

## Getting Tense about Genealogy

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Abstract:

The paper responds to the growing interest in genealogical method as a means of inquiry in education research. The three authors bring together their collective understanding of the nature and purpose of genealogy as a method deriving from the work of Michel Foucault. The authors then indicate how such understandings were applied by each of them to a particular scholarly task. In elaborating the uses and the pitfalls of genealogical approaches by this means, the writers make it clear that there is no blueprint for genealogical use. Rather, working through genealogical methods demands from the researcher a strong grasp of the epistemological and theoretical tensions involved in asking how our present educational practices function as they do.

Keywords: genealogy, methodology, epistemology, post structuralism.

New methodologies have their tensions, and genealogical method is no exception. In this paper, we explore tensions inherent in enacting genealogical method as a non-traditional research tool. The difficulty of using a set of methodological techniques which has only marginal status within the field of educational research is, quite obviously, one significant tension. Concern arises because, while genealogy is an increasingly popular methodology in the social sciences, it is often misunderstood, sometimes misrepresented, and has still to achieve broad acceptance. Another concern, based more pragmatically on the question of tense, is getting our grammatical timing right. This arises because genealogy is a ‘history of the present’ (Foucault, cited in Dreyfus and Rabinow, 1982, p.118) with all the ambivalence around timing that is implied by such a phrase. These are but two of the tensions addressed in this paper; others are identified and illustrated through research instances which we have included from our own work in genealogy.

We proceed first by elaborating the nature of a genealogy and arguing for its importance as a method of educational inquiry. We then move to three research instances in order to demonstrate how each of us in our writing has struggled to get our textwork under control, noting particular pieces of text as exemplars of the scope offered by the genealogical method as well as some of the traps it sets up for the experienced researcher and the novice alike.

### **Genealogy as a project, method and politics**

At the outset we need to establish what genealogy in the Foucauldian sense is. Genealogy or ‘history of the present’ has been described as ‘the union of erudite knowledge and local memories which allows us to establish a historical knowledge of struggles and to make use of this knowledge tactically today’ (Foucault, cited in Gordon, 1980, p. 83). Genealogy seeks to inquire into processes, procedures and techniques through which truth, knowledge and belief are produced. As a task, a method and a politics, genealogy takes up the challenge to ‘emancipate historical knowledges’, by giving them legitimacy and rendering them ‘capable of opposition and of struggle against the coercion of a theoretical unitary, formal and scientific discourse’ (Gordon, 1980, p. 85). Bearing labels of ‘anti-history’ and ‘anti-science’ (Smart, 1983; O’Farrell, 1989), genealogy demonstrates how particular discourses are historically constituted, and how these are changed and reconstituted into qualitatively different practices.

Genealogy is ‘a new kind of history’ which emerged in Foucault’s later work. It concerns itself with the ‘productive’ rather than the primarily negative, inhibitive or repressive forms of power, which his archeological period had addressed. Genealogy is interested in power and the body in terms of ‘how it is that subjects are gradually, progressively, really and materially constituted through a multiplicity of organisms, forces, energies, materials, desires, thoughts’ (Gordon, 1980, p. 97). As such, genealogy seeks not a depth investigation or an uncovering of what might be ‘behind the scenes’, but rather an elaboration of ‘the surfaces of events, small details, minor shifts and subtle contours’ (Dreyfus and Rabinow, 1982, p. 106). This approach has been likened to a literary genre—the detective story—where the task is to identify clues rather than to search for a general causality (Donzelot, 1979, p.78). The search

for clues takes the form of an irregular movement between the past and present so as to reapproach and analyse current problems in a different way.

The first requirement of conceptualising a genealogy is a particular orientation to the present. As Meredyth and Tyler (1993) suggest, such an approach takes as its starting point 'questions posed in the present, investigating the terms in which those problems are currently understood, and tracing the line of descent that has led to problems being posed in these ways' (p. 4). Intellectual work of this kind will involve 'new truth games, new ways of objectifying and speaking the truth about ourselves, and new ways in which we are able to be and required to be subjects in relation to new practices of government' (Burchell, 1993, p. 277). Signaling this present orientation to investigating 'regimes of truth' (Foucault, 1980), 'history of the present' is a term which is not especially privileged by Foucault, but is one of the several he uses to describe the project and method of his historiography. As a project, it is exemplified in *Discipline and Punish* (1977) and *The History of Sexuality, Vol.1.* (1978). However, as a method, genealogy is not elaborated at length in any particular place in Foucault's work, but is nonetheless a relatively consistent framework for doing research. In his view, history must serve the concerns of the present. For instance, Foucault's rationale for *Discipline and Punish* makes this point:

I would like to write a history of this prison, with all the political investments of the body that it gathers together in its closed architecture. Why? Simply because I am interested in the past? No, if one means by that writing a history of the past in terms of the present. Yes, if one means writing a history of the present. (1977, pp.30-31)

The present rather than the past thus becomes the object of inquiry. Historical data are used to unsettle and destabilise the self-evidence of the conceptual bedrock of present understandings and analyses (McCallum, 1990). By asking specific and definite questions in the present tense, it is possible to investigate past practices, showing them to be 'strange'. In this way the legitimacy of the present can be undercut by the foreignness of the past, offering the present up for re-examination and further enquiry.

