

Men and feminism

New attitudes towards equality could lead to better relationships

by Kristin Lazure (A&S '99)

Michael Kimmel is a feminist man. He believes in women's equality, and he is optimistic more men will mirror his views as we approach the 21st century.

According to Kimmel, a professor of sociology at the State University of New York at Stony Brook, men have already made significant changes in their approach to gender issues.

"When I was in college, 'dating etiquette' was what is now called 'date rape'. The 'perks of being a boss and a professor' were what are now called 'sexual harassment,'" Kimmel said in a recent interview.

He notes that injustices against women which were tolerated in the past are now against the law. Universities and corporations have shown that they will not tolerate rape or sexual harassment. Institutional concerns for women's safety are widespread

It has never failed to astonish me that so many people misinterpret the anger of feminist women . . . as 'male-bashing' or 'male-hating'. Feminist women, it seems to me, are quite justified in their anger at injustice and discrimination and their fears of violence and danger that together circumscribe their lives. But at its core feminism is . . . an optimistic worldview that sees men as capable of change and, with enough encouragement, even likely to change. . . .

—Michael Kimmel
Manhood in America

and well-established, indicating enormous change in public opinion regarding women's rights.

The author of five books, Kimmel attributes recent changes in opinion about feminism largely to the fact that more men's girlfriends, wives, mothers, sisters and teachers are feminists.

However, he sees the need for a second dimension of change that has not yet occurred. He will focus on this subject — male-female relationships — in an upcoming appearance at Vanderbilt.

"Women and men would have better relationships if we change our views [about femininity and masculinity] and learn caring and respectful ways to talk about gender issues," Kimmel said.

Kimmel, who spoke at Vanderbilt two years ago, said he was pleased with the response he received here, considering the conservative nature of the campus. "A good number of people turned out, and we had spir-

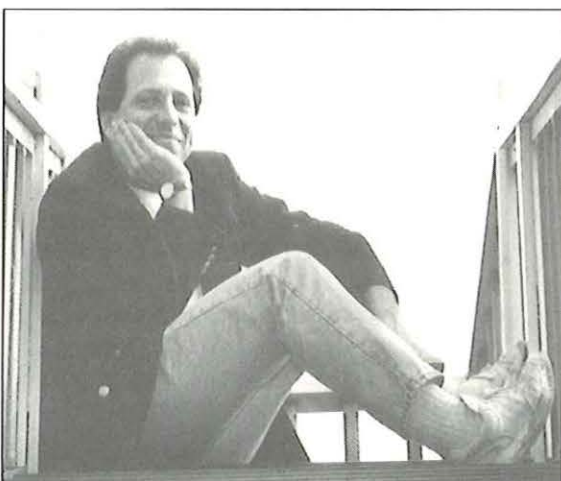
ited and interesting dialogue," he said.

However, Kimmel has frequently been met with unfavorable responses. Audiences have often questioned his manhood and his sexual orientation. He is hopeful that as we near the end of the millennium, the notion of masculinity may be redefined to include men who are nurturing and caring fathers, husbands and friends. Men will be sure of their manhood and at the same time recognize the fact that women are their equals and deserve their respect.

When asked why he feels so strongly about his pro-feminist position, Kimmel responds, "Why not? Supporting feminism is as American as apple pie."

He sees equality for both genders, all races, all ethnicities and all sexual orientations as the "natural extension of the Jeffersonian idea of democracy," where all individuals have the same rights as well as the same responsibilities not to impede the rights of others.

"We should always treat others as if their integrity is equal to our own," Kimmel argues.



Michael Kimmel brings his views on masculinity and feminism to Vanderbilt on March 17 and 18 for a workshop and lecture. See calendar on pages 4-5 for details.

continued on page 3

Is Vanderbilt feminist an oxymoron?

by Bronwen Blass (A&S '00)

The other day I was hanging up posters for Students for Women's Concerns when I saw a guy from one of my classes. He asked me what I was doing and what SWC did. When I told him how we are active in things like bringing speakers to campus, walking against domestic violence, supporting the YWCA, and providing a forum for discussion, he was visibly relieved and said, "Good, so you're not some crazy feminist group terrorizing the campus." I couldn't help wonder why the term feminist had such a negative connotation for him, but I had to admit his view is not rare.

