Feminism and feminist pedagogy in two helping professions: *a collected papers dissertation*

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> "While much of the advising literature focuses on the perspective of the student in relation to academic advising, very little takes on the perspective of the advisor and how their individual values influence their advising practice."

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This 2024 collection of studies provides a comprehensive exploration of feminist pedagogy and its application in nursing education and academic advising as well as a conceptual take of what feminist advising could embody. Conducting a structured literature review on feminist pedagogies in helping professions, along with an empirical study exploring the lived experiences of primary-role academic advisors who identify as feminists, will contribute valuable research to advance a feminist approach to advising. Additionally, offering a conceptual framework for applying feminist pedagogies to advising could provide a foundation for other feminist advisors to shape their own practices.

Paper #1: "Feminist Pedagogy of an Exemplary Helping Profession: A Structured Literature Review"

The purpose of the structured literature review (Rocco et al., 2023) was to examine how the scholarly literature of feminist pedagogy is used in an exemplary helping profession, nursing. This review was guided by the following research questions: How does the literature describe the use of feminist pedagogy in the nursing profession? As nursing is an exemplary helping profession and one that is respected for the high levels of ethical standards (Riley et al., 2021), exploring the scholarly work available can help to gain an understanding of how it is being employed and can be applied to other caring professions, such as academic advising.

Methods: Structured literature reviews explore the available literature concerning a specific research question or questions within a specified set of parameters. Data was collected for a one-week period and consisted of five phases. Once the question(s) is/are identified, parameters are established to guide the continuation of the review. The parameters can include date ranges, specific databases, types of scholarly work, and a variety of others. For this review, criteria for inclusion were scholarly articles (removing dissertations or theses), written in English, using the search term feminist pedagog* - meant to include pedagogy and pedagogies – in nursing. The final sample consisted of 12 publications (conceptual, empirical studies, literature reviews, book chapters, and practitioner pieces.

Data Analysis: Data was analyzed using the 6-step thematic analysis protocol (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Articles were first read to become familiar with the information within (step 1). After articles were thoroughly reviewed for content, sections or ideas that were interesting were pulled out and grouped by relevancy (step 2). Next, using coding software, interesting ideas were pulled together and placed them in larger coding groups and with the help of the software, themes began to emerge (step 3). As the themes emerged, they were explored further to determine if there was enough significance to continue with them (step 4). Significance was determined through saturation or through connection to feminist pedagogical guidelines. If there was enough significance, the themes that remained were explained so that others can understand both where they

emerged and how they are significant (step 5). Lastly, these finalized themes were wrapped up into a findings section (step 6).

Findings: This review unearthed three predominant themes the creation and maintenance of an inclusive classroom climate, the design of a curriculum that challenges traditional power dynamics and fosters a woman-centered perspective, and the ongoing tension between care and cure in nursing practice. Each theme underscores a different facet of how feminist pedagogy integrates into nursing, highlighting the transformation of teaching methods, learning environments, and curricular content.

Paper #2: "The Lived Experiences of Primary-role Advisors Who Identify as Feminists"
The purpose of the phenomenological study was to explore how 22 primary-role advisors who identify as womxn ("womxn" is used chiefly in feminist writing as an alternative spelling to avoid the suggestion of sexism perceived in the sequences m-a-n and m-e-n; Kunz, 2019) and feminists describe the role feminism plays in their advising practice. This study was guided by the following research question: How do primary-role advisors who identify as womxn and as feminists describe the role feminism plays in their advising practice?

Methods: Interviews revolved around the womxn (first interview), their practice (second interview), and their institution (third interview). Participants self-identified as feminists rather than having strict definitions imposed upon them to qualify. Participants were required to be working as primary-role advisors at institutions with more than 10,000 students enrolled. Interviews were conducted beginning in August 2023. Each participant dictated the pace at which interviews were conducted with some completing all three interviews in days to some completing interviews over several months. Zoom allowed for convenience for participants, as well as allowing for accessibility.

Data Analysis: Data was analyzed using thematic analysis to identify and categorize themes within a dataset (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Data was analyzed by reading through the transcripts of each interview. Because the three interviews have different foci, transcripts were read as a participant set of three interviews, rather than all at once. The initial set of analysis occurred through asking basic descriptive questions to understand what participants were conveying (Lochmiller, 2021). Once a better understanding of the participants responses was reached, the first cycle coding occurred (Saldaña, 2015). Significant passages were noted in the reflection pieces for each interview. Next, a frequency of patterns within the first cycle coding were identified and then labeled as potential themes and grouped together based on similarity. The identified potential themes were analyzed to "identify disconnections" (Lochmiller, 2021, p. 2036) among patterns. These disconnections were coded as potential themes, then reviewed and further defined.

