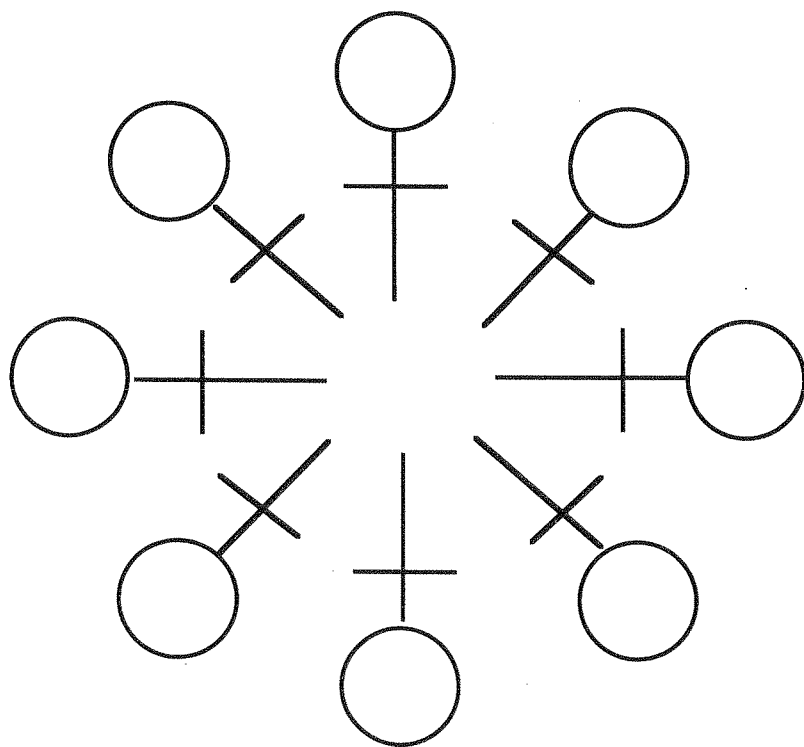


# Center for Research on Women

# 86

## Curriculum Transformation: Personal and Political

Lynn Weber Cannon  
Memphis State University



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MEMPHIS STATE UNIVERSITY  
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(901) 678-2770

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BY LYNN WEBER CANNON

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CURRICULUM TRANSFORMATION:

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by Lynn Weber Cannon<sup>1</sup>

Introduction

In 1973, when I was a beginning doctoral student in sociology at the University of Illinois, Urbana, I received a letter from Professor Helena Znaniecki Lopata. She was then the President of the Midwest Sociological Society and one of the most respected women sociologists in the country. Her father was Florian Znaniecki, author of The Polish Peasant, one of the classic works in the field of sociology. The letter asked me to chair a session on race relations at the upcoming Midwest Sociological Society meetings.

I panicked, figuring she must have made a mistake since I was just a graduate student and not a "real" sociologist. I decided I had to straighten this out, so I got permission from the department chair to call her and correct the mistake. So I called, she answered, and I proceeded to tell her who I was and the mistake she had made in asking me to chair this session because I was "just a graduate student".

She interrupted me immediately and said, "Don't ever say just, you are a 'very important person'. I knew what I was doing, and you can do this job just fine. Would you be willing to do it?"

Of course, I said yes. And I left the phone room feeling empowered--stronger and better about myself. I went on to chair the session, a scary event, but one that was important to my professional development.

I never forgot her response--never say "just", you are a "very important person".

I think of that story when I think about the task of curriculum transformation because it is essentially about reshaping the college curriculum to incorporate all the very important people in world, not just the tiny few whose lives and perspectives have dominated academia in the past.

This paper presents some ideas about how to get all the very important people into the college curriculum. At the Memphis State University Center for Research on Women we have been working at the task of curriculum transformation with some intensity since our founding in 1982. Over the years we have come to see that this process requires change in three interrelated areas which can be summarized with the acronym VIP: vision, information, and pedagogy.

