

Jean Dresden Grambs, ed.
TEACHING ABOUT WOMEN IN
THE SOCIAL STUDIES:
CONCEPTS, METHODS AND
MATERIALS.

Washington, D.C.:
 National Council for the Social
 Studies, Bulletin No. 48, 1976.
 117 pp.

Not so long ago, there was a genuine complaint that material — serious, scholarly material — on women was hard to come by. This excuse for not teaching about women is no longer valid, for there are now specialist book stores devoted exclusively to works by and about women, special issues have been devoted to "Women" by almost all the learned journals in the Humanities and Social Sciences, and there are innumerable articles scattered throughout the others. Now there are fat bibliographies and bibliographies of bibliographies. Do we, then, need yet another publication on women? Yes — and teachers of the Social Studies will surely agree that *Teaching About Women in the Social Studies* is, indeed, a welcome book.

The book goes beyond the first necessary stages of consciousness-raising and, in the words of its editor, hopes "to provide teachers and curriculum developers with some beginning concepts, instructional strategies, and instructional resources so that current and future generations will have a more balanced view of how the world was, and how the world *is*." (p. 2) In brief, it offers practical suggestions about how to combat the hidden curriculum of sexism in schools. It was sponsored by the U.S. National Council for the Social

Studies Committee on Sexism and Social Justice, a body which recognizes the deleterious effects of sexism on both males and females.

"History becomes a poor guide to understanding the present or predicting the future if it is grossly out of touch with historical reality," says Jean Grambs in her Introduction. (p. 1) To correct the distortion produced by the fact that written history has been almost exclusively male, Grambs issues a general call to action at every level of schooling: Early Childhood, Upper Elementary, Middle School, and High School. Currently, sexist assumptions and stereotypes pervade them all and the just teacher must be ever alert to screen texts, illustrations, exercises, A-V material and classroom practices for bias. Grambs points out that in many schools there is an increasing opportunity for teachers to develop mini-courses on specialized topics and considers it appropriate to add Women's Studies to the roster of options open in Social Studies. She notes that, while Women's Studies courses are burgeoning on college campuses, more than half the high school graduates will not go on to college, and relatively few of those who do will have a chance to take W.S. courses. It is clear that few contemporary undergraduates will have an opportunity to discover, for example, that there *were* women in history and they may never find out. Here is a chance, then, for the schools to teach what the college graduates do not know.

Grambs calls upon Social Studies teachers to move forward aggressively in offering W.S. courses, pointing out that to focus on women in the Social Sciences does not have to mean cutting out vital portions of what has been traditionally

taught. Rather, it means acknowledging the fact that human history and human behavior include both men and women. This is essential if the schools are to prepare young people for the changing world in which sexual equality is increasingly a matter of legal and social reality. "It is crippling," she says, "to continue to give youth a view of the world that never was and to suggest that that is the world that is." (p. 5)

The seven chapters which follow offer numerous specific suggestions for the Social Studies teacher and direct him/her to a wealth of source material. An interesting aspect of Chapter 1, "Getting a Hold of the Tiger," is the sample of inventories designed to help students and teachers identify the values they presently hold. These attitude inventories could be used with little or no modifications in Canadian schools. They would serve as useful diagnostic tools, providing excellent starting points for any work on women or on understanding social attitudes.

E. G. Campbell's chapter on "Women in U.S. History" also has a message for Canadian schools. It does not deal exclusively with the substance of women in U.S. history but presents perspectives on curriculum structures, emphasizing how they can be made to accommodate material on women. Campbell suggests that there are two obvious structures: (1) a topical chronological design which offers a means of incorporating concepts appropriate to Women's Studies; (2) a structure devoted to an exclusively conceptual design. These instructional methodologies could easily be used to teach "Women in Canadian History." (Further ideas about the conceptual methodology may be found in the special "Women and Education" issue of this *Journal*.)

Other chapters in *Teaching About Women in the Social Studies* offer useful suggestions for the difficult task of integrating women into an already over-packed curriculum. There is remarkably little overlap or

repetition and, taken as a whole, this book can provide teachers and administrators with means for coping with the instructional aftermath of the discovery that, wittingly or unwittingly, Social Studies teachers have been withholding the truth about women.

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*See Christine Garside Allen, "Conceptual History as a Methodology for Women's Studies," *McGill Journal of Education*, Vol. X, No. 1 (Spring 1975), pp. 49-58.

Curriculum on Women Project Staff.

THE WOMEN'S KIT.

Toronto: O.I.S.E., 1974. \$59.50.

With the development of Women's Studies courses, either as units in Social Science curricula or as separate course offerings, there has been a demand from teachers for usable resource materials. The plethora of printed matter concerning women's liberation ranging from radical lesbianism to "The Total Woman" is mostly inappropriate or inadequate for use in the classroom. The problem is compounded in Canada since most suitable material is of American origin and deals with the American historical experience only. Most of the heretofore available works on Canadian women have been of 'The Saga of Laura Secord' variety, but the shortage has been admirably filled with the production of *The Women's Kit*, by O.I.S.E.

The Women's Kit is a large box crammed with materials of all types and meets the needs of teachers of Women's Studies courses on two counts. First it provides students with an "encyclopedia" of sorts concerning many aspects of women's