Findings: Participants described how they blended the arrangement of physical space, empathetic communication, and the empowerment of student decision-making to create a transformative advising experience. They created their environments, utilizing the placement of furniture and decor, alongside sensory experiences like scents and lighting, to foster a welcoming and inclusive atmosphere that bridges the gap between advisor authority and student approachability. In their interactions, participants balanced the delivery of essential information with empathetic listening and genuine care, engaging students through inquiries about their well-being and aspirations. This approach not only cultivates a rapport but establishes a collaborative dynamic, empowering students to take an active role in

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their educational paths. To further reduce the power dynamic between advisor and advisee, feminist academic advisors must create relationships based on care. The insights gained from this study underscore the necessity of reimagining traditional advising models to embrace a more holistic, empathetic, and empowering approach.

Paper #3: "Feminist Academic Advising: A New Paradigm for Equity and Inclusion"
The purpose of this conceptual paper was to introduce a model of feminist academic advising and to demonstrate the tenets of this model that differ from other existing models. By incorporating the information gleaned from the structured literature review and how feminist pedagogy has been incorporated into the exemplary helping profession of nursing as well as information gleaned from primary role advisors who identify as feminists, this paper puts forth seven tenets that embody the practice of feminist advising.

Feminist academic advising follows a set of expectations in relation to approach to practice and interactions with advisees. The three major components of a feminist academic advising practice are building strong and meaningful relationships with students through strategic interactions, paying close attention to the power dynamic between advisor and advisee in both the physical space and the academic realm that is inherent in higher education, and employing a lens of social justice and advocacy to the interactions and conversations with advisees. Feminist academic advising is guided by seven central tenets that guide the approach to practice: the positionality of advisor, relationship-centered, being mindful of power dynamics, intentional about physical space, social justice and advocacy, a holistic understanding of students, and working towards resilience and community building.

IMPLICATIONS

The role of academic advisors has never been more critical. As students who are entering college are experiencing more complex needs, the ability of academic advisors to meet and address those needs becomes more important to the success of students. Feminist academic advising aims to address not only the complex needs of students, but to also highlight and celebrate the unique skills of advisors that they bring to practice beyond theory. More needs to be done to understand why advisors are in this field and how their personal identity and background informs both their practice and how they interact and support students. Moreover, the experiences advisors had as advisees should also be explored as it can inform how they have crafted their practice and why they have chosen to develop certain skills or approaches to work with students. Theory and research that looks at the technical side of advising and how it is performed is essential to the field, but so is the understanding of the advisors themselves.

First, the findings from the research underscore a pressing need for reform in both curriculum design and advising practices to better reflect feminist pedagogical principles. By embedding feminist principles more deeply into these aspects, educators and advisors can create inclusive, equitable, and empowering learning environments. This reform process involves a critical examination of existing practices to identify and eliminate biases, ensure representation of diverse perspectives, and foster a learning atmosphere that values and uplifts all voices. For advising, this means adopting approaches that respect student autonomy, acknowledge the whole person, and support students in navigating both academic and personal challenges in a manner that is informed by an understanding of the systemic inequalities they may face.

Second, educators and advisors need access to ongoing training and resources that

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Second, educators and advisors need access to ongoing training and resources that equip them with the knowledge and skills to implement feminist pedagogy effectively. This includes understanding how to create inclusive and welcoming spaces, recognizing, and addressing power dynamics in educational settings, and adopting a holistic approach that considers students' emotional, psychological, and social well-being alongside their academic development. Professional development programs should focus on practical strategies for applying feminist principles in diverse educational contexts, including how to facilitate discussions around sensitive topics, integrate social justice into curriculum planning, and support students' personal growth and resilience.

Third, to sustain and expand the impact of feminist pedagogy, institutional support and policy changes are essential. Educational institutions must commit to supporting equitable and empowering practices at all levels, from classroom interactions to broader institutional policies. Implementing policy changes that facilitate a more inclusive and supportive educational environment requires a commitment from leadership to prioritize equity and justice. This could include allocating resources for the professional development of staff, revising assessment and evaluation criteria to reflect feminist principles, and ensuring that institutional policies do not inadvertently reinforce existing inequalities.

Finally, the emphasis on community building and resilience within feminist pedagogy highlights the importance of fostering strong, supportive networks among students, educators, and advisors. Educational institutions should actively work to create spaces where individuals can come together to share experiences, offer support, and collaborate on initiatives that challenge systemic barriers to equity in education. This involves not just individual efforts but also institutional commitments to promoting a culture of solidarity, mutual support, and collective empowerment. By investing in community-building activities and resources, institutions can help cultivate environments where students feel valued, understood, and capable of overcoming challenges, thereby enhancing their academic success and personal development.

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