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Teachers' Institute for Equality in Education
Held at the University of Arizona
By Myra Dinnerstein, Brenda Even, Betty Newlon, and Sherry O'Donnell

Women from the Tucson community and the University of Arizona collaborated to design a two-week Teachers' Institute for Equality in Education. Held last June on the university campus, the Institute was designed to help Arizona teachers of grades K through 12 develop nonsexist classroom methods and materials. The many inquiries we have received from other educators and women's studies personnel throughout the country suggest that information about our program will help others design similar institutes in their own regions.

We planned our Institute for the summer, since there is little time or money for bringing women's studies information to elementary and secondary teachers during the academic year. Funding for the Institute came from a $51,026 grant under Title IV of the 1964 Civil Rights Act (Desegregation of Public Education), a source suggested by Alison Hughes, director of the Tucson Women's Commission and former grants writer for Tucson's Pima Community College. The Title IV grant enabled us to pay Arizona teachers stipends, including per diem expenses to out-of-towners. The grant also provided honoraria to the university and community women who have participated endlessly, as volunteers, in so many of our programs. Myra Dinnerstein and Sherry O'Donnell of the university Women's Studies Program administered the grant, provided speakers and consultants, and assembled women's studies research guides. College of Education faculty members Betty Newlon and Brenda Even served as elementary and secondary school directors. They developed grade-appropriate curriculum materials and classroom procedures, contacted Institute panelists, and served as liaisons between the university and Arizona public schools.

To make an impact on a state as large and widespread as ours, we limited Institute participants to 50-60 teachers from three target school districts in southern Arizona: Tucson Unified School District, the largest urban district in the state; Nogales School District, a rural border district with an 89-percent Mexican-American student body; and Roosevelt School District, a suburban school district in the Phoenix area with a significant number of Black students. We viewed each applicant as a future center of influence and information for her/his school and district. To assure cooperation in implementing Institute concerns, we required assurances of commitment from the superintendents of the designated districts, whose letters of support accompanied the grant proposal. Also, each teacher attending the Institute presented a letter from her/his principal pledging time and opportunity to use Institute materials in the classroom and in training sessions for the entire school staff.

In addition, we were careful to develop nonsexist materials suited to the ethnic diversity of Arizona. As traditional multicultural materials often stereotype women and provide limited role models for girls, we wanted to show a whole range of models and alternatives for young Mexican-Americans, Native Americans, Blacks, and Asians. We worked hard to provide nonsexist materials aimed at preparing all students for a world where roles, jobs, and responsibilities need not be rigidly gender-specific.

The first days of the Institute were devoted to an overview of sexism: its definition, its legal history, and its effects on both sexes. Keynote speaker Shirley McCune challenged participants to examine carefully all aspects of sex-role stereotyping.

On the second day, a panel of three women's studies faculty members considered socialization and sex-role stereotyping from the following points of view: (a) children's reactions to sexist socialization; (b) girls' attitudes toward math and their lack of participation in team sports; and (c) current research on sex-role socialization. The panelists also suggested re-socialization intervention strategies through classroom activities.

On the third day, attention focused on textbooks—how to analyze them for sexism, how to select new ones, how to adapt or supplement them if securing new ones is impossible. The comments of Heather Alberts from the Pima Career Education Project were further underscored by the Weitzman-Rizzo slide-tape presentation, "Images of Males and Females in Elementary Textbooks." Participants then examined their own texts for sexist influences. Debbie Dillon, the Sex Equity Specialist from Arizona's State Department of Education, alerted participants to the resources available from her office.

On the fourth day, the group explored two curriculum areas: social studies and language arts. Historian Mary Rothschild, from Arizona State University, described women's changing roles and educational development in the United States and suggested ways to integrate new social studies materials into classroom activities. Sherry O'Donnell, from the University of Arizona's Women's Studies Program and English Department, provided similar insight into the inclusion of new women writers; and Margaret Fleming, also from the University of Arizona, concentrated on language and its relation to sexism.

Further discussion of curricular areas, this time political science, anthropology, psychology, and economics, occurred on the fifth day. Panelists attacked the sexism/sex-role stereotyping issues from different perspectives and provided the participants with books and/or activities suggested for consisting of representatives from the Anglo, Black, and Mexican-American cultures, commented briefly on their own lives, offered possible alternatives for teaching students from different cultures, and responded to many questions from the audience.

Participants met in their respective elementary and secondary workshops on the sixth day. After first examining materials on sex-fair testing methods, they spent the remainder of the day preparing materials for the workshop handbooks.

