RHODE ON RESEARCH

(The Women’s Issues column, begun last month to feature ongoing research at the Institute, this month features excerpts from Director Deborah L. Rhode’s talk about the value of research, delivered to the Institute Associates.)

It is always a special pleasure to be invited to address the Associates because this group has been critical to the survival of an organization that has been critical to the lives of so many Stanford women. And to the lives of many many other women, most of whom don’t even know we exist. What I’d like to talk about this morning is something that is both profoundly personal and profoundly political; it’s about why I believe research on women is so important, and why your support of the Institute makes such a difference, not only for those of us who are directly affiliated with its work but also for the larger community that is affected by that work.

Before we can make progress in dealing with gender inequality, we must first convince people that there is a social problem. Research is critical to that effort.

Although this point seems somewhat self-evident, it’s an issue that arises again and again in fundraising. In fact, I probably wouldn’t have to be doing fundraising at all if the Institute had a nickel for every time someone said, “I’m sorry we don’t support research on women, we only support programs that assist women.”

What I wonder, do these individuals think research on women does if not assist women? Occasionally when I have raised that point the response is, “You know what we mean—programs for battered women, programs for assisting divorced homemakers, and so forth.” Well, I know what they mean, but I wonder if they know what I mean. Let me take as examples those two topics, spousal abuse and divorce, since they are ones that are often cited.

Domestic brutality has been common for centuries, but it was not until the 1970s that this private experience became a public concern. And its emergence had much to do with women’s research. Although systematic data has been limited, it is now estimated that in any given year, ten to twenty percent of American women are beaten by a man with whom they are intimately involved and one-fourth to half of all women will experience such violence at some point in their lives. Yet until the 1970s, virtually no information was available concerning the frequency or severity of family assaults. Police and court statistics weren’t even collected or broken down in such a way that researchers could tell whether a reported assault was between family members. There were no battered women’s shelters, and no research on the battered women’s syndrome, the psychological and socio-economic factors that encouraged women to remain in abusive relationships.

Legal norms both reflected and reinforced those attitudes. The traditional view was that family assaults, euphemistically categorized as “domestic disturbances,” were relatively unimportant and that intervention was generally ineffective. The attitude was well summarized in an influential police manual, which indicated that the police officer’s sole responsibility in such cases was to “preserve the peace.” He should attempt to pacify the parties, urge them to take a walk or reason together. Arrest was to be avoided. Officers should “never create a police problem where there’s only a family problem.” Estimates from around this period suggest that the chances of a spousal abuse case ending up in court were less than a hundred to one. Prosecutors and judges worked on similar assumptions. “Personal quarrels” did not deserve their professional attention. Everyone would be better off if parties would simply “kiss and make up and get out of court.” To the woman with disabling injuries, dissatisfied with this approach, the advice was to “just leave.” And the assumption was that if she didn’t, she must somehow like it. Where exactly she could go, how she could support herself and her children, and why it was that she, rather than her assailant, was the appropriate person to vacate the family home were questions that simply weren’t asked.

The women’s movement triggered an escalation of task forces, teach-ins, and research enterprises. Indeed, the first conference that this Institute sponsored was in 1977 on the subject that was just becoming a subject, battered women.

Over the last fifteen years, a good deal has been accomplished. Great credit goes to volunteer women who have staffed and supported battered women’s services. Of equal importance has been the work of scholars, who have given us greater insights into the causes of the battered women syndrome—and the ways to counteract it, by reducing fears of reprisal and expanding economic and social alternatives. It would be uplifting to end on that!
THANKS

All of us at the Institute would like to express our deepest thanks to our individual and corporate supporters who give so much of their time and energy to the Institute. In particular, we thank those who served on the Associates Board during 1988-89: Rima Abu-Zayyad, Kathe Alden, Penny Bauer, Margaret Beltramio, Suz Cameron, Leah Chodorow, Karen Jost, Catherine Evans Latta, Mary Anna Matsumoto, Marnie Pauluss, Jan Pieper, Margaret Knowles Schink, Sara Taft, and Jane Yates.

Thanks are also due the many individuals who made our fall and spring fundraisers a success. Margaret Schink chaired the fall event, a private showing of Andrew Wyeth's "Helga Pictures." In May, supporters were treated to an exclusive Peninsula performance of the Bay Area Women's Philharmonic, chaired by Cathy Latta. "Music for a Spring Evening" featured 17th and 18th century works by women composers, performed by an all-women orchestra and directed by JoAnn Falletta.

