

TEACHING WOMEN'S STUDIES TO MALE INMATES

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Synopsis—Simon Fraser University, in conjunction with the Correctional Services of Canada, offers university credit courses within four federal penal institutions in southwestern British Columbia. A first year introductory Women's Studies course was run at a medium security prison housing an entirely male population. Course materials were similar to those used on campus, with some allowances made for an all male group.

The instructor compared these students and previous, almost exclusively female, students of this course. The male inmate students were highly motivated and vocal. They expressed a similar level of stereotypical attitudes as on-campus students, and appeared to be receptive to the ideas of the course to a comparable degree. Their written work was poorer, in many cases, than that done by on-campus students, while their participation rate in classroom discussion was noticeably higher. All in all, the male inmate students appeared to benefit from the course at least as much, in the short-term, as any previous group of Women's Studies students.

In conclusion, it is suggested that Women's Studies for Men could be successful outside of a prison environment if courses were constructed and presented within a context which stressed empathy with women from a perspective which emphasized that while individual men are not responsible for the collective conditions of women, they are responsible for the implications of their own actions.

BACKGROUND

Simon Fraser University, in conjunction with the Correctional Services of Canada, offers university credit courses within four federal penal institutions in southwestern British Columbia. This program is unique in that regular university courses are taught by university faculty within the confines of the prisons. Inmates involved in this program are enrolled at Simon Fraser University, usually as special entry mature students. They may complete their BA degrees while incarcerated or may continue their studies, with no change of student status, if they are released from prison before graduation. Most courses offered are drawn from a humanities program and may be combined with correspondence courses to complete degree requirements over a period of several years.

Matsqui Institution is one of the four institutions which hosts the university education program for inmates. Matsqui is located in a rural setting in the lower mainland of British Columbia. It is a medium security institution housing an all male population of approximately 350. Education is one of several work assignments that an inmate may

choose. As a work assignment, education offers few advantages: it has a low rate of pay and requires inmates to spend relatively long hours in the classroom and doing homework. One might assume that the 35 to 40 inmates who choose and remain with this program each trimester do so for the rewards of education itself.

The Academic Centre is set off from other areas of the prison by the ubiquitous chain link fencing used throughout the prison. Entrance to the area is through a small guard house where there are usually two guards on duty. Beyond that point, there is normally no further contact with guards throughout a student's day. As a result, the atmosphere in the academic centre is considerably more relaxed than it is in other areas within the institution and the spirit of free thought and lively inquiry is remarkably present in the university classrooms within the prison.

Each instructor is greeted by new students with a certain amount of wariness. Inmates seem to be rightfully concerned that instructors should not condescend to them, condemn them, or fear them. It is important for the inmates to know if they may speak freely in the presence of an instructor or if they

must fear that their remarks will find their way back to the prison administration. A successful student-instructor relationship must be based on easy communications. But in the prison environment, anyone who appears to be on easy and friendly terms with inmates is seen by the guards as suspect, and vice versa. As a result, relations between guards and instructors remain cool.

THE COURSE AND THE STUDENTS

I first offered "Perspectives on Women: An Introduction to Women's Studies" as an elective at Matsqui Institution in the first trimester of 1986. This course had never been offered in any of the prisons before, nor had it ever been taught to an all male class before. The course has been running more or less continually for 10 years on the campus of Simon Fraser University with myself acting as teaching assistant during 5 of those 10 years. But it had never before drawn more than four male students in a class. The same course has also been offered by correspondence since late 1984 with a larger minority of men enrolled under those conditions.

The class began with an initial enrollment of 26 students. This number represented a little more than half of the entire university program population of 47 students and was the largest enrollment of any course that semester.¹ The number dwindled to 15 by the fourth week of class, when it came time for students to pay their fees if they were to continue to attend the class. A total of 12 students completed the 13 week course. Most of the men who took this class claimed to be there simply out of curiosity. One said that he came to women's studies to find out why his three marriages had failed. Another said that he was there because he thought that "women are a very hard subject."

