

Margaret
Cunningim
Women's Center

Of changes and choice. . . Women in the 1990s

Sue Hinze Jones, A&S '85, is a fourth year graduate student working on her doctorate in sociology. One area of her studies is the intra-familial division of labor.

Two weeks after the birth of my first child, I returned to the classroom to resume teaching Contemporary Social Problems. As the external vestiges of my pregnancy waned I became more "normal-looking," as one student put it. Inwardly I was setting forth on an unfamiliar journey combining motherhood with my career as a graduate student/academic.

What did they think - those students who witnessed my transformation? Did the women wonder about becoming pregnant? Did the men think about becoming a father? Regardless of what students believe, rapid changes in women's roles have challenged both men and women to create lives that embrace fulfillment in both personal and work realms.

Many students will combine non-traditional or alternative family structures (i.e. single lifestyles, single-parenthood, child-free couples) with work lives. My experience in the few years since graduating from college has been as a graduate student, wife, and mother. My husband and I are grappling with problems faced by dual career couples with young children.

The majority of female college graduates can expect to work outside the home for most of their adult lives, a trajectory much different from that of our mothers and grandmothers. Men's participation in the private sphere has changed less, and overall, men's lives are not struc-

tured much differently from their fathers' and grandfathers' lives. Yet women still are more likely than men to worry about not devoting enough time to family and are more likely to quit or cut back on their job if family needs demand more attention.

Few women are in a position to choose *between* motherhood and a career or job. For the vast majority, "sequencing" and realistic expectations are key to combining a career with marriage and children.

Some women may choose to coast in their jobs while children are young, planning to put more energy into their occupation when their children are older. Others defer childbearing until they are well established in a career track. This is "sequencing." A realistic expectation about sequencing is that the woman who makes this decision may never reach the top of her career ladder. That's fine if she is content with the choice.

Women who combine raising a young child with remaining in the work force also need to have realistic expectations. We cannot win the Nobel Peace Prize in medicine and hand-sew our baby's bibs. A husband who shares equally in child care will not solve the problem because he also shares the stress. Even third-party help, an alternative open to parents who can afford it, cannot resolve the guilt and sense of responsibility felt by a mother who is bombarded from all sides with "good advice" about her parent role.

Why doesn't anyone ask men if they will or can combine fatherhood with careers or jobs? Although the answer to this question might be obvious, the point here is that if society treated men as full participants in family lives, then women would not be so pressured into accepting the either/or myth of motherhood vs. career/job.

Women who reject the above myth often fall victim to another myth known as the "superwoman syndrome." This popular notion, that women must *do it all* to *have it all*, puts undue pressure on women to

(continued page two)



Of Changes (from page one)

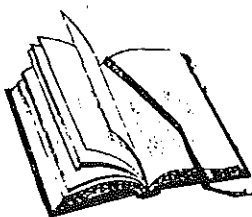
make up for both society's and men's failures to adjust to the rapid changes in women's lives.

We women owe ourselves peace of mind and enjoyable lives. However, we threaten to deny ourselves such basic pleasures by accepting the superwoman myth and attempting to excel in each role we choose. In an ideal world, parenting would be valued and incorporated into the social structure: corporations, the government, schools, and factories would accommodate the needs of working parents, and men would be expected to share equally in domestic duties. However, as we work and wait for such changes to occur, we must avoid the superwoman trap, or risk our mental health.

I have learned to think long-term about what is important to me and to accept that I can't do all of those things every day. In the short-term, my peers who have not chosen parenthood will finish their dissertations semesters ahead of me. I will finish, however. In the long-term, I too will accomplish that goal at a slower pace. And that's fine with my husband and I.

As I balance changing diapers with writing lectures, I muse about how today's college graduates will pursue their life's goals in the absence of social support for the dual-career parents and in the face of pressure to conform to social myths. A few will emulate their parents and grandparents, carrying on with a division of labor that fixes women at home and men in the world. Most will reject old stereotypes about men's and women's roles and will design lives that permit both mothers and fathers a chance to participate in public and private spheres.

