Andersen Speaks on "Denying Difference"

On February 12, 1988, Margaret Andersen, Professor of Sociology at the University of Delaware, addressed a group of faculty and students as a part of a workshop on integrating issues of race and gender into the curriculum sponsored by the Race/Gender Resource Center. Andersen's talk was titled, "Denying Difference: The Continuing Basis for the Exclusion of Race and Gender from the Curriculum."

Transforming the curriculum, Professor Andersen explained, requires personal as well as professional change. This fact, she believes, is the root of the resistance toward such efforts. When educators undertake the task of curricular transformation, Andersen stated they must ask themselves two questions: (1) "What is the core content of my discipline?" and (2) "How would my discipline have to change in order to include women and people of color?"

Feminist scholars, said Andersen, have identified five phases of curriculum change. She noted that all of these phases are necessary and that, when we are teaching, most of us work in all of them at some point, and in some of them simultaneously. She cautioned that these should not be interpreted as another judgmental scheme, but as useful for organizing our thinking.

The first phase she termed the "womanless all white curriculum," which is still the primary curriculum and doesn't need much description because we have all identified it and are survivors of it." Here women and minorities are completely excluded from the curriculum. "In its modern form in sociology, women and racial-ethnics are completely left out of research samples, though there are footnotes appearing in articles in the major journals which say, 'In this analysis, women and blacks have been left out because they complicate the model.'" In economics this phase "is reflected in the assumption that rational action is the basis for economic behavior and that free choice motivates human beings to work and make decisions." It assumes we all, regardless of race or gender, have equally free choices.

The second phase Andersen identified as the one in which we "try to put women and minorities into the curriculum—women in leadership, women in history, Blacks in the civil rights movement." The historian Gerda Lerner has termed this practice the "add-women-and-stir" approach, where we try to find the "women worthies" or the "famous few"--Frederick Douglass, Sojourner Truth, Susan B. Anthony. In religion the focus is on finding women or minorities who are ordained ministers or famous religious leaders, while not looking at the everyday religious actions and beliefs of women and minorities. In many introductory social science texts, this phase is reflected in the fact that we now have separate chapters on gender and race and ethnicity, but nowhere else in the book do race and gender have much significance.

Andersen argued that this phase is theoretically contained, that it "takes the dominant group experience as the organizing framework for the discipline and tries to stick us in." She cited as an example a widely used American history textbook which now includes in its chapter on the Progressive Period a discussion of how
the progressives saw the immigrants. But the text does not point out that the "Progressive" Period was the period that had the highest rates of Black lynchings. Moreover, the text does not ask how the immigrants saw the progressives-the really transformative question. The "adding in" approach, Andersen concluded, breeds tokenism, maintains a deep sense of otherness vis a vis women and minorities, and does not ask more fundamental questions of the disciplines concepts and organizing principles.

In the third phase which often happens tangentially or in conjunction with the second, women, Blacks, Latinos, gays, lesbians, and other traditionally excluded groups become defined as victims. In this phase we begin to document the exclusion and discrimination that is practiced against these groups and sexism and racism become important topics of study. This approach does yield important findings. Economists demonstrate that the income of women and Blacks is not equal to that of men and whites. In psychology, research on patterns of group prejudice might be done. In education, sexist images in children's books might be examined. However, excluded groups in this phase become defined in what Patricia Bell Scott has called a "problems framework." Women and minorities become the problem. "In fact," contended Andersen, "not only do women and minorities become the problem, they also become to look pathetic. This approach still takes the dominant group viewpoint as the reference point, by comparing us to it. "It," the dominant group, is still seen as neutral and having no stance. In fact, the built-in tendency of this phase reflects the hierarchical way it is organized. People do not typically pity themselves. You are only pitted by those who are in some hierarchical relationship to you. To see a group or person as pitiful assumes a superior stance."

While Andersen believes that there is a part of this phase which is necessary: to point out the fact of discrimination, she has found that in her classes this becomes overwhelmingly depressing. She stated that, "About halfway into a course, the students are emotional wrecks. They can't take anymore. They don't want to think about the course material and resistance sets in. No one wants to be seen as a victim--even those of us who are. What the victimization phase does is to deny the creativity and sense of self-worth that we as victims have had to achieve in order to survive our victimhood. At this time students need to re-construct their sense of dignity." This is the time, said Andersen, to bring in Black and women's culture, music, or comedy to make students feel good about that which so-called victims have created.

In the fourth phase of curriculum transformation women, Blacks, Latinos, Asians, lesbians, and gays become seen as society, not in society, but as society. Their experience "becomes the lens through which history, society and culture are viewed. Here the meaning systems as experienced and defined by those we study become central. Another shift is that, as we move away from treating people as victims and start to view the world through their experience, then our attention turns not just to the examination of oppression, but also to the examination of privilege. Examining privilege reveals how the structure of race, class, and gender relations affects the experience of all of us, not just those who are their victims. This re-centers the curriculum in different questions and turns many of our assumptions upside down. It means that we do not just study others, but that we also study ourselves."