The men who remained with the course past the final drop date ranged in age from 22 to 50 years, with most of them being in

their 30s. (Two men were in their 20s, 7 in their 30s, 3 were between 40 and 50 years old.) They came from diverse class, educational, ethnic, and racial backgrounds. Two identified themselves as coming from the middle class, while the rest of them came from less advantaged backgrounds. Several of the students had already completed a substantial number of university credits while others had only recently completed their high school equivalency course. (Seven men had earned sufficient credits to qualify them as first year students, two were at a second year level, and three were at a fourth year level.) Ten of the students were caucasian, one was oriental, and one was polynesian.

The inmates who attended this course were incarcerated for crimes against both person and property. The crimes that they were convicted of included assault with a deadly weapon, assault causing bodily harm, extortion, bank robbery, smuggling, living off of the avails of prostitution, murder, and politically motivated property destruction. Four students had been convicted of murder (two of whom admitted to having committed the murder themselves) and were serving life sentences. Most of the men who took this course freely admitted that they had long histories of criminal activity (ranging up to 30 years). Those who were imprisoned on first offenses were in the minority. This distribution may reflect the type of inmate who has the motivation to become a student. The Women's Studies students tended to be older individuals who had longer sentences and thus had longer expanses of time to fill.

The course was structured in a lecture/seminar format supplemented by films and video tapes. Class time totalled four hours each week for which students received four credits. The reading material for the course consisted almost entirely of reprints gathered from diverse sources. I altered the curriculum to reflect both my differences in philosophy from previous instructors and my perceptions of the needs of this particular student body. Where possible, the reading materials and general course contents were chosen in such a way as to encourage the personal emotional involvement of the students. The study of the social and psychological aspects of women's lives was emphasized, and facts and figures were presented

¹An English writing skills course was almost as heavily enrolled with 25 students, as was a "History of Psychology" course with 21 students. "Anthropological Concepts" started with sixteen students, "Introduction to Fiction" enrolled eleven, and "The Great War" initially attracted 7 students. Four students also took directed reading courses.

alongside evocative personal testimonials. The course differed from the one given on-campus in that it was organized to be more emotionally demanding and to give more attention to a feminist perspective on masculinity.

"Perspectives on Women: An Introduction to Women's Studies," as taught at Matsqui Institution, was comprised of six main sections. The course began with an exploration of the biological bases of sex and gender differences and similarities. This was followed by a brief look at evolutionary theories and the possible lessons to be gained from the study of technologically primitive societies. The second section covered psychological theories of the development of gender during early childhood, youth, and adolescence. This section also included a discussion of the physical and sexual abuse of children. The third section looked at the economic position of women, beginning with pre-industrial societies and ending with a look at the status of women in unions and in non-traditional work. This was followed by several weeks of discussion on the institution of marriage, during which time economic, emotional, and psychological aspects of marriage for both men and women were examined. Sub-topics included children and child-care, sexual relations, housework, and wife battering. The fifth section began with a look at the ways that women are portrayed in the arts, advertising, and the media. This led into a discussion of pornography, which was followed by classes devoted to the questions of rape and prostitution. The final weeks' classes were spent in study of a feminist utopian novel² and a history of some of the accomplishments of the women's rights movements in Canada, England, and the US.

Throughout the course I attempted to build within the students a sense of empathy with the experiences of women. It was helpful to call on similarities between the experiences of the students and the experiences of women. I therefore repeatedly made comparisons between sex/gender prejudices and class, racial, and ethnic discrimination. It al-

so proved useful to call on their experiences within the prison system as powerless and disenfranchised people. I felt that it was important that these students not come to feel personally blamed for the circumstances of women in general, but that they should be encouraged to examine their particular contributions to the social relations which they had experienced. I also believed it essential that they understood that feminist agendas offered increased freedom for both men and women, and that acceptance of the premises of the course would not lock them, as men, into losing and blamefilled situations.

