

FAILURE IS IMPOSSIBLE!



Susan B. Anthony

Feminism and Family Studies Section Newsletter
National Council on Family Relations
Number 7, March 1997

**Report from the
CHAIR**

It seems we've just finished one conference and it is time to plan another. As I write this I am anticipating the arrival of proposals for the '97 conference and as you read this, many of you are probably busily reviewing proposals. Let me thank all of you who volunteered to review and all those who are reviewing. We have so many willing volunteers that I couldn't use everyone in this round, but I will still be contacting people about serving as session **discussants, presidents, and recorders**. If you weren't at the business meeting and did not have a chance to volunteer, but would like to serve in some capacity at the conference in Crystal City, please contact me soon. It is the continued dedicated work of our section members which make our program consistently strong.

For those of you who weren't at the business meeting you may have missed the big news that we now have a section **listserve** for all who are interested. So far it has been used for posting job announcements, soliciting input on projects, and general dissemination of information about books, conferences, etc. Our hope is that it provides an avenue for us to assist and support one another in our work. If you are interested in having your name added please contact Kate Conway at katech@bach.udel.edu.

I also want to take this opportunity to remind students and new professionals of our **paper and proposal awards** and encourage you to get those submissions in--time is running out. See the announcement in this newsletter for more detail.

Let me also remind every one to take a good look at the NCFR Report you should be receiving soon--if you haven't already received it.

The bios and pictures of our **slate of candidates** are in there. We have excellent people who have agreed to run for all the offices in the section.

As always, feel free to contact me with ideas, suggestions, questions or whatever concerning the section.

Leigh Leslie

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(That's LL as in Leigh Leslie and 11 as in 10 + 1 ... it's a little confusing when you first look at it, but once you get it you don't forget it.)

**1996-1998 Feminism & Family Studies Section
EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE**

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A Note from Women's History

October 7, 1869

Mrs. Belva A Lockwood

Madam, the Faculty of Columbian College have considered your request to be admitted to the Law Department of this institution and after due consideration have considered that such admission would not be expedient as it would be likely to distract the attention of the young men.

From: Dusky, L. (1996). Still Unequal. NY: Crown Press

SECTION SUMMARIES

Families in Political Context Kansas City, MO. Nov. 1996

The Feminism and Family Studies Section had a strong and successful presence at the fall conference. Below are reviews of some of the sessions. Read on for summaries of some very interesting research projects.....

IDEOLOGY AND THE NEGOTIATION OF ROLES IN FAMILIES

Submitted by Tracey Laszloffy

Three papers were presented in this section. In the first, "The Negotiation of Equality in New Marriage: A Study of Patterns of Accommodation and Benefit," Anne Rankin Mahoney and Carmen Knudson-Martin examined how newly married couples respond to social-contextual factors which both encourage and inhibit equality. Their analysis of in-depth interviews with twelve egalitarian heterosexual couples in their first year of marriage revealed that while all of the couples described their relationship using a "language of equality," none of them fully met the criteria for equality. Relationships in which couples specifically engaged in open negotiations, fighting, and power struggles were either in conscious transition to equality or lacked equality but did not find this acceptable. In contrast, the couples characterized by the "myth of equality" avoided addressing gender equality issues and instead engaged in benign reframing, rationalizing, not examining consequences, hiding issues, or placing the responsibility on the wife. The authors concluded that most of the couples in the study had an incomplete idea of what an equal relationship would look like and seemed unaware of the ways in which gender impacted upon their relationship. Moreover, those who were on their way to achieving equality had to be willing to fight for it through a process of conscious negotiation, conflict, and open struggle.