Several Bay Area corporations deserve special thanks for their general support to the Institute as well as specific support for the fall and spring fundraisers. They are IBM, Pacific Bell, Xerox, Digital Equipment, Wells Fargo Bank, Pacific Gas & Electric, Vichon Winery, Beltranro's, and Sears Candies.

PROGRAMS

This year’s programs spanned a wide range of topics and formats and were enthusiastically received by a diverse audience of scholars, students and the broader Bay Area community. Repeating last year’s mix of day and evening programming, the Jing Lyman Lecture series explored health issues across the lifespan, contemporary issues and problems of nurturing, and the multi-faceted meaning of women’s selfimage. In addition, a retrospective of Jing Lyman artists, who contributed to the graphic design of the series’ posters over the years, was begun in December and will continue throughout the summer at the Bechtel International Center.

Special seminars were held on the empowerment of women in Sweden and the United States; the assumptions about and perceptions of power and powerlessness that guide men’s and women’s experience of each other; the meaning of ecological feminism, featuring author and scholar Irene Diamond; and the work of Cynthia Fuchs Epstein on how sex differences have been exaggerated and maintained in our culture.

The Associates gathered for a fall panel on "What is Feminism?" featuring visiting scholar Kathleen Jones, affiliated scholar Karen Offen, and NOW representative Janet Cook. Professor emerita Eleanor Maccoby presented her recent work for the winter seminar on child custody in divorce, and graduate student Jo Ortel gave a lecture/slide presentation on women artists for the spring seminar. The annual Associates’ Day brought members together to celebrate the role of the volunteer, with presentations by Arlene Kaplan Daniels, Rebecca Klatich, and Deborah Rhode.

Mary Ann Carr of IBM was the featured speaker at our fall Corporate Seminar, presenting her work on the Math, Engineering and Science Achievement (MESA) program. The annual Corporate Seminar in Personnel and Management, held in June, spotlighted three Stanford professors. William Miller (President of Stanford Research Institute) on the economy and the Pacific Rim, Myra Strober on the "Mommy Track," and Deborah Rhode on gender, race and class within the workplace.

CONFERENCES

The Institute, in conjunction with the Earl Warren Legal Institute of UC/Berkeley, sponsored a fall conference on "Divorce Reform in Retrospect." In March, Institute representatives flew to Japan to attend a conference on "The Family" co-sponsored with Josai University of Tokyo. And in April, adolescent pregnancy was the central focus of a research conference sponsored by the Institute (see separate article).

Finally, under Institute auspices, the Graduate Women’s Network held their annual spring conference on "Feminism in the 90's: Determining Our Future." Gloria Steinem brought the day to a close with a retrospective account of what women have accomplished and where we must go in the future.

SCHOLARLY CELEBRATIONS

Several faculty and scholars saw their hard work come to fruition in book form this year. Professors Myra Strober and Sanford Dornbusch celebrated the release of Feminism, Children and the New Families (Guilford Press). Affiliated scholars Annette Lawson, Jean Davison and Harriet Biodgett are the respective authors of Adultery: An Analysis of Love and Betrayal (Basic Books); Agriculture, Women and Land: The African Experience (Westview Press); and Centuries of Female Days (Rutgers University Press and Alan Sutton, Ltd.). Senior scholar Marilyn Yalom’s Les Temps des Orages (Maren Sell) has just been released in time for the French Bicentennial.

AWARDS

Michelle Rosaldo Prize in Undergraduate Fieldwork. This year the Rosaldo Prize of $1,500 was awarded to Smita Singh, an undergraduate in anthropology. She plans to travel to New Delhi and spend summer and fall quarters interviewing women in two Hindi-speaking villages in Northern India. Her research proposal, "Effects of a Development Project in Northern India on Women’s Attitudes Toward Gender Roles," has been well thought out and promises to produce some very worthwhile results.

Marilyn Yalom Research Fund. We were able, through the generosity of the many past contributors to the fund honoring Marilyn Yalom, to make eight awards ranging from $500 to $1,000 each. A great diversity of interests is revealed in the following list of scholars and faculty and their projects.

Beverly Allen, assistant professor of Italian: Literature of Italian terrorism and gender-specific assumptions.

Herminda Cancino and Stan Watat, School of Education: Factors that shape the identity and views of learning of women field workers from Mexico.