As I write this article I wonder about my eight month old at the babysitter's. Did he take his morning nap? Are his emerging teeth bothering him? The decision to leave him was not easy; neither is the decision to miss soccer practice again, nor to miss an important paper presentation. But they are my decisions, choices made that allow me to achieve a comfortable balance between my roles as an individual, family member, and worker. ■



Lost Book

The Women's Center Library has lost an

important book, *Sexual Harassment of Working Women: A Case of Sex Discrimination* by Catharine A. MacKinnon, Yale University Press, 1979. This summary of the case law on sex discrimination is needed for research. If the borrower reads this notice, please return the book as soon as possible. Anyone wishing to donate a copy to the library, please call 322-4843.

News quotes

Another woman breaks into the ranks of big time sports program directors.

Deborah A. Yow was selected as athletics director at Saint Louis University (in June), which will make her the third woman now directing a National Collegiate Athletic Association Division I athletics program full time.

Judith A. Davidson of Central Connecticut State University and Eve Atkinson of Lafayette College are the other female directors among the 292 Division I colleges.

Ms. Yow, who will leave her position as associate athletics director at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro, comes from a family with a formidable college-sports presence. Her sisters, Susan and Kay, coach women's basketball at Kansas State and North Carolina State Universities, respectively. Deborah Yow herself coached basketball at Oral Roberts University and at the Universities of Florida and Kentucky.

The Chronicle of Higher Education
July 11, 1990

Supreme Court lets stand Boston U. Professor's reinstatement.

The Supreme Court let stand a lower-court ruling ordering Boston University to reinstate with tenure a former English professor found to have been a victim of sex discrimination.

The lower court also had awarded
(continued on page four)

It's your health

Beth Colvin Huff, RN, MSN
Department of OB/GYN

If you will be needing elective surgery at any time in the future, the issue of blood transfusion should be discussed with your surgeon. There are three donor sources from which you may receive blood - yourself, your designated family and/or friends, and random donations. The pros and cons of each are listed.

Donating your own blood, called **autologous donation**, is of course the safest procedure. There is no risk of disease transmission or transfusion reaction. You must, however, have enough time before the scheduled surgery to donate (usually 3-6 weeks) and you must not be anemic when beginning the donations. If you do not need the blood, it is destroyed and cannot be given to any other persons.

Asking friends and family with your blood type to donate for you is called **directed donation**. Be aware that this blood is tested just as vigorously as random donations and that any blood that does not pass the screening tests for hepatitis and the AIDS virus will be destroyed. Some people, when faced with an urgent need for blood, will prefer to have people they know donate for them. The American Red Cross needs at least 72 hours to receive the donation, test and process the blood and then deliver it to the hospital where you'll be having surgery. If the blood is not needed for your surgery, it becomes available to anyone needing that blood type.

Random (or homologous) donations have been the mainstay of blood transfusions for years but recently the risk of disease transmission has been a concern. Fortunately, over the past 5 years the Red Cross has had available improved screening tests for both hepatitis and AIDS, thereby reducing the risk of infection.

Autologous blood transfusions are obviously the safest alternative when considering surgery. But if faced with an immediate life-threatening situation, homologous blood is much safer now than a few years ago. Supporting the American Red Cross with blood donations is a vital service that ensures that there is plenty of safe blood available for emergencies. ■

Speaking of women . . .

A Poignant Reminder

Fay Wirth Renardson, Associate Editor
Alumni and Development.

The visual image is powerful: mothers and grandmothers—heads draped with white scarves or diapers embroidered with their children's names and dates of disappearance, photographs of their children clutched in their hands or hung around their necks—silently march every Thursday afternoon in a circle around the obelisk at the center of Plaza de Mayo, the great square in front of the presidential palace in Buenos Aires, Argentina.

