

Fuilure is impossible!

- Susan B. Anthony

Feminism and Family Studies Section Newsletter

National Council on Family Relations Kristine Baber, Editor Number 1 April, 1991

FROM THE CHAIR...

As we "go to press," there's lots of good news and bad news for those of us interested in the intersection of gender and family. The Court has just struck down the fetal protection policies that force women to choose between economic security and future fertility and may have forced employers to start paying more attention to the safety of both female and male workers... But, the battle for reproductive freedom seems to be heating up (if it can get any hotter) in the states...

There's a lot of great news to report from the FFS Section, though. Sheila Ricbe (NCFR's Business and Personnel Director) recently released a year-end report of our Section's finances that includes information about the proceeds from the 1990 Fundraiser. The net receipts approached \$3000. which brings the total amount in our endowment fund to \$8000+. Thus, thanks to the hard work of Rosemary Blieszner and the members of the Endowment Fund committee, our panel members (Jessie Bernard, Harriet Presser, Helena Lopata, Matilda Riley, and Mirra Komarovsky--whose remarks are reproduced in this Newsletter), the NCFR staff, and all of you who contributed to the fund, we are more than 80% of the way to our \$10,000 goal. Let's make 1991 the year we go over the top! Organize your departments, hit up your book publishers, and reach into your own pockets one more time! When the fund reaches \$10,000 it will generate enough interest income to fund our \$500 small grant each year.

Speaking of awards...

Please note that the deadline for applications for both of our Section awards—the 1991 Award for Outstanding Research Proposal from a Feminist Perspective AND the 1991 Paper Award for Outstanding Contribution to Feminist Scholarship—has been extended to JUNE 15. Applications should be sent to me at the Department of Sociology, University of Florida, Gainesville, 32611. More information about these awards is provided in this Newsletter. If you have any questions, please call me at (904) 392–0261 (O) or

(904) 378-1262 (H).

The 1991 Program...

I've heard a lot of positive comments about the innovations in the program format that have been instituted by Alexis Walker and the Program Committee. Colleagues from other disciplines report that poster presentations have been their primary format for program participation for years and that they feel they get more helpful, in-depth feedback from other scholars working in their areas than they got from the paper-reading format. We look forward to the same kind of success!

I'm pleased to report that quite a number of outstanding proposals for poster presentations and symposia were submitted to our Section for inclusion in the 1991 NCFR program. All of the proposals have been "blind" reviewed by three Section members who volunteered to serve in this capacity. (Thanks go to Katherine Allen, Elizabeth Bergen, Rosemary Blieszner, Kit Chesla, Sue Crohan, Susan Dalton, Polly Fassinger, Mike Johnson, Edie Lewis, Mary Morgan, Michelle Naughton, Maureen Perry-Jenkins, Peggy Quinn, Patty Spakes, Linda Thompson, Linda Beth Tiedje, and Lynn Woodhouse for their insightful reviews.) The final decisions about the 1991 program will be made at the NCFR Board's spring meeting later this month. Authors will be informed of the outcome of the review process shortly after that meeting. If you would like to be involved in the review process for the 1992 Program, please respond to our call for volunteers at the business meeting in November, or drop me a note...

In closing, help us continue the momentum developed by Karen Polonko, Alexis Walker, and all the people who've been so active in the Section since its beginning. Send your teaching materials/ideas to Donna Sollie. Sign up for the mentoring project by contacting Leigh Leslie. And most important of all—plan to attend the 1991 meeting in Denver in November.

— Connie Shehan

Department of Sociology University of Florida Gainesville

MISSION STATEMENT

In the March NCFR REPORT, President Lynda Henley Walters encouraged NCFR members to contact her or another Board member with thoughts about the organization's mission statement which will be discussed at the Spring Board meeting on April 20 and 21. This is an opportunity for members of the Feminism and Family Studies Section to express their ideas about what the mission of NCFR should be.

