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*Book Reviews*

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**Women's Realities, Women's Choices: An Introduction to Women's Studies.** *Hunter College Women's Studies Collective.* New York, Oxford University Press, 1983, 621 pp., \$14.95 (paperback).

Ever since we began teaching introductory women's studies courses more than a decade ago, they have presented difficult challenges ranging from the pedagogical to the political to the intellectual. The most fundamental of these has been the need simultaneously to invent, to keep abreast of, and to convey intelligibly to students an entirely new academic discipline. As if this were not challenge enough, our feminist principles have also prompted us to extend our studies to minority and Third World populations and to transcend traditional disciplinary boundaries. And sometimes we have had to moderate our feminist instincts to bolster claims of "academic objectivity" or to hold the sympathy and sustain the courage of our increasingly conservative and usually middle-class students.

Until now we have had to accomplish all this by assigning either collections of readings for which we provided the interdisciplinary framework, or xeroxed materials we assembled ourselves. Now the eight women of the Hunter College Women's Studies Collective—Ülkü Bates, Florence Denmark, Virginia Held, Dorothy Helly, Susan Lees, Sarah Pomeroy, Dorsey Smith, and Sue Rosenberg Zalk—have written the first basic women's textbook that is comprehensive, coherent, and thoroughly interdisciplinary. What is more, it responds intelligently to each of the challenges noted above.

When they have to make politically loaded decisions, the authors opt for the middle-class American brand of feminism that they probably expect to find or hope to cultivate in most of their students. This seems a reasonable approach in such a textbook, and the collective has carefully thought through nearly all of these choices, which begin with the book's principle of organization.

The volume is structured in what the collective calls "concentric circles," moving from women as individuals to women in their closest, usually familial, relationships to women in the larger society. Part I, "Defining Women," explains how women are constructed in both dominant and feminist images and theories, then proceeds to women's

bodies, personalities, and social roles. Part II, "The Family Circle," discusses women in their intimate relations as daughters and sisters, as wives and mothers, or in alternative living arrangements—religious or utopian communities, single parent or lesbian households. Part III, "Women in Society," places women in the various social institutions that shape them: religion, education, health, work, and politics. An opening chapter describes the discipline of women's studies and a closing one looks at past and possible future social change. Attractive illustrations and pertinent boxed quotations provide welcome breaks in the text, and each chapter is supplemented by discussion questions, an annotated list of recommended readings, and a substantial bibliography.

This is a serviceable organization, which the collective believes "meshes with the experiences and perspectives of most readers." But, as the authors acknowledge, it leans toward the liberal tradition by positing the self as the primary unit of analysis. A more radical alternative would have been to reverse the book's order, placing the social constraints on women at the core of their identity.

To balance this emphasis on self, the authors strongly insist in Part I on the social construction of gender and demonstrate in the excellent chapters of Part III the systematic nature of women's oppression. Throughout, they underscore the need for networking and collective action. Even their collective authorship cuts against the individualistic slant of the book's organization.

The authors further tilt the scales toward collectivity by using the pronoun "we" rather than "they" to refer to women of every place and time. They admit that some eccentric constructions result ("among all Orthodox Jews, widows without sons must obtain a rabbinical divorce. . . from our late husbands' brothers or nearest male kin before we can remarry"), but feel the "we" allows them "to speak for women as subjects" rather than as the objects they have always been in male discourse. Unfortunately, this device can also seem to collapse crucial distinctions among fundamentally different populations of women—a charge that has been repeatedly leveled against White middle-class American feminists. As with their other choices, the authors try to mitigate this problem—both by registering their awareness of it and by frequently detailing cultural differences among women.

The decision to devote an entire part to the family, rather than, say, treating it as one of the social institutions in Part III, may alienate readers who form their intimate relationships primarily outside such structures or who object to the traditional identification of women by their family roles. The authors compensate for this moderate posture by enumerating alternatives to and within the family and keeping the feminist critique of this important institution constantly before us.

One curious area of silence flaws this otherwise capable discussion of the family. Though every other dyad in the nuclear family receives attention, there is no parallel commentary on wife-husband relationships. The "Wives" chapter explains marriage customs and household patterns throughout the world but virtually ignores the intimate relationship at the center of this bond. And, although the three-page section on daughters and fathers quite appropriately deals with incest, there is no mention of domestic violence in the entire chapter on "Wives." Such a striking omission makes one wonder whether husbands constitute the feminist heart of darkness.

Another of the book's shortcomings probably comes of trying to inspire hope in students who might otherwise sag under the weight of what they learn about women's oppression. Occasionally, the authors propose simplistic remedies to the complex problems they have so clearly articulated. For example, they point to androgyny as a vision of the future that could eliminate the masculinity-feminine polarity. And they conclude an otherwise sophisticated analysis of the constraints on women's political power with "Can we save our gains in women's studies, and can we make further progress toward the goals we have begun to define for ourselves? The answer depends on women."