We need a new vision of what a curriculum would look like that is inclusive. This process typically involves reconceptualizing one's discipline in light of a race-, class-, and gender-based critique. Such a critique entails identifying how and why groups have been excluded from the curriculum in the past and learning to move groups typically on the margins into the core of the curriculum.<sup>2</sup> Furthermore, it involves presenting

information on previously marginalized groups in their complexity rather than in restricted and stereotypic ways.

Second, we need Information about the diversity of experience among women, people of color and other groups. The fields of women's studies and racial and ethnic studies have grown dramatically in the last two decades. New resources are continually being developed to help us in that task. And third, and equally important as the content of what we teach is to employ a new pedagogy--that is, teaching styles that structure classrooms in ways that ensure a safe atmosphere to support learning for all the students, not just the privileged few. This paper will briefly address each of these dimensions of curriculum transformation: Vision, Information, and Pedagogy.

#### Vision: The Critique of the Content of Traditional Disciplines

Why should we engage in projects to transform the curriculum by making it more inclusive of the experiences of women, people of color, working class, and global peoples? My answer is really quite simple: we are here to educate people, and until we transform the curriculum, we will only miseducate. A liberal arts education should prepare adults to contribute to society in economic, political, community and family roles. An education which ignores the contributions, struggles, challenges, and other life experiences of the vast majority of the world's people cannot possibly prepare intelligent citizens capable of making significant contributions to society. In 1982, the Association of

American Colleges stated the rationale for integrating women into the college curriculum somewhat more elegantly:

"Research on women results in the discovery of information and materials on women's lives, accomplishments and culture which can be added to our existing knowledge; its goals are to integrate these new findings into the curriculum and present a truer, more complete understanding of human experience. The new feminist scholarship...can modify and transform the assumptions, values and methodologies of given areas of study by accommodating the perspectives and concerns of the heretofore invisible half of the human race."<sup>3</sup>

If we further require, as we should, that our curriculum reflect the experiences of men who have been excluded or marginalized in the curriculum: working class, men of color, gays, non U.S. peoples, we would create a curriculum which reflected the experiences of all of the world's people not just the tiny elite we have known for so long.

When the issue is framed in this way, it seems almost absurd that higher education has been so exclusive. But of course, despite the logical sense it might make, representation of the full range of human experience across the world and throughout history has never been the criterion for inclusion in the curriculum. So a first step in envisioning a new inclusive curriculum is to develop an understanding of why higher education has been so exclusive for so long.

In her recent work, feminist philosopher Elizabeth Minnich identifies the conceptual errors that have pervaded the academic disciplines as a consequence of the way they were initially conceived.<sup>4</sup> She argues that it is misleading to continue to think in terms of omission when we think of women and the dominant tradition. Instead, we should consider the process one of exclusion of women from education. She states,

"The distinction matters: One can omit people, or a subject matter, in a way that can be easily corrected simply by including what was left out. But women were consciously, purposefully excluded by the small, elite group of Greek men who ...believed that there were men who were ruled by reason and so were suited to rule themselves and others, and then there were women and "inferior" men who could not reason and so needed to be ruled (cf. Aristotle)."<sup>5</sup>

She further states:

"At the beginning of the formalization of the dominant Euro-American meaning system into educational structures and contents, a small group of privileged men defined themselves as the best, the norm, and the inclusive idea of and for humankind. Even more simple, we can say that the few not only defined themselves as the inclusive type, but as the norm, and as the best. When they thought about what it meant to be human, they thought about themselves directly and about

the rest of humankind as beings from whom, against whom, they could and should distinguish themselves. To be a man was to be manly, i.e., not like a woman, and not like a slave, and not like a "barbarian", and not like a man who worked with his hands."<sup>6</sup>

Minnich's analysis makes it clear that race, class and gender were used as criteria to exclude people from the formalized education that was to express and perpetuate the meaning system within which the few were to rule.

