



When Life Hands You Lemons

The Woman Philosopher as Accidental
Ethnomethodologist

Shannon Dea, University of Waterloo

The big question:

- ▶ When a woman philosopher gets bogged down in gender-related service work, is there a philosophically robust way for her to treat what she learns in the process as data?
- ▶ That is, can we turn service into research and still be doing Philosophy?
- ▶ When life hands us service lemons, can we make research lemonade?



Plan of the talk

- ▶ A few preliminaries
- ▶ What lemons?
- ▶ Scholarly antecedents
- ▶ Reasons to make lemonade
- ▶ Reasons not to make lemonade
- ▶ Next steps



A few preliminaries...



Ethnomethodology

- ▶ The usual definition:
“A method of sociological analysis that examines how individuals use everyday conversation to construct a common-sense view of the world” (OED).



Ethnomethodology

- ▶ According to Kessler and McKenna (1978), the central ethnomethodological question is “What are the methodological ways by which members of a group produce, in each particular situation, [the] sense of external, constant, objective facts which have their own independent existences, not contingent on any concrete interaction?” (5)

To properly engage this question, Kessler and McKenna maintain that we have to “bracket the natural attitude.”





AUTO-ETHNOMETHODOLOGY

WEDNESDAY, JULY 4, 2007

Auto-Ethnomethodology

Learning what you are made of by studying how you put yourself back together once you have fallen apart.

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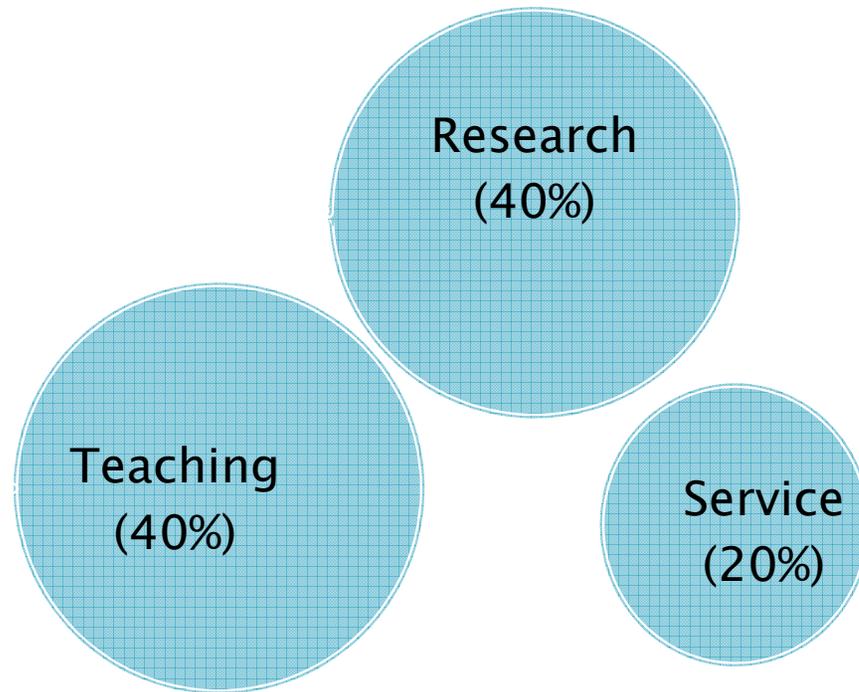
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LITTLERED

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One aspect of the academic's (including my own – hence the “auto”) “natural attitude” that might be worth bracketing:



Why do this?



Low-hanging fruit...



And there's an embarrassment of riches...