The second paper, by Janet Wright, was titled "Outside/Inside: Creating the Stepmother

Role in Lesbian Step Families. This author's study, which focused on five lesbian families where at least one parent brought children from another family, addressed two questions: 1) if parenting tasks are not divided by gender, then how do they get negotiated? ; and 2) how does the fact that one person is a step parent affect their emotional connection to the children and how they parent? Through analysis of observations, interviews, and subjects' journals, three unique parenting stances emerged. The co-parent stance involved helping and supporting the biological mother with daily routines and nurturing responsibilities, but the power and responsibility leaned more heavily toward the biological mother. In the step mother stance, the step mother assumed more of the traditional mothering types of responsibilities, but the biological mother retained a greater degree of power and authority. In the third stance, co-mother, both mothers had equal rights and responsibilities with their children. The author concluded that personality factors rather than gender factors determined how parenting tasks were negotiated. The ways in which parents nurtured were infinitely more salient than biology in making one a parent.

In the third paper, "Fatherhood Ideology and the Politics of Parenting," authors Carl Auerbach and Louise Silverstein began by noting that , ironically, though neoconservative religious groups and progressive feminist groups reflect dramatically different ideological positions, both advocate strongly for emotionally connected, responsible fathering. Using data collected through semi-structured group interviews of about 200 men who were asked to discuss their fathering experiences, four theoretical constructs emerged as necessary for producing change in how men interact as fathers: gender role strain, facilitating ideology, social support, and rewards for new behaviors. The authors concluded that the neoconservative movement may be more effective in reaching fathers because it soothes men's gender role anxiety by reinforcing male power and authority. In contrast, the progressive feminist movement has exacerbated this anxiety by challenging the patriarchal power base that privileges men.

The discussant, Kate Conway-Turner, suggested that all three papers were about the

importance of connection in families and ways in which ideology and choice lead us to negotiate roles in our families. She raised several questions as “food for thought” 1) what are the key contextual issues we need to consider with regard to families?; 2) how do we sort through the distinctions between what is ideal versus real with regard to family relationships; and 3) what types of myths do we have about ideal family roles?

SOCIAL IDEOLOGY, SOCIAL INSTITUTIONS, AND FAMILY FUNCTIONING

Submitted by Elizabeth Farnsworth

The papers presented in this section were “When the political agenda sets your execution date: Families of children with disabilities” by Diane Hovey, “Mother’s power and the development of gender role attitudes in sons and daughters” by Juli Barnard, Constance Hardesty, and Carolyn Stout Morgan, “So you think I drive a cadillac: The social construction of welfare moms” by Karen Seccombe, Delores James, Kimberly Battle-Walters, Maximilian Wilson, and Goldie MacDonald, and “Working them out.. working them in: Ideology and the everyday practices of female military partners experiencing the cycle of deployment” by Deborah Norris.

According to Hovey, funding decisions of legislators or administrators leave families of children with disabilities “feeling as though they were pawns in a political chess game with life-threatening consequences.” Using eight years of participant observation regarding disability issues in politics and in-depth and brief interviews with ten families, she outlined three ways the political process impacts families who have children with disabilities: a) the political process plays a role in shaping the family’s view of and response to their child; b) the political process decreases family support through the perpetuation of stereotypes that increase stigmatization and isolation; and c) the political process impedes a family’s ability to manage their situation thereby increasing the risk for crisis. Hovey called for responsive social service programs based on an understanding of family and community contexts. She said that as

long as programs for children with disabilities and their families “continue to be given the death penalty, families will need to be engaged in appealing the verdict.”

Barnard, Hardesty, and Morgan began by contrasting women’s recent advances in positions of authority in government, education, and economy with continuing resistance and negative attitudes toward women in these positions.

Drawing on social learning and social feminist theories, data from a random survey (n=416) in a large metropolitan city, OLS regression analysis was used to assess the effects of mother’s labor-market, familial and personal power as experienced during the respondent’s childhood on the respondents attitudes toward women in positions of authority. Findings indicated that being raised in a two-parent family in which mothers performed a majority of the household labor significantly decreased men’s acceptance of women in positions of authority. The interaction of mother’s personal power combined with family decision-making power had a positive significant effect on acceptance of women in positions of authority for men and women in two-parent families. In addition, mothers’ work authority had a positive significant effect on accepting women in authority. The authors concluded that the development of attitudes toward women in positions of authority is to some degree influenced by perceptions of mothers’ power.