Minnich also notes that this elite Greek male perspective simultaneously makes all other humans (1) invisible: we are told not to notice our absence when "man" and "mankind" are written about, because the language used is deemed to be "universal and generalizable". (2) The perspective makes other humans inferior-- as judged against the universal ideal. And (3) it makes others deviant or exceptional or otherwise to be considered only in a special category, a sub-set. So when we look for ourselves in the scholarship taught and practiced in our schools, that is how we find ourselves, as an absence, and/or as inferiors, and/or as a sub-set of the real thing, the real subject matter. And that is how we have been in every field across all disciplines.<sup>7</sup>

Elizabeth Minnich uses a philosopher's analysis of language and ideas to identify the political nature of knowledge and the ways the many are "disappeared" from higher education curricula. It is the power to define knowledge and curricula which, of course, enabled the few to successfully exclude so many very

important people from the curriculum. Florence Howe, editor of The Feminist Press, describes the process as follows:

"In the broadest context of that word, teaching is a political act: some person is choosing, for whatever reasons, to teach a set of values, ideas, assumptions, and pieces of information, and in so doing, to omit other values, ideas, assumptions, and pieces of information. If all those choices form a pattern excluding half the human race, that is a political act one can hardly help noticing. To omit women entirely makes one kind of political statement; to include women as the target of humor makes another. To include women with seriousness and vision, and with some attention to the perspective of women as a hitherto subordinate group is simply another kind of political act."<sup>8</sup>

Is it not more dangerous, she wonders, to ignore or support openly the patriarchal assumptions that govern our society than to challenge them openly? Why is it political to include women and minorities and not political to leave them out?

#### Vision: The Critique--Consequences for Students

While some of the critiques of the existing curriculum have very clearly pointed to the political nature of education and the early processes of exclusion, others have focused on the

consequences of teaching such a curriculum. What and how do people learn in such a system?

In the last five years, one national report after another has labelled education as an institution in crisis, and various proposals for addressing this crisis have been made--ranging from evaluating teacher competency, to increasing the number of teachers, to developing more standardized testing of students, to further infusing the curriculum with the ideas of the few old elite Greek men as proposed by their recent advocates Alan Bloom and William Bennett. Many of these proposals have been promoted in the context of a call for "greater competition" with foreign nations.

But thinking of the problems of education in this way fundamentally misunderstands the consequences of exclusion and the crisis that we face. Our crisis is real, but I contend that it is based in the very deep alienation of our students from that which we ask them to study, and our own alienation from that which we sometimes teach.

Margaret Andersen, sees the problem as quite dangerous:

"In the current historical context of competition and increased vocationalism, the alienation of students only further breeds racism, sexism and ethnocentrism (as we are seeing in the rise of "racist incidents" on many campuses across the country.) Because we do not teach our students to see themselves as connected to their learning, we do not teach them to see themselves as connected to others. In

fact, as Elizabeth Minnich has suggested, becoming educated in this society means learning about a world detached from the experience of most learners."<sup>9</sup>

Elizabeth Higginbotham, an African American sociologist, has been working in the area of curriculum transformation for some time. She has written of how her education alienated her from her African American heritage. She illustrates how African American people are treated as a sub-set, as inferior, and as absent in the curriculum. She states:

"Throughout my whole educational career, agents of the dominant group attempted to teach me 'the place of Black people in the world.' What was actively communicated to me was that Black people and other people of color are on the periphery of the society. They are marginal. I learned that what happens to people of color has little relevance for members of the dominant group and for mainstream thinking about the society."<sup>10</sup>

Higginbotham discusses the basic myths about our nation including the myth that America was a country that people entered in search of freedom--religious freedom, the freedom to work as independent farmers, freedom from nobility and the hierarchical stratification of Europe, and freedom from the rapid industrialization of Europe. Colonists, and later white immigrants were portrayed as wanting change in their lives, so

they took the risk to begin life anew in this budding but already glorious nation. The fact that they were seeking their "freedom" while enslaving others (principally Native Americans and Africans) was not viewed as a contradictory activity, but just "one of those things" the United States had to do to build a great and prosperous nation.