Some institutional lemons:



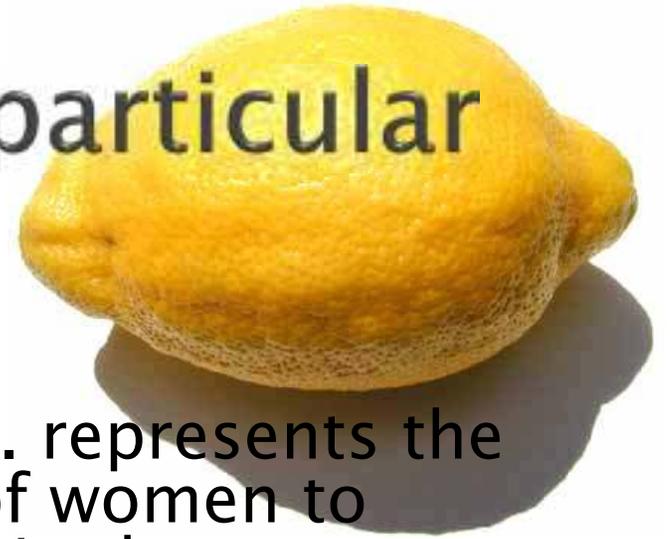
Service in general



“Women and racial minorities generally perform more service work (including, but not limited to, diversity work) than other faculty members: this often constitutes a dual burden.” (Hart, Grogan, Litt and Worthington 2009, 62)



Diversity service in particular



...“institutional housekeeping”... represents the invisible and supportive labor of women to improve women's situation within the institution... Much like... unpaid domestic housekeeping..., institutional housekeeping is usually performed without resources and recognition. In the context of university life, women's work of monitoring gender equity adds to their official responsibilities of teaching, publishing, and grant seeking. (Bird, Litt and Wang 2004, 195)



Diversity service in particular



“The institutionalized practices for assessing faculty progress toward tenure and promotion at Research Intensive universities are built upon a model that relegates "service" to the margins. Unless university administrators embrace equity issues as their own high priority missions, women and members of minority groups will continue to be penalized for doing institutional housework.” (Ibid., 200)

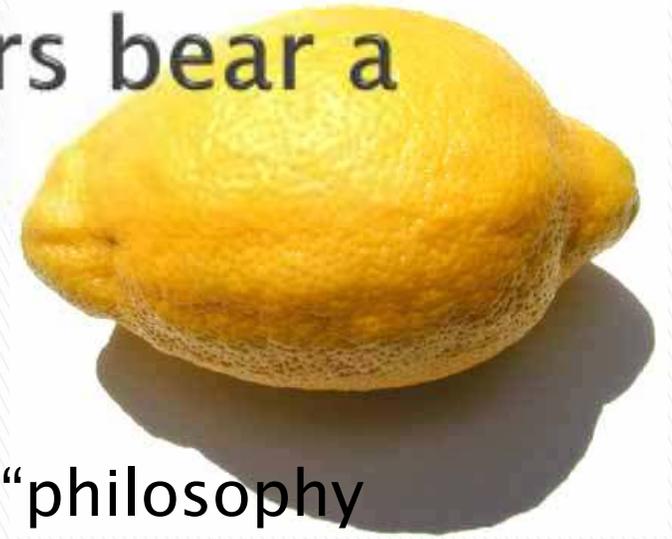
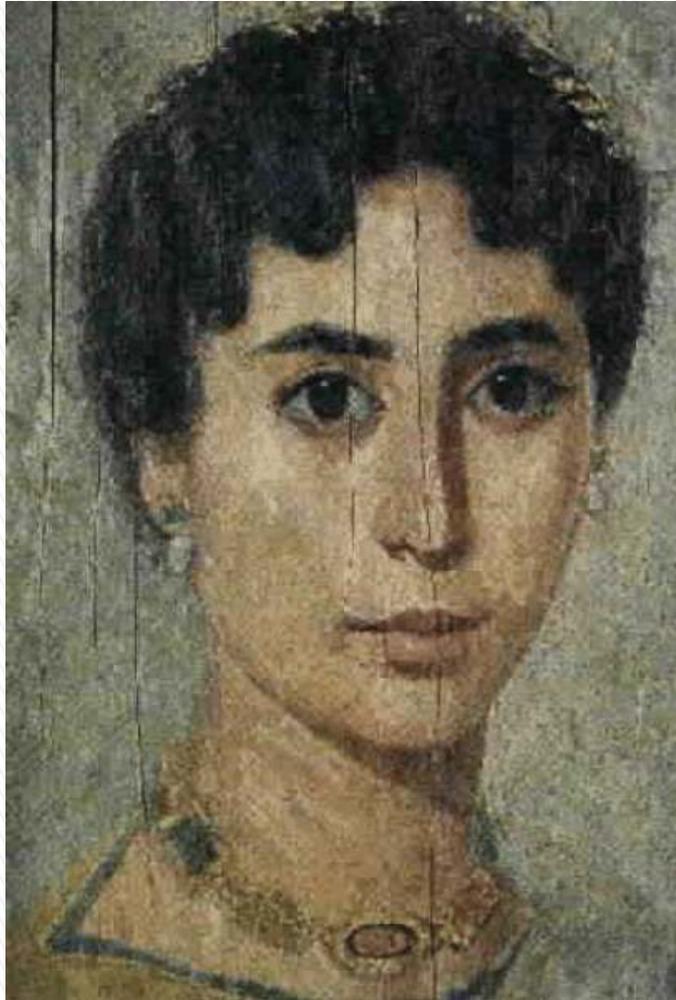