To achieve this present orientation, it is necessary for historians of the present to reproblematised the very starting points of their intellectual endeavour by dismantling the key conceptualisations that seem most fundamental and natural to particular truths about the world, themselves, and the subject. In so doing, a genealogy is also a politics. Through genealogical investigation, present problems can be examined through a new lens, outside traditional modes of inquiry in the social sciences. 'How' questions posed in the present are especially useful in showing the conditions of possibility which have allowed the emergence of a particular practice or discourse at a particular time in history. By asking questions which centre on the relations of power, knowledge and the body, the terms through which those problems are currently understood become objects of inquiry (Tyler and Johnson, 1991, p.2).

### **Grasping genealogy**

While working without a blue-print<sup>1</sup>, scholars who adopt genealogical methodology must nevertheless conform to certain demands. Central to an understanding of genealogy is its predication on a particular understanding of power. In contrast to earlier archeological explanations of power as silencing and forbidding, genealogy presents power as a productive network of forces that makes connections, produces subject and objects and utilises the effects of knowledge (Grosz, 1990, p.85). As mentioned earlier, genealogy examines the nature and development of productive power and its positive and negative effects on the lives of individuals. Although the issue of sovereign power has not been eliminated, and in many ways is more acute than ever before (Foucault, 1991a), it is the productive effects of power as a capillary force on the body/subject which is the concern of genealogy.

Two conceptions which Foucault has drawn from Nietzsche—*descent* and *emergence* (Foucault, 1986, pp. 77-86)—map both the demands and the boundaries of genealogy as a methodological approach. Descent seeks to identify the intersection of ‘subtle, singular and individual marks’ that seem at once unified and natural. In so doing, this activity disturbs what seems foundational by identifying ‘the accidents, the minute deviations—or conversely the complete reversals—the errors, the false appraisals and the faulty calculations’ (Foucault, 1986, p. 81-83) which are part of any historical investigation. Emergence, on the other hand, looks to the ‘the moment of arising’ when ‘the current series of subjugations’ comes together in a ‘hazardous play of dominations’ that have given birth to our way of existence (Foucault, 1986, p.83). Emergences constitute the discontinuities of history which are the focus of genealogical inquiry.

Through its investigation and patient documentation, a genealogy offers, first and foremost, an analysis of the *singularity* of events. This singularity of events can be achieved by thinking of an ‘event’ in a particular way. The notion of an event differs from that traditionally understood by historians as, say, a decision or a treaty. Instead, an event in the Foucauldian sense requires a breach of self-evidence (Foucault, 1991b, p. 76), demonstrating that there is no ideal continuity or natural process. This process challenges taken-for-granted knowledge, and recognises the multiplicity of causes and conditions which constitute an event (Foucault, 1991b, p. 76). It also takes account of the increasing interconnections of the conditions of possibility which have allowed an event to occur when and how it did. The ‘eventalising’ of singular ensembles of practices, so as ‘to make them graspable’ (Foucault, 1991b, p. 79), requires a genealogy, as an ‘effective history’ (Foucault, 1986, p.88), to ‘shorten its vision’. There is no compulsion then to incorporate broad historical sweeps of time, although some genealogies require that the search for clues extends farther afield in historical time than others. What is important is that a line of descent should be drawn to the emergences, the discontinuities and the events closest to the ‘problem of the present’ under investigation. These should guide the enquiry, rather than the arbitrary use of historical time frames or historical dates. In doing so, genealogical method demands not only a rejection of the idealised march of progress as mentioned above, but also the high points of history and final meanings. An event, for instance, is ‘merely the

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<sup>1</sup> The examples that *Discipline and Punish* (1977) and *The History of Sexuality Vol. 1* (1978) are of course valuable sources as are the plethora of recent genealogies from other Foucauldian researchers and writers.

current episode in a series of subjugations' (Foucault, 1986, p.83) and should be treated as such. Refusal of the notion of progress becomes a defining feature of this approach, and one that separates genealogy from traditional and revisionist histories.

