

WORK IN PROGRESS

MAKING THE INVISIBLE VISIBLE: INFORMAL INFLUENCES

IN THE CAREERS OF FEMALE AND MALE PHYSICIANS

In 1975, in a review of the literature on women and research in medical sociology, I raised the question of why women doctors, elite by criteria of academic achievement and social class, had made so little mark in the higher levels of medical institutions. Their numbers admittedly have been limited by deliberate medical-school quotas throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, but even as a minority, they have been underrepresented in the top ranks of medical schools, research institutes, and hospital departments.

The explanations offered for their moderate achievements--professional and family role conflict, low-prestige specialty choice, salaried practices, feminine social-psychological characteristics--were inadequate or conflicting. For example, it has been said that women physicians choose pediatrics and psychiatry because they are nurturant and people-oriented, but choose pathology, a low-interaction specialty, because it is easy to combine with family responsibilities. It has been argued that women do not go into private practice because it is too time-consuming, but Marilyn Heins and co-workers' study of women physicians' productivity shows it is 90 to 99 percent of male physicians' professional commitment. Academic medicine does not require entrepreneurial skills, but does require competitiveness, yet women physicians with substantial achievements in research and numerous publications are not chosen for prestigious leadership positions in academic medical institutions.

I argued that the damper on women physicians' upward mobility could probably be located in the professional sponsorship-protege system, whereby established senior doctors advance the careers of promising junior doctors through referrals, recommendations, assistantships, and joint research. This process of apprenticeship and tracking has been shown to be of major significance in shaping the careers of male physicians in private practice and in academic medicine. However, while there are studies showing the effects of informal discriminatory practices used against women in medical school, there are no studies of the informal influences on the careers of women physicians comparable to the major studies of male physicians' careers.

The aim of my current research is to provide comparable data on the informal influences in female and male physicians' careers. The data consist of taped interviews with 68 physicians affiliated with a prestigious medical center. The sample consists of 34 male and female internists, ranging in age from 30 to 79. The physicians are in a variety of sub-specialties, and have had various combinations of professional work--private practice, clinical research, and institutional health services. The majority are Caucasian, but for the purpose of probing the effects of other discriminatory characteristics, non-Caucasians and foreign medical school graduates were also interviewed. The sample also contains 26 physicians who are married to physicians. This subsample will provide additional data on the informal influences of physician husbands and wives on each other's careers.

The interview data are from physicians in metropolitan and suburban practices who are affiliated with a prestigious medical center, and are therefore generalizable only to relatively elite doctors. A subsequent stage of this research will utilize the 1976 data from the Association of American Medical Colleges Longitudinal Study

of the Class of 1960, which consists of a national sample of female and male physicians in a variety of specialties and practice settings.

The completed research should indicate the significant informal influences that continue to shape the careers of female and male physicians at all levels, but particularly pinpoint the factors that have kept highly qualified women physicians out of the top ranks of the medical profession since World War II. Such knowledge should enable the women physicians (and other women professionals) now being trained in larger numbers than in the past to identify and counteract the potential hidden barriers to their future advancement.

In addition, the study will add to the growing body of evidence that invisible barriers strewn in the informal organization of work still keep even the most highly qualified, competent, and accomplished women out of the top ranks of almost every profession and prestigious occupation in the United States, as documented by Rosabeth Moss Kanter's study of large-scale corporations, Cynthia Epstein's study of law, Barbara Reskin's study of science, and Jessie Bernard's study of universities.

Judith Lorber

Associate Professor, Brooklyn College

Current Center Activities

This issue of the Newsletter will be the last of the current academic year. On behalf of the many readers who have already expressed their appreciation, I want to take this opportunity to thank the Newsletter editor Martha Nelson for the terrific job she has done.