A lesson from pedagogy:

- ▶ Course alignment and authentic assessment
→ career alignment and authentic performance review



Do women philosophers bear a special burden?

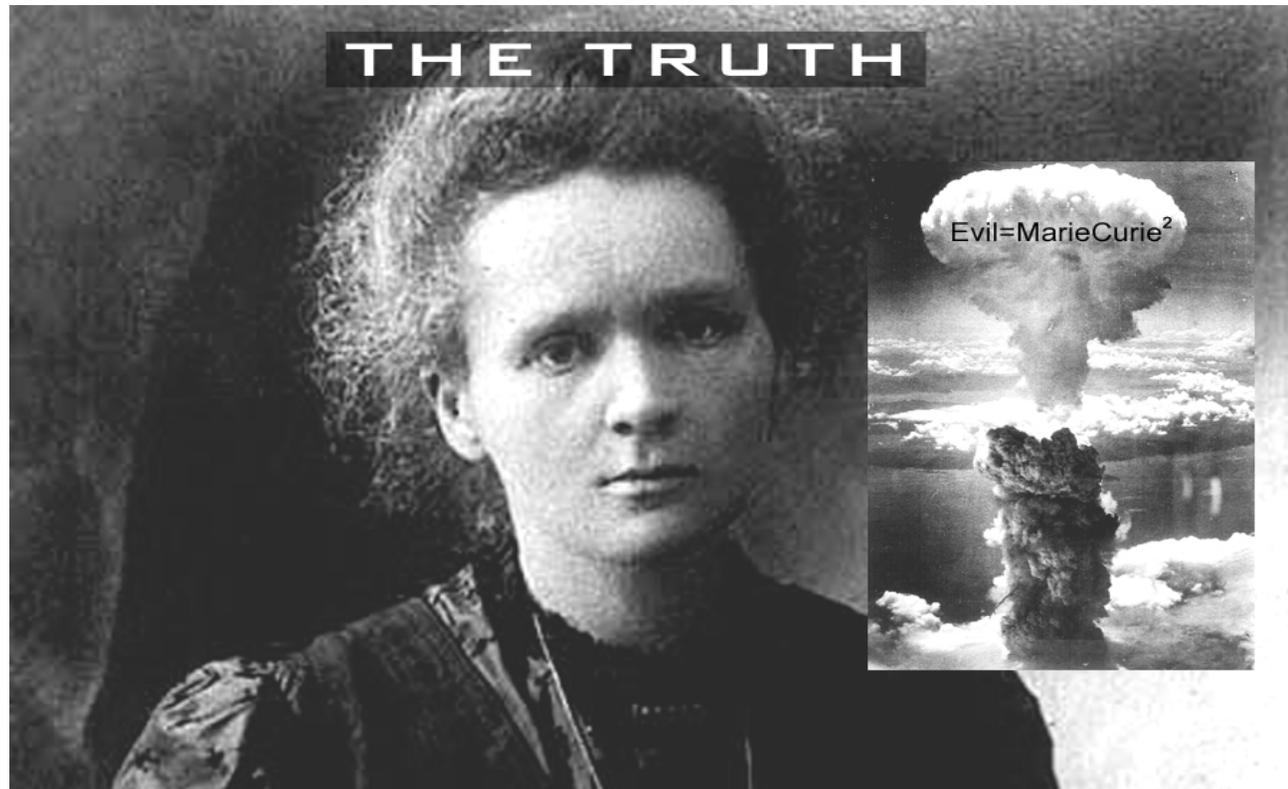


- ▶ The “philosophy exception”
- ▶ Philosophers in general concerned with “the good life” and often willing to speak about it in academic and governance circles

