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Commission for Women

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WOMEN’S CENTER PROVIDES A VARIETY OF INFORMATION AND SERVICES FOR THE UTK COMMUNITY

Since its founding in 1976 as a division of Student Activities, the Women’s Center has served many functions on our campus. According to Ms. Karen Griffin, the Women’s Center Graduate Assistant, “the Women’s Center offers an assortment of information, services, and programs available to all UTK students, faculty, and staff.

The Women’s Center houses valuable information on women’s issues such as health, relationships, sex roles, and violence against women. The research materials available include a 1,000 plus volume library of unique and special order pamphlets. Topics addressed which may be of particular interest to the student population include scholarships, financial aid, child care, and career opportunities. Another important function served by the women’s Center is information to help individuals find campus and community resources for almost any situation. According to Griffin, “the center is an all around resource center aimed at women's issues. We have books, journals and magazines that can’t be found in the main library, and great people to help you find the answers you need.”

Despite its strong commitment, the Women’s Center is more than just a resource and information area. The Women’s Center also presents programs, generally in the form of brown bag discussions on various topics. It is this role that gives individuals a place to meet, learn and get involved in programming for women on campus. Some of the possible topics for discussion this year include the difficulties faced by career women, addictive relationships, assertiveness training, and women in sports. Additional campus programming is also done through the Women’s Coordinating Council.

According to Mark Constantine, Director of Student Activities, “women and men can benefit from the vast resources that the Women’s Center has to offer.” The Women’s Center is located in Room 301 of the University Center and is open from 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m., Monday through Friday.

DELUSIONAL JEALOUSY AND WIFE ABUSE EXAMINED

By Cheryl Travis

The lead article for the summer Networker was titled “Delusional Jealousy Can Lead to Abuse,” citing the work of Vijai Sharma, Clinical Director of Hiwassee Mental Health Center. The article provides a social construction of wife abuse as a clinical diagnosis in the male partner, i.e. “delusional jealousy disorder.” This construction locates the problem within an interpersonal sphere and fails to incorporate any feminist analysis of the social or political structures which encourage and maintain abuse of women.

Although the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual adopted by psychologists as a basis for clinical classification does not list delusional jealousy as a disorder, the article nevertheless presents a diagnosis of the male perpetrator as having a disease. This disease model has the additional effect of reducing some of the responsibility of men for their actions. Constructing wife abuse as a personality disorder contributes to solutions that offer individual therapy as opposed to collective action.

Cultural conventions that establish women as property to be exchanged among men support violence against women. The handmaid is privileged only so long as she conforms to her narrowly prescribed role. The failure of law enforcement to treat wife abuse as a crime is clearly another factor that conveys a permissive message to men, while encouraging women to be understanding, patient, and ultimately fatalistic. Where community interventions have been initiated, results indicate that treating domestic violence as a crime is an effective deterrent to repeat assaults. Continued abuse and the apparent pattern of helplessness on the part of wives and mothers can also be linked to the limited economic and social alternatives of women seeking to leave abusive relationships.

The social and political context of women’s lives are major factors in how personal events are experienced. The personal is political, even when it’s wife abuse.
COMMISSION FOR WOMEN YEAR END REPORT

By Nina Elliott, Chair of CFW

The UT Commission for Women is a committee appointed by Chancellor John Quinn to advise him on planning, implementation and evaluation of University programs and policies designed to improve the status of women. It is also the charge of the Commission to recommend changes in policies or procedures relative to the concerns of women, to consult and advise university officials on the needs and status of women and in some cases to recommend and encourage research to assess the status of women faculty, staff and students.

The 1989-90 CFW was composed of 38 members, consisting of 14 faculty, 19 staff exempt and non-exempt members, and 4 undergraduate students. We also had a graduate student, Carol Guthrie who served as our graduate assistant. Carol was the editor of the Networker and coordinated the office activities. In August 1989, the CFW met to discuss the plans, goals and objectives of the CFW for the 1989-90 academic year. Once our agenda was established, we developed strategies for accomplishing our goals.

It was very important for the CFW to establish a good solid working relationship with Chancellor Quinn and his administrative staff. The Commission also wanted to have more interaction and input from students and women in non-exempt positions. It's vital to the CFW's function and charge to remain open and accessible to all women faculty, staff and students in order to serve as a forum for all women on campus. Both of these objectives were accomplished.

Due to the size of the commission, we were able to divide into 7 committees. We realized that some of the goals we had set would take years to complete, while others were more easily reached. Each committee worked on several issues and goals as outlined in the planning session. In some cases the CFW continued to work on projects from previous years. One such case in point is the continuation of work on the maternity leave policy handled by the Work and Family Issues Committee. The survey of faculty attitudes and beliefs on maternity conducted by Dr. Lynn Blinn, Department of Child and Family Students, College of Human Ecology was completed during the Spring semester. The results will be analyzed and studied by the CFW. The Work and Family Issues Committee also worked on child care, dual career and families issues. The CFW will continue to monitor all three issues.

The Networker Advisory Committee worked with the editor to produce the Networker. This committee not only reviewed articles for the Networker, but also wrote some of the articles. The Networker is the CFW publication for all women faculty, staff and students. It is produced 3 times a year.

