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Coeducation and Women’s Studies: Two Approaches to the Question of Woman’s Place in the Contemporary University

One of the most striking changes to come out of the decade 1964-74, a decade of educational turmoil in the United States as in most industrial societies, was the near universal acceptance of coeducation. One by one the bastions of male privilege have opened their doors to a select female student body, and with equal fanfare the major women’s colleges (with some notable exceptions1) hastened to admit men students. Administrators, faculty, students, and alumni appear to have given overwhelming endorsement to the concept that justice and equity of treatment require that both sexes be educated together. However widespread as that endorsement has been, it has been accompanied by little critical inquiry into what coeducation actually means as an experience for students. Coeducation obviously involves a social policy with regard to access to educational institutions. If genuinely equal treatment of the sexes were an educational goal, then it should also involve changes in the content of the curriculum, what is taught, and the varieties of human experience examined. It might also affect the very creation of knowledge because a new group with new social perspectives would be recruited into the research activities of the universities which are today the major creators of knowledge. Finally, if coeducation were really to result in equal treatment for males and females, there should be the same pattern of career development for men and women into the professional elites of society. Up to the present, however, attention has been focused on the access of women to institutions of higher education, with little or no thought given to the relationship of women students to the curriculum, women scholars to research activity, or women graduates to the occupational structure of society. When access is considered in isolation, the logic of coeducation as an equitable social policy appears to be overwhelming. The logic for educating women in male-controlled institutions is by no means so strikingly apparent, however, when one views the question of equity of treatment of the sexes from the perspective of the content of the curriculum, the opportunity to participate in the creation of new knowledge, and the potential for subsequent career development.

The decade of the sixties produced mounting evidence that in the English-speaking world coeducation had clearly lacked something of importance for women students. Since 1969 in the United States, Great Britain, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand, the mushroom growth of women’s studies courses and programs, directed with varying degrees of academic rigor toward the examination of selected aspects of women’s experience, has given clear evidence that women students do not find their intellectual needs fulfilled by the conventional curriculum and the traditional sociability groups of a coeducational college.

It is no accident that the rise of coeducation has been accompanied in these highly industrialized societies of the English-speaking world by a growing demand
for special academic programs for women. It is in the most highly industrialized societies that critics of the modern industrial state have drawn attention to the widening gap between the returns for male and female work and to the increasing concentration of women workers in the service areas of the work force. The climate of the 1960s, which has encouraged criticism of modern technological society from the point of view of its environmental hazards, has also created a popular awareness for the first time of the facts long since documented by feminist scholars about the negative impact of industrialization and the capitalist labor market upon women’s access to adequately paid and dignified work. With the differential between rewards for male and female work (either manual or intellectual) increasing in modern societies, there is clearly a need to revise the received view of modernization which has hitherto been accepted as a force for the improvement of women’s status. Certainly the existence of the differential and its accentuation over time demonstrate a pressing need for remedial action which will bring women into the work force on a more competitive basis.

Once the question of remedial action is raised, it immediately becomes necessary to ask why almost a century of access to higher education for women in the United States has not apparently had some impact on this general pattern of female employment in industrializing societies. The proponents of coeducation today argue that admission of women into elite male colleges will automatically provide them with intellectual skills which will enable them to enter the work force on equal terms with men. The proponents of special women’s studies programs, on the other hand, argue that far from requiring further exposure to male-controlled institutions women students need to share in the experience of other women and to develop educationally in relation to a female peer group. They reject the simple mechanism of access as a solution to the question of equality of treatment for men and women students and argue that women are more likely to develop intellectually and master some field in the humanities or the social sciences if they approach it through a curriculum directed toward the analysis of the experience of their own sex-group. In the area of the natural sciences, proponents of special programs for women argue that women students are currently so poorly prepared for work in the mathematical and natural sciences at college level that they are best able to develop these intellectual skills while learning in a female peer group. Advocates of special programs for women are able to cite positive evidence for their views in the data for the United States which show that twice as many women achievers per thousand women enrolled are produced by women’s colleges as are produced by coeducational institutions. Once this sort of evidence is carefully scrutinized, it suggests that in the area of motivation, levels of aspiration, and the achievement of identity as an intellectual worker there may be many negative aspects of admission to predominantly male-oriented institutions of higher education for women students.