One additional problem afflicts all introductory texts in a field as rapidly developing and as sensitive to current events as women's studies: they will be out of date almost as soon as they are published. This one, for instance, could not address the influential thinking of Carol Gilligan about women's moral nature or the implications of the information age for women's lives. To keep their subject matter timely, some instructors may want to keep assigning xeroxed materials, which can be continually updated, either instead of or in addition to this textbook.

Still, the Hunter College Collective is to be congratulated for producing a pioneering text that will make it easier for many new people to teach introductory women's studies and will offer those who already teach such courses a long awaited synthesis. With its first integrated introductory textbook, women's studies has finally come of age as a discipline.

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**Too Many Women? The Sex Ratio Question.** *Marcia Guttentag and Paul F. Secord.* Beverly Hills, California, Sage Publications, 243 pp.

Paul Secord writes in the preface that this book was started by Marcia Guttentag and was not completed prior to her death in 1977. Secord, who was married to Guttentag during the last five years of her life, completed the book, writing approximately half the chapters and drawing upon some scattered notes and his memory of extensive discussions about the book with Guttentag. The outcome of these combined efforts is impressive in both scope and content, albeit sometimes plodding in literary style.

The principal purpose of this book is to understand the social consequences of variations in the sex ratio, the ratio of the number of males to the number of females. Surprisingly, this ratio has deviated quite markedly from 100 (which represents an equal number of males and females) in different times and places. And if we consider the ratio of unmarried males of marriageable age to the ratio of unmarried females of marriageable age, the ratio may be even more unbalanced. For example, low sex ratios (more women than men) were characteristics of classical Sparta, Europe in the later Middle Ages, and New England during the nineteenth century. High sex ratios were characteristic of classical Athens, Europe in the early Middle Ages, and the Western Frontier of the United States during the nineteenth century.

Guttentag and Secord, drawing heavily from social exchange theory, argue that the sex ratio affects the balance of dyadic power between males and females, which is defined as "social power deriving from dependencies in a two-person relationship" (p. 157). The party in greater supply is less able to turn elsewhere for satisfaction and hence is more dependent on the partner. However, the consequences of a low sex ratio are not in any sense the opposite of a high sex ratio. This is because the structural power of men and women is not equal. Structural power refers to the economic and political power that society gives to one gender. Since men have always had greater structural power, when they have also had the greater dyadic power associated with a low sex ratio, the two powers have combined to produce a strong effect on male-female relationships. These effects include an emphasis on women developing the "feminine" attributes that are thought to attract men as well as an emphasis on motherhood and homemaking. Paradoxically, the rejections experienced by women as a result of the low sex ratio have also led to feminist movements deemphasizing dependency on men and encouraging women's attaining greater structural power. Men in low sex ratio societies will tend

to value women less, to be less committed to any one woman, and to de-emphasize traditional relationships between men and women and the traditional roles that accompany them. But when the situation is the other way around, when sex ratios are

high and there is a shortage of women, men value women more and treat women very differently, though on their own terms. They emphasize and reinforce traditional relationships in which women have a subordinate role. This is possible despite the shortage of women, because men possess superior structural power. (p. 167)

A fascinating example of a high sex ratio society is described by the authors as it occurred among Chinese-American laborers in the United States during the nineteenth century. The Chinese social structures, including the clans and tongs, were exclusively controlled by men; women had virtually no structural power. Since few Chinese women immigrated to the United States, the sex ratio was extremely high, at one point as high as 20 men for every woman. These two forces combined to produce very powerful restrictions on the behavior of women. Women were either in brothels controlled by the tongs or were married to wealthy men whose control of them could be compared to that observed in a prison setting. The potentially greater dyadic power of the women associated with the high sex ratio was completely overwhelmed by the imbalance in structural power. The greater value of women in this situation of scarcity led to greater restrictions by the men, much as one might be sure to lock an expensive jewel in the vault and be more causal with a piece of costume jewelry.

Guttentag and Secord describe a number of other societies and how the relations between the genders can be related to the sex ratio. They also examine the many factors that lead to varying sex ratios, for example, greater neglect of female infants, gender-differential emigration or immigration, and war. They have written an intriguing and scholarly book which draws from anthropology, sociology, history, and psychology. In a final chapter they extrapolate their conclusions to the future. While one may not agree with all of their conclusions, Guttentag and Secord have written a provocative book that deserves to be read by those interested in women's studies and sex-role behavior.