With the above tenets in mind, and because a genealogy employs a different set of techniques from other histories, a cautionary note needs to be sounded here. A genealogy is neither serendipitous nor ungoverned. Foucault's historiography is unorthodox, but this does not imply that 'any arbitrary construction will do' (Dreyfus and Rabinow, 1982, p.119). In other words, a genealogy is not an excuse for a sloppy history. What it does call for is a 'pragmatically oriented, historical interpretation' of 'those cultural practices in which power and knowledge cross, and in which our current understanding of the individual, the society, and the human sciences are themselves fabricated' (Dreyfus and Rabinow, 1982, p.120). In other words, the genealogical method has its internal rules of performance despite the fact that there is no blue-print about procedure. Procedure is very much a matter of knowing what would be *inappropriate* given the epistemological and ontological assumptions being made by Foucauldian scholars. As Liz Grosz indicates in *Volatile Bodies* (1994, pp.21-24), many of the rules for enacting new French theory are about what must be avoided rather than what one commits to. This can make the task of genealogy both seductive and depressing because of its lack of prescription. As unmasking or de-naturalising work, it is concerned with the 'small' stories, the marginalised topics, and the taken-for-granted practices, and must be precise about the practices and the tactics being used to scrutinise them.

### **Three research instances**

As researchers and authors we have wrestled with the above-mentioned possibilities and concerns. The following research narratives explain and highlight the tensions we needed to deal with around managing an authoritative account without asserting the research account as a Finding. To avoid traversing similar territory, each of these short texts will cover different aspects of genealogical methodology.

The first gives an instance of a research project by Daphne Meadmore and Colin Symes. The reason for drawing on this material is to demonstrate how the impetus for a study can be made graspable. The second by Erica McWilliam is a detailed comparison of how two texts operate differently in linking education and eros, showing the difference a genealogical perspective can make. The third research instance is by Caroline Hatcher who demonstrates how a genealogy can be a feminist project, dealing with the question of advocacy. The inclusion of these narratives is to show something of the scope and usefulness of genealogy to research in the social sciences and cultural studies.

#### *1: Uniform thinking*

In this section, I draw on our research in the area of school uniforms, most particularly on the article 'Of uniform appearance: a symbol of school discipline and governmentality'.<sup>2</sup> What precipitated our enquiry is a resurgence of interest in the school uniform where a set of clothes is being used not only for the formerly held reasons of discipline but also to meet the demands of new 'government' (Foucault, 1991a) agendas of the late twentieth century. To us, this constitutes an example of the

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<sup>2</sup> This article appeared in *Discourse: studies in the cultural politics of education*, Vol.17, no.2, 1996, pp.209-225.

body and power coming together in strict codes of regulation. This was therefore conducive to genealogical investigation, given that genealogy ‘attaches itself to the body’ (Foucault, 1986, p. 82) and is interested in how the body is ‘the inscribed surface of events’ (p. 83). The school uniform is one such inscription on the body; it inscribes gender and class differences and more subtle differences within, between and among students’ bodies as well.

While we are aware that school uniforms in Western democracies such as Australia, the UK, New Zealand and so on have been adopted almost universally in government and non-government schools, we are also aware that uniforms have undergone something of a renaissance, precipitating a renewed interest in their function within schools and education systems, even in countries which had formerly eschewed school uniforms, e.g., USA. That school uniforms have been reinstated at a time when clothing for children has become more casual (following the trend among adults) is a curious historical development (Postman, 1985; Kline, 1993), especially in the sphere of state education. It appears to be indicative of some emergent ethos in education formerly absent or less pronounced in the immediate past. Currently uniforms are seen as some form of pedagogic salvation, able to mitigate or offset community concerns about educational effectiveness. For instance, school uniforms were a feature of the platform of the Labor party in a recent state election in Australia when this party pledged that all parents of students attending state and non-government schools would receive an annual \$50 uniform allowance. This election promise held an imputed linkage between the desirability of the uniformed school student and a ‘return to community values’. Concomitantly the majority of state Departments of Education in Australia have formulated new policies on school dress, developing a set of coherent rulings in regard to such which replace tacit but non-official policies and practices.<sup>3</sup>

This positioning of the school uniform in the foreground of the political arena constituted for us, as researchers, a ‘problem of the present’. Through tracing the school uniform as an intersection of discourses reflecting and unravelling specialised ‘regimes of truth’ (Foucault, 1980, p.132), a genealogical examination of the school uniform as a mandatory set of clothing provided an understanding of how school uniforms have come to be an integral part of the culture of the school. We found that the discursive regime of the school uniform encompasses, among other matters, moral, health, safety and social justice concerns. In order to find clues about the conditions of possibility which have allowed the recent ascendancy of the school uniform, we traced the discourses which have established the mundane school uniform as a tactic and strategy of disciplining and governing individuals and school populations.