Some particular lemons:



This:



Kill 250,000 innocent Japanese in WW2 and it is given 2 Nobel Prizes.
Expose the defective Moral Intelligence of Womankind and it is called Sexism !

nath007@mail.com

And this:



And this:

The screenshot shows a web browser window displaying the website 'Feminist Philosophers'. The browser's address bar shows the URL 'http://feministphilosophers.wordpress.com/gendered-conference-campaign/'. The website has a dark background with a light blue navigation bar at the top containing links for 'ABOUT', 'CONTACT', 'GENDERED CONFERENCE CAMPAIGN', 'OUR POLICIES', 'THE PSYCHOLOGY OF PHILOSOPHY', and 'WHY STAY?'. The main heading is 'FEMINIST PHILOSOPHERS' with a sub-heading 'News feminist philosophers can use'. The featured article is titled 'Gendered Conference Campaign' dated December 10, 2009. The article text discusses the prevalence of all-male conferences and the harm they cause, including implicit bias and stereotype threat. It lists some all-male conferences: 'Freedom and Freedoms', 'Neuroscience and Pragmatism', and 'The Collective Dimension of Science'. On the right side of the page, there are several green callout boxes: 'Thinking Blogger Award', 'subscribe by email' with a 'Subscribe to Feminist Philosophers by Email' link, a search bar with a 'Search' button, 'this is a useful database!' with a link to 'Choose a category to get relevant articles...', and 'categories' with a 'Follow' button. The Windows taskbar at the bottom shows the time as 12:06 PM.

Lemons to lemonade?



“Diversity service work that is evidence-based and embedded in research findings can be recast as an intellectual enterprise... Clearly, instead of being seen as an add-on to the central faculty roles and responsibilities, this kind of service work should be regarded as integral to the core.” (Hart, Grogan, Litt and Worthington 2009, 62)



Lemons to lemonade?



“Search and tenure committees need to be educated about criteria for new research areas (e.g., feminist studies, race/ethnicity studies, sexuality studies, community-based and applied inquiry...) Institutional leaders... must challenge committees to reward scholarship that is emergent and to support diverse ways of working.” (Cress and Hart 2009, 483)



Scholarly antecedents



Keynote presentation 8:45-10:00

Scholarship of Teaching and Learning: You're Already Doing It!

Catherine Wehlburg, Assistant Provost for Institutional Effectiveness at Texas Ch

Many post-secondary educators who are thinking about doing research on teaching and learning are dissuaded from doing so by the perceived extra work such research would entail. However, Dr. Wehlburg argues that this perception is misguided. If teaching, learning and student assessment are happening in your classroom (and they are!), then you've already done most of the work needed to be a scholar of teaching and learning. So why not take advantage of it? This engaging and interactive workshop will help participants develop the strategies they need to parlay course prep and assessment time into powerful "scholarship of teaching and learning" results.



Scholarly antecedents



Dorothy Smith's institutional ethnography



Scholarly antecedents

“Developing a sociology for women/people started with the idea of beginning in the standpoint of a housewife and mother in the actualities of her everyday world and anchoring an investigation of the social in the concrete actualities of the everyday and of everyday doings. ...we came to see more and more clearly how the intellectual and cultural world we’d participated in had been put together from men’s standpoint...”



Reasons to make lemonade:

- ▶ There's LOTS of data.
- ▶ Economy: if we're gathering this data anyway, then treating it *as* data is an efficient way to build a research profile.
- ▶ Philosophers have distinct methodologies; therefore, a *philosophical* engagement of the data will yield distinctive results.



