Power Relations and Caring in Early Childhood Teacher Education

Nurit Dvir[1]& Orna Schatz-Oppenheimer[2]

Abstract

This article is based on case study employing a narrative research on the life story of an early childhood teacher educator and on field observations. The article examines power relations and caring in the spirit of feminist pedagogy in three different contexts: (1) the teacher educator's life story; (2) an analysis of the lessons observed; (3) the feedback session with a teacher student, as well as interviews following the observations. The research shows that experiences of gendered power relations shape the teacher educator's feminist educational perspective. Yet the attempt to translate power relations and caring from feminist ideology into professional practice is complex, reflecting the possibilities and limitations of the teacher educator'sprofessional role.

Keywords: life story, feminist pedagogy, power relations, caring, teacher education

1 Introduction

Education has long been a site for feminist work. The profession of teaching, including at teacher-training institutions in many educational systems worldwide, is a gendered field in which the teachers are predominantly women (Drudy, 2008). This fact raises questions about power relations and caring as significant themes related to notions of feminist pedagogy (Ylitapio-Mäntylä, 2011). Feminist pedagogy embraces a set of epistemological assumptions, teaching practices, learning and teaching processes, curriculum content and teacher-student relationships (Crabtree, 2009). The purpose of this article is to examine how feminist perceptions of power relations and caring shape the practices of an early childhood teacher educator in a teacher-training college in Israel by analyzing her life story, discourse and practice from a feminist perspective.

Two central questions are examined in this article:

1. What expressions of power relations and caring are reflected in the life story of the early childhood teacher educator and how do these shape her feminist pedagogic perspectives?
2. What expressions of power relations and caring are reflected in the discourse and practices of the teacher educator in her relations with her students? What professional significance does she assign these expressions in the context of feminist pedagogy in early childhood teacher training?

We analyze the life story of an early childhood teacher educator and explore the experiences she felt shaped her professional feminist pedagogy. We also analyze two events in her encounters with students. The first, a lesson with all her students, took place at the college. The second, a discourse session with one student, was held in a kindergarten.

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[1] The Kibbutzim College of Education; Mofet Institute, Tel Aviv, Israel, Nurit.dvir@smkb.ac.il
[2] The Hebrew University; David Yellin Academic College of Education. schatz@macam.ac.il

Analysis of these events in terms of practices and discourse in relation to feminist pedagogy will help identify the professional-pedagogical significance that the teacher-educator assigns to her power relations and caring with her students. In addition, it will raise awareness of the implementation of feminist pedagogy practices in early childhood teacher training.

1.1 Power relations and caring in education

Feminist pedagogy calls for reexamination of aspects of equality and prevention of discrimination (Smith, 2001: McLeod, 2009). The basic assumption is that relations and roles within the family are a reflection of what occurs in society at large and that "the personal is political" (Hanisch, 2006). The need for a struggle against patriarchy, male hegemony and changes in power relations within the family, the school and society are still the main issues in feminist pedagogy. The tension between power relations and caring in the professional world of teaching has been surfaces as a cluster of practices and discourse. They require intentionality and commitment on the part of the person in authority to act for the well-being of the individual, to enable understanding of influential forces in different life contexts and to encourage an examination of strengths and weaknesses and development in the context of different power relationships (Nodding, 2011). Foucault (1978) differentiated between "power" and "power relations". He claimed that "power" is a permanent, inert certain strength we are all endowed with. Power is productive as well as dominating. "Power relations" are part of power and they are dynamic, unequal and context situated. Caring is defined as commitment and professional responsibility. In this spirit, power and caring are not perceived as dichotomous concepts (Ropers-Huilman, 1999). Together, they can produce space for change in educational practices. They may be experienced as complex moral-emotional relations in all fields of life (Engster, 2005, p. 57), and they are the moving force in teacher-student relations (MacNoughton, 2005; Vogt, 2002).