The problem is that the mechanism of coeducation, though it appears on the surface the simplest road to equitable treatment of the sexes, conceals within itself many difficulties and obstacles in the way of achieving this goal, though few educational theorists or educational historians have paid serious attention to them. The dilemma which is posed for women students in institutions which have developed along the model of male colleges and professional schools is a variant of the classical dilemma faced by suppressed ethnic minorities and colonial peoples seeking to liberate themselves from the inhibitions of subordination to the values of a dominant culture. Is liberation to be achieved by mastering the skills of the domi-
nent culture, or is it to be found through achieving the capacity to confront, analyze, and articulate another kind of experience which commands no place in the institutions which are the guardians of the dominant culture? Victims of European oppression in the Third World may answer this question with relative ease because they possess an indigenous culture to which their search for authenticity may be directed, and because the tides of cultural nationalism may be harnessed as sources of political power through which Third World societies may selectively direct the use to which Western culture and technological skills within their native lands may be put. The problem is more complex for women seeking a place at the center rather than at the margins of the academic institutions which create and transmit the learned culture of the West. On the one hand, to be in command of that culture women must master skills in mathematics and the hard sciences which have traditionally been defined as unfeminine and neglected in the education of females. On the other hand, if these skills in abstract reasoning are to be applied in a manner which draws on the inner springs of creativity, they must be acquired in a way which is no threat to the female identity. This can be achieved by an educational experience which is critical of many of the assumptions of a male-controlled culture and which takes the female as the norm rather than the deviant exception to the life of the mind. One precondition for such a view of intellectual life is a sense of solidarity with female colleagues. Otherwise the weight of a lengthy cultural tradition which denigrates female intellect will take its toll, epigrams like Dr. Johnson's on women preachers will sink deep, and the woman student will be perpetually nervous and self-conscious about her own intellectual performance.

Even should such female sociability be carefully institutionalized within the educational community (as it once was for educated males), there is no basis in Western society for political organization along sex lines alone so that the Western woman, if she wants to influence the way her culture is defined and transmitted, must attempt to do so from within the centers of existing prestigious institutions. This strategy may be modified by the creation of parallel female institutions, but it can be argued that the resources required to support major centers of learning and research are now so vast that they cannot be mobilized by private effort. Furthermore, women's colleges and universities can hardly hope to undermine the traditional patterns of Western culture unless the direction of the institutions is such that the role assigned to women scholars is responsible, dignified, and unequivocal.

In order to understand why there should be any need to establish the authenticity of the woman scholar, it is necessary to examine the historical forces which have shaped the roles assigned educated women in the United States, the pioneer society in the development of coeducation. These forces have ensured that the educated woman has with few exceptions been trained to view her education as fitting her for marriage or for some service role which involves her in applying knowledge defined by male scholars.

It is usually assumed that coeducation was introduced in the mid-nineteenth-century United States for the purpose of raising the status of women and altering the conventional relationship between the sexes. This assumption bears no relationship to the historical forces actually responsible for the development of coeducation. At the level of the high school and the state university the arguments for coeducation were ones of economy and efficiency. The goal of educating women was the utilitarian one of securing a pool of trained teachers to staff the school system at a minimum of cost. Within the private colleges the most striking example
of the pressures encouraging coeducation can be found in the history of Oberlin College, long celebrated for its liberal pioneering role in the early development of coeducation. Oberlin was founded on the manual-work pattern of many early evangelical schools whose purpose was to allow the sons of farmers to work their way through theological training to prepare for the ministry. By the 1830s promising Western candidates for the ministry were being kept from going East to college by shortages of ready cash, yet the rapid expansion of Western settlement created an ever-expanding need for trained clergy. The manual-work school was improvised as a solution to this problem. In its early informal manifestations young men would undertake to work the land of a minister with sound theological knowledge if he would instruct them in return for their labor. Oberlin was a formal institutionalization of such an arrangement since the college was linked to a five hundred-acre farm where it was hoped that the students would produce enough in crops to reduce the cost of their education considerably. No sooner was the experiment launched, however, than it became clear that another element of cost could be eliminated if there were women students who could carry out the domestic chores in return for instruction. Once admitted to the college, they duplicated there all the existing service roles of women within the domestic economy. Classes were not held on Mondays so that the women students could launder and repair the men’s clothes. Cooking and cleaning were done on a careful schedule outside classroom hours, and the women students always waited on table. Thus the effect of the experiment was hardly consciousness-raising, and those few feminists, like Lucy Stone, who were early Oberlin graduates were radicals on such questions before they entered college.