It became evident as we searched for clues that the discursive regime associated with the school uniform is a complex one, and subject to a multitude of contingencies. Its component parts are drawn from various eras and historical contexts and often fashioned around various ‘invented traditions’ intended to give schooling historical

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<sup>3</sup> Our paper entitled ‘Keeping up appearances: uniform policy for school diversity?’ dealt with the recent policies relating to school dress in all Australian States and Territories. Additionally, we examined the ‘scripts’ underpinning school uniforms in a book chapter ‘Force of Habit: the school uniform as a body of knowledge’. in E.MeWilliam and P.G. Taylor (1996).

links that are contrived rather than real (Hobsbawm, 1992). By paying attention to emergences, discontinuities and events, our genealogy positioned the emergence of the school uniform largely as a disciplinary strategy that was part of the dramatic upheaval of the English Public School in the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century. Along with other signifying practices like the school song and colours, the badge and the motto, the school uniform was instrumental in generating a distinctive school spirit and a sense of *communitas* that divided a school from its rivals and competitors. School uniforms were almost universal in the post-war period when secondary education became more pervasive, but were almost universally hated by the late 1960s. As many ethnographies from this period indicate, uniforms and the appearance of the body in general were a constant source of conflict and disputation. This was compounded in the post 1968 period when the popularisation of libertarian discourses led to the common perception that uniforms were the apotheosis of an oppressive pedagogy, signifying the ultimate badge of servitude in the classroom. By the late 1980s, we noted another discontinuity, one centred on a marketised approach to education which saw the re-emergence of the uniform as a symbol system. A set of clothing, worn precisely as prescribed, inscribed the student body as being ‘academic’ and by association ‘successful’. Whilst the school uniform continues as a disciplinary strategy, it also works as a tactic of government of students. This is evident in the recently formulated policies in state education as well as in the phlethora of prospectuses which all schools produce with varying degrees of sophistication and official decree.

In terms of methodology, we were able to move from one historical period to another, not being confined by temporal limits or needing to show a linear progression. Mindful of the need to shorten our vision of history, we were nonetheless compelled to trace the line of descent to the emergence of the school uniform as we know it. For instance, we found that the blue sporting blazer from Harrow is the precursor of the contemporary school uniform, adopted almost holus bolus by English Public schools, state schools and government and non-government schools in other countries of the British Empire and elsewhere. In our analysis of policy documents in the latter part of the study, our focus was more squarely centred on the present in terms of policies and practices.

In all of this movement from the past to the present and back again, the tense of verbs posed some difficulty, although nothing of the magnitude that the following research instances describe, largely because this particular genealogy did not operate as a textual analysis in the same way. Nonetheless the reader may already be questioning the choice of tense used within this particular narrative and the changes of tense within even a paragraph. The line of descent to the practices of the *past* had to be managed as a history of the *present* and the tense of verbs is crucial in making this happen. Because our research led us along many different but connected pathways, our description necessarily prompted making some ‘tense’ decisions.

Certainly there was no compunction from our data analysis to argue for some sort of progress, despite educational bureaucracies in all Australian states, formulating policies about school dress. Interestingly we found that generally these policies were more ‘progressive’ than the more rule governed uniform practices in schools where the marketing of all schools, both government and non-government, has changed the

very culture of schools. A set of clothes is more than ever before a means of ‘examining’ bodies through its normalising and hierarchising effects (Foucault, 1977). In all of our searching for clues, it is the current phenomenon of the renaissance of uniforms, their spread to places like the USA, their legacy in places like Africa, and the Caribbean, and their ability to meet new agendas in Australia that has sparked and guided our sleuthing.

## 2: *Irony, not advocacy*

As another example of what it means to use genealogical method, I draw on the final chapter of my recent book *Pedagogical Pleasures* (McWilliam, forthcoming). Here I contrasted my own work with Jim Garrison’s recently published volume, *Dewey and Eros* (1997), by indicating how the two books work differently as systems of logic. I used the sub-heading ‘Dewey-eyed about Eros’, to indicate my ambivalence about Garrison’s book. I was not pretending neutrality, and I certainly could not, since I was using my own work as a point of comparison. I indicated how the two books differ in their treatment of the nature and purposes of teaching because I worked as a genealogist (i.e. showing how truth games are played) and Garrison worked as an advocate (i.e. arguing for a particular truth). A number of my colleagues, some of whom had read *Dewey and Eros*, had presumed that Garrison and I must be doing similar work (Dewey/ pedagogy/; eros /pleasure) and had suggested to me that the content of Garrison’s book would be of direct relevance to my own. Garrison’s book was relevant, but only because it allowed me to show my (well-intentioned) colleagues that they had been wrong in assuming our tasks were similar. The task I set myself then, was to show how these texts were different. This is elaborated briefly in what follows.