Plans for activities at the Center in 1980-81 are well underway. Since we would like to maintain a balance among the activities in the social sciences, arts and humanities, we would welcome any and all ideas and suggestions for activities that might facilitate work in the humanities here at the Center. In particular, we would like to use our Fall lecture series to highlight feminist scholarship in the humanities and we would very much like your suggestions for possible speakers.

Several new Associates have joined the Center, and their projects promise to add new dimension to our existing activities, as well as depth to research areas in which we are already working.

The new RESEARCH ASSOCIATES are:

Rita Guttman, a Professor Emerita of the Biology Department of Brooklyn College, is acting as the co-ordinator of a project to involve retired CUNY faculty and staff in the work of the Center.

Anne Mulvey, a psychologist, has been investigating the relationship of stressful life events, gender and age. She will continue her work on this topic and will work with the Women and Health group.

Vivian Gornick, writer and editor, will be writing on the careers and lives of women in science today, exploring and describing the emotional, intellectual and professional experience of scientists who are women.

Margie Strosser, with Lisa Wilde, will direct a film entitled "Breasts: From Women's Point of View". The film will examine the ways women see themselves and their cultural image in specific relation to breasts.

Dennis Werner, an anthropologist, is working on a proposal to evaluate three major theories about why people hold negative or stereotyped ideas about homosexuality.

Lisa Wilde, with Margie Strosser, will direct the the film "Breasts: From Women's Point of View".

The new FACULTY ASSOCIATES include:

Barbara Katz-Rothman, an Assistant Professor at Baruch College, is examining the differences between medical and woman-centered health care.

Judith Lorber, Associate Professor at Brooklyn College, will work on her project on male and female physicians, which is described in detail in this Newsletter.

The VISITING SCHOLARS are:

Hema Goonatilake, of the University of Kelaniya, Sri Lanka, is researching the topic of women and the media.

Rhoda Unger, an Associate Professor at Montclair State College, is attempting to delineate a theoretical framework for a feminist psychology of women and analyzing the development of the field in terms of a sociology of knowledge approach.

We are delighted to welcome these new Associates and Visiting Scholars and we look forward to the interchange of ideas and experience among all our members.

Mary Brown Parlee, Director
Center for the Study of Women and Sex Roles

WOMEN'S STUDIES: FALL, 1980

The interdisciplinary curriculum in Women's Studies at the Graduate Center will include three courses for Fall, 1980. They are:

--Seminar in Sex Roles and the Environment, a three credit course, taught by Susan Saegert on Wednesdays from 9:30-11:30.

--Political Economy of Class, Race and Sex, a three-credit course, taught by Professor Franklin on Tuesdays, from 6:30-8:30.

--Women and the Power Structure, a three credit course, taught by Cynthia Epstein, on Wednesdays, from 2-4 pm.

More information on the interdisciplinary curriculum in Women's Studies is available in the Center, or from Rolf Meyersohn, Committee on Interdisciplinary Study and Research, CUNY, 33 West 42nd Street, New York, 10036

WOMEN IN THE ARTS: COMPOSERS

On Friday, May 2, Women in the Arts: Composers was presented by the Center for the Study of Women and Sex Roles in co-ordination with the Doctoral Program in Music. The program was part of the series "American Women in the Arts", for which Rosette Lamont is the general chair. Adrienne Block, chair for this session, is to be congratulated for her skill in bringing together diverse talents, a multiplicity of musical and theoretical viewpoints.

Three composers played their own works. Vivian Fine, who might be termed the classicist of the group, works in a contemporary idiom that draws on the Western traditions. Her "Lieder for Viola and Piano" played by Fine and Jacob Glick had musical reference to Hugo Wolf's lieder and Schubert's "Trout". The work ranged from the subtlety of the "Lento" to the remarkable power of "In the Garden of the Crucifixion." Meredith Monk's "Tablet", an extraordinary work for piano, three voices, and two recorders was played and sung (and moved to--the composer is also a choreographer) by Monk, Andrea Goodman and Monica Solem. The work, which uses pre-verbal sounds instead of words, later prompted Elizabeth Wood, in a fascinating series of questions during the panel discussion, to ask whether such an approach was distinctively female. (No definite answer was reached.) The last performer, Amina Claudine Myers, played her jazz compositions, "Earth" and "The Real Side" works of enormous power that fight the usual stereotypes of female creativity--or lack of it.