It was not long, however, before the economic considerations which had fostered the coeducational experiment at Oberlin acquired more elaborate justifications. These were essentially utilitarian with the utility defined from a male point of view rather than as affirmations of the dignity of the female intellect. The presence of the women students, it was thought, contributed to the psychic well-being of the men. There could be no morbid thoughts of “Popish celibacy” or hints of “monkish vice” on the part of men students with so many available and suitably educated young women on hand for marriage. Suitably educated meant, of course, trained to be a suitable mate for the kind of man who was an Oberlin graduate. Church and college authorities recognized that the role of the itinerant Western minister was a lonely one which lacked the traditional social supports which church and parish offered more settled clergy. What was to take the place of the eroding or nonexistent community was marriage to a mate whose education had equipped her to share her husband’s religious and cultural aspirations. Thus we see in Oberlin’s inspired improvisation a prototype of the coeducational institution which was to develop in the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries. Women graduates with their disciplined minds and funds of useful knowledge would provide the cultural supports for a lonely male existence which could no longer draw on the resources of established religious and cultural institutions. This response to the problems of the uprooted in the new world was first evoked in evangelical Protestant culture faced with the social demands of missionary activity in the sprawling settlements of the great West. It was to be secularized in the twentieth century to provide the rationale for coeducation for the upwardly mobile and rootless middle class of urban America.

There was, of course, a tension between the traditional Christian view of the female as subordinate in marriage and the idea of the female as colleague in missionary endeavor, but it was not perceived as such by Oberlin’s early advocates of
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Contemporary views of the female psyche fitted nicely with utilitarian assumptions about the purpose of coeducation. The nurturing instincts were thought to be dominant in the human female, while the acquisitive instincts derived from hunting were purely male. Thus, it was perfectly feasible to educate women for service activities like teaching, for which they were paid a bare subsistence wage, without opening up the threat that educated women would become real competitors with males in the employment market. It was believed that the intellectual powers of the female could be fulfilled only through applying knowledge in the service of others, and therefore it was possible to educate women without ever considering their intellectual skills on the same level as those of males. The logic of these views of the female psyche prevailed during the development of graduate education for women so that advanced degrees for them became training in the application of knowledge to one of the service professions such as nursing, librarianship, social work, or home economics. All such activities, even the tending of books, could be made natural extensions of female nurturing activities, presumed to have their own psychic gratifications and rewarded at a level which enabled an efficient democracy to develop the basic cultural and welfare institutions at a minimum cost to the taxpayer.

The essential concern with the application of knowledge rather than its creation by women which characterized the early coeducational colleges was shared by the early women's colleges such as Mt. Holyoke and Rockford College in Illinois. But the social milieu in which this concern was expressed resulted in a real difference between graduates of the two types of institution with regard to decisions about the uses to which learning was to be put. Early coeducational colleges assumed a male definition of the useful in females and encouraged marriage. Women's colleges, on the other hand, turned out several generations of graduates whose special experience in college had required them to develop talents for leadership and to define high standards of performance for themselves. They accepted the belief that education viewed as an end in itself (rather than as preparation for marriage) was a special calling for women which ruled out the possibility of family responsibilities, and they therefore escaped the role conflicts which were to paralyze later generations of graduates attempting to combine marriage and a career. Thus encouraged to self-definition, many developed new areas of activity for women such as social work, and many became celebrated public figures. Their memoirs provide a lively and spirited account of their educational experience. Because they eschewed marriage, however, their model of the educational process was a single-sex one. They could not, therefore, come to grips with the central question posed by the emerging pattern of American higher education: could women share in the creation of knowledge on equal terms with men, or was the role of the educated woman merely its application in service occupations or its simplification for transmission to the young?