Regenia Gagnier, associate professor of English: The historical rise and fall of political economy, using the tools of gender analysis and feminist theory.

Kathleen Jones, visiting scholar: "Women and the Paris Commune of 1871: A Collection of Documents with Critical Notes."

Sherri Matteo, associate director: A co-authored textbook, On Teaching the Psychology of Women, for the Athene Series of Perseamon Press.


Gender Research Fund. This is the first of two possible awards each year to Stanford faculty as seed money for research proposals. These projects are expected to result either in grants funded or to be shared by the Institute. This spring an award was made to Barbara Babcock of the Law School and Estelle Freedman of the History Department, in the amount of $4,500, for their interdisciplinary work on "Gender and Justice: The Impact of Women on Criminal Justice in Modern America." Their study focuses especially on the careers of Clara Shortridge Foltz (Babcock) and Miriam Van Waters (Freedman).


Three of Phyllis Koestenbaum's Criminal Sonnets will be published in Gulf Coast, a literary magazine from the University of Houston.

"Sexuality and the Menopausal Woman: Diagnosis and Treatment by the Social Sciences" was the subject of associate director Sherri Matteo's talk at the conference of the Society for Menstrual Cycle Research in Salt Lake City on June 2.

Affiliated scholar Karen Offen has been celebrating the bicentennial of the French Revolution by lecturing about women's revolutionary experiences. In May she was a featured speaker at the Temple University (Philadelphia) Bicentennial Conference and at the Palace of the Legion of Honor (San Francisco). She also gave papers at the International Congress on Women and the French Revolution (Toulouse, France) and the International Congress on the History of the French Revolution (Washington, D.C.). Offen's article, "On the French Origin of the Words, 'Feminism' and 'Feminist,'" appeared in Feminist Issues (Fall, 1988), and her review article, "The Use and Abuse of History," appeared in the April issue of the Women's Review of Books.

Lillian Robinson served as the keynote speaker for the University of Hawai'i's observance of Women's History month in March, lecturing twice at the Manoa (Honolulu) campus, as well as at the Hilo campus and Honolulu Community College. Robinson also gave the Department Scholarship Lecture in Women's Studies at San Diego State University in April. Her article, "Looking for Wonder Woman," appeared in the June Artforum, and a review of Margaret Atwood's Cat's Eye appeared in the June 3 issue of The Nation.

A memoir, based on senior affiliated scholar Marilyn Yalom's lecture trip to Japan and China in Autumn, 1987, and her meeting with Women's Studies scholars in Beijing, was published in the Spring/Summer issue of Sequoia, the Stanford literary magazine. An article based on one of her lectures was published in English and Japanese under the title, "Recent Minority Women's Literature in America" in the Bulletin of the Institute for Women's Studies of the Ochanomizu University.
RHODE (continued)

not turn out well for women, given what was absent from the agenda. Reformers were not concerned with the welfare of women or children. Indeed to the extent that issues of gender equity entered the debate, it was issues of fairness toward men that dominated discussion. The absence of concerns about women was in part attributable to the absence of women in the reform debate. Those with major influence—lawyers, judges, legal scholars—were overwhelmingly male. The lack of systematic data about distribution of resources among divorcing couples made it easy for policymakers to rely on anecdotal experience—primarily male experience—in formulating their concerns. It was not until divorce became commonplace and researchers concerned with women’s issues began to study its impact, that the debate began to change. Here again, the publication of one book was critical in transforming private misery into a social problem, and a problem that was gender-specific. I’m referring to Lenore Weitzman’s The Divorce Revolution: The Unexpected Social and Economic Consequences for Women and Children in America (1985). The history of that book is relevant since its origins had something to do with the kind of gender inequality it described. Some of you may have known Lennie; she was closely affiliated with the Institute for many years, and the support we provided, when more mainstream sociology departments were unreceptive, is a further testament to the importance of organizations like ours. Lennie’s findings will probably come as no surprise, but let me give you the Reader’s Digest condensed version, which turned out to be largely consistent with other studies. Even in the so-called good old days, things weren’t so good from women’s point of view. Less than a fifth of all women received alimony, and non-compliance was pervasive. Over the last two decades, awards have been decreasing in frequency, and fewer are for permanent support. Principal among those inequalities are women’s disproportionately high assumption of family responsibilities and disproportionately low access to resources necessary to discharge them. About three-fifths of all divorces involve minor children, and mothers still receive custody in 90 percent of all cases. Few of these women have obtained child support awards sufficient to meet the actual costs of child rearing. In one survey, two-thirds of fathers had support obligations that were less than their monthly car payments. Not only have support awards been set at unrealistically low levels (in part because primarily male judges have no idea how much children’s tennis shoes really cost), but their value has quickly fallen through inflation and non-compliance. Over half of all divorced men have failed to meet their spousal and child support obligations, and many women have found it prohibitively expensive to enforce them. Unsurprisingly, in the years immediately following divorce, women’s income substantially falls and men’s substantially rises.