Seccombe, James, Battle-Walters, Wilson, and MacDonald conducted in-depth interviews with 47 women who receive AFDC to examine the metatheories they use to a) interpret public stigma toward welfare recipients, b) explain why other women receive AFDC, and c) explain why they themselves receive AFDC. Individualist, Social Structuralism, Culturalism, Fatalism, and “Big Brother” were the metatheories examined. The authors found that respondents tended to blame social structure, fate, or the welfare system for their own economic circumstances, but invoked popular and mainstream individualist and cultural “victim blaming” metatheories to explain other women’s reliance upon the system. Many women believed popular constructions of the welfare mother as lazy and unmotivated but evaluated their own situation as distinctly different from the norm.

The paper by Norris began with a personal narrative by the author describing her experiences with Navy families during her years she worked in a bank, her own family experiences, and her work at the Military Families Resource Center. In her banking position, she came to recognize the exhaustion on the faces of the Navy wives whose husbands were deployed and to learn about the particulars of their lives. Norris conducted a feminist, qualitative study based on the experiences of seven Navy wives during phases of pre-deployment, deployment, and post-deployment of their spouses. She identified military and gender practices inherent to the military institution and revealed deployment as a work process involving purposive activity and practices to maintain family cohesion during deployment cycles and embody gender ideologies associated with women's socialization.

WOMEN IN THE LATER YEARS

Submitted by Ramona Faith Oswald

This Sunday morning session was presided by Mary Morgan.

Marsha Carolan presented her work with a participatory research group of midlife women that was formed to 'Break the Silence about Menopause.' The women in this group had diverse experiences while all agreeing that women need more empathy and information about menopause from medical providers, that women may feel shame and secrecy regarding menopause, and that community building among midlife women is an important route to education and support.

"Women and retirement: The unexplored transition" was Christine Price's presentation of her dissertation research with Patricia Bell Scott. Christine's analysis of a racially diverse sample focused on "relinquishing professional identity" and discussed the challenges faced by women as they make the initial transition to retirement, lose social contacts and professional challenges, and confront ageist stereotypes.

"Spiritual resiliency" was the topic of Janet Ramsey and Rosemary Bliezner's cross-

cultural study that compared older Lutheran women in Virginia and Germany. Janet and Rosemary found that Lutheran women experienced their spirituality as an emotional and integral part of family and community relationships.

As the discussant, Jackie Stanfield tied these papers together with three threads. She pointed out that each project facilitated and reported the voices of women, emphasized later life transitions as important to women, and celebrated the significance of women's personal, work, and community relationships.

Your Young and Happily Aging Recorder

Occupational Category	1983	1994
Executive, administrative, and managerial	32.4	43.0
Officials and public administrators	38.5	46.1
Personnel managers	43.9	61.6
Purchasing managers	23.6	37.0
Professional specialty	48.1	52.8
Engineers	5.8	8.3
Dentists	6.7	13.3
Dietitians	90.8	92.0
Nurses (RNs)	95.8	93.8
Physicians	15.8	22.3
University teachers	36.3	42.5
Elementary school teachers	83.3	85.6
Secondary school teachers	51.8	55.6
Librarians	87.3	84.1
Clergy	5.6	11.1
Lawyers	15.3	24.6
Technicians and related support	64.6	64.3
Health technicians	84.3	81.6
Science technicians	29.1	36.7
Legal assistants	74.0	79.9
Sales occupations	47.5	49.1
Real estate sales	48.9	48.4
Insurance sales	25.1	35.1
Securities/financial services sales	23.6	29.9
Cashiers	84.4	79.8
Administrative support, including clerical	79.9	78.9
Secretaries	99.0	98.9
Computer operators	63.7	60.6
Messengers	26.2	25.7
Service occupations		
Child-care workers	96.9	97.3
Cleaners and servants	95.8	95.8
Police and detectives	9.4	15.6
Firefighting, fire prevention	1.0	2.1
Precision production, craft, and repair	8.1	9.3
Mechanics and repairers	2.8	4.2
Construction trades	1.8	2.2
Carpenters	1.4	1.0
Operators, fabricators, and laborers	26.6	24.3
Textile/furnishing machine operators	82.1	74.4
Truck drivers	3.1	4.5
Freight, stock material handlers	15.4	20.1
Laborers (except construction)	19.4	18.2
Farming, forestry, and fishing	16.0	19.3
Farm operators and managers	12.1	25.4
Farm workers	24.8	16.6
Fishing, hunters, and trappers	4.5	6.2

Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census, *Statistical Abstract of the United States*, Table No. 649:411-13.