Jean Bethke Elshtain, Centennial Professor of Political Science, first saw the Mothers of the Disappeared (*los desaparecidos*) marching in 1982 when she was in Argentina to lecture on women and politics. Haunted by their image, Elshtain later returned to Buenos Aires and spent three full days listening to the testimony of some of these mothers and grandmothers. Among them was one of the original fourteen *madres* who first stepped into the Plaza de Mayo in April 1977, immediately becoming a powerful, symbolic presence and a poignant reminder to Argentines and the world that their children were missing—probably dead—and that those responsible must be brought to justice under the Nuremberg principles.

"As mothers, they challenged and delegitimated a military regime by non-violent, symbolic protest," said Elshtain. "Symbolic power resided in their identity as mothers. They transformed the *mater dolorosa* into active female witness and helped bring down a junta. We cannot dismiss this as private drama."

Beginning in 1976, men and women—especially young people from about sixteen to twenty-five years old—began to disappear from Buenos Aires and the provinces. "Forcibly taken from their homes or snatched off the streets by people in Ford Falcons with unmarked license plates, they were transported *sans* trial to clandestine jails or torture centers. No one knows how many

disappeared," Elshtain said. "Conservative estimates are eight to ten thousand; the mothers say twenty to thirty thousand."

The military juntas in power between 1976 and 1979 waged a dirty war against a generation of young people tainted, they claimed, by democratic ideas that threatened to undermine Argentinean society. "Their idea was to purify society and rid it of these subversive elements," said Elshtain. "Using the language of disease, they described those who disappeared as infected with bacilli, viruses, poison, or toxic substances. They also referred metaphorically to the tree of subversion that must be severed at its roots."

Initially the mothers could not believe that the wanton torture and murder of innocent citizens was happening in a civilized country such as theirs. Caught in a web of political terrorism and powerlessness, these women recognized that they had power as mothers in their shared tragedy. "They couldn't save their own children, but they could call public attention to their disappearances," Elshtain said. "Even in a situation where there is a radical absence of choice, it was possible for these mothers to become a political force."

Although the disappearances stopped in late 1982 when a constitutional government came into power, the mothers continue to march. "They want a record," said Elshtain. "They want to avoid a double disappearance—disappearance from life and disappearance from history." One of their accomplishments was the National Commission on the Disappeared, a tormented series of government-sponsored hearings that was publicized under the heading *Never Again*. The mothers have moved from their own concerns to those of human rights, assuming a guardian position in society to watch and witness every violation. "Our children were kidnapped for their dreams," they told Elshtain. "We will continue to uphold their dreams, always vigilant for the dignity of man."

Is there any lingering symbolic power in the image of motherhood?



photo by Kathe Köllwitz

What continuing clout does the image of motherhood have in America? "Mothers' movements have not received enough scholarly attention," said Elshtain, who is working on a book about mothers and politics to be published in about two years. One chapter is devoted to the Argentinean mothers; the other examples are from the United States—among them, MADD (Mothers Against Drunk Driving), MAGIC (Mothers Against Gangs in Communities), and mothers opposing toxic waste dumps. When the Mothers' Strike for Peace in the 1960s voiced their opposition to atmospheric nuclear testing, women chose "a most provocative symbol to combat the pollution of that most hallowed of all liquid substances—mother's milk," Elshtain wrote in *Women and War* (1987). "A skull-and-crossbones emblem on a baby's bottle is as powerful as a veteran in his wheelchair throwing away the insignia of war." ■

Mark your calendar for
Cuninggim Lecture Oct. 17.

Shari Benstock, Professor of English and Chair of the Women's Studies Program at Miami University will be the speaker for the third annual Margaret Cuninggim Lecture. The October 17 lecture entitled "*The Literary Baedeker: Images of Travel in American Women's Writing, 1900-1940*" will be held in the new Psychology Building room 126 at 8:00 p.m. A reception will follow.

Calendar of events

Call 322-4843 for further information on the programs listed below.