What to do about that fact remains a matter of profound importance and profound dispute. Which is the point of the symposium the Institute cosponsored last fall, and hopefully those of us who participated will add some of the gender-related concerns that were missing last time around from the reform agenda. These are not just women’s issues; they affect children as well. The quality of life we provide for families now will affect the quality of life we can expect for ourselves in our later years and for our children and their children. Research on women can play a vital part in improving the lives of many generations to come. I am deeply grateful to all of you for supporting us in that crucial mission.

ADOLESCENTS (continued)

Ann Phoenix, of the Thomas Coram Research Unit in London, said her research showed that “the major problem that mothers under twenty face is economic. But early childbearing does not cause poverty. Low socioeconomic status generally predates pregnancy and motherhood in this age group.” Doris Capello of the New York Puerto Rican Project spoke of sexual naivete among young women, because “their mothers were too strict.”

In another study, professor Frank Furstenberg, Jr., of the University of Pennsylvania, who researched fathering, reported that “children only benefit from a close paternal relationship”—that by contrast youths living with their biological fathers, who were not close, actually were doing worse, on average, than all youths studied. He also noted that “some children do well despite a lack of a parental presence,” perhaps because of an attachment to another figure.

“Support” in both senses of its meaning was the key word used by policymakers. Eleanor Hinton-Hoyt, director of the Project of Equal Educational Rights in Washington, D.C., stated that young black women should be helped, supported, and looked after within the black community as a whole. Others suggested Ann D. M. Pearce, director of the Women and Poverty Project at the Institute for Women’s Policy Research in Washington, included:

making contraception and abortion available regardless of income, race, and residence; using support groups and grassroots neighborhood organizations to help raise self-esteem.

The conference was supported by a sizable grant from the Russell Sage Foundation, followed by funding from the Barnard Center for Research on Women, the Joe and Emily Lowe Foundation, the March of Dimes Foundation, the Charles Stuart Mott Foundation, and the Beatrice M. Bain Research Group at UC-Berkeley. Conference papers will be published in a book to be edited by Lawson and Rhode.
THE JING LYMAN SERIES IN RETROSPECT

Fall—Health Across the Life Span. In her lecture, "Is Aging a Feminist Issue?", Laura Carstensen, Stanford assistant professor of psychology, noted that "we have approached the study of aging in a manner strikingly similar to the study of gender...we have concluded that difference represents some deficiency."

Carstensen suggested "We need to have the kind of perspective where we're very open to difference and to change, where we look at older women's lives and realize that they will be our lives."

The fall series went on to explore "Ethnicity, Gender and Aging" with Jose B. Cuellar, and concluded with an all-day conference on women's health issues.

"Health Fair '88: Taking Action" began with morning keynote addresses by Deirdre English, Nathan Maccoby, and Robert Marcus. The afternoon workshop topics were varied, including occupational health, menopause, exercise, heart disease, and infertility.

Winter—Nurturing Choices. The winter series' exploration of nurturing choices was broad-ranged, including the "sandwich generation," child custody and alternative life styles, the family and its roles, fatherhood, and a panel discussion on surrogacy.

Kathleen McConnell, LCSW, defined the sandwich generation as those adults (typically women) caught between caring for still dependent children and increasingly dependent elderly parents. One of the myths which she examined was that of role reversal between elderly parent and child. "There is no way in which you can change roles with your parent (provided the parent is not incapacitated by a serious illness). And I see that as being a real trap that a lot of caregivers get into. Your parents have the right to make bad decisions just like you or I have the right to make bad decisions."