In his introduction to *Dewey and Eros*, Garrison says he intends to ‘employ Dewey’s philosophy to clear new trails for educational inquiry’ (1997, p. xix). Given that Rorty identifies Dewey as ‘an historicist in whom the desire for a more just and free community dominates’ (Rorty 1989, xiv), and given that I self-identify as taking pleasure in writing as an ironist, the differences in the texts are predictable. Nevertheless, I underline these differences to counter the naive pluralism that continues to be so stultifying of our capacity to think about education as a project. Ours are not parts of one big, happy family of texts.

Garrison begins by proposing that there is an educational need that, through his book, he seeks to fill. He does so by speaking of education as ‘desperately need[ing] re-enchancement’ (1997, p. xiii), a need that can be met by restoring something that was once in evidence and has now gone missing—eros—‘that loving, life-affirming, passionate “desire” that is the most basic type of love’ (p. xix). By contrast, my interest is in understanding teaching in ways that refuse closure around the matter of what good teaching ought to be. I think something more might be learned about teaching by ‘think[ing] of all good teachers as working properly rather than in some universally ethical way’ (Chap. 1, p.13). I do not want to exclude the possibility that proper teaching might not be loving or vigorous or logical at any given time and place. Thus I do not identify a supreme aim for teacher education, nor an ultimate goal for my scholarship, and I do not understand this as an omission, but a commission, of my text.

In refusing the lure of ‘some universal ethical way,’ I am being hailed to Michel Foucault and similar writers who insist that ‘experience is historically constituted out of games of out of truth and error’ (Chap. 1, p.19). Garrison’s preferred ‘universally ethical way of teaching’, is that version of liberal education exemplified by the ‘ancient wisdom’ of phronesis (the practical wisdom of the Greeks) and the educational work of John Dewey, ‘the most prominent philosopher of education in the twentieth century’ (p. xix). Thus, while I argue there is value in ‘turning the logic of liberal education on its head’, Garrison argues the value of restoring certain liberal traditions of thought in education, including ‘the ancient conversation about poetry, prophecy and the education of eros [that] has been almost totally forgotten’ (p. 2).

Garrison’s is thus a project of reclamation for reconstruction. His first chapter is ‘devoted to recovering and reconstructing Platonic wisdom regarding the education of eros’ (p. xiii). He situates his work within a meta-reconstructive project, which he understands as ‘the continuous reconstruction of ideas to meet the needs and purposes of an ever-changing world’ as Dewey ‘would have recommended’ (p. xx). Garrison sees Dewey’s work as crucial here, in that it was Dewey who reclaimed the practical wisdom of the ancients but also combined this successfully with love and logic. In doing so Dewey made it possible for ‘the ethical, aesthetic and cognitive threads of vital experience’ to be drawn tightly together ‘to yield the whole fabric of life, not just shreds’ (p. xx).

My work also looks to other times and works, but not in order to ‘yield the whole fabric of life’. I want to work with the shreds, because I expect them to offer up more interesting possibilities for analysis of the discursive organization of teaching at this point of historical time. I am suspicious of the idea that shreds can come together to form a continuous or ‘whole’ fabric. My assumption is that any notion of ‘wholism’ or continuity of experience is created out of the texts available to me in the work I do to bring my self into being. I therefore understand that my interest is to disassemble through description rather than ‘draw together’. I attempt to play across elements within the discursive organization of relational pedagogy rather than pronounce on their wisdom or lack of it.

My journey is therefore a journey among texts, a rhizomatic journey that does not have a predetermined point of arrival or departure. I express a preference for working counter to any imperative to ‘read pedagogical work and its attendant pleasures as the effects of a march of progress’ (Chap. 1, p. 11). That is, I argue for moving ‘out of the comfort zone provided by the idea of pedagogy as always progressing’ (Chap. 1, p. 12). Garrison’s text, on the other hand, is committed to forward movement. He speaks of ‘using the formal schema of practical deliberation as our roadmap and trusting our intuitions along the way [in order to] ... arrive ... at our destination’ (p. 201). His text aims to make growth and transformation more likely. In line with Dewey, he argues that ‘the wisdom of prophets is a social hope for expansive growth reduced to a working program’ (p. 200).

