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Editorial

The Feminist Press

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It's been a year since our last editorial. We continue to receive encouragement about the Newsletter especially from people who like the mix of news about elementary, secondary, and higher education. But we wonder about the fact that we've had no negative criticism of our coverage or our features. And we're sorry, frankly, that we've been able to provoke no debate, and only a trickle of correspondence from our readers. In the interest of provoking such debate or correspondence, we offer several clusters of questions that need answering. We hope you'll try one or more of these.

First, about courses. What should "introductory" courses consist of? Will content need to shift with the level of popular consciousness, or is there a "hard core" of information, a developed "body of knowledge" that all introductory courses should contain? After introductory courses, what? What distinguishes "introductory" from "intermediate" from "advanced courses"?

Second, about curriculum. Is there a practical theory for organizing a women's studies curriculum? What models are there for organizing a sequence of women's studies courses? Need all programs offer a pot-pourri or are there other means of curriculum-building?

Third, about "majors" or "minors" in women's studies. Are they necessary or useful? Or are there alternatives? Where do majors lead? What is happening to graduates?

Fourth, the issues of programs. Is the interdepartmental or "network" model viable? Or is it too costly and too powerless? Are programs becoming "departments"? Are any programs dissolving? What are the major political and pedagogical issues that new and continuing programs face? How are directors being selected?

While we've asked specific questions only about higher education, obviously there are even more questions to be asked about newer developments in secondary and elementary. Here, our needs are somewhat more primitive, for we don't yet have an abundant proliferation of women's studies courses or units, much less system-wide programs. What we need here are information, reportage, and analysis from those of you teaching or administering new developments in women's studies. We also need information from those of you who are pressuring for system-wide nonsexist education or developing public school affirmative action programs. Let us hear from you.

ANALYZING PHYSICAL EDUCATION FOR EQUALITY

On his last day in office, New Jersey's Governor William T. Cahill signed into law A823, a bill prohibiting discrimination in the public schools of the State. The bill states simply:

No pupil in a public school in this State shall be discriminated against in admission to, or in obtaining any advantages, privileges or courses of study of the school by reason of race, color, creed, sex or national origin.

The following day newspapers reported the enactment of this legislation on their sports pages. There is good reason for this. While many aspects of sexism and sex discrimination are not recognized as such by educators and laypersons alike, discrimination in educational sports programs is so blatant it cannot be overlooked or rationalized. The increasing demands of girls and women for more equitable treatment in sports programs are seen by many as a threat to the boys' programs, and, therefore, are viewed with alarm by the male sports establishment.

Just how unequal boys' and girls' sports programs can be is demonstrated by a study of the athletic program of the Westfield, New Jersey, schools undertaken by this writer for the Union County Chapter of the National Organization for Women. Westfield was chosen for survey because it typifies the pervasive neglect of extra-curricular sports programs for girls.

Table 1 graphically illustrates the gross inequities in the girls' program.

EVALUATING A WOMEN'S STUDIES COURSE

Some fifty women attended the first Women's Studies Evaluation Conference in June 1973, at Wesleyan University. About half had previously taught women's studies courses. Literature and the social sciences were heavily represented; there were no hard scientists. We came with questions about the value, even the possibility, of evaluating women's studies courses and programs. We wondered whether any measuring technique could isolate one class as the cause of change in a student. We questioned social science methodology, and we speculated about possible alternative methodologies.