Nowhere was this central issue more vividly illustrated than in the careers of women who were early graduates in the sciences. This was an area in which it was difficult to contrive easy applications of knowledge which did not encroach on such male activities as engineering. The early women graduates of M.I.T. were able to avoid the speculative challenge of the laboratory as well as the threat of poaching on male preserves in employment by branching out into household science and food chemistry. These fields quickly developed a status similar to the service professions. They became areas of study with a low research content requiring minimal levels of
institutional support and thus easily accommodated within established academic settings without noticeable impact on the traditional male disciplines. Even the most energizing education at the undergraduate level could not counteract the intellectual limitations of such sex-stereotyped graduate careers. Indeed the development of graduate programs confined to the study of domestic processes and the preparation of food completed the process of adjustment by which women were admitted to institutions of higher learning. They entered college on supposedly equal terms with males, but their intellectual goals and career aspirations remained separate and unequal.

This accommodation to the potential for change inherent in the admission of women to institutions of higher learning in the United States resulted in the long run in a declining position for women scholars within the American university. This decline set in after what appeared to be the initial success of women graduates of the first generation admitted to higher education. During the years of peak expansion of the American educational system in the twentieth century, women were actually represented in decreasing numbers on the faculties of four-year colleges. Over the three generations during which there have been qualified women graduates available for academic posts, the high point of female representation on university faculties was reached in the 1870s and '80s. After that date, there was a relative decline in the number of women faculty members, and this trend began to accelerate markedly after 1950. The clear preference for male scholars which this trend exemplified was and continues to be their supposedly greater potential for research. Thus it is clear that a century of experience with coeducation has not so far resulted in a situation which offers the same opportunity to women to influence the way their culture is defined and transmitted as is available to men. Yet without such equality of opportunity, women's education must remain a derivative process which offers neither the insight which comes from confrontation with one's own experience nor the drive to master and advance a field of knowledge which is the true mark of the scholarly imagination.

Given the scarcity of resources available for the support of education and research, it is clear that with one or two exceptions it is not possible to develop parallel women's institutions which will offer levels of support for research activity comparable to those available in male-controlled institutions. Instead women must find their way into positions of influence within existing institutions and attempt to redirect the allocation of their resources toward the needs of women scholars and women students. The quickest route to such positions of influence will certainly be found through the recruitment of faculty. A significant proportion of women on the faculty of coeducational institutions would eventually sensitize them to the dimension of coeducation as an experience for women students which lies beyond the simple question of access.

There are serious dangers in the current approach to the problem of recruiting women faculty being adopted in the United States. The attempts to use federal legislation to force affirmative action programs on the institutions with regard to the employment of women faculty can be easily circumvented by large institutions where a few low-status programs staffed almost exclusively by women can be created to achieve an apparently respectable percentage of women faculty. In any case, large institutions like the University of Michigan, Columbia, and the University of California have tended to enter into such protracted negotiations over precise affirmative action policies that little positive action has so far resulted. Moreover, forced
COMPLIANCE UNDER AFFIRMATIVE ACTION PROGRAMS DOES LITTLE TO CHANGE ATTITUDES. SENIOR FACULTY AND ADMINISTRATORS TEND UNDER THESE CIRCUMSTANCES TO VIEW WOMEN SCHOLARS AS PROBLEMS TO BE IGNORED OR NEUTRALIZED AS MUCH AS POSSIBLE, INSTEAD OF SEEING THEM AS PART OF THE SOLUTION AND AS POTENTIAL LEADERS IN RESHAPING INSTITUTIONS WHICH HAVE TOO LONG RESPONDED ONLY TO THE NEEDS OF MALE STUDENTS. IT IS DIFFICULT TO BUILD A MORE COMPREHENSIVE CURRICULUM OR A LIVELIER INTELLECTUAL EXPERIENCE FOR EITHER SEX IN SUCH A CLIMATE OF POLITICIZATION AND CONFRONTATION. FURTHERMORE, WHERE COMPLIANCE WITH THE HIRING OF WOMEN FACULTY IS EXTERNALLY ENFORCED, IT WILL BE DIFFICULT TO ACHIEVE THE REALLOCATION OF RESOURCES NECESSARY IF THE SERVICES AND SCHOLARSHIPS REQUIRED TO GIVE WOMEN STUDENTS EQUAL ACCESS TO GRADUATE EDUCATION IN THE PRESTIGIOUS PROFESSIONAL FACILITIES ARE TO BE MADE AVAILABLE. THE EXTENT OF THE REALLOCATION REQUIRED IS RARELY RECOGNIZED ALTHOUGH TODAY 74 PERCENT OF GRADUATE STUDENTS IN PRESTIGIOUS GRADUATE SCHOOLS ARE MALE, AND IN SIGNIFICANT FIELDS LIKE BIOCHEMISTRY ONLY 1.5 PERCENT OF WOMEN B.A.S GO ON TO THE LEVEL OF THE DOCTORATE, WHILE ONLY 2.3 PERCENT OF WOMEN B.A.S GO ON TO THE DOCTORATE IN PHYSICS. CERTAINLY UNTIL THE DAY WHEN WOMEN FACULTY AND WOMEN TRUSTEES ARE A MAJORITY ON UNIVERSITY DECISION-MAKING BODIES, FORCED HIRING OF WOMEN FACULTY CANNOT ALONE ACHIEVE THE REALLOCATION OF RESOURCES REQUIRED. SOME COOPERATIVE STRATEGY IS ESSENTIAL—ONE WHICH ATTEMPTS TO TRANSFORM MALE DEFINITIONS OF SCHOLARLY ROLES WHILE AT THE SAME TIME SENSITIZING INSTITUTIONS TO THE NEEDS OF THEIR WOMEN STUDENTS.