The assumption of feminist pedagogy is that power relations and caring include getting to know and respecting the other, and responding with empathy to his or her needs in order to facilitate his or her development (Ylitapio-Mäntylä, 2011). Based on Skeggs (1997), Osgood suggests that a "caring identity is based not only on the fulfillment of the needs of others and selflessness, but also on their own desire to feel valuable" (Osgood, 2012, p. 112). Assuming that power relations and caring represent an infrastructure that empowers both students and teachers, criticism of feminist pedagogy is critical of both traditional teacher-centered pedagogy and child-centered pedagogy. The critics claim that power relations and caring in the spirit of feminist pedagogy are an alternative to the hierarchical authoritarian relations characterizing a powerful teacher who is perceived as having both knowledge and power. This type of power relationship reproduces a pattern of male control in the educational system that harms both students and teachers (Walkerdine, 1992). Yet, Walkerdine's (1990) earlier work makes the case that "caring" evacuates the teacher's 'self' as a subject, metaphorically comparing the teacher to a "container of irrationality". Feminist pedagogy is also critical of the child-centered pedagogy especially in early childhood education. It claims that actuality, those teachers are "serving the child" while ignoring their own needs, values and perspectives. This complaint is primarily lodged against early education teachers who recognize the potential of power that exists in each child and try to include care in early childhood education but at the same time are caught in the traditional perspectives embedded in societal maternalistic discourse (Ailwood, 2007). Early education teachers often perceive power as a negative act that oppresses the young child (Lenz Taguchi, 2010), while caring is perceived as a natural feminine therapeutic characteristic that harms teachers' professional image (Vogt, 2002). Research shows that the discourses of maternalism and professionalism are intertwined in complex ways in early childhood teachers' negotiations of their subjectivities (Ailwood, 2007; Moss, 2006; Sumsion, 2005). One of the reasons it is awkward to discuss power and caring among teachers is that these terms havenegative connotations, Power is perceived traditionally as male character and care as female character (Lenz Taguchi, 2010, p. 26). In this sense, examining concepts such as power, caring, discipline, knowledge, truth and reality is often seen as radical, especially in early childhood education (Lather, 1992; MacNaughton, 2005).

Feminist pedagogy criticizes teacher training, particularly early childhood teacher training. This pedagogy claims that already in the teacher training stage students must be educated to reexamine the influence of their feminine subjectivity as teachers. They must be made aware of practices that establish power relations and caring between men and women in the public and the personal space, and between teachers and students in the educational space (Liston

& Zeichner, 1996). For pedagogical change to be created, power relations and caring between students, teachers and teacher-educators need to be reexamined.

Teacher-educators need to have the critical professional thinking of syllabuses and texts and the types of knowledge that form the curriculum in different courses, as well as be able to encourage students toward activism and toward examining power and caring in their individual, professional and feminist identity (Ylitapio-Mäntylä, 2011).Although expressions of power relations and caring in early childhood education are important, few studies have examined these issues with respect to early childhood educators (Warren, 2014, Ylitapio-Mäntylä, 2011). This study aims to extend the understanding of power relations and caring in the spirit of feminist pedagogy theories and practices in early childhood teacher education. Feminist pedagogy research that is based on narrative research may help expose the world of teaching, the female experience and the identity of female educators from their own perspectives and through their own subjective commentary. This will facilitate the exposure of women's feelings, thoughts and reflections and the examination of gender power relations and caring (Elbaz-Luwisch, 1991; Lazar, 2005). Exploring the personal-professional gender tapestry and the professional identity of the teacher-educator in this study, including her discourse and practice, is based on influential feminist approaches (Lather, 1991). Furthermore, these approaches consider that stories raise consciousness of the oppression of women and encourage women to fight for emancipation. It is assumed that women understand that the oppression they experience by males and by females can be heard in other women's stories or read in the literature and in research (Walkerdine, 1992).
To summarize, the literature indicates that in early childhood teacher training, involvement with power relations and caring in the spirit of feminist pedagogy is extremely significant because the students' experiences during the teacher training process will shape them as early childhood teachers. The teachers are then influential in shaping the children's perceptions, which will affect their attitudes in the future.

2 Methodology

2.1 Research method

This study employs a narrative inquiry approach based on the life story of an early childhood teacher educator and on field observations. Our assumptions are that identity is constructed subjectively from the meaning that individuals assign to their reality, and that narratives can provide an opportunity for the narrator to examine and reconstruct identities (Bruner, 1987; McAdams, 1993).A life story is a tapestry of identities: personal, social-cultural (gender) and professional identities that change and develop throughout one's lifetime (Mishler, 2004). Narrative research is relevant to this study for several reasons: First, the conceptual framework relates to feminist theory (Lather, 1991). Second, there has been growing recognition of the contribution of life-story research to the study of teachers' professional identity (Beijaard, Meijer, & Verloop, 2004). Third, turning points as are described in Rachel's life story is recognized as a significant analytical tool in narrative research (Hancock, 2009). Furthermore, the essential quality of narratives is not their factuality or the actual historical events they recount but rather their role in the process of identity construction and transformation, in exploring beliefs, conceptions, professional goals and the best ways to accomplish them (Chan, 2012). This article therefore addresses the narratives of an early childhood teacher educator to better understand her unique power relations and caring.