WRITE OR CALL TODAY

NEW BOOKS OF INTEREST

- Chafetz, Janet Saltzman. (1990). Gender Equity: An Integrated Theory of Stability and Change. Newbury Park, CA: Sage.
- Gordon, Suzanne. (1991). Prisoners of Men's Dreams: Striking Our for a New Feminine Future. Boston: Little, Brown & Company.
- Hawkesworth, M.E. (1990). Beyond Oppression: Feminist Theory and Political Strategy. New York: Continuum.
- Hirsh, Marianne & Keller, Evelyn Fox. (1990). Conflicts in Feminism. New York: Routledge.
- Nielsen, Joyce McCarl. (1990). Feminist Research Methods. Boulder, CO: Westview Press.
- Ranke-Heinemann, Uta. (1990). <u>Eunuchs</u> for the Kingdom of Heaven: Women, Sexuality, and the Catholic Church. New York: Doubleday.
- Rubin, Lillian. (1990). <u>Erotic Wars: What</u>
 <u>Happened to the Sexual Revolution?</u>
 New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux.
- Stacey, Judith. (1990). Brave New Families.
 New York: Basic Books.

COMMENTS by MIRRA KOMAROVSKY

[ED. NOTE: Dr. Mirra Komarovsky had been invited to participate in the panel discussion, "The History, Struggle, and Development of Women in Academe and Feminist Research," for the Jessie Bernard Endowment Fund at the NCFR meeting last November. Unfortunately, an eye problem prevented her from attending the conference. Dr. Komarovsky has graciously agreed to share with our readers the speech she had prepared for the panel. We congratulate Dr. Komarovsky, recipient of the 1991 "Career of Distinguished Scholarship Award" from the American Sociological Association.]

It is a pleasure to join colleagues on this panel. Our stories will reveal both common experiences of our cohort of women sociologists, as well, I am sure, as variations caused by different social and personality factors. Sociology is a very complex enterprise.

In order to deal with the cogent questions outlined by Karen Polonko within the limited time, I shall intersperse my narrative now and then with brief vignettes.

First a few words about my origins. My family arrived in the USA from Baku, Azerbaijan in 1922. I was 17 years old and in the Spring of 1922 received my high school diploma from Wichita, Kansas and was graduated from Barnard in 1926.

The obstacles encountered by me as a woman are complicated by the fact that my status-set involved two other components unwelcome in the academy.

Now comes my first vignette. My undergraduate adviser was William F. Ogburn with whom I worked closely as a student and a research assistant. In my senior year he suddenly asked me a puzzling question, "What do you plan to do after graduation?" "Teach College Sociology, of course," I answered, amazed that despite our work together my professional commitment would be in question. "Not a realistic option, " my mentor replied. "You are a woman, Jewish, and an immigrant." I was hurt more by his seemingly calm blow to my life plan (I found out later that I was mistaken in that) than by any fear that he

was right. And, indeed, at 22 having received an M.A. from Columbia, I accepted the rank of instructor at Skidmore College and was promoted to assistant professor for the second year.

I left Skidmore after two years to return to graduate studies at Columbia. There was not a single woman on the Barnard faculty in sociology and certainly not at Columbia. All my professors were men — Ogburn, MacIver, Hankins and others.

Now my second vignette. Between 1931–1935, I held several research jobs. MacIver, who chaired the Barnard Sociology Department, knew me as a student, Ph.D. candidate at Columbia. In 1935, there was an opening for an instructorship at Barnard. Instead of offering it to me, he divided the job. I was to teach a course on the family, a subject that at the time did not interest me, whereas the male graduate student was asked to teach two courses, on social stratification and on theory — specialties that did interest me. Much later MacIver explained that the man, unlike me, was more likely, he thought, to remain in the profession. On my score he proved to be wrong.

MacIver's male candidate left Barnard for a better position and eventually I became a full-time instructor. In fact, I remained an instructor for five years after I received my doctorate and published two books, favorably reviewed. This lack of promotion was not, however, caused by sex discrimination but by the conviction of Dean Gildersleeve of Barnard and President Butler of Columbia that anyone whose name was Komarovsky would somehow pollute the Protestant ambiance of the faculty.



Why did I stay? Assertiveness training, which I may have needed, in this case would have resulted in an offer to leave. What helped to suppress, perhaps even to repress, the sense of unfairness was my otherwise satisfying life. I loved teaching (I still teach), and was happily married to a businessman who wouldn't leave New York — but then neither would I. I will tell you presently the hidden price of this seeming adjustment. But first another vignette of sex discrimination.