Like many of us, Higginbotham learned about slavery in the South and was explicitly taught that Black people did not share the same history as whites. African people were forced to come to North America against their will and instead of finding freedom, they had to work as slaves.

Yet, what troubled her even as a young girl was the fact that the experiences of African Americans never informed the standard characterizations of the society. The slave experience of Africans and African Americans did not alter the image that America was a land in which people found freedom. Even as an African American student she was expected to master the myths--accepting them was part of the socialization into the political system.

She states:

"I was in school to learn the experiences of the dominant group (which was also very male, as well as white and affluent)--and that would be the basis for an understanding of the system. In spite of the intended message, it was hard for me to understand why the experiences of Black people in this nation were not incorporated into our images of who we

were as a nation. At the time there was no mention of Asian Americans, Chicanos, or Native Americans. But I came to understand the practice. Whatever happened to Black people was an exception to the rule. Therefore, the experiences of Black people did not have to be included in our search for the truth. Our experiences were not the material from which theories and frameworks were derived."<sup>11</sup>

As Higginbotham's story illustrates, the histories of subordinate groups are typically taught in ways that blame the victim. Victim blaming is a type of explanation for social inequality which stresses that any group's failure to attain material rewards, education, or other societal resources results from defects deemed to be unique to the culture of that group. For example, such explanations might focus on a group's character (e.g., the group members have low self-esteem), values (e.g., laziness--no work ethic) or social forms (e.g., female-headed families).

To achieve a "victim blaming" attribution, teachers do not actually have to say, for example, that African Americans, Chicanos, or Native Americans are lazy, ignorant, or savage--although that would surely do the trick. Instead, victim blaming is subtly encouraged in classes where images of America as the land of freedom and opportunity are juxtaposed with any oppressed group's experience, and the contradictions in these images are not reconciled by recognizing institutionalized social structures which block progress such as inadequate school systems, job

opportunities, health care, etc. Victim blaming attributions not only ignore social structural factors, but they also ignore the roles of powerful groups in establishing and maintaining social systems which perpetuate their privilege (such as legislating restrictions on groups' rights and exploiting groups for low wage labor). When such key issues in an oppressed groups' experience are ignored or only nominally acknowledged, students are left to rely on prevailing myths and stereotypes to explain the subordinate group's "failure to succeed in America".

So Higginbotham's experience in schools illustrates her alienation from a view of African Americans that is marginalized, stereotypic, and victim blaming.

#### Vision: Incorporating Diversity

When we begin to incorporate all the very important people with seriousness and vision and with some attention to the role of power and privilege in shaping American society, things begin to look very differently. We see that to deal with diversity in American society is to go to the heart of the social fabric. American society is built on diversity: people conjoined from different nations, cultures, races, classes and genders. But instead of the neat and simple story that Elizabeth and most of us were taught about this great nation, the picture is filled with contradictions and conflict, oppression, and strife.

This nation was literally built by African slave labor; by Asians who irrigated land, and built railroads; by Mexicans in

mines and on farms; by Native Americans who were forcefully removed from their land; by immigrant workers who withstood dehumanizing working conditions in the factories of the Northeast; and by women, who reproduced the labor force, and many of whom worked in low wage sectors of the paid labor force.

The basic and most important roles played by these very important people, the ways in which their labor was exploited and rights denied, the ways in which they have struggled against unfair treatment, the imbalance of power in relations between dominant and subordinate groups has been ignored. To ignore this dimension of power in the development and maintenance of this nation is to present a sterile history which does not empower students to take charge of their own learning but further divides them from each other and alienates them from their lived experience. In today's academic environment, this sanitized depoliticized view of diversity in America plays itself out as so much attention to "cultural enrichment".