To be labeled a feminist these days is not usually a compliment. Few college-aged women, at least at Vanderbilt, seem willing to take on the label. For a word which, to me, means one who believes in something as reason-

able as social, political, and economic gender equality, feminism seems unfairly maligned. To look further into this issue and that of women's rights as seen by college-aged women, I conducted a survey of nearly 200 undergraduate women at Vanderbilt as part of a paper I wrote for a seminar taught by Professor Wendy Hunter.

Out of the women I polled, only 36% said that they would call them-

self unjust, sexist practices, it seems to me that these women are more likely to have felt put down or held back by the frustrating barriers of a patriarchal society and as a result understand the need for a feminist movement. No trends could be found on the basis of socioeconomic level, religion, or hometown. The self-identified feminists came from Catholic families in Alabama making \$25,000-50,000 a year as well as atheist homes in New York making \$100,000-200,000 a year.

When asked to rank, in order of likelihood,

the social movements they would join, those polled ranked a gender-based movement second only behind an environmental movement and followed by religious and age-based movements. This relatively high ranking for a gender-based movement suggests that the 36% is misleading. Feminist sentiment is out there, just not by that name.

Of the women surveyed, 43% felt that the women's rights movement has been "very effective" in improving conditions for women, and 98% feel that it has been at least "somewhat effective." When asked how these improvements affect them personally, 34% felt that their opportunities and experiences were improved on a daily basis and 91% felt that they were helped out at least occasionally. Most women seem to acknowledge the benefits of the women's rights movement, but only to a certain extent.

From my study, I conclude that while Vanderbilt women are far from embracing feminism, many support the goals of the movement. I believe that feminism must be reclaimed by my generation, for although we are living with more opportunities than ever before, we must continue to work toward true equality. Women still earn only 71% of what men do. There is a very clear role that a feminist movement can play today, and I believe we should all reexamine what it means to be a feminist in order to reclaim the word and its true meaning. ■

In a survey of undergraduates, "only 36% said they would call themselves feminists."

selves feminists, yet 97% felt that greater gains can be made for women. When asked why they did not consider themselves feminists, several made comments like "feminists are too radical," "I'm not that extreme," or "feminists are just too weird." A drastic image problem is apparent.

An interesting split is seen when results are divided by racial groups. Percentages of Caucasian, Hispanic, and Asian women who replied affirmatively to the feminist question all correlated pretty strongly to the overall percentage, but 66% of African American women surveyed called themselves feminists, twice as many as any other group.

Another trend was found in whether or not one called herself a feminist and her year in school. As the years a woman had spent at the university increased, so did the likelihood she would identify with the feminist label. When asked why they were feminists, women in the survey frequently cited the frustrations of trying to enter male-dominated fields such as math and sports.

When observing that both African American and older undergrads are more likely to term themselves feminists, a connection can be drawn between the experience of prejudice and support for feminism. Assuming that African Americans are more likely to confront bigotry than other racial groups and that older students are more likely to have experienced



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Men and feminism

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As a Jewish man born to the first generation after the Holocaust, Kimmel reveals that his grandmother always taught him to stand up against any injustices he saw. This lesson, he concedes, has contributed to his active voice for feminism.

"I'm no different from anyone else. I had a normal suburban New York upbringing where my mother had a job and my father was supportive. I grew up thinking of course women belong in the public sphere and of course men can be caring without diminishing their masculinity."

Kimmel, who was voted Best Professor (1992-1993) by the University of California-Berkeley student body, believes that men can change and that the majority of women believe men can change. In our conversation, he was so intense and enthusiastic he made me believe that gender equality is not only possible, but imminent. He is not a male-basher; he believes in men while he supports women.

