sensitivity - rather than a rigid zero tolerance.

- *A broad curriculum and a range of teaching methods.* If children need to be naughty then they may need room to be themselves but be unable to find it. It may be that some styles of teaching and learning are only suitable for some groups (as has been suggested for boys and girls). Similarly, there is space for a wide range of expression in PE, games, drama, art, dance and school trips: without these, the 'basics', so called, may be impossible for some.

I am making modest proposals. They are proposals that each educator would have to work out in their own context, in their own neck of the woods. Good educators will probably be acting on quite a lot of them already. I am proposing 'nothing grand', in the words of a Nottinghamshire primary head who was dealing with gender issues in her school in a series of apparently small moves (Griffiths and Davies, 1995). On the other hand they are made with the aim of providing principles of social justice for these educational practices. So these modest proposals are made

with a full appreciation of grand motive. The motive is to deal with the structures of injustice in present day England: poverty, gender, race, sexuality, religion, class and disability, in all their numerous complex, shifting, intersections. It is cheering then, that it seems that one way of dealing with this huge issue is through the possibilities of play - and of being naughty - both for children and adults.

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Notes

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[1] I am grateful to John Makin and Adele Miller of the University Library and Information Sevices for who helped me find these figures.

[2] Goodman, 1997; Hills, 1995; Times Educational Supplement, 13 November 1998.

[3] Times Educational Supplement, 25 September, 1998.

[4] Knowles, 1997.

[5] She was too modest to want to be named.

[6] I prefer it to the well-known related concepts such as hybridity because it is dynamic.

[7] Of course children, like adults, can lie about what they are doing. 'Only playing, Miss!' is notorious as a cover for bullying and was used as a title by the Neti-Neti theatre company for just that reason (Casdagli and Gobey, 1990).

[8] This is well explained in Mary-Jane Drummond's (1998) article on play in the early years.