Dissertation Writers Group will meet for preliminary planning/organization sessions on Tuesday and Wednesday, September 4 and 5 at 5:00 p.m. in the Margaret Cuninggim Women's Center. All women at the proposal stage and beyond in any school or discipline are invited to attend one of these sessions. Subject to interest there will be one or two groups formed for the academic year. The Dissertation Writers group is task oriented, providing problem solving, trouble shooting, and moral support needed to complete a dissertation.

If you cannot attend either session, please phone the Women's Center at 322-4843 to indicate interest.

Book Group will meet at The Book Oasis, 2824 Dogwood Avenue, near 100 Oaks Shopping Center, on September 10 at 5:15 p.m. to choose books for the next six months.

"Exercise/Diet Equation" is the first in a series on women's health. Sharon Shields, Associate Professor of the Practice of Health Promotions & Education, and Teresa Sharp, Clinical Nutritionist, will describe how diet and exercise work together to produce a healthy body.

Workshop will be on September 13 at 12:15 pm in Sarratt 118. Bring your lunch.

Lunchtime Book Review on September 19 at 12:15 p.m. will hear Jay Clayton, Assoc. Prof. English, review *Women of the Left Bank* by Shari Benstock in Sarratt 118. This review will serve as an introduction to Dr. Benstock who is the 1990 Margaret Cuninggim lecturer (see box page three).

Body Image and Self-Esteem, a workshop led by Nancy A. Ransom, is a follow-up workshop for women who have participated in a Women and Self Esteem Workshop. This one-hour workshop will examine sources of women's negative body image and discuss strategies to help build self-respect for all types of physique.

Reservations for this September 25 workshop will be limited to the first twenty-five who call or write the women's center. If demand warrants it will be offered again. Workshop will be held at 12:15 p.m. in Sarratt 205.

If this is the first time you've received this newsletter, it may be because you are a contributor to the Margaret Cuninggim Lecture Fund. Although our policy is to only add persons to our mailing list who have asked to be included, we have taken the liberty of adding these supporters.

News quotes (continued from page 2)

\$215,000 to the professor, Julia Prewitt Brown, in 1987.

Without comment, the Supreme Court declined to consider the university's arguments that requiring it to grant tenure interfered with its right to choose its faculty members.

Ms. Brown, who has been teaching English at Providence College, has said she will return to Boston University in the fall.

The Chronicle of Higher Education
June 27, 1990

Elder Care

Did you know that women today end up spending more years caring for their own or their husband's parents than for their own children? Part of this responsibility is helping aging parents deal with their finances, particularly medical bills.

"The Medicare Handbook," available from your local Social Security office, tells you how to fill out forms correctly (thus avoiding reimbursement delays), and lists toll-free numbers of insurance companies.

The American Association of Retired Persons has trained volunteers who will answer your questions; to get the name of one in your area, call 1-202-728-4843. For information and worksheets, write to AARP Fulfillment, 1909 K. St., N.W., Washington, D.C. 20049 and ask for Request Payment Record D13561.

Good Housekeeping
February, 1990

Bad news on equality for American women. Full workplace integration of women will take another 75 to 100 years at the present rate of change. A new report, *The American Woman 1990-91*, says the outlook is more grim for minority women. Minority women's plight and all women's problems with housing, employment, business, and the arts are covered in this third of a series of reports that document women's social, economic, and political status.

It is a valuable resource and information tool for those working with women's issues says Sara E. Rix, editor of the report for Women's Research and Education Institute (WREI). You can order a copy for \$12.95 prepaid from WREI, 1700 18th Street, NW, Suite 400, Washington, D.C. 20029.

University Women, June 1990
The University of Wisconsin

Front line news from The University of Wisconsin.

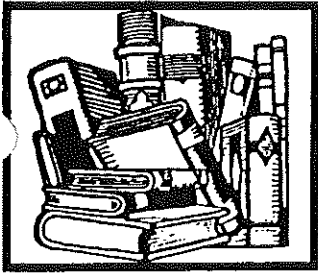
by Marian J. Swoboda, Assistant to the President for Equal Opportunity Programs

Sixteen years after the first attempt to amend its bylaws to change the term "chairman" to "chair," the University of Wisconsin System Board of Regents voted unanimously, without discussion, on July 13, 1990 to make the change. The Board's action was a far cry from the day in July 1974 when the idea was first introduced. Records indicate that the subject was greeted with much mirth at that time. As a matter of fact, the motion even failed to be seconded.