2.2The context of the research

According to the law, early childhood education in the Israeli system starts formally from age 3. In Israel, there are 17,675 kindergartens attended by almost 500,000 children studying 6 hours every day. The official curriculum includes social, cognitive and emotional aspects of creative learning and playing experiences. Early childhood educators must have graduated from institutions of higher education (B.Ed). Most of them (99.5%) are women at least 20 years old and they start studying after serving two years in the army (ECCE, 2007).Formally, early childhood education in Israel perceives gender issues as important for the socialization of the children but actually, there are only a few gender orientated local programmes in early childhood teacher education (Zusman, 2016)

2.3 Participants

- Rachel, a teacher educator in the early education track, with 30 years of experience and a master's degree in education.

- Twenty-two female second-years early childhood students taking a didactics course with Rachel. Their average age is 25. Four of the students are mothers. Yael, who is 24 and single, is one of the students in the course.

2.4 The researchers

The two researchers are Rachel's colleagues. One is a primary school teacher-educator at the college where Rachel teaches. The second is a mentor of first-year teachers at a different college. The idea of researching Rachel's work emerged from our interest in feminist pedagogy. As Rachel's colleagues,we were aware of her predispositions toward a feminist agenda and curious about her unique work as a feminist teacher educator.

2.5 Data collection

Three different data collection tools were used:

- Three open interviews with Rachel, in which she was asked to, tell us about the significant stations in her professional life in the context of her role as an early education teacher (Slim et al., 1998). The open interviews were dynamic dialogue between us. They were conducted in her home and all together lasted more than three hours. We recorded the interviews, parsed them and then analyzed them.
- Participant observations of lessons (90-minute lessons) we both observed during one semester (14 lessons) with 22 students in a classroom at the college, followed by a semi-structured interview about half an hour long. We chose one gender issue, focused on three lessons that had thick description (Geertz, 1973) of "power relations" and "caring", which we later identified as a main theme prominent in her lessons.
- Participant observation of a one-on-one meeting related to this lesson with a student teacher in a kindergarten, followed by a semi-structured interview, almost one-hour long.

Observations were recorded as field notes (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992) and the interviews were recorded and transcribed. Triangulation through a combination of research tools and methods (Denzin, 2001) provides a rich composite and creates a "thick description" of the teacher educator's personal and professional world, revealing her unique voice as a feminist teacher educator. The triangulation may confirm the validity and reliability of the present research.

2.6 Data analysis and interpretation

Qualitative data analysis was based on the interpretive hermeneutic approach (Josselson, 2006) and thematic holistic content analysis (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). Our assumption was that any story in its entirety has greater meaning than its parts (Lieblich, Tuval, Mashiach & Zilber, 1998). Analysis and interpretation of the findings included several stages:

Open coding

In the open coding stage, we inductively identified several central themes, among them feminist values and gender equality. We found that expressions of power relations and caring were the most prominent in Rachel's discourse and practices.

Close examination and assigning code words

In the second stage, we reread Rachel's life story and the notes on the observations several times. We analyzed the content of the narratives as presented (Lieblich, Tuval-Mashiach & Zilber, 1998). In deconstructing the narratives and focusing on a word, line, sentence or paragraph, we gave each discrete incident, idea or event a name or a code word representative of the concept underlying it (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). Code words were chosen to elicit new insights from the data. Close examination elicited the two impressions of "power relations" and "caring", which were woven both implicitly and explicitly into the narratives.

Interpretation

In the third stage, we interpreted the entire narrative via these two impressions with our reflections as researchers and as teacher educators in relation to feminist theories that served as a theoretical framework. In the

fourth stage, we shared our interpretations with Rachel in a collaborative process between the interviewers, the interviewee and the theory (Roberts, 2002).

2.7 Ethical considerations

As a result of this research, we as researchers and colleagues may develop a range of relationships with Rachel (HREC, 2007, p. 25).

During the hole process, we gave her the opportunity to collaborate and discuss the process. In the last stage, we asked Rachel and her student Yael for their written approval of the final version. They both responded positively and agreed to its publication. In order to preserve anonymity, the names and other private details of the participants were changed and identifying details blurred.