It also proved necessary for me to be able to communicate with the students through the culture of men, from the perspective of women. This required that I be able to couch the messages of the course in terms that would be sufficiently familiar to the students to enable them to grasp the ideas easily, without obscuring the feminist nature of the material. The composition of the group, as both inmates and men, meant that they functioned within an extremely masculine social order which placed a high value on concealment of emotions, voracious sexuality, toughness, and a disregard for authority and middle-class social values. Thus, I had to find ways to evoke emotion and empathy in the students without myself appearing to be weak or emotionally involved. This meant that I was forced to validate larger portions of their masculine reality than I would otherwise have been inclined to, in order to use their reality as a starting point in leading them to a feminist analysis of their experiences. It also meant that I tailored my style of delivery to be coarser and more hard-hitting than I would normally use in a women's studies classroom. I also found it necessary to take a "one of the boys" attitude in the many discussions which alluded to sex lest the classroom become infused with sexual tensions which would undermine my credibility as an instructor.

STUDENT RESPONSES TO THE COURSE

Overall, the response of the male inmate students to Women's Studies was enthusiastic. Attendance throughout the course remained unusually high and discussion was always

²Marge Piercy's *Woman on the Edge of Time* (1976) was chosen because it dealt with questions of poverty, discrimination against racial minorities, insanity, incarceration, and feminist visions of a better world.

spirited. I was continually surprised at the almost total absence of hostility and argument from the students. There seemed to be an exceptional willingness to hear, as one student put it, "the answers to questions you never even thought to ask."

The information and analysis which I used was generally well accepted but there were times when the generalized information I offered didn't match the personal experiences of the students. These occasions become excellent opportunities to explore class, ethnic, and regional differences in the roles of women and to look at the ways that masculine and feminine roles sometimes cause individuals to perceive shared experiences very differently. It was usually possible, through discussion and exchange of ideas, to arrive at a confluence of opinions.

The greatest areas of contention centered around romantic masculine notions of sexuality which surfaced during our discussions of marital relations, rape, pornography, and prostitution. The men in this course seemed to be strongly attached to the belief that women consistently derive satisfaction from sexual intercourse and therefore desire it as ardently as men do. They were very resistant to the idea that many women find their sexual relations with men disappointing, and that they often engage in them for reasons other than sexual release. They seemed to be unwilling, or unable, to dispassionately consider women's experience of sexuality where they felt it reflected poorly on their own.

The most difficult ideas to convey were those concerned with the depth of the effects of feminine socialization to passivity and the enforcement of passivity through structural barriers to female power. As men, who had taken the masculine ideals of physical and emotional toughness and independence to an extreme, they often found it difficult to understand why women would accept situations and conditions which they themselves would find humiliating and unbearable. Their life experiences told them that if a situation was unacceptable to them they could force it to change or leave it behind. The idea that one's attachments to other adults or children, or that the enormity of a social structure, might stop one from taking action was foreign to them.

The students showed the least interest in

any discussion which was entirely theoretical. They were curious about employment and income statistics for women but appeared to be uninterested in theoretical explanations of how that situation came to be as it is. They were surprised to find how large the differences were between the earning powers of men and women and especially surprised to find that increased education still left women in lower income brackets than men of similar training. Nonetheless, there was little support for the idea of gainful employment as a method of improving women's status. They seemed to hold the attitude that anyone who worked at a regular job was being foolishly exploited by their bosses. As one man said, "Most of us wouldn't be in here in the first place if we believed in working for a living."

Student response to me as the instructor varied through the course and among individuals. At the beginning of the course, some students attempted to impress me with their civility, knowledge, and willingness to learn. They seemed to be concerned that I not see them as ignorant and dangerous criminals. Others took more of a "wait and see" attitude, neither challenging me nor putting forward any more than was minimally demanded of them. Still others seemed to be intent on testing my response to a thinly veiled display of sexualized machismo. This last group rapidly dropped out of the course when they realized that they would be unable to gain any control over the situation through such methods. Gradually the other two types relaxed into a group of individuals eager for the pleasures of learning.