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**The Challenge of Change: Perspectives on Family, Work, and Education.**  
*Edited by Matina Horner, Carol C. Nadelson, and Malkah T. Notman.* New York, Plenum Press, 1983, 323 pp., \$22.50.

In celebration of its one hundredth year, Radcliffe College sponsored an interdisciplinary conference which examined rapid change in the spheres of family, work, and education over the past two decades. *The Challenge of Change*, a collection of essays by eminent scholars in a variety of fields, is a

result of that conference. Contributors to the volume cover a wide number of issues ranging from demographic and cultural changes at the macro level through topics such as women's moral judgment and sex differences in personality characteristics of different cohorts of college students at the micro level. The editors have succeeded in effectively organizing this diverse set of papers into a coherent whole which both adds to our current knowledge and raises important questions for future research in the area of sex roles and social change.

A major strength of the book is found in the diversity of approaches represented. There is diversity in discipline, in scope of analysis, and in theoretical framework. Such a combination holds the potential for disaster. A reader may be both confused and dismayed by a plethora of unrelated issues and arguments which are at cross-purposes. This book avoids that pitfall in several ways. First, while the authors represent different disciplines, they focus upon different facets of the same general set of issues. Second, the contributors are among the most distinguished in their respective fields. Thus, while they may approach a research problem from different directions, they do so with a skill for linking their research to other perspectives and with an eye for the important issues that must be addressed.

Because of the interdisciplinary nature of the collection, a reader will not be equally interested in each contribution. Certainly, a reader with demographic training will be more drawn to the chapter by Keyfitz on the direction of demographic trends in the United States or to Bane's discussion of the divorce rate, just as a developmental psychologist might find more of interest in Mitchell and Block's chapter examining the lives of students (activists and nonactivists) at Berkeley and how these students' values compare with the values of their parents. Both readers, however, will find that every chapter addresses issues which are of key importance to a complete understanding of the complex changes occurring in the roles of women and men.

A second strength of the collection lies in its dynamic approach. History is truly built into the discussion. All too often analyses of change look only at recent decades without providing a broader context for understanding the massive social transformations which are occurring. The reader may expect such a limitation when reading the preface or glancing at several of the chapter titles. Indeed, some of the authors do focus on the time period since the 1950s, such as Veroff's analysis of psychological orientations to work and Stewart and Salt's chapter on college graduates of the 1960s and 1970s. Such a focus is justified by the increased rapidity of social change since the Second World War. In addition, these pieces are provided with a broader context by other chapters in the collection. The demographic chapters continually refer to the experience of cohorts earlier

in this century, and several authors point to the importance of the context of the nineteenth century. Jessie Bernard, for example, contrasts the "ground rules" guiding marriage and family life in the Victorian era with those that apply today. It is essential that any study of social change and sex roles be placed within such a broad historical context.

The book is refreshing in that issues of race and social class are seriously addressed by several authors. A central point in an early chapter by Chafe is that "the issue of sex equality cannot be separated from larger issues of equality in the society." This argument is clear, and all too often books on sex roles neglect these issues. Later in the book, Fleming's chapter assesses the theory of Black matriarchy as applied to sex differences among Black college students. Her work clearly illustrates the linkages between race and gender in the study of social change.

Thus far this review has pointed to a number of strengths in this collection. The book reflects the strengths of social science, but it reflects the weakness of social science as well. While the collection as a whole is successful in representing a diversity of approaches, taking a dynamic perspective which builds history into the analysis, and seriously addressing issues of race and class, individual contributions vary in the extent to which they exemplify these strengths.

A second area of weakness deserves special attention. One of the most striking points of variation between chapters is the extent to which conclusions are drawn from the data and then applied to much broader groups of individuals. Among the central dilemmas of social science are questions of the adequacy of measurement and the generalizability of findings. Some of the authors do not adequately address these concerns, while others do an admirable job. A few examples will illustrate this variation.

Gilligan's chapter on woman's moral judgments draws very strong conclusions about both sex differences in moral judgments and social change in women's moral judgments from in-depth interviews with a small set of women. While the author suggests that the 29 women in one study represent a variety of social class backgrounds, it is clear that they do not represent all of the possible combinations of race and class, not to mention region, religion, cohort, or ethnic group.

In the next chapter, Lipman-Blumen uses a functionalist framework to contrast male and female leadership styles in formal organizations. Her analysis is interesting, but seems to assume that the traditional organizational structures will continue to exist unchanged. Current research in newer information-based organizations suggests that the formal and informal structures are very different. Thus, the suggestions for change and analyses of sex differences in leadership may not be as applicable.

In both cases the authors raise important and interesting issues. Their conclusions, however, move beyond the point warranted by the data presented.