The good teacher according to Garrison, is one who performs ‘the education of eros’ and is therefore ‘critical and creative’. But, ‘more than that, it means teachers must be prophetic and poetic’ (p. xvi). By prophecy Garrison means ‘naming the values we need in needful times’, and by poetry he means ‘imagin[ing] what is absent yet

present in our need' (p. xvi). So Garrison's text scales the dizzy heights of transformation, but also descends to the disturbing depths of 'needful times'. My text is played out on a mundane landscape of emotions in keeping with the tenor of genealogical work more generally. I think of good teachers as teaching 'properly', according to versions of teaching that are true in their historical time, rather than transcending it. I think we can learn something about teaching by inquiring into the sorts of pleasure that are possible, basing our work on the proposition that 'teachers' pleasure [is] the product ... of certain forms of training, constituted and organized through available discourse' (Chap.1, p. 11). In using Peter Cryle's (1997) idea that emotions are themselves an object of training, i.e., that we 'learn to feel pleasure' (Chap 1., p. 29), I do not invite the reader to celebrate a possible future with me or to bemoan present loss and need. I see 'feeling empowered' in itself as a fragile, historically constituted idea, so I do not position myself as having answers to problems to do with disempowerment. I do not discuss teaching in terms of problems to be overcome, or old agendas to be claimed, but in terms of the discursive conditions within which we work.

Garrison names the state of values education as a present problem for education and sees himself as an advocate of a particular solution. 'Overcoming the modern prejudice against emotion and imagination', he argues, '... is only part of the answer to the problem of values education ... [It is] also how to create alternative values' (p. xvi). Teachers have an obligation to 'recognize their students' unique, individual needs, desires, interests, dreams, and best future possibilities' (p. xvii). This statement of Garrison, perhaps more than any other in his book, speaks a language that, as Rorty put it, 'all of us recognize when we hear it' (Rorty 1989, 94). My work seeks to take this moment of recognition as a point of departure, not a point of consensus. How has it been possible to think teaching this way? How might this most familiar text be characterized as a "strange" idea about teaching? To what end?

I want to conclude my individual narrative here with a brief comment on grammatical tense. The matter of grammatical timing bedevils all genealogical work, much as it does the undergraduate who is unsure whether to write 'Foucault says' or 'Foucault said'. And, of course, there is no simple answer to this—it is a matter of purpose within a context. The very term 'history of the present' flags the likelihood of awkward grammatical postures that can have the writer floundering somewhere between the pluperfect and the future conditional at almost every turn. When writing my final chapter, for example, I had to consider whether my re-telling of the earlier chapters of the book required me to write in the past tense or the present. A re-reading of this brief narrative itself reveals some of this difficulty, with the first paragraph written as a reflection on the task (past tense), and the following paragraphs as a re-description of the works (present tense). The resolution of the matter of tense is not an easy one, however. As indicated earlier in this paper, one may never be sure that the right choice has been made, but the wrong choice can obscure meaning or, more importantly still, conflate genealogical method with traditional historical method.

### *3: Troubling feminism*

As a final instance of the scope, usefulness, and complexities of doing genealogy, I will draw on my doctoral work, a study entitled *Making the Enterprising Manager: A Genealogy* (Hatcher, 1998). The study examined the ways in which the enterprising

manager is constituted in the mid 1990s in Australia. It identified a range of discourses that produced this idea of the enterprising manager including those of psychology, management, participation and gender. As with many doctoral theses, tensions abound as the student writer/researcher balances the demands of the research community for rigour and paradigm purity with their often very personally motivated interests in doing research that will ‘make a difference’, to use an old cliché. Indeed, the outcome of the study was a clear recognition that there is no pure place from which to do research. This section focuses on just one dimension of that research project, the discourse of gender. It takes up the politics of genealogy, and in particular, how genealogy can be understood in a period where advocacy and identity politics are becoming increasingly important in academia. It provides a reading of the truth of gender and reflects on the taken-for-granted practices which have become the common sense knowledge of feminism. The section concludes by describing how writing up a genealogy is also fraught with problems of tense (in the grammatical sense), and so heightens the tension for the genealogist long after the epistemological and methodological decisions have been made.

Deciding to do Foucauldian work, as a committed feminist, is like deciding to wear a fashionable lipstick! It is both trendy and risky. On one hand, it brings new life to a project that has become increasingly jaded, and on the other, for some feminists (Mc Nay, 1994), it puts the project itself at risk from possible cooption by the very forces that conspire to oppress women. If, as Foucault suggests, genealogy is a tracing of ‘the hazardous play of dominations’ (1986, p. 83), feminist knowledge itself would need to be acknowledged as ‘merely the current episode in a series of subjugations’ (Foucault, 1986, p. 83). Genealogical work on the ‘truth’ of gender was one such moment of acknowledgement in my doctoral research. In the thesis, I argued that this truth about gender was itself a regime of truth that has contributed to new forms of hegemonic knowledge about being an enterprising manager and, as such, must be made strange. The argument is briefly elaborated below.