The atmosphere in the classroom was generally free flowing. Students appeared to feel free to initiate side discussions and to ask questions or debate any topic which came to mind. As the course progressed, the students coalesced into a sort of working unit with a "team spirit" and an apparent faith in my leadership. Around the time that my testing by the students came to an end, the course material accelerated in intensity and the students began to show signs of feeling challenged by the content of discussions and reading assignments. There were many hours of classroom time where the silence during lectures was intense and focussed: each man seeming to be inwardly reliving and re-examining his own experiences of the topic under

discussion. Many classes ended with an almost palpable feeling in the room of the group having "gone through" something together. But, because the social code of extreme masculinity allows one the option of expressing only a very narrow range of emotions, it was rare for a student to do more than sigh and say, "that was a heavy class." Nevertheless, it was clear to me that the students were challenged, moved, and in some ways changed by what they were learning about themselves and about women.

The effects of this progression of consciousness could most clearly be seen in the nature of the interactions which took place after regular class time. The Instructor usually stayed after class to engage with students in informal conversation about anything that students chose to bring up. Over time, more and more students began staying for these social visits, which lasted longer and longer. As rapport was established, topics became more personal and students from other classes joined in. It was during this informal time that students began to speak about the emotional responses that they were having to the course and to exhibit their sense of camaraderie with me through their disclosure of personal information and their inclusion of me into their inmate talk and social assumptions.

Students used this time with me to make revelations about themselves, both as criminals and as men. It was during such times that the stories of their past crimes and their times in court were related. It was also during after class time that they told me those things about their relations with their wives, girl friends, and lovers that they would not admit to in the public forum of the classroom. Even more telling were the stories that they related to me about the many times that they had transgressed their own understanding of the limits of the code of masculinity. Those were the times when they felt free enough, and safe enough, to speak about having experimented with wearing women's clothing, allowing a woman to take the lead in sexual relations, or finding a sexual thrill in the act of murder. They used the more casual time after class to both boast and confess; acts which court attention and intimacy, which display interest and trust.

At the conclusion of the course an infor-

mal social was held and the students were asked to fill out course evaluation forms. Both of these provided opportunities for the students to express their feelings about the course. Overall the students expressed very positive feelings about the course: five of the twelve men who completed the course volunteered that they felt that a similar course should be required of all students. Two of them specifically stated that they thought the course should be required for university graduation; one suggested that every inmate in the prison should be required to take the course, and another man said that he thought the course should be taught in the elementary schools before young people had a chance to develop bad habits.

Three men said that they were saving their reading materials and passing them on to friends. One man had been giving them to his wife to read along with him as he progressed through the course, and another (20 odd year veteran of the criminal life) had been trying to get his 19 year old daughter to read the course materials in the hopes that the information would help her to become better equipped to take care of herself as she made her way in the world. The third was saving his as a reference work on feminism. Eight of the 12 students completed course evaluation forms. In reply to one of the questions on the form, two of them said that they would like to minor in Women's Studies, and six students said that they might take another Women's Studies course if it fit into their course schedules.

At the end of the social, every student took the time to warmly thank me for my part in the course. They seemed genuinely pleased to have had the opportunity to take this Women's Studies course and made a point of making individual statements to that effect.

MALE INMATE STUDENTS COMPARED TO ON-CAMPUS STUDENTS

The inmate students differed from the usual on-campus students on several accounts. First and foremost, for a Women's Studies class, is the fact that they were all men. Not only were the inmate students men, but they were men who were more experienced and more experienced in more marginal lifestyles

than the usual Women's Studies students. Previous classes on campus had never drawn more than four male students in a lecture session (less than 10%) and it was not unusual for a class to be composed entirely of female students. Those male students who attended Women's Studies courses on campus were mostly young, white, middle-class, and in some way closely associated with at least one feminist. The inmate students tended to be older than the on-campus students and to come from less privileged backgrounds. Thus, they came to the course, and the material, with significantly different life histories and perspectives than the customary groups of mostly young, middle-class, female university students.

Introductory Women's Studies courses on campus have always drawn more students than the Matsqui course did, so that campus classes are larger and less intimate than the prison class. This may be a factor in the relatively higher degree of student interaction found in the prison setting. It also seems likely that several of the students in the prison were considerably more vocal as individuals and would have been under any circumstances. The fact that the class was comprised entirely of men, who lived closely together and who had been collectively socialized to be more aggressive than a group of young middle-class women, also contributed heavily to the lively discussions which were a regular feature of the class. On a day by day basis, a larger percentage of inmate students were more vocally involved in classroom discussions than is normally the case on campus.