Pay equity, opportunity for advancement, comparable worth and professional development were major concerns for the CFW. A new committee, the Economic and Professional Development Committee was formed to address these concerns. The committee identified and explored the following issues: How do salaries of secretarial and skilled crafts employees compare? What is the mobility between exempt and non-exempt positions? At what rate do promotions from faculty to administrative positions occur? Is the rate different for males and females? Are there differential work loads among faculty at different rank and between male and female faculty? Is there a difference made between male and female faculty in the availability of resources such as teaching assistants? Is there a difference in salary for male and female faculty at various professional ranks? This committee has already begun collecting data and information. Work will continue on these issues next year.

Campus safety remained a concern for the CFW. The CFW Safety Committee monitored safety issues and the campus environment. It also worked with the campus wide safety committee and on one occasion invited the chair of the campus wide committee to meet with them. Safety concerns were brought to the attention of the campus wide committee and/or Chief Ed Yovella. The Commission also had a member who served on both safety committees.

During the week of March 5-9, 1990 the Commission sponsored Women's Week a celebration in honor of women on campus and to increase the visibility of women's issues, achievements and accomplishments. Highlights of the week included:

Women's Studies reception hosted by Dr. Osborne, Chair of Women's Studies
Women in concert, performances by UTK music faculty and students
Inna McCliean on "Women Behind the Iron Curtain" sponsored by the Women's Coordinating Council
Women in Leadership Conference, sponsored by UTK Personnel
Smart Women: Healthy Choices, Women's Health Conference, sponsored by UT Women's Health Services

The film "Home of the Brave," discussion led by Dr. Chris Holmblund, Assistant Professor, Romance Languages
Women's Health Fair
Chancellor's Reception for all Knoxville women
Angela Davis, sponsored by the Black Cultural Programming Committee
Showcase of Women in Tennessee History illustrated in the University Center
Spotlight on Women's Research sponsored by the Commission for Women

Presenters:
Marianne Brening, Physics
Rosalind Hackett, Religious Studies
Nancy Howell, College of Vet. Med.
Pat Waive, Botany
Carole Harden, Geography
Susan Metros, Art
Dragana Brzakovic, Elec. & Computer Engineering

The Commission also sponsored two Focus on Women luncheons. Dr. Dorothy Brown, the first black female surgeon in Tennessee, spoke on medical and ethical issues surrounding abortion. Our second speaker was Ms. Denise Bentley, Assistant Professor, Accounting and Business Law at UTK, spoke on property laws in Tennessee. The Chair appear on WUTK's radio program "In Affirmative."

The Commission in conjunction with Women's Health Services of the University Medical Center sponsored the Mobil Mammography unit screening for breast cancer during the weeks of November 6th and 13th.

In our role as an advisory committee to the Chancellor, the CFW has advised the Chancellor of the need for a new report on the status of women at UTK. No thorough study on women has been done since the early 1970s. One of the CFW's major accomplishment was to develop a proposal to be used in studying the status of women at UTK. A new committee, the Task Force Committee, prepared a proposed research document on the status of women which identified areas for investigation. The proposal was presented to Chancellor Quinn last spring and he has agreed this study should be conducted. The CFW has taken on the challenge of conducting this study during the 1990-91 academic year. The Chancellor gave his approval and support. We will study and compare the various issues as outlined in the CFW proposal, review and assess the progress made since the 1970s Task Force on Women's report as well as address "new issues" being raised on

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our campus and at peer institutions. We do not pretend to know all the issues and concerns of the women faculty, staff and students, so we ask you to make us aware of issues you believe need to be investigated and studied. We invite you to send your concerns to the Commission for Women, 2012 Lake Avenue or call 974-4739, between the hours of 8-12 Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday. Please call between these hours to ensure that someone will be at the office to take your call. When you call the commission please ask for Michelle or Susie.

The issues addressed in this report, are but a few of the concerns of the commission. While we have made some contributions to the university, there is still much more work to be done in the areas of safety, child care, integration of work and family life, and pay equity just to cite a few. The commission will continue diligently to remove the barriers that obstruct the career paths of women, and to create a healthier and safer environment in which to work.

WOMEN’S FESTIVAL AND CONFERENCE

The University of Arkansas is hosting the Women’s Festival and Conference: Restructuring the Word, March 28-30, 1991.

The Conference will focus on a variety of women’s concerns such as childcare, employment equity, and reproductive freedom. In addition, academic and research presentations, as well as community and experimental sessions will be offered.

For further information, contact Dr. Joanie Connors, CAPS-Student Health, University of Arkansas, Fayetteville, AK 72701; telephone (501)-575-6631.