Diversity is most readily and easily addressed at the level of culture--in our food, music, folk customs, and festivals. For example, universities have international student days, and a women's history day, week, or month; and many cities now sponsor cultural and ethnic heritage festivals. This year, 22 years after Martin Luther King, Jr.'s assassination in Memphis, poverty and racism still shape life for the majority of the city's Blacks. Political power is still in the hands of whites elected by whites--even though 50 percent of the eligible voters are Black. But for the last five years Memphis has held a month-long festival

saluting "Africa in April"--we eat, dance and sing our way through the month. It is no longer as threatening as in the 1960's, when cultural symbols were used to rally forces to struggle for economic power--for a greater share in societal resources.

Now cultural symbols and economic threat have been dissociated in the mass culture. Today there can be talk of, and appreciation of, diversity by when there is no intention of redistributing existing societal resources or even of making significant concessions for the distribution of future resources.

But when those same groups begin to be perceived again as threatening the distribution of power, these same symbols we danced around in April could easily return to the symbols of struggle and threat of 22 years ago. In short, while many pay great lip service today to the appreciation of diversity, our nation has not dealt well with diversity in the present, or in the economic or political realms--where power and resources rather than interesting music or food are at stake.

When group histories are reduced to food, language, dance and dress, their most important contributions to shaping this nation are lost. It has been the social movements engendered out of struggle for justice by various groups which have left us all with a legacy of laws and social structures designed to protect our freedoms, provide us with a political voice, and ensure people's survival. Furthermore, it has taken mass social movements: the civil rights movement, student movement, women's movement, welfare rights, homeless, gay and lesbian, to raise our awareness of the presence of the majority and to demand their inclusion in the

curriculum. It has been through these social movements that people have come to understand how so many very important people have been excluded from the academy. It has been in connection with social movements that individuals undergo personal transformations in the way they view knowledge, scholarship, and the curriculum. It is when people begin to connect their own biographies with their learning that we begin to achieve meaningful education and to contradict the alienation which currently characterizes education for most people. And it is in the connection between individuals' biographies and the social changes/movements around them that a new vision of the curriculum emerges.

I will illustrate this process by recounting a story of my own personal transformation. I grew up working class and Catholic in Nashville, Tennessee, Country Music City USA. I attended Memphis State University as an undergraduate student from 1967-1971, and received my M.A. in sociology from Memphis State in 1973.

My second semester in college, the spring of 1968, was bizarre. There were curfews in the city for weeks on end as the city's garbage collectors struck. Finally, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. came to lead them in a march. He was murdered in Memphis on April 4, 1968.

I remember the fires on the city's skyline and the tanks driving around empty streets as I was supposed to be studying for my second semester mid-term exams.

The times were intense: Vietnam, civil rights movement, student movement, war on poverty, Black power, and a burgeoning women's movement. Sometimes I thought the world was coming to an end (a vivid image of complete devastation my Catholic education had permanently implanted in my brain). It was a time that many students went into the social sciences to try to figure out what was happening in the world. I was not unusual, I studied sociology, psychology and race relations. No one could deny the importance of race in shaping events around the world, especially where I lived in Memphis.

As I was completing my Masters degree and began looking for doctoral programs in sociology, the chair of my department recommended that I and a male classmate of mine, Herbert<sup>12</sup>, apply to Yale. So Herbert and I applied to Yale and several other schools. A few weeks later I was called into my chair's office and told that a professor at Yale wanted to speak to me on the phone. He said he had received my application but he needed to talk to me about one issue.

He said that Yale had recently had two women in its program and they had come into the program to study sociology but had ended up "studying women". He said Yale was very troubled by this and did not want it happening again. He then noted that my application indicated my interests in race, social psychology, and research methods but he wondered if I really intended to "study women". I responded, "Of course not, I have no interest in studying women." I was asked to promise that if accepted into their program I would not study women. I agreed immediately,

since I couldn't even fathom what that would mean. Women had been absent in my education. I hadn't even noticed.