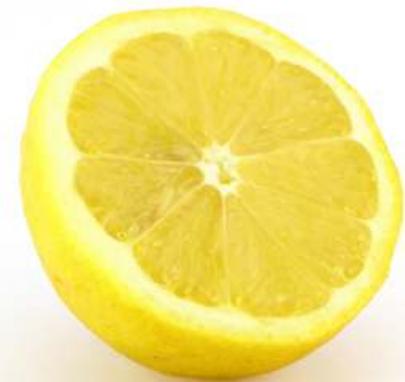
Reasons to make lemonade:

- ▶ Applicability: this stuff is important. Treating it as genuine research could get more scholars working on it, could bring about salutary practical results.



Reasons to make lemonade:

- ▶ The work is inherently interesting to (many) women in academe.
- ▶ Solidarity: doing this kind of work helps women researchers to forge connections.



Reasons to make lemonade:

▶ Dissemination!



April 27, 2011
#top #appic



The Joyful World Of Hands-Free Breast Pumping
#milk #boobs



How Far Have You Gone For A Condom? #sex #contraception



Jersey Shore's Angelina Is Pregnant
#dirtbagafterdark #celebrity



14 Bizarre & Bewildering Thingamabobs For Your Boobs
#funbags #gallery



This Week In Tabloids: Star Apologizes For Calling Katie Holmes An Addict



Did 16 & Pregnant Star Get Knocked Up To Be On TV?
#watch #16andpregnantjenr



FAQ: Include # before tag:
#tips, #snapjudgment, #groupthink, etc.

Bizarre Campaign Targets "Overeducated Women," Marie Curie



The above poster appeared at the University of Waterloo last month, plastered over the faces of female student government candidates. The text reads, "The brightest woman this Earth ever created was Marie Curie, The mother of the nuclear bomb. You tell me if the plan of women leading men is still a good idea!" This was only the beginning of a bizarre series of stunts by an anonymous misogynist who has yet to be apprehended.

By Anna North

Like 7 people like this.

Tweet 0

Mar 8, 2011 05:28 PM 25,434 162

more about #universityofwaterloo

read more: #college, #universityofwaterloo, #mariecurie, #misogyny, #antifeminism

Reasons to make lemonade:

▶ Dissemination!

The screenshot shows a social media feed with several posts. The posts include:

- April 27, 2011** #top #appic
- The Joyful World Of Hands-Free Breast Pumping** #milk #boobs
- How Far Have You Gone For A Condom?** #sex #contraception
- Jersey Shore's Angelina Is Pregnant** #dirtbagafterdark #celebrity
- 14 Bizarre & Bewildering Thingamabobs For Your Boobs** #funbags #gallery
- This Week In Tabloids: Star Apologizes For Calling Katie Holmes An Addict**
- Did 16 & Pregnant Star Get Knocked Up To Be On TV?** #watch #16andpregnantjenr

Below the posts is a banner for **JEZEBEL** with the tagline "CELEBRITY, SEX, FASHION FOR WOMEN".

Below the banner is a featured article titled **Bizarre Campaign Targets "Overeducated Women," Marie Curie**. The article includes a photo of Marie Curie and a nuclear mushroom cloud. The text reads: "The brightest woman this Earth ever created was Marie Curie, The mother of the nuclear bomb. You tell me if the plan of women leading men is still a good idea!" This was only the beginning of a bizarre series of stunts by an anonymous misogynist who has yet to be apprehended.

Below the article is a social media post by Anna North. The post includes a "Like" button with 7 people, a "Tweet" button with 0 tweets, and a timestamp of "Mar 8, 2011 05:28 PM". The post also shows 25,434 views and 162 comments. A yellow circle highlights the view and comment counts. Below the post is a "read more" link with the text: "read more: #college, #universityofwaterloo, #mariecurie, #misogyny, #antifeminism".

Reasons not to make lemonade

- ▶ Problems with changing one's individual research focus:
 - No formal training in such research – in methods or background literature.
 - Undertaking the necessary training may be too little too late. A crash course can't replace sustained undergraduate and graduate level work in an area.
 - Undertaking the necessary training would be extremely time-consuming – reversing the “economic” benefits of such a shift.
 - A further distraction from existing research areas?