As cited in Lindsey, L. (1997) Gender Roles. Prentice Hall

BOOK REVIEWS

ETHICAL DECISION MAKING IN THERAPY: FEMINIST PERSPECTIVES. (1995).

**Edited by Elizabeth J. Rave and
Carolyn C. Larsen. NY:Guilford**

Reviewed by Marsha Carolan

Ethical questions seem to be emerging more urgently as we move closer to the twenty-first century. Highly visible therapists such as William Doherty (*Soul Searching*) and Mary Pipher (*Reviving Ophelia*) have received a lot of attention of late in challenging the ethics of the 90s. Doherty stressed the need for therapists to act with caring, community, and moral justice in facing critical situations with their clients while Pipher condemns a society in which young women are prized only for physical beauty and youthful sexuality.

Feminists will likely recognize the familiarity of issues such as these. Feminist scholars have been raising their voices to speak to these issues for decades. This book, although recently published, arose out of several decades of feminist therapy meetings and conferences at the Feminist Family Therapy Institute in Colorado. In a thoughtful and thorough treatment of ethical decision making, editors Elizabeth Rave and Carolyn Larsen showcase the contributions of an array of feminist practitioners who elegantly address the natural complexity of ethical decision making. All of the chapters are thought provoking and helpful, treating a range of relevant issues including naming and norming in mental health, lifespan and aging biases, monetary and health concerns, reproductive issues, overlapping/dual relationships and violence against women. All of these topics are of concern to all practicing clinicians but have particular relevancy for those therapists that identify with feminist practice.

Several aspects of this volume make it a particularly important work. In chapters 4-11, an issue is first addressed conceptually followed by an illustration in the form of 2-3 dilemmas that are responded to by 2-3 different feminist therapists.

Each chapter has a variety of dilemmas and a different cast of therapists so that a wide variety of feminist therapists have the opportunity to offer their viewpoints throughout the text. Each therapist not only offers her unique perspective but in offering her perspective also demonstrates a theoretical and practical approach to working with women and their significant others.

Another aspect that makes this volume stand out is in the presentation of a model for ethical decision making in Chapter 2 followed by a feminist code of ethics in Chapter 3. The two page "Ethical guidelines for Feminist therapists" should be required reading for all therapists and feminist practitioners. This is an ethics guide that addresses the real issues at the heart of feminist ideology: cultural diversity, power differentials, and social change. Additionally, it addresses the real issues at the heart of feminist practice: overlapping relationships, and therapist accountability, a function of which is the need for therapist self-care. The final substantive chapter of the book is devoted to the issue of self-care, an ethical issue rarely if ever addressed and yet one so fundamental to the practice of caring of others. Purchasing or reading this volume is an act of self-care that is recommended for everyone who seeks to or presently practices as a feminist therapist.

*Our religion, laws, customs are all founded on
the belief that woman was made for man.*

Elizabeth Cady Stanton

By a Section Member

RUTS: GENDER ROLES AND REALITIES (1996)

**Edited by Anne Rankin Mahoney
Red Feather Lakes, CO: Red Mesa
Publishing**

Reviewed by Carmen Knudson-Martin

The title of this book, *Ruts: Gender Roles and Realities*, graphically illustrates how deeply trapped we can be in learned ways of living--ruts--that direct our behavior as males or females. This volume provides a interdisciplinary look at how destructive inflexible gender roles can be and makes visible the many ways society reinforces these ruts through mass media, education, religion, the military, the economy, politics, and the family. Whether discussing television comedies or the financial well-being of retirees, we see recurring examples of how widespread and how limiting rigid gender roles are for both women and men.