3 Findings

3.1 Teacher educator's personal life story: The sources of feminist pedagogy

In the mid-70s, when she was an adolescent, Rachel left Israel and lived for two years with her parents in New York, where she was exposed to feminist ideology:

These things happened to me in the United States. **Suddenly** *I understood how many times people bothered me on the street. . ..* **Suddenly** *I noticed. . .* **suddenly** *I understood that something in my life as a girl was not right…*
Rachel expresses anger regarding the invasion of her personal space. She describes her exposure to the ideas of the feminist movement as a sudden, exciting event that flooded her when she was in a new and unfamiliar environment. She uses the word "suddenly" three times in a brief text. The suddenness is a type of epiphany that shakes her to the core (Denzin, 2014), a turning point that will change her life (Hancock, 2009).For the first time, Rachel discovers gendered power relations and becomes aware of their significance. She describes the strong impression made on her by the ideas of the first wave of the feminist movement in the United States, in its struggle to undermine the social order and the male hegemony. In a similar fashion, Safran (2000) described the influence of feminist publications and research on her own views. Women such as Millet (1971) and Rich (1972) criticized power relations in the representation of women as subjects in male texts and in the historical canon, and they write them anew from their personal-female representation, experience and history, while identifying with women and with the system of universal gender.

Two years later, upon her return to Israel Rachel served in the army for two years. Then she began academic studies and became actively involved in the feminist movement. At that time, she experienced the oppressive power relations and the unbalanced control between men and women: "*In our day, everything at the university involved terrible fights. The [female] students were forced to accept the authority of the professors, who were mostly men.*"These experiences led her to question hegemonic knowledge and to adopt activism. She decided – first time in Israel -- to write her thesis on the topic of feminism, entitling it "Sexual stereotypes in Israeli textbooks," despite the fact that "*initially my [male] mentor claimed that there is no gender problem [in Israel] and that it is an American problem.*"

3.2 Teacher educator's professional life story: Feminist Pedagogy

Rachel is determined to continue with this perspective: to examine and challenge the power relations between men and women in the educational realm, a place where she can influence and shape the coming generation. She therefore chose to express her feminist activism through teaching in an academic setting, stemming from her sense of mission and care, and her desire to influence others:*Early education teachers must educate and transmit conventions suitable for living in society, consideration of the other, and knowledge of canonic stories and national traditions.*Rachel distinguishes between power relations in the political field and power relations in the field of education. While she hints at the negative power in politics, which is geared toward acknowledged and unacknowledged control that preserves the existing social order, she views the field of education as a powerful tool for social change, a system that through caring can have a long-term influence. In this sense, one can see that she distinguishes between power relations for the purpose of control and power relations for the purpose of caring and self-development. She is aware of the necessity for "caring" to develop the self. In order to influence and change her students' perceptions, she aims to awaken consciousness and restore the students' sense of self:

Early education teachers need to develop self-knowledge and self-realization, to awaken experiences of aesthetics, breaking boundaries, creativity, critical thinking, to develop emotional capabilities and reflection that focus on the children's self:*In my work, I focus on developing the students' assertiveness, power and self-image and I try to encourage their*

struggles. Rachel views caring as an important practice for challenging students' preconceived perspectives and at the same time for restructuring their professional female subjectivity. She is self-reflective, and examines her sources of power relations and the significance that she assigns to the power relations and care that she has with her students:

> *My strength is in my personality, professional confidence and knowledge. . . . I have a lot of power but I am not in a power struggle to show them that. I feel that I can give them faith in their abilities, love and equanimity to help them flourish.*Clearly, she views the sources of power relations and caring as stemming from her personality and her professionalism. King's (1998) critique on women caring in education distinguished between "caring for" and "caring about". The type of caring that women are associated with (caring for) is consigned to unprofessionalism, an act that effectively bars women teachers' authentic access to the so-called "high status" caring. From the position of caring, Rachel has the space to care for others. Perhaps this is not the best for them, but it is something she needs to do. Caring relations are expressed by revealing her perceptions to her students, trying to create conditions for intimacy and solidarity and searching for ways to facilitate their own change. Professionally, she aims to empower, give self-confidence and independence, and strengthen the trust between them. She declares that she intentionally refrains from using control and wrestling with her students because she cares and wants to let them change on their own. She utilizes her power, in her words, "to awaken the students' awareness of their personal and professional future." From this standpoint, her "caring for" her students is her personal and professional strength.