The panel discussion, moderated by Elizabeth Wood, undercut some commonly held assumptions, such as the idea that there have been few women composers in the past. Judith Tick, of Brooklyn College, discovered in her research that male historians of music often leave out of their accounts the women composers who made a mark on their age, thus effectively depriving later generations of any knowledge of them. Adrienne Block discussed history's treatment of women composers, in particular the nineteenth century American, Amy Beach. Beach was esteemed in her lifetime, but her reputation has been progressively diminished in histories of American music. Psychiatrist Anna Burton attributed this tendency to the equation of creativity with magic and divinity and the desire to make all gods male within patriarchal society.

Both the performance and the panel --on which the composers appeared-- contributed to an important and iconoclastic program.

Elaine Baruch
Associate Professor, York College

EMPLOYMENT

Graduate assistants are needed for a funded research project this summer and through the academic year to work on developing an instrument controlled for syntax and concept relations, data collection with fourth graders in schools, and data analysis. Statistical consultant needed, too. Call Beatrice Kachuck at Brooklyn College, 780-5943, 780-5892 or 522-2525.

Student interns interested in working in practical politics are needed by the Missouri ERA Coalition. The Coalition will offer transportation to and from Columbia, Missouri, room, board, local transportation, and help in obtaining credit from their college or university. The program includes one week of intensive training, eight weeks of work in the field working on primary campaigns, and a two-day wrap up after the campaign. For information and an application, write to Mary Ann Sedey, President, Missouri ERA Coalition, 300 S. Grand, St. Louis, Missouri, 63139.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Alice and Edith Hamilton Competition for the best original scholarly book-length manuscript on women is now open. Guidelines for the \$1,000 competition are available from Women and Culture Series, The University of Michigan Press, 1058 L.S. & A. Building, The University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, Michigan, 48109.

Division 35 of Psychology of Women is sponsoring an "Open Symposium of Papers on the Psychology of Women" on Tuesday, September 2, at the 1980 Annual Convention of the APA in Montreal, Canada. All those who submit abstracts, regardless of academic background or professional membership, will be able to present their scholarship. Send two copies of a 300 word abstract, double-spaced, with complete summer address, and a self-addressed, stamped postcard, to Susan Riemer Sacks, Barnard College, New York, New York, 10027. The research may not have been published or presented anywhere else.

The NEH has awarded a grant to the Women's Studies Program of Hunter College for the writing of a textbook and instructional manual for the basic course, "Introduction to Women's Studies". The text will be used experimentally and will be evaluated by Hunter students and teachers. Other instructors are invited to write to Sarah Pomeroy, Box 483, Hunter College, CUNY, 695 Park Avenue, New York, New York, 10021. In addition, the manuscripts will be sent to outside evaluators who will be selected on the basis of their knowledge and teaching experience in the field of Women's Studies. Consultants fees will be paid. Application deadline is August 15, 1980

The Women's Center of Brooklyn College provides resources for the following services: individual therapy, couples, families, crisis intervention and counseling services. For information on these resources and others, call 780-5777, Monday-Friday, 11-5.

Women's International Democratic Federation and Women for Racial and Economic Equality are holding a joint Regional Seminar in New York from June 6-8 on "Racial Discrimination and Its Effects on the Economic Rights of Women". For information, contact WREE, 130 East 16th Street, New York, New York, 10003, (473-6111).

On Thursday, June 12 from 6:30 to 8 pm the Committee to End Violence in the Lives of Women will hold a vigil in Herald Square (34th and Broadway). For more information contact the Committee, Box 2216, Brooklyn, New York 11202.