A meeting of the Columbia Graduate Sociology Department— Some 8 men and I, one woman, representing Barnard—

Merton reported on applicants for admission to the graduate department. He mentions quite casually that too many of the women applicants had high college records. In order to have a desirable number of men, men with <u>lower scores</u> had been given preference.

A pause. My presence is an embarrassment. The men look at me. With, alas, unusual for me sarcasm, I say, "I suppose it depends on how far down the barrel you had to scrape to get your desired number of men."

Merton doesn't like this. "Undergraduate women study more conscientiously than men and may get better grades, but men are more creative and we can expect more of them in the long run."

I said that a hidden price must have been paid for this adjustment. It was difficult, for me at least, to maintain self-confidence and creativity when neither the institution nor one's colleagues took me seriously. At a deeper level my confidence was eroding.

How did I get out of the doldrums? I'll point to some internal and external factors.

In the early 1940s the problems I had experienced as a very prim, intellectual undergraduate and later as a professional women, began pressing on my consciousness with such force that I needed not merely to express but to conceptualize them and to fashion some middle range theory.

The external factor in my redemption was the arrival of Millicent McIntosh as President of Barnard College. Her confidence in me led to my appointment in 1948 as chair of the Barnard Sociology Department. Gladys Meyer, Bernard Barber, Renee Fox, and Roberta Simmons all taught in the Department. The last two

would have certainly received tenure had they not been lured by offers from graduate schools.

I don't want to give the impression that decades of research on women would have followed merely because I began to feel some appreciative resonance, not only in reviews of my articles and books, but in invitations to address academic and wider public audiences — Mrs. Roosevelt's TV "Prospects of Mankind," Canadian TV "Conference on Women," Professional Women's Clubs, and the like.

Now I want to turn to some theoretical issues. What bearing does this brief life sketch, as well as the substance of my work, have on some current polemics in feminist scholarship?

The first is the issue of determinism, of relative rigidity of women's personality in a patriarchy. That is, how powerful is socialization in childhood and youth, as well as, structural and cultural constraints throughout life to keep women in their traditional psychological mold? On the other hand, is personality malleable? Does the social actor have some power to overcome constraints or at least to change when inhibiting constraints weaken?

Feminist writings until the 1970s stressed the impact of differential socialization upon adult personalities of men and women. Whether drawing upon the existing literature or charting new research, the underlying feminist quest was explicit: "What in socialization of children and adolescents might account for traits that are generally regarded as feminine deficiencies in comparison with men?"

This preoccupation with differential socialization was no doubt motivated by the felt need to expose the social roots of "feminine deficiencies" and, more generally, the mechanisms of maintaining gender inequality. The political message was clear: "It is not in our genes."

With the passage of time we note, if not the muting of references to childhood and adolescent socialization, at least the emergence of a new theme. Feminist writers began to highlight the existing literature that confirmed the new theme and also to undertake research specifically oriented to new hypotheses. "Yes." states the underlying new message: "Personality is shaped by early socialization, but let us not succumb to the doctrine of rigid determinism. It is time to recognize the potential for change as people move through life and encounter new opportunities and new rewards. This is especially applicable to women at a time of such rapid transformation in conditions and values affecting their lives." No doubt, there is an ideological component in the rejection of a doctrine of a rigidly-fixed personality. The doctrines of rigidity, after all, serve to bolster the discrimination against women. Male gatekeepers could all too easily claim that reforms must await the emergence at some future time of a generation of women properly socialized to assume new challenges.

As I look back at my life I believe that blocked opportunities, more accurately, an unsupportive environment, accounted for a loss of nearly a decade of creative work. Different personalities might have overcome similar obstacles. For me, a beneficent change in my personal life and the confidence in me on the part of the new College President released whatever latent abilities I possessed. It is a kind of feedback loop process. The social actor receives a new challenge from an authoritative agent who shows confidence in the actor's ability to meet it. If the actor succeeds, self-confidence, aspiration, and ambition rise.

As an aside, the question of malleability vs. rigidity or consistency of personality surely requires a more complex model of research. The psychoanalysts I am sure have different traits in mind when they stress consistency. Eventually we shall have better answers as to which aspects of personality are relatively more or less consistent throughout life and under what conditions. But this is a topic for a different presentation.

- November, 1990

Information in this newsletter does not necessarily reflect the viewpoints of the National Council on Family Relations.