Rachel connects the undermining of power relations in the family with renewed establishment of the students' professional power relations as future kindergarten teachers. She moves from the personal arena to the public-professional-social arena and views these as being intertwined and stemming from one another. She utilizes both her own and her students' personal life stories, through which she reveals power struggles and expressions of care: *" Be responsible for your own struggle, do not expect that even a man who loves you very much will fight for you."*In Rachel's opinion, exposing the dialectic between power and care will contribute to raising students' consciousness of feminist perspectives and motivate them to personal change, which has professional significance for them as students in the present and as early education teachers in the future. Her message to the students echoes the perspective that power and care are connected to taking responsibility for their lives (Noddings, 2011). Beyond this, care is the source of power: in this way, their educational work will be empowered.*When meeting with the students, I emphasize my belief that the children are at the center and that practice and content need to suit them. . . .* My students are at the center of my teaching; to help them achieve personal and professional growth.

In Rachel's words, we hear both that she has a child-centered approach to education and, analogously, that the students are the focus of her mentoring. She also sees that her professional role moves her to empower students and care for them. In this way, she reflects power relations and caring as commitment and personal professional responsibility (Noddings, 2011). In her approach, "care for" and "care about" are interwoven (Ropers-Huilman, 1999) and serve to move the subject toward self-realization and social activism through education. We can understand her approach as resistant to the metaphor of caring as a "container of irrationality" (Walkerdine, 1990). To summarize, Rachel's life story is nourished by ideas of feminist pedagogy. Aspects of power relations and caring (care for and care about) that she experienced as a woman and that she seeks to establish in her relations with her students are intertwined. This stems from the assumption that these processes will raise the students' consciousness of gender issues in their personal lives and will have a long-term influence on their professional work.

3.2 Practices of power relations and caring in the pedagogical discourse

To learn about Rachel's feminist pedagogy, we examined not only her life story but also her discourse and practices when mentoring her students. Below are two cases of supervision that were observed during Rachel's mentoring sessions with her students. Both cases demonstrate different expressions of power relations and care that testify to Rachel's feminist pedagogy.

Case One: Discussion with 22 students in the framework of an instructive lesson at the college. During the lesson, Rachel helped the students plan a kindergarten activity on the topic of family.

Case Two: Giving feedback to one of her students, Yael, in the kindergarten after observing Yael working with the children on the topic of family.

3.2.1 Power relations and caring in pedagogical discourse and practice in supervision

The topic of family is part of the early childhood education curriculum in Israel. In the lesson, we observed, 22 second-year students in the Early Childhood track participated. They sat in a circle. Rachel's choice to have the students sit in a circle and not behind desks invites dialogue which is intended to cancel out the traditional positioning in which the teacher is the authority figure who stands above the students while the students look up from below (Uitto & Syrjala, 2008).

In contrast, when the teacher educator is part of the circle, this contests the hierarchical structure and the control of knowledge and instead facilitates a feeling of caring that includes calm, collaboration, respect, listening and the democratization of knowledge (Engster, 2005, pp. 54-55).At the beginning of the lesson, Rachel divides the students into five groups and asks each group to plan an activity for early childhood on the topic of family. This moves the power relations away from her to the students, whose knowledge and ideas are at the center. She provides the opportunity for their self-realization by establishing the relevant content for the topic of family. One of the students asks: *Do you recommend concentrating on the ideas of gender equality or on the division of roles in the family? Father irons and tells stories. Not only mothers?* Rachel responds, *Start to work and focus on all aspects.*

Rachel leaves the discourse about family open and in this way facilitates independent critical thinking and self-expression, and illustrates her caring in helping to develop the students' professional and personal capabilities. Half an hour later, the students are asked to return to the circle and report:

Shira: I will show the children a picture of a family and they can count the number of family members and talk about their feelings toward each family member. My goal is to awaken emotions.
Rachel: We don't know the family status of the children. Are there single-parent families in the kindergarten? When you talk about this, you have to show that this is no less good than a family with a mother and father, only different. This presents an opportunity for discussion.