THERE ARE ALSO SERIOUS HAZARDS WITH REGARD TO WOMEN'S INTELLECTUAL TRAINING AND THEIR EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF SPECIAL WOMEN'S STUDIES PROGRAMS AS OPPOSED TO THE DEVELOPMENT OF A CURRICULUM WITHIN THE ESTABLISHED DISCIPLINES WHICH IS MORE RESPONSIVE TO WOMEN'S NEEDS. THE MAJOR HAZARD OF THE SPECIAL WOMEN'S STUDIES PROGRAM IS THAT IT TRAINS WOMEN WITH LOW ACADEMIC STATUS AND LOW EMPLOYMENT POTENTIAL, RATHER THAN women WITH IMPECCABLE PROFESSIONAL CREDENTIALS WHO CAN COMMAND ACCEPTANCE WITHIN CONVENTIONAL DISCIPLINES. THIS IS A DANGER WHICH MUST BE AVOIDED IF WOMEN ARE NOT TO BE RELEGATED TO AREAS OF MARGINAL SCHOLARLY IMPORTANCE WITHIN THE UNIVERSITY. OF EQUAL IMPORTANCE IS THE UNDEVELOPED STATE OF THE DISCIPLINE SO FAR AS THE STUDY OF WOMEN IS CONCERNED—WHETHER THE FIELD BE HISTORY, ANTHROPOLOGY, PSYCHOLOGY, SOCIOLOGY, LITERARY STUDIES, ECONOMICS, OR POLITICAL SCIENCE. IN NONE OF THESE AREAS IS THE FIELD SUFFICIENTLY ADVANCED (APART FROM THE WORK OF A CORE GROUP OF SCHOLARS) TO ENSURE THAT THE IMPORTANT QUESTIONS ARE RAISED AND THE FRUITFUL RESEARCH TARGETS DEFINED. INSTEAD, MANY COURSES IN THESE FIELDS ARE PRESENTLY MOUNTED USING TEXTS FROM THE WRITINGS OF EARLIER FEMINIST SCHOLARS PUBLISHED IN THE 1920S AND 30S. THESE, THOUGH IMPORTANT ACHIEVEMENTS IN THEIR DAY, ARE NO BASIS ON WHICH TO BUILD A CLEAR UNDERSTANDING OF HOW CONTEMPORARY SCHOLARSHIP IN SUCH FIELDS CAN BE BROUGHT TO BEAR ON WOMEN'S EXPERIENCE. TO CITE SOME EXAMPLES, ALICE CLARK'S THE WORKING LIFE OF WOMEN IN THE SEVENTEENTH CENTURY WAS A MAJOR SCHOLARLY ACHIEVEMENT WHEN FIRST PUBLISHED IN 1919. TODAY THERE ARE FUNDAMENTAL CORRECTIONS TO BE MADE TO CLARK'S THESIS ABOUT THE IMPACT OF CAPITALISM ON WOMEN'S ROLE IN THE WORK FORCE BECAUSE HISTORICAL DEMOGRAPHERS HAVE DEVELOPED NEW KNOWLEDGE ABOUT FAMILY SIZE, MORTALITY RATES, AND LIFE EXPECTANCY IN THE SEVENTEENTH CENTURY. SIMILARLY, MANY COURSES DRAWING ON MARXIST METHODOLOGY PROCEED IN IGNORANCE OF CURRENT SCHOLARLY OPINION AMONG ANTHROPOLOGISTS REGARDING THE POLITICAL SIGNIFICANCE OF DESCENT IN THE FEMALE LINE. IF WE ARE NOT MERELY TO REPEAT THE ERRORS AND MISCONCEPTIONS OF EARLIER GENERATIONS, WE MUST CONTROL THE ENTHUSIASM OF YOUNG INSTRUCTORS WHICH MAY LEAD THEM TO RESPOND TO THE DEMAND FOR COURSES ON THE SUBJECT OF WOMEN'S EXPERIENCE WITHOUT THE SOLID GRASP OF THE FIELD NECESSARY TO