BOOK REVIEW

Women, Feminism and Family Therapy (guest edited by Lois Bravetman, Journal of Psychotherapy and the Family, 3(4), The Haworth Press, New York, Winter, 1987) looks at whether or not there is gender bias in family therapy models and asks whether family systems and feminist perspectives can co-exist. The goal of this volume is to examine family therapy concepts from a feminist perspective, to look at how a feminist approach affects the training and supervision of family therapists and to use a "feminist-sensitive perspective" to treatment issues which are specially relevant to women (p.5-6).

This book is designed to question the basic concepts upon which traditional family therapy is based and examines such issues as the use of sexist language in all areas of intellectual inquiry, the invisibility of women's work in family therapy, and what we should accept as objective, universal and neutral. Among the considerations that these authors want taken into account are that we need to understand the impact of a patriarchal system on both men and women, that institutions (such as motherhood and marriage) are fraught with sociopolitical implications for women and that we need to develop a greater understanding of women's sexuality, relationships between women, and the importance of the biological effects of the female life cycle (p.8–9).

The authors of this edited volume are all practicing psychotherapists who have worked to integrate feminist principles with family therapy. The book is divided into sections on theoretical issues (is family systems theory really systematic? enmeshment, fusion or relatedness?), clinical applications (women and familial abuse, intergenerational aspects of treating women alcoholics, lesbian mothers and daughters who come out to each other, women and eating disorders, women and therapy, and women and rituals), as well as training and supervision issues (women as students and supervisors).

- Marcie Parker

"MISSING VOICES: HOMOSEXUALS AND LESBIANS – THEIR FAMILIES AND CHILDREN"

by
Pepper Schwartz
Distinguished Lecture,
Feminism and Family Studies Section

The legitimacy of gay male and lesbian families has long been included in the legal controversy over homosexual civil rights. After a substantial history of antagonism toward gay male and lesbian parents, the U.S. courts appear to be softening on the issue of sexual preference in their recent treatment of child custody, adoption, and foster child care cases. According to Pepper Schwartz, however, this new leniency is not without its costs. While judges seem to be less concerned than previously with the sex of a custodial parent's partner, great consideration is given to insure that the family unit ultimately sanctified by the court will not challenge traditional family values.

In her lecture, Schwartz addressed eight concerns of the courts that form the current core litmus test for establishing the "traditional" viability of a gay male or lesbian family.

Are homosexual parents healthy compared to heterosexual parents?

Judges prefer conservative lesbians, frequently viewing gay men as less constant.

Are gay people capable of commitment?

Too often the court requires a higher standard than most couples can provide, given a lack of social means to legitimate gay relationships. Once a commitment is made, however, gay male relationships seem to last longer than either lesbian or cohabiting heterosexual relationships.

Do homosexual parents have role constancy? Is there a Daddy?

Judges seldom warm to ideology that seeks to interrupt conventional gender-role behaviors. Gay men are particularly at risk, appearing too feminine if they claim maternal skills and too masculine if they emphasize only the father role.

Does the family have opposite—sex friends who can provide adequate gender—role models?

Most families can comply.

Can gay parents parent?

The courts are concerned that adequate attention be paid to the everyday needs of children such as homework help, carpooling, medical care, and appropriate fashion guidance.

Do gay parents produce gay children?

Gay men are suspected of potential molestation, although gay men are less likely to sexually abuse children than are heterosexual men. Evidence also suggests that heterosexual families are more likely to produce gay offspring than are gay male or lesbian families.

Will the children of homosexual parents be stigmatized?

In fact, children of gay male and lesbian parents are surprisingly free of stigma, reflecting the values necessary to fit in with their peers.

Are there any options for custody within the kin group that would be preferable to the gay family?

Because how the court defines a case is significant for its disposition, Schwartz stressed that this emphasis on conventionality effectively silences gay male and lesbian parents and forces them into a conservatism beyond that required of heterosexual couples. In short, the current court agenda holds custodial rights for gay parents hostage to the demands of a dying family ideal.

- Kay B. Forest, Recorder

ELECTIONS

Ballots have been sent out for the election of new officers for NCFR. Biographical sketches of candidates appear in the March newsletter. Elections will be held for national officers, the national nominating committee, and the following sections: Family Policy, International, Religion and Family Life, and Research and Theory. Ballots must be postmarked by May 1, 1991 and returned to NCFR headquarters. This is another opportunity for you to influence the future direction of NCFR. Take time to review the platforms of the candidates and VOTE.