The book, which grew out of a seminar in gender studies, is exceptionally clearly and well-written. In a few short pages (the book is 140 pages) this text brings to life many of the important issues in feminist studies. Though careful to provide an objective and reasoned introduction to issues in the field, Anne and her contributors do not mince words. They lay out the historical and philosophical roots of gender inequality, then look at how gender inequalities, distortions, and stereotypes are maintained today using a variety of different lenses that extend beyond the family into all levels of social institutions and across diverse ethnic, cultural and socioeconomic groups.

This book is a godsend to anyone looking for a user-friendly introduction to feminist studies. But it is a delight and worth-while read for more seasoned scholars as well, particularly for those of us who find opportunities for exposure to feminist works outside family studies more limited than we like. The topics of the chapters provide a good stimulus for thought on a variety of interesting issues. For example, chapter two examines how

those who create and maintain traditional gender roles use a triumvirate of God, nature, and tradition to rationalize men's domination over women. Chapter three looks at the economic costs of gender discrimination by examining women over 65. Chapter four looks at how television shapes our views about gender, in particular about women as mothers. Chapter five looks at the "no girls allowed" news coverage of juvenile crime and definitions of female delinquency. In contrast, chapter six examines how the military feminizes the enemy in order to dominate them and the double message sent to soldiers that dominating women is acceptable. Chapter seven considers male-dominance and violence in the anti-abortion movement. Chapter 8 looks at the battle between the radical religious right and the gay, lesbian, and bisexual community. Chapter nine examines the legacy of struggle and resistance among women of the Caribbean. Chapter 10 presents the example of Ida B. Wells-Barnett, a black woman whose leadership in the crusade for social justice serves as a model and inspiration.

The publishing of *Ruts* is itself a testimony to what can happen when new voices are empowered. To get this book contact Red Mesa Publishing, PO Box 505, Red Feather Lakes, CO 80545; (303)0 765-0188.

"Feminists hope that movement against gender inequality may introject into society principles that...make the world a more humane place for all of humankind...and bring together what has been forced apart..."

Anne Rankin Mahoney, Ruts, p. 140.

ATTENTION: STUDENTS AND NEW PROFESSIONALS

*THE FEMINISM AND FAMILY STUDIES SECTION
OF THE NATIONAL COUNCIL ON FAMILY RELATIONS*

ANNOUNCES 1997 AWARDS APPLICATIONS

The Feminism and Family Studies Section of the National Council on Family Relations is seeking applicants for TWO awards to be given at the November 1997 NCFR Annual Conference in Crystal City, VA. Applicants do not need to be members of NCFR, but we welcome new members to our section and organization.

The Outstanding Research Proposal from a Feminist Perspective is given in honor of Jessie Bernard. Graduate students and new professionals (with up to five years post-doctoral work) are encouraged to apply for this award of \$750 to fund feminist research. Proposals will be reviewed for their potential contribution to feminist scholarship and the 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 purpose, theoretical foundation, research methods, and potential contribution to feminist scholarship, and c) a half-page budget. A summary of the recipient's research results will be published in the Feminism and Family Studies Sections Newsletter, and the recipient will be asked to present a report of their project and findings at the 1998 NCFR Annual Conference. The award will be presented at the 1997 meeting; recipients will receive \$400 towards their travel to the 1997 Annual conference.

The Outstanding Contribution to Feminist Scholarship Paper Award is accompanied by a gift of complimentary books from Westview Press and a \$250 cash award. Applications for this 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 the use of feminist frameworks and methods. Applicants should be the sole author or first author of the paper; both published and unpublished papers will be considered, although the paper should be at near-submission status. A summary of the paper will be published in the Feminism and Family Studies Newsletter, and the award will be presented at the 1997 NCFR Annual Conference. Recipients will receive \$400 towards their travel to the Annual conference.

Authors should identify themselves only in a cover letter so all entries can be reviewed anonymously. Letters of support are not required. To apply, send six copies of the proposal or paper by April 10, 1997 to:

J. Elizabeth Norrell, Ph.D.,
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Next Deadline: Sept 15, 1997

**send your articles, reports,
ideas, and/or comments to**

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