Math anxiety and career options, or lack of options, were the topics for the seventh day. Nancy Kreinberg and Rita Liff
from the Lawrence Hall of Science, University of California at Berkeley, supplied information and classroom activities on these two subjects. They involved teachers in a variety of math games and shared a number of resources for changing students' attitudes toward careers.

Counseling techniques and suggestions for multicultural interaction served as focal points for the eighth day. A panel of Black, Mexican-American, Native American, and Anglo counselors discussed their philosophies and described special problems of minority students. After a question period, participants in the elementary and secondary workshops devoted the afternoon to exploring counseling techniques for teachers.

The final day was designated a "work" day for both sets of workshop participants. During the time provided, teachers summarized information, developed activities, and prepared materials for inclusion in the two workshop handbooks. The morning of the tenth and final day was set aside for completing personal implementation plans and developing target group (district) plans. The Institute concluded on a positive note when Arizona State Senator Sue Dye delivered a characteristically witty reminder that humor helps us all survive.

**Evaluation of the Institute**

Five means of evaluation were used for both the secondary and elementary workshops of the Institute:

1. An "Attitude Toward Sex Roles Scale," developed by Peggy Hawley, San Diego State University, was administered before and after the Institute to determine whether attitudes of the participants had changed. The 34-item scale is designed to locate an individual on a continuum between dichotomous and androgynous attitudes toward sex roles. While computer results have not yet been analyzed, other research by Hawley suggests that, with a sophisticated group of respondents, the instrument will probably not discriminate sharply between female and male opinions. Nevertheless, it may indicate that the women in the sample tend to agree more strongly on individual items than the men do.

2. A "Confidence Scale," designed to determine how confident participants felt as nonsexist teachers, was also administered before and after the Institute. Before the Institute, 79 percent felt less than confident in selecting nonstereotyped classroom materials—texts, kits, media—while at the conclusion of the Institute, 91 percent said that they felt confident or very confident about making selections. Only 23.7 percent of the pre-Institute participants expressed confidence in developing a nonsexist approach to the classroom, the curriculum, and the school, as compared to 94 percent post-Institute.

3. Daily comment cards given to participants measured response to the day's activities and gave teachers opportunities to suggest changes in the program. These cards were read and discussed by the Institute directors at a daily meeting. When possible and appropriate, changes were made to accommodate the needs of individual participants, and all suggestions received personal attention. This ongoing dialogue between participants and directors provided a safety valve for participants as well as a bellwether for directors.

4. A "Final Institute Evaluation" was given to participants on the last day of the Institute, in which teachers indicated the strengths and weaknesses of the Institute and measured its impact on them. Selected results indicated that 90 percent of the participants felt that sex-role stereotyping limits career options for both men and women; believed that they would now be able to implement changes in their classrooms; and thought that the Institute would most likely have a significant impact on their attitudes and behaviors.

5. A fifth means of evaluating the effectiveness of the Institute was an examination of the products produced in both the elementary and the secondary workshops. Both workshops produced handbooks designed to provide educators with useful materials for combating sexism in the schools.

Further evaluation would take place in January when Institute participants would come together to discuss and analyze the effectiveness of their new approach on their schools, their colleagues, and their students.

The outcomes of the Institute were overwhelmingly positive. Attitude and behavior change were evident not only in terms of instruments used, but also in terms of daily comments and individual actions. Many participants reevaluated their beliefs, and many more carefully reviewed the socialization process they had experienced. Increasingly aware of their personal views regarding sex-role stereotyping, participants quickly responded to the ideas, materials, and activities shared with them and then began to invent more on their own.

A final outgrowth of the Institute which must be noted was the expressed interest in women's studies. Many participants, formerly unaware of women's studies as a research area or a teaching movement, expressed interest in taking courses and doing research in the area. Although this development had not been perceived by the Institute directors as a major goal, it may well point the direction for future collaborative efforts. Not only can additional courses be established both in Women's Studies and in the College of Education which address the sex-role issue, but joint courses and internships can be implemented. A joint master's degree might even be a possibility. These suggestions could be avenues for increasing potential impact on teachers, who are the key to change in the classroom arena. "They are powerful agents for change," notes Florence Howe, "if they will understand the use of that power." It is our responsibility to help them understand and utilize that power. The Institute for Equality in Education was one means of achieving that end.

Myra Dinnerstein is Chairperson of the Women's Studies Program at the University of Arizona. Brenda Even is Assistant Professor of Secondary Education. Betty Newlon is Assistant Professor of Counseling and Guidance. Sherry O'Donnell was Acting Chairperson of the Women's Studies Program in Spring 1978 and is currently a Teaching Associate in the English Department.