formulate the relevant questions and bring the best recent research to bear on the topic. Thus, though there are now about 1,900 courses and programs offered in 1,000 colleges and universities, these figures should not lead us to believe that much has changed in the undergraduate curriculum, that much new knowledge is being conveyed, or that much progress has been made in dealing with an important pedagogical problem. It will take more than hundreds of hastily assembled courses to reorient disciplines whose entire range of methodological assumptions is based upon norms derived from male experience. Even were research on women’s experience more advanced in the major disciplines of the humanities and the social sciences, it would be questionable whether from the point of view of scholarly creativity it is most fruitful to isolate the analysis of this aspect of human experience from the consideration of others. It would be questionable because the real goal of any program to make the major cultural institutions of society responsive to women’s experience must be the transformation of perception so that we can break away from models of action which have been derived from stereotyped male roles. The isolation of critical analysis of women’s experience in separate institutes and programs would permit conventional scholarship in established disciplines to continue unmodified by new questions and new insights whereas examination of women’s experience should bring about the reformulation of questions within existing fields and the revision of their methodological assumptions. If there is a social basis to thought in the Mannheim sense, then every effort must be made to integrate perceptions from different social perspectives into the current approximation of truth in any field. The example which most vividly illustrates the need to synthesize differing perceptions of social issues arising because of differing sex roles comes from the history of medical social work. The great pioneering figure in creating this predominantly female profession, Ida Cannon, noted in her memoirs, written in the 1940s, every major criticism of health-care delivery in the United States which more radical critics were to perceive in the 1960s. Yet because she defined her teaching role only in relation to other women social workers many chances were missed in her lifetime to transform perceptions of health-care problems by male members of the medical profession. This example illustrates the dangers inherent in transmitting the perceptions of the woman scholar only to the self-selecting group who are predisposed to enroll in ‘women’s’ fields. Important insights available to only one social group will not be generalized, while remediable social problems may be explained away as part of the inherent characteristics of one sex or the other.