National Council on Family Relations Feminism and Family Studies Section MINUTES

Annual Business Meeting - November 12, 1990 Blakely Room, Westin Hotel; Seattle, WA Attendance: 51

Call to Order

Karen Polonko, Section Chair, called the meeting to order at 11:35 a.m.

Minutes

Rosemary Blieszner, Secretary, read the minutes of the 1989 annual business meeting. The minutes were approved as read.

Treasurer's Report

Rosemary Blieszner, Treasurer, presented the third quarter report. As of 9/30/90, the Section had 307 members. The year-to-date revenue was \$4,115.16, including \$1,109 from memberships and \$3,006.16 for the Jessie Bernard Endowment Fund. The year-to-date expenses were \$247.46 for postage, \$1.21 for supplies, \$406.88 for travel, \$64.90 for annual meeting speakers, \$54.81 for computer labels, \$11.25 for long-distance phone calls from the NCFR office, and \$98.72 for printing, for a total of \$885.23. The ending balance for the third quarter is \$5,548.30. The Treasurer's report was approved as presented.

Committee Reports

Endowment. Rosemary Blieszner, Chair, reported that the Jessie Bernard Endowment Fund has received contributions of approximately \$3,500 so far. The proceeds of the ticket sales for the fundraiser panel discussion and reception tonight will provide some additional funds. The fund balance will not be available until after the reception and speaker travel expenses are paid. The annual award for the best proposal will be taken from the Section account until the endowment reaches \$10,000. Mirra Komarovsky was unable to attend the meeting because of a recent eye problem; Helena Lopata graciously agreed to join the panel in Komarovsky's place. Additional efforts are underway to solicit contributions from publishers of family/ gender/feminist studies. Section members were encouraged to help seek additional contributions and help recruit new members of the Section. Rosemary thanked the committee members: Katherine Allen, Gloria Bird, Beth Emery, and Shelley MacDermid.

Awards. Polly Fassinger, Chair, reported that the awards for the Outstanding Contribution to Feminist Scholarship and

Outstanding Research Proposal from a Feminist Perspective will be presented at the session later today before Pepper Schwartz presents the Section's Distinguished Lecture. She thanked committee members, Collect Murray, Marie Osmond, Maureen Perry-Jenkins, and Alexis Walker.

Teaching. Dorothy Cali Balancio, committee member, reported for Donna Sollie, Chair. The committee has received about 20 syllabi for courses from a feminist perspective and a number of other contributions such as annotated bibliographies and suggestions for course projects. The Section members discussed concerns of some members who hesitated to submit their materials. It was decided to include a call for a variety of course materials in the Section Newsletter, with a return sheet to facilitate quick and easy responses.

Mentoring. Alexis Walker, Chair, reported that the committee has developed questionnaires for those who desire mentoring and those who wish to provide it, a letter explaining the program, and a list of recommended articles for the newsletter about professional development issues. After these articles are written, they could be compiled into a handbook for use by those seeking tenure and promotion. The questionnaires and letter are ready for use by the new committee.

Chair's Report

Karen Polonko expressed two concerns about the Section. The first is that she received fewer proposals for conference presentations than last year, and, as a result, the Section had one fewer session on the program. The second emerges from the first: Section members must strive to keep the momentum of feminist approaches growing in NCFR.

Alexis Walker, NCFR Program Vice President, reminded the Section of the possibility of planning a preconference workshop on feminist issues.

Announcement

Margaret Crosbie-Burnett reminded the Section that she and Katherine Allen are editing a special issue of Family Relations on innovative teaching techniques. The deadline for papers is March 1, 1991.

Officer Transition

Karen Polonko thanked the outgoing Section officers: Marie Osmond (Vice Chair), Alexis Walker (Past Chair), Rosemary Blieszner (Secretary/Treasurer), Katherine Allen (Newsletter Editor) and Polly Fassinger and Kay B. Forest (Student/New Professional Representatives). She then introduced the new Section officers: Constance Shehan (Chair), Katherine Allen (Vice Chair), Polly Fassinger (Secretary/Treasurer), Kristine M. Baber (Newsletter Editor), and Vicki L. Loyer-Carlson and Maureen A. Perry-Jenkins (Student/New Professional Representatives).