As he explains in his fascinating book *Manhood in America* (Free Press, 1996), equality does not imply sameness, but rather a world where we "embrace and celebrate difference, a world in which manhood is based more on the willingness to enlarge the arenas so that others may enter than the ability to shore up walls and fences to keep them out. It is a world in which successful achievement of identity is not reserved for those who happen to be of a specific gender, race, ethnicity, and sexual orientation but in which a secure and confident sense of oneself is part of the birthright of every American." ■



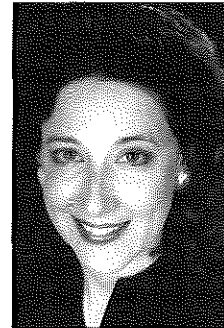
Two women honored for service as mentors

Two recipients will be honored by the Women's Center this month for their roles as mentors to women in the Vanderbilt community.

The Mentoring Award is given annually to a person who fosters the professional and intellectual development of Vanderbilt women. Due to the many excellent nominations that were made this year, the Women's Center Advisory Board selected two people to receive an award — a faculty member and an administrator.

The faculty award goes to Professor Ann Kaiser, chair of the department of special education. Lauren Brisky, associate vice-chancellor for finance, receives the administrator's award.

The other nominees were David Bloome, Karen Campbell, Vivien Cas-



Lauren Brisky



Ann Kaiser

sagrande, Wesley Grantham, Dona Haywood, A.-J. Levine and Charles Maguire.

Presentations of the awards and a reception for all the nominees will be held at the Margaret Cuninggim Women's Center on Wednesday, March 26 from 4 to 6 p.m. Everyone is welcome.

Carpenter Conference focuses on religion, gender and sexuality

"Opening the Conversation," the first annual conference of the Carpenter Program on Religion, Gender and Sexuality will be held March 11-13 at Vanderbilt Divinity School.

Four scholars known nationally for their work in gender and sexuality will address plenary sessions of

the conference. Representatives of 18 Jewish and Christian traditions will participate in roundtable discussions of how gender and sexuality affect four areas: biblical authority, pastoral care, worship and ethics. A community breakfast on March 12 is also part of the three-day event.

The Carpenter Program was established in 1995 with a \$2.5 million grant from the Carpenter Foundation to encourage dialogue on issues related to religion and gender. All conference events are open to the public. For a complete schedule or more information, call 343-3974.

MARCH *Calendar of Events*

Please save and post. Individual

MARCH 1-26

Personal Icons. Mixed media art exhibit featuring works by Nancy Bromberg, Diana Jacobs, Linda Marks, and Kate Riegler. Sarratt Gallery. Held in conjunction with Women's History Month and co-sponsored by the Women's Center.

MARCH 3 / MONDAY

Dissertation Writers, 4 to 6 p.m.

MARCH 10 / MONDAY

Woman on Fire: Menopause Stories. In this 1996 film, director Kathleen Laughlin looks at menopause through the experiences of many women, including three life-



Director Kathleen Laughlin

long friends. The filmmaker takes a personal perspective, rather than a medical one, in considering the effects of "The Change." Her film shows that for many women the transformation of menopause brings spiritual changes as well as personal ones. Following the 90-minute film, Laughlin will be on hand for discussion. Co-sponsored by the Women's Center and the Sarratt Film Committee. One showing only, 7:30 p.m., Sarratt Cinema. \$3.

Book Group meets to discuss *Strange Justice: The Selling of Clarence Thomas* by Jane Mayer. Facilitator is Jane DuBose. 5:15 to 6:15 p.m.

MARCH 11 / TUESDAY

Creative Life Planning Group meets with Lynne Cushing, state president of the National Organization for Women. Noon to 1 p.m. New members welcome. Call Judy Helfer at 322-6518 for more information.

MARCH 12 / WEDNESDAY

Students for Women's Concerns Meeting. 7 p.m. For more information call Tanya Tschesnok at 1-3187.

MARCH 13 / THURSDAY

Women Sculptors: Twentieth Century. Slide-lecture by TSU sculptor Jane Allen McKinney. In her talk, McKinney will show the progression of women's sculpture from portraiture and personal iconography to expressions of national and political agendas and the movement toward "site-specific" sculpture. McKinney's own work includes a 15-foot mobile of abstracted aluminium fish adjacent to the Tennessee Aquarium in Chattanooga and two large-scale site-specific works in Memphis. Co-sponsored by the Fine Arts Department and Cuningim Center. 12:10 p.m.-1 p.m., Garland 220.