Here Rachel retains control by correcting Shira's comments using the tactic of raising consciousness. Rachel takes advantage of Shira's suggestion to make the students aware of different types of families. She raises feminist concepts about new families with same-sex parents, single parent families and so on. Tamar: I would like the children to match mothers and offspring. For example, a duckling and a bird. Afterwards, I will read the story of the duckling that goes looking for his mother.Yael: I want to prepare a card game in which the roles at home will fit the family members.Rachel: Lovely, but pay attention to the division of roles that are not stereotypical. We want to educate the children to gender equality.

By using the word "lovely" Rachel emphasizes the students' comments but also remains in charge of correctness. When the students make their suggestions that create analogies between the animal world and the social structure in humans, their traditional perspectives about family and power relations between the sexes are exposed. The lesson also reveals the dialectic of power and caring that Rachel is debating (Ropers-Huilman, 1999). On the one hand, she invites practices that move the power from herself to her students. On the other hand, while she enables the students to use canonic early childhood stories and games that preserve the social order in the family, and does not criticize the students' ideas even when they are conservative, she suggests that they examine other options as well. She does not get involved in a discussion based on feminist criticism, in which the family is the arena of power relation struggles between the sexes and changes in power relations within the family may change the power relations between the sexes in general. She explains: *I understood that engaging in power struggles with the students on this topic is useless. Using force raises their resistance to these ideas, which may make it very difficult for the students to relate to them.*

Rachel speaks openly about the limitations of her power relations and caring, revealing the tensions in the work of mentoring. In her life story, she noted that she chose to realize her feminist pedagogy perspectives in education and not in politics, understanding the need for long-term social change. We realized that in her work with students, she discovered the delicate play of power relations between herself and her students, the possibility of resistance and the tensions that might arise. She expresses the notion that raising resistance makes it possible for those being controlled to undermine the ability to control them and structure their identity (Butin, 2006; Olssen, 2005).Rachel also learned from her own experience that treating power relations without caring can undermine the students' personal and professional confidence. She is not interested in forcing them to surrender their earlier beliefs and perceptions or in exercising control through a power struggle with her students. Yet she expresses her commitment to deconstructing their perspective by encouraging them to reflect on social patterns. Therefore, she does not allow herself to use oppressive power with her students, to insist on feminist ideology or to exploit her authority.

In summary, the discussion with Rachel about her practices reveals the dialectic and limitations that characterize mentoring in the spirit of feminist pedagogy. She debates the ethical dilemmas and different practices in the process of applying feminist pedagogy. Taking an ethical approach raises critical questions as to the bounds of feminist action: In the name of feminism, is acting forcefully against "areas of resistance" suitable? Isn't this "male patriarchy in female guise"? How desirable is it to use force, which may create resistance to change?

To what extent should one enable resistance and respect different views even if this oppresses women? Answers to these questions delineate the limitations and the teacher educator's options when encouraging feminist practices. In addition, there are other ethical questions such as: To what extent does the teacher educator have the authority to control and shape a specific ideology, including feminist ideology? What are the bounds of the role of pedagogic supervision when shaping professional identity, structuring students' worldviews and examining their values and behaviors? What are the limits of her role in relation to power and caring, authority and responsibility? Who determines these, if at all? How does the teacher educator maneuver between utilizing power and caring?

3.2.2 Power relations and caring in a student's pedagogic discourse

As part of her supervision, Rachel observed one student (Yael) when she worked with kindergarten children on the topic of family and then gave her feedback. The feedback session is an opportunity for a professional and personal dialogue on the student's practices through reflection; this makes it possible to raise the student's awareness and make latent practical knowledge accessible. First, we present selections from Yael's conduct with four children in the kindergarten during the activity and then describe the discussion between Rachel and Yael on the observed activity.

3.2.2.1 The activity in the kindergarten

Yael sits with four kindergarten children in a circle in a small room. She starts by wishing the children good morning and asking how they are, and then introduces Rachel and the researchers who have come to observe. She explains that the topic today will be the family, a topic they had begun the day before. She takes out a board with pictures of family members and cards with pictures that describe different activities in the family: washing dishes, washing floors, preparing a meal. She puts the cards on the table and shares a personal story with the children: every Thursday, she helps her mother clean the house. She then asks the children what they see in the pictures.