At the other end of the spectrum, several contributors do an excellent job of drawing conclusions from the data without moving beyond the limitations inherent in social research. Mitchell and Block present a superb discussion of the weaknesses of their data. Analyses reveal patterns in the data which are viewed as suggestive, and the limitations of their data are clearly outlined.

This variation is best illustrated by two contributors who analyze different aspects of the same data set. When Veroff looks at changes in psychological orientations to the work role, single-item responses are often used to measure complex variables such as happiness or job satisfaction. Limitations in the measures are not seriously addressed. In contrast, Douvan's presentation of data on change in family roles is done so that the small pieces of data help to build a case for the points which are being made. The results are not presented as conclusive or unambiguous, but the result is a more convincing argument.

This variation in how the authors interpret their data is instructive to the reader. When different styles of presentation are placed within a single volume one can see how social science data can best be used to improve our understanding of social change.

Thus, even the limitations of the collection are instructive. *The Challenge of Change* will be useful in the classroom and will hopefully stimulate scholars to build upon this foundation of research in developing dynamic, historically based models for understanding social change in the roles of women and men as they are enacted throughout the institutions of our society.

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**Comparable Worth and Wage Discrimination: Technical Possibilities and Political Realities.** Edited by Helen Remick. Temple University Press, Philadelphia, 1984, xv + 311 pp., \$39.95.

*Comparable Worth and Wage Discrimination*, edited by Helen Remick, points out sex-based job inequalities in today's market. In one American hospital "physician's assistants" were paid much more than "nurses," the former being men, the latter mostly women, but the work not distinguishably different (p. 245). In a grocery store warehouse Department 1, staffed by men and handling canned goods, had a higher pay scale than Department 2, staffed by women and dealing with beauty aids (p. 215). Automobile assembly-line workers are paid about three times as much as typists. A nurse who has passed through a four-year college course is paid a fraction of the salary of an engineer who has passed through a four-year college course.

All this variation is theoretically impossible in a free market. If an employer can recruit women for given jobs at lower cost than men, he will have an advantage over his male chauvinist competitors. Markets give the unprejudiced employer a clear advantage over the prejudiced one; his (!) profits will be greater, his share of the market will expand, soon the prejudiced one will go under. In the equilibrium condition discrimination has been destroyed.

The theory that noninterference will eliminate discrimination has been given a long enough test—hundreds of years, in fact—that we can be sure the pure market explanation of wages is incomplete. For the market is a resultant of prior conditions. One has to go behind the market and see how the qualities that the market assesses with apparent objectivity are themselves determined.

Sex-role specialization begins in the home and at an early age. Parents imprint it on their children. They can hardly be blamed for doing so. In any given epoch it is rational to prepare one's children for occupations that they will have an opportunity to enter. When the profession of engineering was virtually closed to women, it made no sense to send one's daughter to engineering school, even if she could get in. And the market responds to supply differences that result. Why is a secretary—usually female—paid less than a manager—usually male? Because relative to the demand, more people come forward willing and able to be secretaries than willing and able to be managers. Women's perception that there is no place for them as managers crowds the secretary market. The exclusion and segregation determine the pay difference.

The stereotype is held not least by women themselves: "socialization [of children] helps determine their occupational choices. . . . Employers use

their knowledge of and preference for these sex differences to decide whether men or women are suited for particular jobs" (p. 29). Thus, Remick and Steinberg argue that far from court action on behalf of women hindering the free market, "it removes a market imperfection that impinges unfairly on groups with less market power" (p. 289).

If the private qualities underlying the market (what parents say to their daughters at the age of 3) are beyond the direct reach of policy, then something has to be done to change the subsequent market setting. This is the object of affirmative action. The state's declaration that all occupations are open to both sexes and with equal pay acts back on what parents tell their daughters.

Yet legislation is not without its troubles, at least in the transition. Ordering higher pay for women affects their employment in occupations that are equally performed by men and women. If employers think that men are more productive than women, and employers have to pay equal wages, they will hire men as far as they can. The legislation in effect deprives the more enlightened employer of an automatic subsidy provided by free market pay differentials. A way of equalizing that would not affect employment would be a tax on men that would be applied to provide a subsidy to women, but this solution also offers problems.

The dramatic change of outlook, in America and around the world, that has resulted from the women's movement, in John Gardner's words, "may be, in the long perspective of history, more epoch-making than the fight for racial justice. With the rarest exceptions, women have been subjugated by civilizations of every race and skin color. Their emergence into the light is an event of extraordinary significance" (from *Excellence*, quoted in *Common Cause*, September/October 1984).

This book defines inequality between men and women in the labor market, tells us how comparable worth is measured, describes legislation requiring equal pay for work of comparable worth, and proposes remedies for the discrimination that still exists in spite of the legislation.

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