Alongside postmodernist questionings of the metanarratives of science, Man, and progress, feminists have built a substantial and legitimised knowledge about what it is to be Woman. This knowledge regime has constructed a discourse about woman, and gender in general, which relies on an essentialist understanding of gender.<sup>4</sup> The play of differences between men and women has thus become a critical constitutive force in identity construction, because explanations of identity, within modernist logic, rely on exclusion of the Other. In fact, ‘identities can function as points of identification and attachment only because of their capacity to exclude, leave out, to render outside, abjected’ (Hall, 1996, p. 5). Indeed, identity politics, as an important strategy of some feminists, relies on just such a formulation.<sup>5</sup> Difference, as a common sense way to understand reality, defines gender in the 1990s.

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<sup>4</sup> While poststructuralist feminists such as Haraway (1991), Grosz (1994), Walkerdine (1990) have challenged this, the field of management has remained relatively untouched by this challenge. Exceptions here, which have already been noted, include Hearn, Sheppard, Tancred-Sheriff & Burrell (1989); Calas & Smircich (1991); Mumby and Putnam (1996). Bell & Nkomo (1992) provide an analysis of the way research on women in management has revealed a ‘circular pattern of research and writing’ (p. 237) which springs from a ‘difference’ perspective, despite, on the surface, apparent changes in the questions asked about women.

<sup>5</sup> The challenges to the universality of the category of Woman, particularly from marginalised groups such as non-Western, non-middle class women, has been the subject of endless analysis and struggle in the women’s movement. hooks (1981), Gunew & Yeatman (1993), Ang (1995) are just a few feminists attempting to destabilise the category.

Indeed, prior to the 1960s, the feminist focus on ‘rights’ produced knowledge about the exclusion of women from public life. The strategy of knowledge production was summarised succinctly as early as 1792 by Wollstonecraft, as the desire to ‘see the distinction of sex confounded in society, unless where love animates the behaviour’ (Wollstonecraft quoted in Jacques, 1992, p. 589). The development of the liberal feminist tradition, which itself was influential in producing the practices of Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) and affirmative action in the workplace (Tong, 1989; Franzway, Court and Connell, 1989), relied squarely on confounding the differences between men and women. However, ultimately, it is the production of the *truth* of difference, a central tactic of radical and cultural feminists, that has produced a socially hegemonic truth about women in the 1990s.

The regime of truth which has been produced can be understood, particularly through the way the practices of feminists since the 1970s have elaborated and valorised the specific characteristics of the ‘feminine’, such as nurturing and collaboration (Gilligan, 1982; Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger and Tarule, 1986). The work of Gilligan is one such example. Extremely influential in later feminist work (despite its controversial claims), Gilligan’s strategy was to challenge the truth of scientific research in psychology. In *In a Different Voice* (1982), Gilligan challenges the six stage universal theory of Kohlberg about moral development, as well as many other psychologists including Erikson (1950), Vaillant (1977) and Levinson (1978). She argues that the universalising claims of science (and in particular about moral development) do not account for different modes of moral development. She claims that ‘there seems to be a line of development missing from current depictions of adult development, a failure to describe the progression of relationships toward a maturity of interdependence’ (p. 155). In the closing chapter, entitled ‘Visions of Maturity’, she challenges the blindspots which are ‘obscured in psychological texts’ (p. 156) about moral development, arguing that the separation/ attachment binary formulation used to describe this development work to silence women’s voices.

While much feminist research has relied entirely on the idea of the *truth* of experience as a basis for its argumentation, others have taken up the task of engaging with scientific claims. In keeping with this latter approach, Gilligan focuses her analysis on demonstrating the falsity of a universal model of moral development. She claims that :

From the different dynamics of separation and attachment in their gender identity formation through the divergence of identity and intimacy that marks their experience in adolescent years, male and female voices typically speak of the importance of different truths, the former of the role of separation that defines and empowers the self, the latter of the on-going process of attachment that creates and sustains the human community. (Gilligan, 1982, p. 156)

Claiming the *truth* of this experience (based on scientific evidence) as *different* for women marks an important emergence in the possibilities of discussing women’s place in relationships, but particularly in relationships involving responsibility. Gilligan posits an image of ‘connection’ as ‘freely given’, and the contrast of a ‘less violent life’ for women, because ‘maturity’ is ‘realized through interdependence and

taking care' (p. 172). Indeed, she argues that the whole concept of identity and the moral domain 'is enlarged ... by the inclusion of responsibility and care in relationships' (p. 173). The *truth* of this type of 'maturity' is further legitimised by the use of religious authority. The author argues that the epistemology upon which this type of identity and maturity is based is 'the Biblical conception of knowing as a process of human relationship' (p. 173).