The subject matter that the inmate students found most and least interesting paralleled closely the pattern among on-campus students. The male inmate students responded to the course in ways which reflected their life experiences, which differed in many ways from on-campus students, but they were interested and bored by similar subject areas. For example, "socialization" and "pornography" are sections of the course which students usually find absorbing. The male students found a feminist analysis of masculine socialization fascinating and were able to use it to examine their own upbringings. Female Women's Studies students focus more heavily on feminine socialization, but

in a similar way. The subject of pornography, on the other hand, while equally of interest to both types of students, had to be approached quite differently for the male group. When the subject is taught to a female class, because of women's general lack of exposure to the medium, the bulk of the time is spent in an introduction to the content of pornography. When discussing pornography with a group of male criminals, one can safely assume that they are already well acquainted with both the form and content of pornography, and proceed into a more sophisticated discussion.

Inmate students and campus students both seemed to be similarly interested in all topics studied, with the exception of a shared lack of interest in psychological theories and theoretical analyses of women's economic position. The male students did not seem to be particularly attached to masculinist visions of either biology or evolution. They seemed to find the "woman the gatherer" theory of evolution equally as tenable as the "man the hunter" theory. Questions of psychological and socialization processes proved to be equally fascinating to the male inmate students as they generally have been to female students on campus, but the male students were more involved in the problems of masculine socialization. The male inmate students also seemed to be somewhat shocked, but willing to learn, that women with training equal to that of men still earn far less than men do; while young female students on campus often resist believing that such is really the case. Women students usually enthusiastically embrace the idea that economic improvement for women can come through the efforts of women to enter into traditionally male working-class jobs. The men said that they had found the jobs that they had done to be unrewarding and/or dangerous and couldn't see why anyone would want to do that kind of work. They expressed the attitude that no one should have to do the "dirty work" no matter how well paid it was.

The topic of marriage was taught somewhat differently in this version of the course. I placed more emphasis on psychological aspects of long term intimate unions, and the question of wife battering was dealt with in some detail. The course, as it is taught on campus, touches only lightly on intimacy

and wife battering and instead focusses more on housework. In the prison course, I attempted to impress upon the students the vast extent of the problem of wife battering and to explain, from a feminist perspective, some of the reasons men batter and women remain in battering relationships as long as they do. The men generally condemned wife batterers but also tended to want to blame women for not leaving such relationships immediately. This section was very attentively received and prompted much spirited discussion. A similar unit on campus passes with less student involvement.

The weeks of the course which dealt with wife battering, pornography, rape, and prostitution followed closely on one another. The campus course follows a similar development, although it does not treat wife battering and prostitution as whole sections in their own right. In teaching about pornography, I took the approach that pornography acts as a form of sex education and explored the messages that pornography teaches about sexual relations between men and women. I asked the men to remember how pornography had shaped their sexual appetites in their youth and to consider whether they felt that the messages of pornography were healthy for women and men to learn. The men confirmed that pornography had influenced their sexuality and they condemned slasher, snuff, and kiddie porn. Although they were willing to state that it should not be freely available, they were not willing to endorse any measures which they perceived as censorship of pornography.

In discussing rape, I explained how rape is wildly underreported and that it is unlikely that a man charged with rape will be convicted of it. I talked about the social message in the way rape is handled in our society and our criminal justice system. In explaining the differences between stranger rape, date rape, and soft rape, I concentrated on trying to get these men to understand that much of what they consider to be seduction is perceived as rape by women. The men started out being quite vocal in their condemnation of rapists; but when I started to explain about women acquiescing to unwanted sex out of fear of reprisals for refusing to co-operate, they grew quieter and more thoughtful. It seemed clear to me that they were coming to the realiza-

tion that they had forced themselves on women whom they had thought of at the time as merely having succumb to their superior powers of seduction. This was not an easy realization for many of them, and they tried to argue that women really wanted sex as ardently as themselves. Nonetheless, I think that the message got through.

