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Making the Most out of Scarcity: Role Models in Motion

Ellen Kimmel

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WOMEN'S STUDIES AT A STATE COLLEGE (continued)

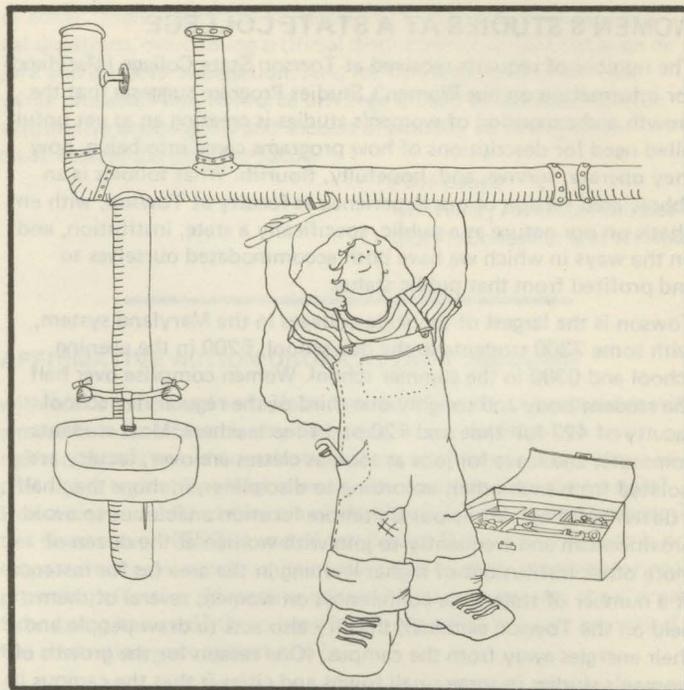
and county public schools. Because the Baltimore city public school student body is 70 percent black and also rich in ethnic groups, while the college still graduates a preponderance of white middle and lower-middle class students, there has been a growing interest on campus in what is called "Human Relations." Pragmatically speaking, it is an effort to bridge the gaps and create greater understanding among races and classes. Although, significantly enough, Human Relations work was initiated without any explicit inclusion of women as an oppressed group, we have since had the various committees, projects and institutes concerned expand the definition of their work. A committee on which we are represented is now designing a Human Relations course which, if approved, will be required of all students for graduation. Thus, some exposure to women's studies may become a basic and necessary part of every student's college education.

This author does not intend to be overly optimistic. Faculty opposition to women's studies certainly still exists, but given our official imprimatur that opposition is muted. We must still yearly renegotiate our position with the administration in such areas as released time for directing the program, and we must negotiate with departments as to how frequently a given women's studies course is to be offered. We do not have any direct control over departmental hiring since we are not ourselves a department, and in some departments our resources are thin. However, department chairs in many cases are beginning to recognize that hiring a women's studies person is a priority, and the latest appointment in sociology, for example, is such a person. And we have meanwhile established a precedent in hiring one woman, part-time, for one of the interdisciplinary courses, with an appointment specifically in women's studies. At the same time, we must continue to "prove" ourselves by drawing large student enrollments. We plan to continue to increase the number of courses and the number of faculty teaching them, as well as to work to change existing courses and provide more courses in the summer and evening schools. We will also do much more work in the area of continuing education for women. Finally, reduction of a four course per semester teaching load to three courses scarcely provides the codirectors with enough time, and faculty with full teaching loads are already overburdened. But we are cautiously pleased with what we have accomplished: a fairly solid base on which to continue to expand. We have formed a strong coalition, which cuts across departmental lines, and one in which from the beginning the presence of senior, tenured faculty gave support to the untenured. We have learned how the budget of the institution operates and thus how to argue for funding, what the sources of power and authority within the institution are and how to negotiate with them, and how to use institutional precedents (such as the prior existence of committees for International Relations and American Studies) to facilitate our work. Our courses have justified themselves intellectually and academically, but the negotiating, we know, will have to continue.

Elaine Hedges
Codirector, Women's Studies

¹ A much expanded version of this article, covering all aspects of our work at Towson—day care, Women's Center, faculty status and salaries, library, continuing education for women, in addition to the regular Women's Studies Program—will be available as a booklet after November 1, 1974. For copies please write to Elaine Hedges and Sara Coulter, Codirectors of Women's Studies, enclosing 50¢ to cover postage and printing costs.

² We have been successful in receiving grant support from Title I of the Higher Education Act of 1965, which is specifically concerned with supporting projects between higher education and the community and has a priority for women. We doubt that we might have better luck with private foundations than we have had with NEH because of the local, institutional and community nature of much of our work. The local community (businesses, clubs, philanthropists, etc.) can be a source of modest funds for specific projects. State Departments of Education have money for curriculum and career development programs that affect public schools. The new Educational Equity Act may also provide possibilities.



MAKING THE MOST OUT OF SCARCITY: ROLE MODELS IN MOTION

Women psychologists in the South are doing something about the problem of minority status in their profession. Less than 20 percent of all psychologists are female. Worse yet, even a smaller number are employed in academic institutions where they might serve as role models for women students who are in the process of choosing a career. In fact, only nine percent of the faculty of Southern psychology departments are female. Since jobs in psychology usually require a doctorate, young women must prepare for such careers much as they would for law or medicine. But what if women students attend institutions which have no women psychologists or perhaps few women faculty members in general? In a field that encompasses diverse areas—from computers to anxiety-syndromes—women in psychology tend to cluster in certain "feminine" ones: child or clinical psychology, for example, hardly representative of psychology's range of possibilities.

For these reasons, the Status of Women Commission of the Southeastern Psychological Association (SEPA) decided to identify and "pool" the existing female role models in psychology in order to "distribute" them throughout the geographic region. Seventy women psychologists, including many non-traditional specialists, volunteered to serve as "Visiting Role Model Women." Their names, along with topics in psychology about which they would be willing to speak, were listed in a brochure distributed to more than 500 college campuses in the South. Departments of Psychology were encouraged to invite women listed in the brochure to participate in their colloquium series.

Since last year, women have received invitations to talk about a wide range of research topics and, thus far, student and faculty reactions have been positive. In addition, the participants have found the experience exhilarating. Each visit includes an informal meeting with women undergraduate and graduate students to discuss and encourage the pursuit of careers in psychology. This aspect of the visit is critical, providing a chance to recruit and, at a different level, an opportunity to demonstrate that the field of psychology is receptive to women. The goal of this project is to keep the Role Models in motion until the graduate student population is 50 percent female. For more information, write to the author at the University of South Florida, FAO 296, Tampa, Florida 33620.

Ellen Kimmel