Eating Disorders Discussion Group meets weekly at the Women's Center, 5-6 p.m. For more information call Gabrielle at 1-6197 or Hayley at 1-1062.



*Celebrate
National Women's History Month*

MARCH 17 / MONDAY

"Male/Female Relationships at VU: What's better." A workshop for student leadership, State University of New York. Registrations limited to 40. To register call 322-6518. Co-sponsors with the Women's Center, Panhellenic Council, Interfraternity Council, Housing and Residential Education. See page 109.

MARCH 18 / TUESDAY

Creative Life Planning Group, noon to 1 p.m.

Women in a Man's World: Gender and Power. Slide lecture by Professor Stacy Cordery of Monmouth College profiles Alice Roosevelt Longworth. This American socialite, daughter of Theodore Roosevelt, was a favorite subject of the press because of her active social life and her caustic wit. Cordery, an assistant professor of history and coordinator of women's studies at Monmouth, has written an upcoming biography of Roosevelt. Her lecture is co-sponsored with the Women's Studies Program, 4:10 p.m., Calhoun 109.



"If you

For the Common Good: Men, Women and Power. Professor of Sociology, State University of New York. Hear how traditional notions of masculinity are being challenged. 7 p.m., Furman 114. Co-sponsors with the Women's Center, ODC, Women's Studies Program, IFC, Housing and Residential Education and the Student Government.

MARCH 19 / WEDNESDAY

Students for Women's Concerns meeting, 7 p.m.



Some of these programs may not be sent.

Celebrating Women's History Month



Where they are and how we can make them
with Michael Kimmel, Professor of Soci-
Stony Brook. 5:30-7:30 p.m., Sarratt 118.
e-mail helferjt@ctrvax or phone 322-6518.
re the Opportunity Development Center,
Council, Students for Women's Concerns and
Also article on page 1 and listing for March 18.

1 p.m.

, Politics and the Roosevelt Family.



Alice Roosevelt:

*can't say anything good about someone,
sit right here by me."*

and Feminism. Lecture by Michael Kim-
University of New York at Stony Brook. Come
inity oppress both men and women. 7:30
Women Center are Speakers Committee,
Panhel, Students for Women's Concerns,
University Lectures Committee.

ng. 7:30 a.

MARCH 20 / THURSDAY

Affirmative Action Revisited, lecture by Professor Carol Swain of Princeton Uni-
versity. Sponsored by the Political Science Department with the Women's Center as
a co-sponsor. 4 p.m. in the Law School, room 133.

Eating Disorders Discussion Group. 5-6 p.m.

MARCH 25 / TUESDAY

Creative Life Planning Group meets to discuss *The Metamorphosis
of Baubo: Myths of Woman's Sexual Energy* by Winifred Lubell. The
book examines portrayals of women in ancient art; discussion
will be facilitated by Martha Gerdeman, production manager
of Vanderbilt University Press. Noon to 1 p.m.

illustration by
Winifred Lubell



MARCH 26 / WEDNESDAY

Mentoring Award recipients honored at a reception, 4 p.m. See article, page 3.

Students for Women's Concerns Meeting. 7 p.m.