Luckily I didn't have to deal with that promise since I was denied admission to Yale. Herbert was admitted.

The point of my story is simple: I had achieved quite a lot in the educational system and had been alienated from my own history. Even as I experienced discrimination in graduate school admission because I was a woman, I couldn't even fathom why or how one would study women. Even as I was deeply involved in the study of racism, I could not envision the need for a similar study of sexism. It took growth in the women's movement and women's studies, and increasing connections between my personal biography and those movements before I came to see the error of the omission of women and ultimately came to study women.

In short, it has taken a transformation in the way we view higher education to be able to even conceive of a new curriculum. What does that new vision entail? A curriculum where students are not alienated from that which they are taught and come to see the connections between their own biographies, what they learn, and the biographies of others; where group histories include the struggle for justice against inequalities of power not just groups' foods and dance; where most people are central not peripheral to learning; and where inclusion not exclusion is the defining criterion.

The progress we have already made to transforming higher education towards inclusivity over the last 30 years has been possible because many very important women and men struggled

for justice in mass social movements. The movement to an inclusive curriculum has faced stiff resistance, and yet remains one of the most exciting movements in higher education today.

#### Information: Getting the Facts

To transform the curriculum obviously requires that we gain access to new scholarship on the many groups of very important people. Many of us are not happy with how we handle the diversity in our midst and would like to move beyond ignoring it, dealing it only as sanitized history, or treating it at the level of the "culturally quaint". Ultimately we want to be able to appreciate people's full histories and the diversity among them. To do so we must begin by being open and honest with ourselves.

We must acknowledge that developing an inclusive curriculum is not an easy task because most of today's college faculty were raised in homogeneous race and class environments, and educated in schools which taught us that vision of history in which most very important people were absent, treated as inferior or a sub-set of the real thing. We must remember this because we cannot and should not be held responsible for the miseducation we have already received. Most of us know very little about different groups. To learn about the struggles, strengths and contributions of different groups--women, racial ethnics, gays and lesbians, working class and others--is something we have to take on as a personal task because it was never given priority in our formal educations.

Obviously, we need to reeducate ourselves about the history and current general life circumstances of different groups-- especially those groups whose histories have been excluded or distorted--Blacks, Chicanos, Asians, women, working class people, gays and lesbians. The task is a formidable one, but if we want to incorporate diversity into our teaching and into our world view, we should see this as a long-term commitment. It is a task, however, that bears many rewards. Betty Schmitz describes some rewards of participation in curriculum transformation projects as follows,

"It has been the explanatory power of the new scholarship and its ability to raise exciting new questions in the disciplines that has captured the minds of faculty members participating in curriculum transformation projects.

Curriculum transformation projects are, in fact, a primary means of ensuring ongoing debate in our institutions about the purposes and character of the curriculum, particularly the core curriculum: by whom will it be shaped? for whose benefit? and toward what ends?"<sup>13</sup>

There are vast resources to help in this quest. While at one time, getting information was a problem, that is really not the case any longer. For example, we now have 500 women's studies programs (one for every six institutions of higher education); one half of them granting the baccalaureate and 125 granting graduate degrees; some 50 centers for research on women; two dozen

scholarly journals; and a professional organization that draws about 2000 people annually to its convention.<sup>14</sup>

The Center for Research on Women at Memphis State University produces many bibliographies of social science works on women of color and southern women, an on-line data base of citations to works on these groups, in addition to papers on the process of curriculum integration. In addition, to aid faculty in the process of curriculum change we held our fifth national workshop on integrating race and gender into the curriculum May, 1990.<sup>15</sup>

But the traditional disciplines have been changed by the new scholarship as well. For example, in the field of sociology, the sociology of sex and gender is now the second largest section in the American Sociological Association. Finally, in every field the basic textbooks are the last thing to change but we have begun to see major changes in those areas as well. In fact, Hall recently published an analysis and ranking of 36 introductory sociology textbooks based on their gender inclusiveness.<sup>16</sup>

#### Pedagogy: Inclusive Methodology

As we begin to develop a new inclusive vision of the curriculum and to gain more information, it also becomes clear that old methods of teaching do not jibe with the new goals. When we change what we want students to learn, we must also change how we teach, that is, develop a new pedagogy.