Prostitution had not been previously taught as part of introductory women's studies. I included it because it was a hotly debated issue in the local press at the time and because I knew that most of my students had some experience with prostitution. I suspected that their opinions of women were infused with the madonna/whore dichotomy and so I wanted to address the question of what makes women into "whores." I explained prostitution as a job option usually turned to in desperation. I pointed out that many young women start out in prostitution after years of sexual abuse in their parental homes. I placed prostitution in context of the limited economic options of most women, often in combination with the sole responsibility for young children and a history of abuse in the family home. Because these men often came from abusive homes themselves, and did not perceive themselves to have many economic options, I also had to explain that women turn to prostitution rather than bank robbery or drug dealing because of the particular pressures of female socialization.

Both campus and prison students responded similarly to these issues: they were depressed by the barrage of "bad news." But female students, especially the younger ones, tend to resist believing much of the material on wife battering, rape, and pornography; they seem to want to believe that the statistics are inflated and the case is exaggerated. The inmate students, on the other hand, were willing to believe the severity of the situation, many of them having had first hand experience of wife battering, pornography, rape, and prostitution.

The inmate students were able to empathize sufficiently with the situation of women that they independently recognized that life under such circumstances could easily result in women becoming fearful and/or distrustful of men in general. Some of the men seemed to be hurt by this judgment by wom-

en but were able to see how it was a sensible response to a social structure which is dangerous to women. Not all of them, though, were able to make the leap from being outraged by the idea of men abusing women as an outlet for their own feelings, to the idea that patriarchal violence is not the solution to any conflict. One man commented that all of the men who beat up their wives "had better look out when us guys who have taken Women's Studies get out." He contended that the Women's Studies students would beat up the batterers and that their grateful wives would fall in love with the men who had protected them and leave their abusive husbands for the arms of the enlightened and respectful ex-Women's Studies students.

The feminist novel, Marge Piercy's *Woman on the Edge of Time* (1976), studied in the prison course was a different one than is used on-campus. The inmates' response to a feminist vision of utopia was instructive. While they found the story interesting and the vision generally appealing, they were not able to suspend their experience of human nature sufficiently to accept the utopian vision. Their experience of human nature included an incorrigible dose of violence, brutality, and anti-social insanity. They were unwilling, or unable, to envision a human world without violent and dangerous people in it.

The inmate students' responses to their instructor was, as a whole, more enthusiastic than has been the case with campus students. This may again be, in part, a result of the smaller class size, but the almost complete isolation of the inmate students from social contact with people from outside of the prison, and from women in particular, probably accounts for the greatest part of their openness, enthusiasm, and eagerness to please. The student "testing" of their instructor, which occurred at the beginning of the prison course, has never been observed in campus classrooms, but the high level of enthusiasm for the course and for me as the instructor was also exceptional.

All in all, the course could easily be said to have been as successful as campus courses. The students were at least as receptive to feminist analysis as any other group of Women's Studies students have been, and were no more resistant to new concepts than any other group. The classroom environment was

more animated than campus classrooms and the level of inquiry was, at times, more probing than on campus. The inmate students were more demanding than campus students but they gave of themselves as generously as they asked.

SPECULATIONS AND SUGGESTIONS

The experience of teaching Women's Studies to a group of male inmates proved to be both challenging and rewarding. The intense interest and involvement of the students came as a pleasant and exciting surprise to everyone associated with the course (University and prison administrators, other faculty and guest lecturers, myself, and the students themselves). The students' reports of their willingness to withstand derogatory comments from their peers, guards, and parole board members, and to stand up for women's rights in front of other prisoners, revealed a commitment to the course, and its contents, which well surpassed all expectations.

Women's Studies offered these students an exceptional opportunity in many ways. The course approached a topic which, it seemed, had been a mystery to these men all their lives. Each man had his own reasons for wanting to understand women better, but all shared an ignorance of women. Extremely masculine people are not supposed to show any interest in femininity except to control, possess, and enjoy the people who most display it. This leaves "masculine men" in a difficult position: they are supposed to be able to manipulate, control, and take pleasure in women without showing any interest in understanding them. Women's Studies offered to these men an environment where it was legitimate and safe to ask questions and learn about women without losing face.