The major role which research in the area of women’s experience could play within a university setting is in precisely the transformation of perceptions of male professionals which Ida Cannon regarded as beyond her teaching competence. This possibility has not yet been grasped by the advocates of separate women’s studies programs though it is in the area of institutional provision for the transfer of the results of research now being done on female psychology, on the images of the female now being discovered by historians of science and the social sciences, and in particular by historians of medicine and psychiatry, to established professional schools such as law and medicine that the promise for the future lies. Assumptions about sex roles and ideas about family structure which are now the subject of the most searching critical scrutiny in the humanities and the social sciences remain unchallenged in professional education because of the failure to provide an institutional framework which will allow synthesis and development from the existing flurry of research on women’s experience. Without such an effort at synthesis the in-
sights of another generation of feminist scholars will remain fragmented, and conventional professional education, the path to most positions of prestige and influence in postindustrial society, will remain as it does in 1974—largely untouched by the ferment of the last decade on feminist issues.

Thus the decade 1964-74 has seen a new awareness of the extent to which coeducation at the undergraduate and graduate level has failed to bring women into positions of authority in the definition and transfer of learning. In the United States there have been significant attempts to modify the curriculum and to control the process of recruitment so as to ensure that institutions of higher learning are more responsive to the needs of women. However, within the drive to establish separate women's studies programs and to force recruitment of women faculty, there have been contradictory elements which could, if unmodified, prove counterproductive in the long run. In the short run can we expect to see much change within the educational system and among professional elites by 1984? Will the undergraduate curriculum have been transformed? Will women students occupy proportionately the same number of places in professional schools as they now do in arts and science programs? Will there be a comparable influx of men into the educational programs of the service professions? Will there be female Oppenheimers and Szilards pushing at the frontiers of knowledge and leading the way in the conceptual breakthroughs of the more abstract sciences? Will the impulse to achieve equity of treatment for the sexes in education, which is basically a question of social policy, result in an academic world where the pursuit of knowledge is more intense and the intellect spurred to greater levels of creativity? Will there, perhaps, be a reversal of the trend toward coeducation and a reversion toward a single-sex educational community?

It is safe to predict that even with massive intervention by the state there will be relatively little change in any of these areas by 1984 because the university alone cannot solve the problem of cultural attitude, and it cannot singlehandedly contrive the conditions which will release the intellectual powers of those whom Western culture has always seen as exercising their minds in ways which were compensatory for or complementary to the minds of men. If there are serious efforts at developing remedial programs in basic sciences and mathematics for women undergraduates whose schooling has not prepared them to compete for admission into schools of medicine and engineering, we may see a significant change in the composition of these professional groups. If the research which is now being carried out in the humanities and social sciences is disseminated through the established disciplines, then we shall see not so much a revamping of the undergraduate curriculum by 1984, but a major critical re-evaluation of the methodological assumptions of the social sciences. If nothing else has changed, students should certainly be hearing less about sex-linked expressive and instrumental roles by 1984. It will, however, be a massive scholarly undertaking to revise the assumptions and eliminate the biases that have been built into all the efforts to observe and analyze society and are so central to the modern consciousness. This could occur through the kind of revolution in perception which does spark intellectual creativity; an unambiguous effort to accommodate to the experience of women could make the academic world a livelier place. Certainly there will be a revived and critical role for the private women's colleges which have not succumbed to the current fashion for coeducation. Given the current rate of change we have no reason to predict that women will have achieved influential, let alone majority, representation on the decision-making bodies of the major public institutions, and this being the case, the significant evidence
about the most effective ways to allocate resources in the education of women will still come from private institutions. If they are to rise to this challenge, they will have to abandon their exclusive commitment to the liberal arts program and begin to deal openly with the problems of discrimination which women will continue to face for many decades in professional and business life, and they will have to deploy resources for a variety of research activities which they have not so far seen as an important responsibility.

There are already signs that all of these opportunities will be taken up by private women's colleges in the coming decade, and for these reasons they will continue to attract students of a high caliber. For the rest there is little evidence to warrant predictions of startling change in the contours of graduate and undergraduate education by 1984. The radical feminist organizations on the campus, the day-care demonstrations, the action groups pressing for new programs and for the hiring of women faculty have identified a problem with deep roots in American educational history, but so far the diagnosis of the problem and the plans for action have been scattered and diffuse. It is to be hoped that the decade to come will see a much more determined effort to work within the structures of existing institutions to make them responsive to women's needs than was the case in the past decade. The words of the spokeswomen for the Women's Studies College at SUNY/Buffalo speak volumes for the disillusionment of the enthusiastic pioneers who saw a single academic program as the base from which to work to transform an institution which they saw as either hostile or indifferent to its women students. After recounting the history of many battles regarding their academic status and some successful efforts to improve the basis of their financial support they conclude:

With these added resources our work may perhaps become less tangential to the University. We no longer have faith that exemplary action is enough; we believe that we must become more courageous, competent and aggressive in university politics.11

Given the institutional structure of intellectual life today, it is to the apparently mundane arena of budget committees and university decision-making bodies that resources to support research and teaching activities are allocated. The feminist utopians of the last decade saw the wave of the future in creating counter-institutions; the next decade will see a renewed political concern for working to transform existing ones so that women students secure the changes in curriculum, the research support, and the professional training which are essential if coeducation is to be a genuinely egalitarian educational policy and if "women's studies" are to be more than the decorative frill to be afforded after other priorities assumed to have greater academic "justification" have been met.

REFERENCES

1. Mt. Holyoke, Smith, and Wellesley have all recently made the decision to remain women's colleges.

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