

INTERACTIVE PHASES OF CURRICULAR RE-VISION: A FEMINIST PERSPECTIVE

I want to speculate here about a theory of five interactive phases of personal and curriculum change which occur when new perspectives and new materials from Women's Studies are brought into a traditional curriculum or a traditional consciousness. After a number of years of work in curriculum revision involving Women's Studies, I found that my colleagues and I were frequently making judgments without having made the grounds of our judgments explicit. That is, we were seeing some efforts of curriculum revision as better than others, more advanced along a spectrum of curricular possibilities which had not yet been described. My theory is an attempt to describe the spectrum.

Such theories have their dangers. Typologies scare me because abstract schema have so often left out most people, including me. Stage theories in particular are dangerous because they can so easily reinforce present hierarchies of power and value. Nevertheless, I want to speak in terms of curricular phases here, partly because colleagues in Women's Studies on many campuses are making similar analyses, speaking and writing about the process of curriculum change as if we could see in it identifiable varieties and types of change. "Such and such a course still has a long way to go," we say. A long way toward what? This is what I will try to spell out here. I like the tentativeness with which others interested in stage or phase theories in this field have drawn their pictures. D'Ann Campbell, Gerda Lerner, Catherine Stimpson, Marcia Westkott and the faculty development team of Arch, Tetrault, and Kirschner at Lewis and Clark College have developed

theories that do not entail ranking and labeling of a sort which perpetuates oppression and exclusion. I take them as models.

For my own analysis, I have adopted, instead of the word "stages," the phrase suggested by Prof. Joan Gunderson of St. Olaf College: "interactive phases." Initial phases of perception do not disappear, but can be felt continually in the mind or the discipline, as one moves toward or away from a more inclusive body of knowledge, a more active process of learning, and a greater ability to see the dominant modes of thought and behavior which we wish to challenge or change.

I begin also with a sense of indebtedness to many other colleagues, including especially the women and men who have taken part over the last four years in the Mellon Seminars at the Wellesley College Center for Research on Women. These seminars are focused on liberal arts curriculum re-vision in two senses: re-seeing and re-making of the liberal arts curriculum. Each year, the Mellon Seminar participants meet together once a month for five hours to consider each of their academic areas or disciplines in turn. The questions we ask in that seminar for each discipline are the same: "What is the present content and scope and methodology of the discipline?" (Or, to use a phrase of Elizabeth Minnich's: "What are the shaping dimensions of the discipline at present?") And then, "How would the discipline need to change to reflect the fact that women are half the world's population and have had, in one sense, half the world's experience?"

The phases in curricular revision which I will describe owe their conceptualization in part to the work of the seminar. Sometimes after a presentation, a member of this group will say, "We really can't get any