In a different vein, noted researcher Michael Lamb, National Institute of Child Health and Human Development, examined the myths and data surrounding the historical and recent changes in the roles of fathers. Although recent evidence suggests that in dual-career families fathers are more involved in childcare, Lamb found that the change reflects a decrease in time spent by working mothers with children. What appears to be a key factor in father involvement, according to Lamb, is that a couple shares childcare responsibilities based upon their own belief systems and needs. Children tend to flourish when there is harmony and marital satisfaction in a family, irrespective of whether the family style is highly traditional or more "modern."

The series concluded with a controversial panel discussion on surrogacy featuring a social worker from an agency providing surrogacy services, and professors from philosophy, law, and nursing. The opinions were as diverse as the fields they represented. The social worker presented surrogate mothers as generous, well-adjusted women who see surrogacy as a chance to help an infertile couple while enjoying the fulfillment of pregnancy. Philosophy professor Julien Murphy suggested that surrogacy must be viewed within a broad social and political context. Surrogacy, she feels, "furthers women's oppression," encouraging women to "sell bodily tissue." It promotes gender bias by providing natural children for men while continuing to exclude infertile women from the natural process. "We need to emphasize that pregnancy, while a valuable service women provide for society, should not be the central way women either derive their self-worth or earn wages. We need to expand ways in which women earn money, by enabling new jobs which have some social power rather than creating new forms of unskilled labor."

Stanford law professor Robert Mnookin addressed the dilemmas faced by the legal system in an era of decreasing availability of newborns for adoption by infertile couples. Surrogacy has further complicated issues. State legislatures and national groups are struggling to develop policies. While the panelists' opinions were varied, there appeared a consensus regarding the need for further research.

Spring—Reflections: Women and Self-Image. Anthropologist Margaret Mackenzie opened the spring series with a lecture, "The Pursuit of Self-Control and the Disturbance of Pleasure: Meanings of Body Image, Eating and Weight." Exploring the meanings of body image, she suggested that eating and weight in this country represent the most fundamental moral issues of the culture. They become metaphors for tremendous power. In the West, the qualities of self-discipline, self-control, responsibility for one's health, achievement, performance, and striving are highly valued. These are values we are immersed in when dealing with the metaphorical meaning of weight. We read people's bodies, especially we read women's bodies, as if they were a text of those virtues.

With the return of Jing Lyman herself to the West Coast and Stanford, the series was doubly honored as she introduced the remarkable lecturer, Jean Shinoda Bolen. An audience of some 300 people was mesmerized as Bolen talked about her concepts of feminist spirituality—"a very quiet but significant evolution that has grown out of the women's movement principle of saying what is authentic for you, questioning other people's authority to define who you are," while examining your own deepest, most revered archetypes, archetypes defined by female goddesses.

The spring lecture/music of Rachel Bagby, and lecture by Marilyn Fabe, illustrated with film clips, were also enthusiastically received. The spring series concluded the thirteenth year of lecture series presented by the Institute. The lectures remain a highly successful forum for the presentation of work on women and gender.

GRAPHICS BY MENDELSOHN

Barbara Mendelsohn, senior graphic designer at Stanford's Publication Services, will display works from the past eight years at Bechtel International Center. The exhibit is co-sponsored by the Institute and by Publication Services and will run through July.

To exemplify the breadth of her talents, the exhibit will include her graphic design work, her illustrations, and some of her fine art pieces. Mendelsohn's work has contributed to the visual impact of publicity and publications for many university departments, including graphics for posters for several Jing Lyman lecture series.

Mendelsohn studied design at UC/Berkeley, and at the California College of Arts and Crafts. In recognition of her design excellence, the Library of Congress placed her poster, "Chronotypes: The Construction of Time," in its permanent collection in 1988. Speaking of her work, the artist describes her love for the process of art and design, her awareness that in the process of solving problems or experiencing the relationship of pen to paper, some results are happy accidents. Her excellence is confirmed by her ability to integrate verbal and visual design.

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To our Associates:
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BOOK REVIEW (continued)

the diversity of African patterns of land tenure and agricultural production. They suggest that solutions to the "land question" have to originate within Africa. Close attention to how policies affect the availability of labor, land, and capital, while constantly maintaining a gender focus, would help secure women's access to these productive resources for wider benefit.

This collection successfully introduces students, planners, and academics to a gendered view of African production systems that is missing from many other current policy studies. While not united in theoretical perspective, the volume's descriptive pieces could work well in undergraduate courses on Africa, economic development, or cross-cultural perspectives on gender.

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