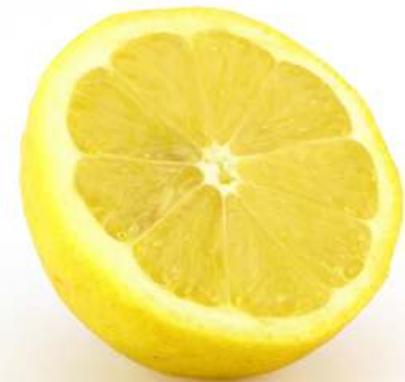
Reasons not to make lemonade

- ▶ Problems with women in particular making this shift:
 - “Ghettoizing” women researchers in this way can reduce the number of women doing strong work in other areas.
 - If women are more likely than men to make mid-career shifts in research focus, then they might be comparatively disadvantaged in terms of the development of their research profiles.
 - If women researchers cluster around similar areas, this might lend support to essentialist claims about female “ways of knowing.”



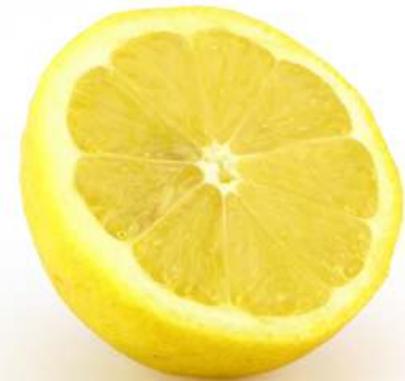
Reasons not to make lemonade

- ▶ Does working on diversity/equity issues as service *and* research mean that one is angry *even more of the time*? (And, when is the best career stage at which to be really angry at academe?)



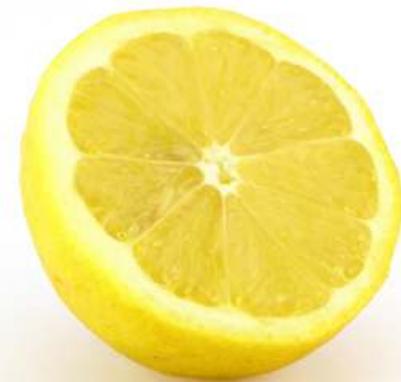
Reasons not to make lemonade

- ▶ Are these issues the ones that should really be occupying our time? The second wave redux – yet more work on issues facing privileged (mostly) white women. Does all of this university diversity work distract us from the really important global feminist work?
- ▶ Eternal recurrence: haven't we been through all of this before?



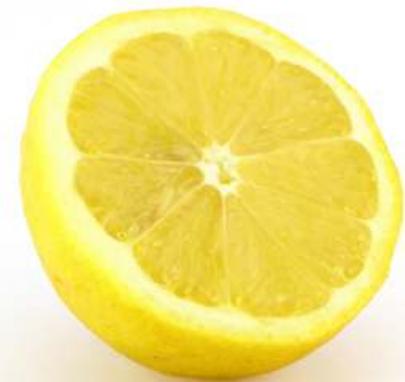
Reasons not to make lemonade

- ▶ If the methodology for such research is really ethnographic, then is this Philosophy at all, or just Sociology–lite?



But...

- ▶ If we find ourselves doing this work anyway, then being philosophers, we need to do it *as* philosophers:
 - Careful phenomenology.
 - Counter-factual reasoning.
 - Good, tough questions.



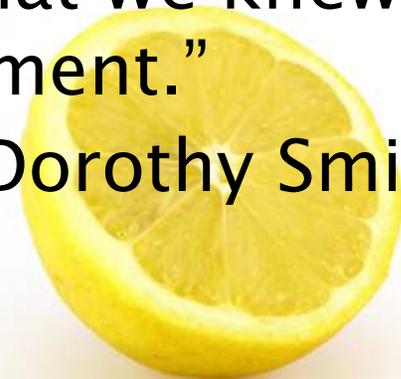
It is what it is.

“We have to set out upon our intellectual travels from the home where we already find ourselves.”

Charles Sanders Peirce

“Starting with experience was what we knew how to do in the women’s movement.”

Dorothy Smith



Thank you.



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(Works cited available upon request.)