The inmate students came to the course in the rare condition of being almost entirely stripped of the usual male privileges. This, combined with the experiences of most of them as underprivileged people in the "outside" world, probably predisposed them to an empathy with the experiences of women as powerless and disenfranchised people. When I introduced them to some of the realities of women's everyday experience and made analogies to their own experiences within the prison system and in their up-

bringings, these men were able to see many of the similarities that most men find obscured by their own power and self-interested attachments to the status quo. As prisoners, and as men who had rarely held any aspirations to success in mainstream society, they had few reasons to resist an analysis which attacked that system without directly attacking them.

The most senior and influential students also came to the course with a fairly well developed left wing analysis of capitalism. They were vocal in their opinions and lent support, on many occasions, to the analysis I put forward. It was not a difficult adjustment for them to see the connections between the exploitation of workers' labour power and patriarchal capitalism's exploitation of women's productive and reproductive powers. They were mentally and emotionally prepared to understand the effects of such a system on the people whose lives are controlled by it. Unlike many of the young, middle-class women who take this course on campus, these men had been extensively exposed to the ugly underbelly of capitalism and had few reasons not to believe that the same social/economic system that they had seen badly degrading and exploiting other human life could likewise control female lives for its own ends.

The few areas where they were resistant to the ideas put forward in the course might also have been, in part, a reflection of their circumstances as prisoners. As prisoners, they were constantly confronted with the reality that they could neither change the parameters of their everyday lives nor leave their situation at will. They seemed to be particularly attached to the idea that that is a condition of imprisonment and that life outside of prison is free from such restraints. Thus, the idea that such a dilemma may also exist for women who are "free" was a difficult one for them to accept.

Being imprisoned also seemed to affect their attitudes towards sexuality. Their access to female sexuality is extremely and carefully limited by forces almost entirely beyond their control, yet the social system within the prison places a heavy emphasis on the desirability of engaging in sexuality with women. Because of their restricted access to women and a social code which encouraged and reward-

ed heterosexual activity, they seemed very attached to the myth that anyone who was not so restricted would be constantly eager for sex. Thus, prison conditions might help to explain their resistance to a feminist analysis of women's sexual experience of men. On the other hand, this same social code probably contributed, at least initially, to the students' intense attention to me. It seemed evident that these students were very eager to please me and were starved for a positive female appraisal of them. It is possible that the students' desire to please was so strong that they made an effort to go beyond a mere parroting of material, to an understanding and acceptance of it.

On the basis of the overall positive outcome of this course, I strongly suggest that more courses of this nature should be mounted in the future. There are several elements in the success of this course which seemed to be particular to the prison setting, but there were a sufficient number of elements which would be common to any group of men to suggest that Women's Studies courses for men could also be successful in other environments. It is certainly true that prisoners have no monopoly on masculinity and that most men are extremely curious to understand women better. Women's Studies classes designed specifically for men would alleviate much of the stigma attached to asking questions and learning more about women and femininity. Men could come to such classes as part of their larger intellectual pursuits without making any particular commitments to feminism, or to changing themselves. Once in such classrooms, all-male groups of students would lend credibility to the masculine legitimacy of such an activity. Questioning of masculine ethics and patriarchal myth and ideology would be easier in an environment made up entirely of gender peers. It would be essential to build into any Women's Studies for Men classes the idea that feminism is not inimical to men, or even entirely so towards masculinity. It would also be important that such courses call heavily on experiences of men which parallel women's experiences of powerlessness, external control, and exploitation.

One of the major challenges of Women's Studies for Men would be to encourage men to empathize with women. In a very real way,

the success of such a course hinges on the ability of students to *emotionally* understand women. Course materials should therefore be chosen which include a large dose of personal testimonials and/or fictionalized accounts of the intimate emotional experiences of women's everyday lives. To the same end, a classroom ambiance which promotes emotional involvement and introspection should also be encouraged by the instructor.

Women's Studies for Men, if presented correctly could prove to be popular with male students. Men are eager to share their

most intimate moments with women, at the same time that they disdain femininity. Few men feel that they understand women and most would like to. Women's Studies for Men could answer this need while positively influencing men's attitudes both towards themselves and towards women.

REFERENCE

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