University Women, July 1990

chair (châr) n. 3.a. The office or position of a person having authority. b. A person who holds such an office or position, esp. one who presides over a meeting.

The American Heritage Dictionary (1985)



In the library

Naomi E. Heiser
Women's Center librarian

The Women's Center library is now receiving *Differences: a Journal of Feminist Cultural Studies*. The editors state that *Differences* "brings together cultural studies and feminism and aims to provide a forum for an examination of cultural politics and discursive practices informed by feminist criticism." So far, each issue has focused on a broad topic that is approached in many different ways by scholars in various fields. The variety of subject matter is fascinating, ranging from familial ideology and the case of Baby M, to the use of the concept "essentialism" by some feminists as a means of degrading the credibility of other feminists and avoiding a confrontation with a supportive heterosexist power structure.

The first issue, subtitled "Life and Death in Sexuality: Reproductive Technologies and AIDS" contains an article, "Silences: 'Hispanics,' AIDS, and Sexual Practices" (Ana Maria Alonso and Maria Teresa Koreck) which addresses the potentially deadly results for "minorities" when AIDS research is conceptualized from an Anglo perspective.

The authors point out the historical origins of the concept/term "Hispanic:" "[T]he Nixon administration began using the term in the wake of the 1960s Chicano Movement in order to co-opt middle-class Mexican-Americans and to displace and preempt more radical forms of ethnic self-identification and political alliance." Consequently, silences about difference among ethnic Latino groups are extensive and profound. The term "Hispanic" "eras[es] from the field of discourse the African and Indian heritage of peoples of Latin America" and contributes to a lack of

understanding about the varied sexual practices and patterns of IV drug use within different Latino groups in the U.S. (say between Cubans and Puerto Ricans). Anglo mythologizing of the "Latin macho" and the "black superstud" ignores the reality of same-sex sexual relationships.

Contemporary imagery of "Hispanics" (and blacks) disseminated by the popular media relies on "proof" of extensive IV drug use to explain the high (in comparison to whites) incidence of AIDS among these groups. What is ignored is that the majority of AIDS transmission is through sexual contact between men, and between "bisexual" men and women. For Latina women, the implications of denial are "particularly deadly, since Latino men are not traditionally accountable for their sexual practices or history." The authors conclude that "these silences [have] hindered research on the epidemiology of the disease, but what is worse, they have resulted in a lack of awareness about the forms of HIV transmission in minority communities, and that lack of awareness is killing people."

In volume 3, subtitled "Male Subjectivity," Carole-Anne Tyler explores "sexual in-difference" (female impersonation, transvestism, transsexualism) and its intersection with "postmodern" forms of fetishism (i.e. television) in "The Supreme Sacrifice? TV, 'TV', and the Renee Richards Story." Tyler notes contemporary cultural fascination with TV "tv" (televsual transvestism): "virtually every issues-oriented talk-show - from Phil Donahue, to 'Ask Dr. Ruth'...has featured transvestites, gay drag artists, and transsexuals, revivifying and allaying anxieties about 'normal' gender identity and object choice, and underlining, in the process, the equation of the normal with the masculine."

Tyler argues that transsexuals embody a disturbing paradox: they are closer to normality than other cross-dressers since their genitals, "the primary signifiers of gender in our culture," have been made to accord with secondary signifiers of gender; yet, they are also furthest from "normality" because "they have retained nothing of their original biological masculinity." The psychic disturbance the transsexual engenders is caused by his "revealing all too

clearly that femininity is the result of a castration". Televsual discourse, therefore, must "contain the fearful potential disruptiveness" of alternative social/gender forms by formulating the questions asked and conclusions drawn about "sexual in-difference."