This pedagogy flows directly from the new vision we have: an inclusive vision whose goal for students is to help them come to

appreciate the full variety of the human experience, both among themselves as well as across the many peoples in the world.

My own thinking about ways of facilitating intergroup understandings was largely shaped by information I have had for over twenty years which emerged from the scholarship on interracial contact in the 60's and early 70's. Essentially, the research showed then and continues to show that positive intergroup contact which promotes understanding rather than to reinforcing stereotypes and generating hostility is most likely to occur under the following conditions: 1) when people of similar statuses; 2) cooperate towards common goals; 3) in small as opposed to large impersonal groups; 4) with institutional supports.<sup>17</sup>

Think about it. Those conditions are directly contradicted by most higher education experiences where students (often of different statuses--classes, races, sexual orientations, genders etc.) are too often in large classes, competing as individuals for the scarce resources of good grades in institutions which do not place a high priority on promoting diversity and intergroup understanding.

When assessing institutional commitment, look at where an institution places its resources. Especially revealing is the support received by programs which have the explicit goals of improving the appreciation of diversity: ethnic studies, women's studies, international studies, etc. Hiring and promotion practices for faculty and administrators and the recruitment and

retention rates among diverse groups of students are also indicators of the institutional commitment to diversity.

Knowing the conditions that will help students to appreciate diversity, to see multiple realities, and to develop critical thinking skills, many faculty have developed methods to try to use their power as teachers to approximate as closely as possible these conditions in their classrooms. Many people identify these practices as feminist, but they are simply good teaching practices which have roots in many movements that have critiqued the curriculum.

The new pedagogy is interactive and views students as active participants in their learning not empty vessels into which information is lectured day after day. Emphasis is placed on cooperation and developing communication skills, including learning to listen as well as to speak. Students are asked to assume and to appreciate multiple roles in the classroom, not hierarchies of participation. Often faculty teach students to appreciate the difference between feelings and thinking and to learn to be clear about which they are expressing when they speak.

Multiple methods are used to bring diverse perspectives before the students, many of which are quite common: guest speakers, films, field trips, etc. But even using these common practices have been reexamined for their effects. For example, guest speakers are sometimes used to bring a "minority perspective" to the classroom. Maxine Baca Zinn, a Chicana sociologist, recently spoke of the difficulty this presented for

her when she was the only Chicana on her University of Michigan--Flint campus. She felt pulled to speak in many classes, and was overworked as a consequence, and yet she realized that unless she agreed to speak, the students might never learn anything about Chicanos. This approach can be problematic if the faculty who invited Maxine did not share the responsibility for learning or teaching about diverse groups and so communicate to their students through their actions its' marginality to the core subject matter of study.

In my own work, I have developed some guidelines for classroom discussion which acknowledge that race, class, gender and other forms of oppression shape our interactions and which ask students to operate under new rules for interacting which do not reinforce old hierarchies. They include respecting others' perspectives, committing to learning about those different from ourselves, and avoiding victim blaming.<sup>18</sup>

In sum, feminist pedagogy seeks to teach critical thinking and appreciation of multiple realities by methods that are interactive, cooperative, non-hierarchical, and separate feelings and thinking.

### Conclusions

The curriculum transformation movement is deep and far reaching. It seeks to reenvision a curriculum around the very important people in the world, to continually support the search for new information by and about very important people and to

teach in ways that enable students to learn that which is important, and central, and meaningful--not alienated from the experiences of the majority of the world's peoples. It seeks to empower students to take charge of their learning.