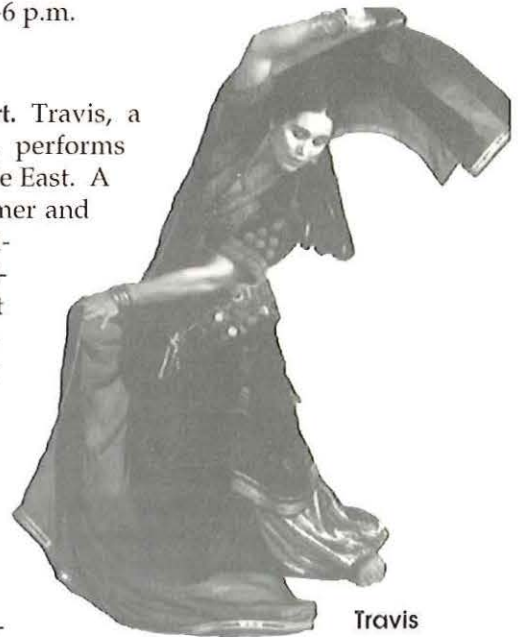
MARCH 27 / THURSDAY

Diversity in Daughter and Mother Relationships, program for undergraduate
women facilitated by graduate students. Discussion and role-playing will explore
diverse approaches to understanding and improving the complex bonds between
daughters and mothers. 5-7 p.m., BJJBCC. Pizza and drinks. To register call Judy
Helfer at 2-6518 or e-mail helferjt@ctrvax.

Eating Disorders Discussion Group. 5-6 p.m.

APRIL 3 / THURSDAY

Courtesan/Corazon: Courting the Heart. Travis, a
creative and ethnic Oriental dancer, performs
dances from central Asia and the Middle East. A
resident of Santa Fe, Travis is a performer and
teacher who works as an artist-in-resi-
dence at schools throughout New Mexi-
co. After beginning her career in ballet
and modern dance, she has studied Ori-
ental dance for many years, most
recently in the former Soviet republic
of Uzbekistan, where she trained and
performed with folklore dance
ensembles. Her performance is co-
sponsored by the Women's Center
and the International Awareness
Committee as part of International
Awareness Week. 7:30 p.m., Sarratt Cin-
ema. FREE.



Travis

*Unless otherwise stated, all programs are held
at the Cuninggim Center, Franklin Building, 316 West Side Row.
For more information, please call 322-4843.*

In the library...

Journals offer wealth of material for research on women's issues

Barbara Clarke,
Women's Center
librarian



The Women's Center library has a wide range of journals dealing with gender issues. These periodicals do not circulate, but are available for copying, reading and research on-site. Here are some of the titles in our collection:

- We have been subscribing to *The European Journal of Women's Studies* since the first issue appeared in 1994.

It is published quarterly by Sage Publications with the support of the European Women's Studies Association. The editors see the journal as "a forum for carrying on and initiating debates within European women's studies." The latest issue includes selections on Simone de Beauvoir, childbirth and lone parenthood in Great Britain.

- *Race, Gender & Class* commenced publication in 1993 and appears three times each year. This is a multicultural and interdisciplinary journal which is aimed at teachers and researchers. The articles, reviews and essays stress the need for the integration of class, gender and race in the humanities, social sciences and natural sciences. Two recent issues were devoted to particular topics: "Working Class Intellectual Voices" and "Domination and Resistance of Native Americans."

- The library has all 11 issues of *U.S.-Japan Women's Journal*. *English Supplement*. The periodical is devoted to the lives, accomplishments and literature of Japanese women in the present and past. Contributors to the latest issue focus on women in agricultural labor, Japanese divorce law, the

first women in the Diet and two Japanese women writers.

- *Psychology of Women Quarterly* has been issued for the past 20 years and we have been subscribing since 1994. This feminist scientific journal, which is published by Cambridge University Press for the American Psychological Association, includes articles, reports and book reviews on a broad range of topics pertaining to the psychology of women and gender.

- One issue has appeared so far of the new *A Leadership Journal: Women in Leadership — Sharing the Vision*, which is published by the Leadership Insti-

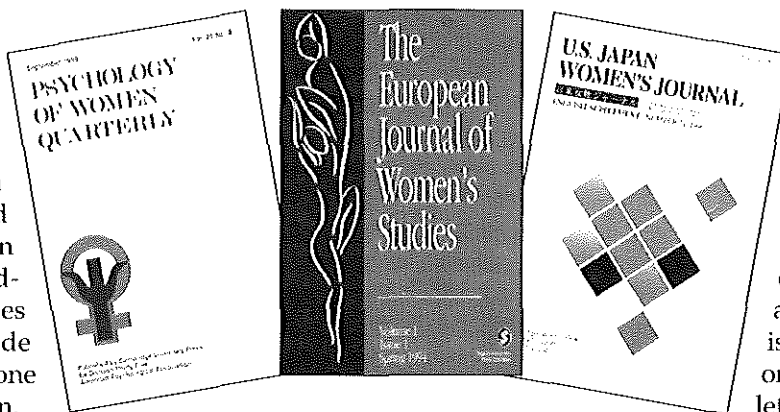
on teaching, curriculum, gender issues in higher education and women's studies.