Tom: Mom is washing the dishes.
Yael: Right. Mom puts the dishes in the dishwasher. So, tell me who in your family puts the dishes in the dishwasher?
Tom: My mother.
Yael: Lovely! So, take a picture of the mother and put it next to the picture of the person who is using the dishwasher [She states this and demonstrates it.]
Ron: Dad makes a hole in the wall with the drill.
Yael: Right! Dad drills in the wall. Who drills in your family?
Ron: I don't know.
Shira: I see a baby
Yael: Who takes care of your brother?
Shira: My mother, sometimes Dad, when Mom tells him to. [When] she is tired or in the morning, she helps me get dressed and then Dad gets Elad out of bed.
Yael: So, whose picture will you take? Your mother or your father?
Shira: My mother.
Yael: Lovely. I hope you had a good time, children. I did too.

Yael's comments about roles in the family focus on the question of power and caring in the family. Just as Rachel avoided critical involvement with her students' conservative perspectives, in the course of her discussion with the children Yael does not undermine the social order either by using stereotypical pictures or by criticizing the children's stereotypical answers. In her discussion with the children, she does not raise critical questions as to the characteristics of the traditional family and the traditional division of roles. She does not encourage them to examine

the social order, perhaps because of their age; her focus is on caring for their security in a structured world. This reflects the negative perspective of power that is common among early childhood educators (Lenz Taguchi, 2010).

This perspective views exerting control as suppressing the children's thinking and the authenticity of the conversation. Noddings (2001) notes that "children and teachers are subjected to the complex, multiple and shifting relations of power in their social fields, and at the same time, they take up the positions of subjects in and through those converging features" (p. 99).

3.2.2.2 Rachel's feedback

Rachel's feedback is intended both to evaluate and to expand Yael's practical knowledge through reflection. It is meant to discuss different pedagogic aspects that emerged during the activity and analyze Yael's practice through them (Schon, 1983).

Rachel: What were your goals in the session with the children?

Yael: To play with them and teach them through play about power relations and roles in the family. . . . I also wanted to connect this topic with their world and with my world.

Rachel: You started the meeting with your own personal story – the personal connection is lovely. But I would like to tell you something about your role that comes from my feminist background.

Rachel relates to Yael's goal of connecting her personal world with the children's world, and reinforces her approach. At the same time, at this stage she relates to the principle of power relations and caring in the family from her feminist standpoint. Although the social order is preserved in the stereotypical division of roles between the sexes, Yael does examine both her perspectives and those of the children by confronting them with stereotypes. Rachel is aware of Yael's conservative perspective but avoids direct criticism regarding the legitimacy of stereotypes in the division of roles among the children. Perhaps she avoids the use of oppressive power to spark a personal, caring dialogue with Yael. She initially relates to didactic methods and the content of the discussion that developed with the children, and then becomes more direct:

Rachel: The games are simple, the pictures are stereotypical and in this group, things are ingrained. Also, regarding your role in the house: You told them that you help your mother. I know that it is difficult to fight the traditional stereotypes that control us but you can work on that with kindergarten children.

Rachel shows empathy for the student's difficulty in letting go of the conservative stereotypes expressed in her choice of pictures as well as in the brief personal story of helping her mother clean the house. Her mild criticism may reflect her view that in order to raise awareness and change positions, one need not always go into a fighting mode. An alternative can be to use caring, empathy and acceptance, and in this way to create an ideological and practical change that suits the student's personal, cultural and professional position. Rachel offers Yael didactic means to help her work on these topics with the children: *"Here is picture of a father loading the dishwasher you can talk about this. Here is a picture of a boy playing with dolls you can talk about this. Oh, boys don't play with dolls?*In the feedback, power relations are examined on two levels: between the teacher educator and her student and between the student and the children. Bakhtin (in Cheyne & Tarulli, 1999) claimed that in every conversation there are at least three voices: the first voice is the voice of the speaker, the second is the voice of the listener and the third is the ideology in whose name the speaker speaks. In the feedback, there are both revealed and hidden voices. The voices of the teacher educator and the student are revealed, while the hidden voices are the stereotypical views and the representation of feminist ideologies and the voices of the children. Analysis of the voices in the discourse in the spirit of Bakhtin's approach shows that the voice of the teacher educator is dominant. Its volume is most significant in the discussion, taking over the student's voice and the silenced voices of the children, which are represented in the student's voice. Over these voices hovers the dominant voice of feminist pedagogy in the teacher educator's voice. Rachel's overpowering voice and the voice of feminist ideology make it difficult for Yael to reflect, examine her own voice, and access her own understanding of feminist ideas, including oppression, liberation, power and caring.