Posing the importance of *woman's truth* and *man's truth* as different challenges the certainty of *truth* itself. The taken-for-granted common sense of autonomy as the highest level of moral development is unsettled by such an analysis, particularly when the scientific evidence upon which such a conceptualisation is offered provides the basis for the logic of operation. Indeed, the 'truth of the ethic of care' described by Gilligan, allows her to claim that care of the 'self' only stems from adequately tying relationships to responsibility. By posing the tensions between responsibilities and rights, between 'fairness and care', she claims that unless both are adequately accounted for, true maturity cannot be achieved. This dialogue between an ethic of judgement and an ethic of care 'gives rise to a more comprehensive portrayal of adult work and family relationships' (p. 174). Gilligan's move to establish the importance of transforming the self is significant for understanding the present. In her image of the self, subjects are required to discard certain aesthetic and moral values associated with the 'masculine', and to work to produce this more mature, more 'adult' identity. Gilligan's model suggests a new hierarchy of moral development, and new types of work required to become fully mature. This regime of truth resituates the landscape through the play of difference. Connection rather than autonomy is valorised in the the logic presented by Gilligan.

The work of Gilligan has often been criticised as essentialist. Nonetheless, her ideas have played an important role in much contemporary argument about the place of women in organisations, and about their capacity to lead and manage them (Helgeson, 1990; Peters 1991; Limerick and Cunnington, 1993). The brief genealogical analysis above problematises her moves and so risks that 'special resentment' from feminists that Rorty (1979) so clearly recognises might occur when beliefs so central to our desires are challenged. By refusing a final vocabulary, in fact, by treating the category of 'gender' as merely a moment in the politics of truth, the journey of thinking differently has already begun. This groping for truths provides one way to pursue the 'limit experience' (Foucault, in Miller and Rose, 1994) through which, Foucault (1992) argues, we can transform ourselves. In this sense then, genealogy provides a useful way to transgress the boundaries that shape us.

Such a move is never comfortable, and the writing-up process for such work increases the tension of doing this kind of study. Continually placing the truth 'up for grabs', refusing closure on authority and authenticity, and 'mastering' the truth itself are risky business. This is particularly so for the doctoral candidate for whom the relations of power between the watchers and the watched (Paechter, 1996) that is, between examiners, supervisors and their students is a complex one. In alternative qualitative methodologies, the simple answer is to confess. That is, to demonstrate rigour, the qualitative researcher simply provides a reflexive account of the processes, choices, and errors of the study (Ball, 1990). Paechter (1996) likens this to the confessional mode alluded to by Foucault in describing pastoral power as a key form of power

governing society in the twentieth century.

Games of truth and error are at the heart of genealogical work. The genealogist produces one truth in the act of writing up their research. Choices such as the use of a particular tense contribute importantly to doing genealogy and need to be acknowledged as political acts because they imply political choices. For instance, in the analysis above, the decision to use the present tense to describe Gilligan's moves to establish female styles as superior, in terms of moral development, required the enactment of power relations. The tense itself suggests the descriptive role of genealogy, which positions the truth of Gilligan, not as the authority to speak, but merely as one attempt to claim to speak the truth (much as the style of a literature review requires). Writing in the present tense seems to imply knowledge 'in the making', rather than as established truth. Innumerable discussions between supervisor and student were required to unfold the logic of this methodological style. The move away from commitment to Gilligan's truth was partly achieved by writing in the present tense, refusing its authority (as the past tense might imply) and removing support by describing rather than arguing its validity. In this way, 'meticulous' description is the data of genealogical analysis.

### **Conclusion**

In our discussion, we have elaborated Foucaudian genealogy by firstly explaining its central principles and then proceeding, by example, to demonstrate how a genealogy might take shape. As we have shown, genealogical method allows the researcher to travel along rhizomatic pathways, searching for new vantage points from which to see the self. New vistas come into view, as some are closed off. What is important is that the journey, as Foucault intended that it should, rejuvenates and in doing so, offers new ways of seeing the present. Through our elaboration of what *is* appropriate (as well as hinting at what is not) we have aimed to make genealogy as a project, method and politics more available as a research instrument for those interested in challenging 'what is'. Hopefully our research narratives demonstrate what it means to produce a space in which to think differently.

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