Tyler's theories carry a warning about the role of men "in" feminism and the new trend of men's studies: "Because 'becoming woman' appears to promise an antiphallic identity and epistemology, many male poststructuralist theorists have advocated it. Feminist theorists, however, have been suspicious of this trend, wondering if it might not be the latest strategy for mastering the loss of mastery associated with the feminine."

Editor's note: This is Naomi's last library column. By the time you read this she will be beginning a graduate degree in therapeutic applications of art at the University of New Mexico, Albuquerque. She and her writing and editing skills will be missed! ■

"Women's Studies: Selected List of Acquisitions Received During the Month By the Central Library" (including some titles received in other campus libraries) is issued by Marillyn Craig, Central Library women's studies bibliographer, in cooperation with the Vanderbilt Women's Studies Committee.

To be placed on the mailing list, send name and campus mailing address to Marillyn Craig at the Central Library or call 322-6285.

WOMEN HELPING WOMEN THROUGH DECISIONS. Women volunteers (faculty, staff, and students) are needed for a course in positive decision-making and life-planning skills at the Tennessee Women's Prison. Would you work one-on-one with a prisoner/partner for an hour weekly during the eight-week course, September 24 through November 19? Volunteer training is scheduled for September 15-16. For information call Dismas, Inc., Candy Markman, at 383-6393.

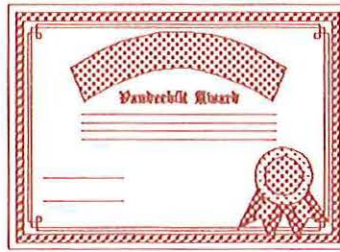
Announcements et cetera

You can make a difference. There are many opportunities for volunteers at Vanderbilt University Medical Center to enhance the care given by the staff. Volunteering just two or three hours a week really does make a difference. The Information Desk, the Recovery Room, and the Oncology Unit are just a few of the assignments that are available, both day and evening. Orientation for anyone interested in learning more about volunteering will be on Monday, September 10, from 10:00 a.m. until noon and 5:30 p.m. until 7:30 p.m.

For more information about volunteering or to register for the orientation session, please call Vanderbilt Volunteer Services at 322-2379.

Success Strategies For Women's Advancement: Developing Leaders. A conference for persons interested in higher education which addresses issues of the advancement of women. Speakers include Dr. Margaret Perry, Chancellor, UT Martin, and other academic leaders in public and private universities of Tennessee.

Location: Austin Peay State University. Cost \$35. You may call the Women's Center at 322-4843 for applications and more information about the conference.



Affirmative Action Awards: Call for nominations. Nominations are being sought for the Affirmative Action Awards sponsored by the Opportunity Development Center (ODC).

Affirmative Action Awards are given in two categories. The first recognizes significant efforts on behalf of the general Affirmative Action Program at Vanderbilt. The second acknowledges exemplary support and encouragement of persons with disabilities in the Vanderbilt community.

Any member of the Vanderbilt community may nominate an individual, group, department, or other recognizable entity. Nominations must include the name, title, and department of the nominee together with a written description of the nominee's contribution.

Nomination Forms are available from the ODC, Box 1809 Station B, telephone 2-4705. All nominations must be received at the ODC by September 24, 1990.

Women's Research Awards. The National Association for Women Deans, Administrators, and Counselors (NAWDAC) announces two \$500 awards for papers on any topic relevant to the education and personal and professional development of women and girls. These annual awards are presented in two categories: graduate student competition and open competition (persons at any career or professional level). Entries must be submitted by November 1. For more complete information check the bulletin board at the Women's Center.

Sock of Ages

*If drama's based on conflict,
Must life become a bore,
Now that peace has broken out
And we're at odds no more?
Something tells me deep inside,
Around the solar plexus,
We should give thanks we'll
always have
The battle of the sexes.*

*--Richard F. Barrett
The Wall Street Journal
June 19, 1990*

Women's VU

Editor: Judith Tefft Helfer

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• A yearly subscription to off-campus addresses is \$5.00.

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