Connic Shehan invited comments and suggestions from Section members, encouraged them to recruit new members, and requested assistance with reviewing conference presentation proposals and presiding at conference sessions.

1991 Program

Alexis Walker described the process of developing the conference program format, summarized evaluations of previous conferences, and stated two goals for the 1991 conference: for presenters and attendees to interact with each other (to be accomplished via poster sessions) and for attendees to learn from each other (to be accomplished via symposia and plenary speakers). Poster sessions will be arranged with papers on related topics, regardless of the presenter's Section, in the same room.

The meeting was adjourned at 12:35 p.m.

- Rosemary Blieszner, Secretary

FFS MENTORING PROGRAM

All necessary groundwork for the Feminism and Family Studies Mentoring Program has been completed. Throughout 1990 the Mentoring Committee developed policies, procedures, and materials that would serve as the vehicle for running the program. The time now has come to begin the process of recruiting and pairing mentors with individuals desiring a mentor. Let me first, however, refresh everyone's memory as to the purpose of this program.

Purpose: Through the Mentoring Program the FFS Section will attempt to bring together professionals who need advice or assistance in the academic arena and those who have been successful in this system. The immediate goal is to help faculty establish themselves professionally and be promoted and tenured. A broader, long-range goal is to increase the number of feminist professionals in senior ranks.

<u>Procedure</u>: Any member of the FFS Section is eligible to participate in the program. Mentors and individuals wishing to be mentored need to contact me

via letter or bitnet. I will send you an application form to be returned to me with a copy of your curriculum vitae. Individuals will be paired for one year on the basis of area(s) of interest and degree of assistance requested and offered. A letter of introduction that specifies the expected level of help requested and/or offered, whichever is lower, will be sent to each member of a mentor pair.

While mentors volunteer their services, individuals who seek mentoring are asked to pay \$10 (if income is \$20,000/yr. or less) or \$20 (if income is over \$20,000/yr.). This money will be contributed to the Section's Award Endowment Fund. In this way, program participants contribute to the Section and to the development of feminist scholarship.

If you have any questions, feel free to contact me at the address or bitnet number below. For your convenience I have attached an initial interest form to this page which can be mailed directly to me. I will then send you all necessary material.

> - Leigh Leslie, Mentoring Program Coordinator

Name	
Address	
I'm interest	ed in: serving as a Mentor being assigned a Mentor
MAIL TO:	Leigh Leslie, Mentor Coordinator Dept. of Family & Community Development University of Maryland College Park, MD 20742
BITNET #:	LALESLIE@UMD2



OUTSTANDING CONTRIBUTION TO FEMINIST SCHOLARSHIP PAPER AWARD





OUTSTANDING RESEARCH PROPOSAL FROM A FEMINIST PERSPECTIVE AWARD



The Feminism and Family Studies Section is seeking applicants for our second annual "Outstanding Contribution to Feminist Scholarship Paper Award." Applications for this non-monetary award are open to all graduate students and new professionals (with up to five years post-doctoral work). Papers should demonstrate contribution to feminist scholarship and use of feminist frameworks and methods. Applicants should be sole author or first author of the published or unpublished paper. To apply, please submit five copies of your paper by June 15 to:

Dr. Constance Shehan, Department of Sociology, University of Florida, Gainesville, Florida 32665. The award will be presented at the 1991 NCFR meeting. A summary of the paper will be published in the Feminism and Family Studies Newsletter.

The Feminism and Family Studies Section is seeking applicants for our first annual "Outstanding Research Proposal from a Feminist Perspective Award." Graduate students and new professionals (with up to five years post-doctoral work) are encouraged to apply for this \$500 award. Proposals will be evaluated for their potential contribution to feminist scholarship and use of feminist frameworks and methods. Applications should include: a) an abstract of 100 words or less, b) a five page (maximum) proposal outlining the project's theoretical foundation, research methods, and potential contribution to feminist scholarships, and c) a half-page budget. Please send five copies by June 15, 1991 to: Dr. Constance Shehan, Department of Sociology, University of Florida, Gainesville, Florida, 32665. The award will be presented at the 1991 NCFR meeting. A summary of the recipient's research results will be published in the Feminism and Family Studies Newsletter.