- We have been subscribing to *Social Politics: International Studies in Gender, State, and Society* since the first issue appeared in 1994. This title, which comes out three times each year, is published by the University of Illinois Press and has an international focus. Some of the issues concentrate on a particular topic, such as "Gender Inequalities in Global Restructuring," "Between East and West" and "Gender, Transitions to Democracy, and Citizenship."

- *Women in Higher Education* publishes articles, news items, practical advice and lists of career opportunities. The monthly newsletter was founded in 1992 to empower women in higher education and help them pursue successful careers in the often sexist academic world. Recent issues have included articles on bias against women athletes, leadership programs for women, academic administration, and campus date rape brochures.

- The Communication Department at George Mason University publishes *Women and Language* twice each year. It is an interdisciplinary research periodical which aims "to provide a feminist forum for those interested in communication, language and gender." The editors include scholarly research and theoretical articles, as well as essays, news items, book reviews and poetry.

Among the many other journals in the library are: *Feminist Teacher*, *Minerva*, *Women: A Cultural Review*, *Signs*, *Women's Studies International Forum*, *Feminist Issues*, *Working Woman*, *Feminist Studies*, *About Women on Campus*, *off our backs*, *Gender & Society*, *On the Issues*, *On Campus With Women*, *Ms.* and *Women's Studies Quarterly*. ■



tute at Columbia College of South Carolina. This is an interdisciplinary journal that deals with "research, theories, and practical applications of leadership related to women's ways of leading." It is to appear twice each year and the first issue includes selections on U.S. feminist leaders and the motivational factors and behavioral styles of women leaders.

- Since 1991 we have been receiving *Transformations*, which is issued every six months by the New Jersey Project at William Paterson College in Wayne. The New Jersey Project was the country's first statewide curriculum transformation project and it supports the work of faculty, staff and students who are trying to integrate issues of women and gender into the curricula of public and private colleges. The periodical includes articles

From corsets to crash diets

Historical fashion trends affect women's health

by Arleen Marica Tuchman
Associate Professor of History

We are all familiar with the binding of Chinese women's feet, but we don't have to look that far to ponder how and why cultural ideals of beauty can have devastating health consequences for women. The

corset, a standard item of clothing for 19th century American women, distorted a woman's skeletal structure and greatly weakened her body musculature. Yet she chose to don this item of clothing; indeed, she frequently dressed her young daughters in corsets as well. To understand why women may have chosen to wear corsets, one must recognize that fashion entails much more than clothing; it is also a statement about the image one wishes to portray. The key to the wearing of corsets, then, is to understand their cultural meaning.

The stereotypical Victorian woman was pale, frail and submissive. Her small waist — preferably no larger than 18 inches — lay between a rounded bosom and a bell-shaped lower torso. To achieve this figure, women wore corsets made of coarse cotton with stiff supporting wires, usually of whalebone, and steel bands. Thin women might only have had to pull their waists in by three inches; but more robust women often reduced their waists by as much as fifteen inches! Resting on these corsets were layers of skirts and petticoats; in the winter they could weigh thirty pounds. And all of this weight hung from a compressed waist, supported by high-heeled shoes.

Need I list the maladies? Women complained of headaches and fainting spells; their internal organs were often severely distorted; they risked broken ribs and collapsed lungs; many suffered from a prolapsed or sagging uterus, their own musculature so weakened that they could not hold their uterus in place. There is a certain irony to these outcomes, for the tight-lacing, which gave the illusion of large breasts and a wide pelvis, offered a subliminal promise of sexuality, fecundity, and easy delivery; yet women's fashion frequently damaged the very reproductive organs it was supposed to enhance.