One final example from my own experience illustrates the kinds of results we can achieve when this new pedagogy works well. One of the reasons I became involved in curriculum transformation work was because I teach race and ethnicity, and statistics, two courses in which students are so emotionally charged that for any learning to take place I had to work hard on how I would teach.

Once early in my efforts to make major changes in my teaching, I was teaching a statistics class. Most of the students were women, about forty percent were students of color, and all were working class,--first in their families to go to college. Statistics is a required course. Most students don't want to take it, and feel very powerless in the class.

I knew things were beginning to be different when this class asked for a special extra class to review and prepare them for their final exam. I agreed, and when I showed up they were all there. There was a big spread of many kinds of cheese and crackers on the desk up front. Next to the food were these special napkins they had selected just for this occasion. The napkins had a picture of a huge mouse with a big grin on its face. The caption read "Bring on the Cat".

At that moment I knew these students were empowered. That's what curriculum transformation is all about, connecting people to each other and to their learning. They were working together,

they were learning, they were proud, and they were ready for the  
Cat!

<sup>1</sup>I wish to thank Margaret Andersen, Elizabeth Higginbotham and Betty Schmitz for information, insights and encouragement in developing this paper.

<sup>2</sup>Catharine Stimpson, Women's Studies in the United States. New York: Ford Foundation, 1986.

<sup>3</sup>"Liberal education and the new scholarship on women: Issues and constraints in institutional change," Report of the Wingspread Conference, Racine, Wisconsin. (Washington, D.C.: Association of American Colleges, 1982). (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 224 406)

<sup>4</sup>Elizabeth K. Minnich, "Conceptual Errors Across the Curriculum: Towards a Transformation of the Tradition," Working Paper. (Memphis, TN: Memphis State University Center for Research on Women, 1986), and Elizabeth K. Minnich, Transforming Knowledge (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1990).

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., pp. 1-2.

<sup>6</sup>Ibid., pp. 2-3.

<sup>7</sup>Ibid., p. 4.

<sup>8</sup>Florence Howe, "Feminist Scholarship: The Extent of the Revolution," in "Liberal Education and the New Scholarship on Women: Issues and Constraints in Institutional Change," Report of the Wingspread Conference, p. 20.

<sup>9</sup>Margaret Andersen, "Denying Difference: The Continuing Basis for Exclusion in the Classroom," Working Paper. (Memphis, TN: Memphis State University Center for Research on Women, 1987), p.4.

<sup>10</sup>Elizabeth Higginbotham, "Race, Class and Gender: Building the All Inclusive Curriculum," Lecture, Sociologists for Women in Society Workshop on Integrating Race and Gender into the Curriculum, Louisville, KY, 1990.

<sup>11</sup>Ibid.

<sup>12</sup>To preserve anonymity, the name of my classmate has been changed.

<sup>13</sup>For a review of curriculum transformation projects, see Betty Schmitz, "Integrating Scholarship by and about Women into the Curriculum," Lecture, Tennessee Board of Regents Workshop, Nashville, TN, 1990, forthcoming as: Working Paper (Memphis, TN: Memphis State University Center for Research on Women, 1990).

<sup>14</sup>Ibid.; and Stimpson, Women's Studies in the United States.

<sup>15</sup>For information on Center resources or to place orders contact: Center for Research on Women, Memphis State University, Memphis, TN 38152. (901) 678-2770.

<sup>16</sup>Elaine J. Hall, "One Week for Women? The Structure of Inclusion of Gender Issues in Introductory Textbooks," Teaching Sociology 16 (October, 1988): 431-442.

<sup>17</sup>Yehuda Amir, "The Contact Hypothesis in Ethnic Relations," Psychological Bulletin 71 (May, 1969):319-349.

<sup>18</sup>Lynn Weber Cannon, "Fostering Positive Race, Class and Gender Dynamics in the Classroom," Women's Studies Quarterly (forthcoming).