As an example of what this shift in perspective can accomplish, Andersen presented an assignment she used in one of her courses which was composed of primarily white students and a few Black students. Students were asked to write an essay answering the following question: "If someone were to write your life history, what would they learn about race relations in this country?" What she tries to reveal to students through this exercise is that the social structure of racism in this country, along with class and gender, has affected us all--not just those who are its victims. "While it is easy for white students to see others as victims," she stated, "it is very difficult for them to grasp the complexities of race, gender and class and how they influence their collective and individual experience. But, as stu-
Workshop Participants Discuss Issues of Integrating Race and Gender into the Curriculum with Professor Andersen

Geri Cooke -- Religion, Tom Greaves -- Anthropology

Michael LaGrega -- Civil Engineering

Mary Hill -- History
the issues of race and gender have been trivialized and dismissed as being unimportant in psychology, yet when we meet people race and/or gender are the first things we notice. These issues have been dismissed as something we can't measure or something that is uninteresting. One of the goals of the course, stated professor Wade, is to increase awareness by demonstrating to students that racism and sexism have some very deep psychological roots and are not issues of the past.

In addition, the course addresses, from a psychological perspective, methods by which changes in attitudes and behavior regarding race and gender might be achieved. The course follows a seminar format and involves outside readings as well as two texts. "Last fall," stated professor Wade, "the course went very well with lots of discussion. I encourage students to speak their minds and try to convey to them that their opinions are important. I think that on a campus like Bucknell the issues covered in the course are ones that both black and white students want to discuss." The course will be offered again next spring with some new literature included.

Race and gender are also areas in which professor Wade has done research. This research includes studies of interracial marriage, discrimination against multiracial individuals, affirmative action, and race and gender differences in self-esteem.
principal data the modernization process in England and the United States, with quick comparative glimpses at Africa, Latin America, and Asia. Among topics examined were (somewhat beyond a narrow definition of the course topic) Claude Levi-Strauss' argument that gender inequality constituted the historical foundation of social order, Esther Boserup's discussion of the prominent role of women in African agriculture and its decline with colonization, Sheila Rowbotham's somewhat similar discussion for England in the 18th and 19th centuries, comparable arguments about United States' history, and bits of pieces of arguments that state formation in modernization had the same consequence.

That course, while interesting in its own right, slowly evolved away from its historical emphasis toward its present focus on the contemporary scene, toward an analysis of the crosscutting features of gender and class inequality, of the contemporary character of gender inequality in higher education and in the professions, and of the cultural images of male and female which legitimate and conceal patterns of gender inequality.

In the spring of 1979 Kendrick put in place a second and companion senior level sociology seminar on feminist theory, one which emphasized the degree to which feminist theory focused on the organization of the family as a principal explanation for gender inequality. That course, too, has evolved over the years and is now much more an introduction to the classic works of contemporary feminist theory.

As the topics of these courses shifted, so did Kendrick's approach to teaching. Over the years, he came to appreciate the axiom that certain kinds of learning should lead to a rethinking of one's life, of the meaning of one's social location, and of one's concerns for social justice. He combined that axiom with the feminist prescription that the personal is the political to reorganize the format of his classes. Now he emphasizes directed conversations about the relation between texts and the social self, its social and historical location, and forms of social engage-ment. Since the self is, among other things, a socially constructed, socially located gendered image, feminist theory helps bring that to consciousness.

One of the highlights of these courses for Kendrick has been the constant complaint of students that conversations never stop. The end of class is only the signal to move the conversation to some other quarters, a dorm room, the library, a lounge. Students complain that Monday nights just seem to go on and on and on. But they remark in course evaluations that they will never see the world the same way again.

James Cone Shares with Faculty How Making Race Central Transformed His Teaching

(See story next page)

On June 11, 1963, The University of Alabama provided the backdrop for what would become a lasting symbol in American civil rights history. With his "stand in the schoolhouse door," Governor George Wallace attempted to defy a federal mandate by blocking the entrance of two black students to the University. Overruled by the highest levels of federal government, Wallace relented, and the major university in the last southern state to integrate its educational institutions enrolled Vivian Malone and James Hood. In the intervening 25 years, considerable progress has been made toward ensuring equal rights for all Americans. Yet, even today, racial incidents continue to make headlines, not just on college campuses or in the South, but in major northern cities and indeed nationwide. The nature of racial prejudice and discrimination--its causes, its history, and its impact on society--will be the focus of this conference hosted by The University of Alabama. Eminent scholars and experts will examine racial prejudice and discrimination at the individual, institutional, and socio-cultural levels. The conference will move from a historical perspective to a current focus before addressing strategies for the improvement of race relations. For further information, contact: College of Continuing Studies, P.O. Box 2967, Tuscaloosa, Alabama 35486-2967. Or phone: (205) 348-3000.


"Parallels and Intersections" is a four-day national conference in which the multiple forms of oppressions which affect all human beings will be explored, analyzed, and challenged. Racism, classism, heterosexism, anti-semitism, sexism, ableism, and ageism are just some of the labels we have developed to express the dynamics of how we define others and define ourselves in our daily communication and behavior.

Participate by organizing a panel, conducting a workshop, or presenting an academic paper. Bring your music, your poetry, your performance, your book exhibit. Share your struggle with people from all over the country.
Deadline for submission of one-page proposals is December 1, 1988. For further information, contact: Women Against Racism Committee c/o Women's Resource and Action Center The University of Iowa 130 N. Madison Street Iowa City, Iowa 52242 Phone (319) 335-1486


The Women's Studies Department and the University of Minnesota are proud to present "Leadership and Power: Women's Alliances for Social Change," the tenth annual conference of the National Women's Studies Association (NWSA). We invite you to join us for the five-day event. The goal of the '88 conference is to address differences of race, class, and ethnic background in order to effect personal, social, and political change. The conference will focus on leadership styles that promote personal empowerment, while building successful coalitions among diverse groups of women, especially those of the university and the community.
For further information, contact: NWSA National Office University of Maryland College Park, Maryland 20742 (301) 454-3757