So why did women do this? The cinched waist, as we have just seen, announced a woman's reproductive capabilities, but it also marked one's membership in a higher social class, one that did not have to live on a heavy

starch diet, or do one's own housewifery and childrearing. (Indeed, corsets made bending and stooping extremely difficult, suggesting that servants performed these functions.) The cinched waist also symbolized the restrictive, middle-class Victorian view of woman's role: women as representatives of order, morality and repose. Finally, the corseted woman's inability to move also demonstrated her lack of independence and consequent reliance on men.

20th century ideals

One might be tempted to argue that by the beginning of the 20th century fashion no longer carried so much cultural meaning; or, at the very least, that the health consequences were no longer so dire. Yet before we become too complacent, I wish to point out that as early as the 1920s, thinness began to emerge as an ideal for women. At that time, one of the loudest proponents of a slim and muscular figure was the Australian swimmer, Annette Kellerman. What should be cause for alarm is that Kellerman was proud of being 5' 4" and 137 pounds. What our society considers to be thin has clearly gotten progressively thinner! In addition, the new ideal woman has in many ways become androgynous. Disgusted by the softness of her body, she attempts to develop a tight, muscular build. Yet in puberty and adolescence it is young boys who gain weight through the development of muscles; young women usually gain weight through fat deposits. Indeed, until a critical body weight is reached menstruation will not begin.

One of the devastating consequences of this trend is the way women's self esteem has become so intimately linked to body size. A recent survey showed that roughly 75% of women between the ages of 18 and 35 consider themselves fat, even though only about 25% are overweight. Another study showed that 80% of girls in the fourth grade are dieting. This alone should be frightening, but what this trend has also produced is a higher incidence of anorexia and bulimia.

Of course, an obsession with weight does not necessarily lead to eating disorders. We all hear the same message about an ideal body, and yet we don't all have eating disorders. Still, as long as we live in a society in which female self-esteem and happiness are tied to body weight and shape — that is, as long as it is fashionable for women to be thin — we will continue to struggle with the health consequences. ■



Announcements

Meetings

The March meeting of CABLE will honor the 85th anniversary of the Girl Scouts. The luncheon meeting will be at 11:30 a.m. March 12 at Vanderbilt Plaza. CABLE is a Nashville women's networking organization; guests are always welcome at its monthly meetings. Reservations, due by March 6, can be made by calling 269-3180.

Conferences

The Women's Center and Campus Student Services will sponsor three students to attend the **National Conference for College Women Student**



Leaders to be held in June in Washington, D.C. The conference is designed for women students who aspire to or who are currently in leader-

ship roles on campus or in the community. Sponsorship will cover registration costs, but not travel expenses, for those attending. For more information contact Nancy Ransom at the Women's Center, 322-4843.

The second annual **Women's Leadership Conference** for college and university women students in Tennessee will be held Friday, March 7 at Middle Tennessee State University in Mur-

reesboro. Keynote speaker is Dr. Bernice Resnick Sandler, senior scholar in residence for the National Association of Women in Education (NAWE) and author of *The Chilly Classroom Climate: A Guide to Improve the Education of Women*. For information, call the June Anderson Women's Center at MTSU, 898-2193.

The National Organization for Women is sponsoring a **young feminist conference** April 11-13 in Washington, D.C. The conference will focus on skill building for young feminists interested in serving as leaders of cam-

pus and community groups. For information, contact NOW's National Action Center at 202-331-0066.

Petition drive

Add your name to the list of those seeking additional funding for **breast cancer research** by signing a petition at the Women's Center. The petition is part of Campaign 2.6, a national effort to get 2.6 million signatures on petitions seeking a commitment from the president and Congress to spend \$2.6 billion on breast cancer research. Deadline to sign the petition at the Women's Center is March 14.

March

NOTABLE DATES IN WOMEN'S HISTORY

- 4** 1933 *Frances Perkins* became President Roosevelt's Secretary of Labor; she was the first woman to serve in the U.S. cabinet.
- 12** 1912 *Juliette Gordon Low* founded the Girls Scouts of the U.S.A. in Savannah, GA, with 16 girls.
- 17** 1863 Birthday of *Anna Williams*, a physician who isolated the diphtheria bacillus in 1894.
- 22** 1893 The first public women's basketball game was held at Smith College.



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Women's VU

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