4. Summary and Conclusions

This article examined power relations and caring in the spirit of feminist pedagogy in three different contexts: the teacher educator's life story, the lesson observed, and the feedback session with the student following an educational activity in the kindergarten, as well as in the interviews following the observations.

The findings show that Rachel's personal and professional life is influenced by topics of power relations and caring that are laden with feminist ideologies. These complex issues related to power relations and caring emerge in

the discussion of feminist pedagogy theories and are articulated in her life story, in her discourse with students and in her professional practices.

The findings show that the attempt to translate feminist ideology into professional practice reveals complexities and tensions that may stem from the prevailing perspective of power relations among early childhood educators (Lenz Taguchi, 2010). These complexities resonate in the research of Blaise and Andrew (2005), who advocate a more proactive role for early childhood education teachers. They challenge the dominant discourse of gender and place some of the responsibility for the students' "failure to see" on teacher educators. They suggest that teacher educators need to be prepared to be controversial and encourage students to "get uncomfortable and shift their thinking" (p. 56).

Rachel may be cautious in using power relations with her students so as not to oppress them and therefore moves in the direction of caring. Moving between power relations and caring and their different aspects creates a space where it is possible to realize feminist ideology. Yet at the same time, Rachel is aware of the limitations of her role. Accordingly, she chooses to act with caring and sensitivity and listens to her students; she is careful not to use practices that she views as regimental. This is expressed in her messages to the students aimed at them as female teachers with gender awareness. Thus, she empowers women by using educational techniques that can deconstruct authority and hierarchy, and through didactic methods that encourage the students to ask questions from a gender perspective on topics taught in the kindergarten, such as family roles. She aims to raise the students' awareness of power relations and caring on feminist topics in general and specifically regarding early education, and to encourage them to make gender-conscious decisions in their activities.At the same time, Rachel's self-imposed restrictions so as not to overpower relations are expressed in her cautious feedback toward Yael's conservative messages and the fact that she does not get involved in her students' dilemmas and personal-professional conflicts. A discussion of dilemmas and conflicts in teacher education is likely to bring with it criticism of traditional professional discourse and may cultivate the students' reflections on their professional identity (Authors, 2014).The event in which Yael mentions a piece of her life story exemplifies the potential involvement with life stories in early childhood education. Specifically, feminists' life stories are anchored in ideas of feminist pedagogy that see the significance of these stories as an expression of power relations and caring (Elbaz-Luwisch, 1991, 2001; Ritchie & Wilson, 2000; Walkerdine, 1992; Weiler, 1999). Such exposure to life stories can be effective in challenging professional perspectives and can renew restructuring of the professional critical approach (Carte, 1993; Connelly & Clandinin, 1990; Kelechtermans, 1993).The main limitation of this research is that it is based on the experience of one Israeli teacher-educator. However, the findings contain universal points that lead to important and broader reflections on early childhood teacher education issues. The research may reveal an awareness of feminist pedagogy discourse and practices, gender, power relations and caring in early childhood education, and may encourage teacher educators to include feminist pedagogy in theory and practices. Without feminist-oriented education, early childhood educators often fail to see the significance of gender in children's learning. Indeed, MacNaughton (1997) claimed that early childhood teachers do not view gender as fundamentally constitutive in children's learning so they need alternative ways of thinking about gender through feminist theory and pedagogy "until they reclaim their pedagogic gaze in and via feminist discourse" (p. 321).

This article has shown that feminist pedagogy that is based on power relations and caring, even when sometimes complicated, conveys the message that power relations and caring among early childhood educators not only do not damage their professional image, but rather strengthen and enrich it (Lenz Taguchi, 2010; Vogt, 2002).
An additional contribution of this article is in its methodology: by examining all three aspects (life story, practice and pedagogical discourse), we attempt to illustrate how power relations and caring are transmitted from one aspect to the other. In Addition, research on teacher-educators' work in a feminist pedagogy context will increase their knowledge and that of the professional community regarding their professional feminist identity. This is of great importance because most teacher educators are women who within their professional identity integrate the various roles of women in academia: teachers, researchers and teacher educators. Research that includes revealing their life stories, discourse and practice can provide a platform for their authentic voice to be heard. It can enable them to articulate the importance with which they regard feminist topics in their work, including those connected with power relations and caring.

Making the female voice heard in academia and especially in the field of education may extend awareness of the centrality of political and social-cultural forces, especially gender forces that shape educators' personal and professional identities (White, 2013).

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