COMING ATTRACTIONS FOR WOMEN’S HISTORY MONTH—March 1991

March 1-29, 1991 - Black Cultural Center Gallery
Coressa Clark Art Exhibit, sponsored by The Black Cultural Programming Committee

March 4-8, 1991
Women’s Week
- March 4, 1991 - Noon - University Center
  Brown Bag Luncheon on “Women and Wellness” featuring Rosa Emory
- March 4, 1991 - 3:30-5:00 p.m. - 2012 Lake Avenue
  Women’s Studies Reception
- March 4, 1991 - 8:00 p.m. - University Center Auditorium
  Molly Yard, President of the National Organization for Women. Sponsored by The Women’s Coordinating Council
- March 5, 1991 - 8:00-5:00 - U.T. Conference Center
  Women in Higher Education Conference: The Roles of Self Assessment. Sponsored by UTC Personnel
- March 6, 1991
  2:30-4:00 p.m. - University Center
  Chancellor’s Reception for All UTK Women
  7:00 p.m. - University Center
  Panel Discussion “The African American Woman,” sponsored by The Black Cultural Programming Committee
  8:15 p.m. - Clarence Brown Theatre
  Martha Graham Dance Company, sponsored by The Cultural Attractions Committee
- March 7, 1991 - Noon - Shiloh Room
- March 7, 1991 - 7:30 p.m. - The Laurel Theatre
  Poetry Reading by George Ella Lyon, sponsored by the Creative Writing Program; The John C. Hodges Better English Fund; The Women’s Coordinating Council; The Black Cultural Programming Committee; The Women’s Studies Program; and The National Endowment for the Arts Audience Development Program

March 10, 1991 - 8:00 p.m. - Presidential Grill
Comedian, Bertice Berry, sponsored by The Cultural Programming Committee

March 11, 1991
4:00 p.m. - Shiloh Room
Lecture on “Women in Comedy” featuring Bertice Berry
7:00 p.m. - Clarence Brown Theatre
“Sister” by Jomandi Productions, sponsored by The Black Cultural Programming Committee

March 27, 1991 - U.C. Ballroom
Club Africana Musical: A Tribute to African American Women Who Shaped Jazz, sponsored by The Black Cultural Programming Committee

WELCOME TO OUR NEW EDITOR

December 31, 1990, was Carol Guthrie’s last day as Graduate Assistant of the Commission for Women. She has worked diligently for the Commission for over three years. Carol will be missed by all.

We are happy to welcome our new graduate assistant, Michelle Releford-Dalton. Michelle is also the new editor for the Networker. She is a doctoral candidate in the department of Educational Leadership.

Ms. Dalton received the Bachelor of Arts degree in English from Albany State College, Albany, Georgia and a Masters of Science in Education from Jackson State University, Jackson, Mississippi. She has also done further study in the area of Public Administration at Florida A and M University, Tallahassee, Florida.

Her dissertation is entitled “The Long Road to Recognition: A Historical Investigation of the Activities of the Association of Colleges for Negro Youth, 1913-1934.”

Susie Waters, an undergraduate Anthropology major will assist Ms. Dalton with her new duties.
TRAVIS DISCUSSES MATH AND GENDER DIFFERENCES

By Cheryl Travis

The summer issue of the Networker carried an item with the lead "Hormones Linked to Math Inequality." The issue is complex, and some of the related issues are discussed here. Social science approaches to individual and group differences have been relatively simplistic and have been based on descriptive studies that compare means and standard deviations among two or more groups. Although this approach can be a useful first step in research, there are several problems.

Differences are often more complex than can be adequately reflected in a single score, and cumulative reviews indicate that gender differences are relatively small. In the case of differences on math tests, gender accounts for about 4% of the variation in math scores. Scientific standards for designating an effect as even a weak outcome generally require that at least 10-15% of the variation in scores be explained. Thus, girls and boys are really more alike than they are different in their math performance, yet gender differences repeatedly make headlines.

While gender might be a consistent effect, it is quite small in relation to the impact of other factors. For example, the number of math courses taken by boys and girls generally reveals an increasing difference with age that also parallels differences in national test scores. Thus, there is good reason to suspect, and would even hope, that math scores are influenced by educational experience. Furthermore, the differences that do exist are more complex and varied than a single difference score would indicate. Detailed studies of male and female performance on national tests indicate that for some groups of problems, such as math computation, girls typically outperform boys.

Conclusions that the influence of male hormones on brain development are the causal factors for these differences represent a gross reductionism without an empirical base. There is no evidence to indicate that testosterone is a causal factor in brain lateralization among humans. In fact, there is no evidence that brain lateralization is critical to math performance. Assumptions about sex differences in brain lateralization have been based on studies of right and left-handed MALES, not comparisons of males and females. There is no evidence for a dose response relationship between testosterone and math performance. One wonders why researchers have not looked for a correlation between male virility and math test performance. The hormone argument also conveniently ignores the fact that the biochemical precursor of testosterone is progesterone, a "female" hormone.

A final series of problems in gender difference research are the implications drawn for policy and planning. The interpretative stance often has been to view differences in any area as reflecting normative male scores contrasted with female deficits. This prejudicial interpretation has been supported by labels that characterize the male behaviors in desirable terms while female behaviors are characterized by traditional stereotypes. Another problem with policy implications is the tendency to view differences as biologically based. As long as the cause is seen as biological, the problem is located in individual people, in this case, girls and women. There is correspondingly less investment of planning or resources in changing the educational system or gender roles that are likely to be far more important factors.

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