

The task of transforming the sociology curriculum can only be accomplished if in addition to including new knowledge and perspectives, existing information and perspectives are critically evaluated as well. One aspect of the existing curriculum that merits scrutiny is the way in which the information covered in the undergraduate curriculum is divided into various courses. It is important for feminist scholars to consider the consequences of the ways the existing curriculums are structured. Furthermore, we will need to examine alternative ways of structuring courses so that they will adequately reflect the experiences, perspectives and priorities of a population that is diverse in terms of gender, race, ethnicity, class, sexuality, age and so on. Focusing on course organization and structure can lead one to ask a variety of questions. One could, for example, ask what the implications of teaching separate courses in theory and research are. One could speculate on how a course on the sociology of health would compare to the more frequently encountered course in medical sociology. One could think about teaching a course on race and class rather than the more traditional courses -- one on "minority groups" and another on "social stratification".

This paper pursues one such question of structure, and considers two existing and separate courses: the sociology of work (or occupational sociology) and the sociology of the family

The organization of courses in sociology departments follow closely the academic specialties that have evolved in the field. It is therefore understandable that two separate courses exist, one on work and one on families, just like the dozen or so other separate courses on social groups or institutions (i.e., the sociology of education, political sociology, sociology of religion). In addition, the purpose of studying each institution and group separately may be to make it possible for students to examine

each one in a relative isolation so that each one can be better understood, albeit in a simplified way. One could argue that there is another underlying reason for separating the subject matter of work from that of families in the undergraduate curriculum.

It may be that while one course (on work and occupations) focuses on what is commonly considered the "top" or important sphere, the other (on families) focuses on one that is seen as much less important. As Peggy McIntosh has argued, our society as a whole has traditionally defined the world as a pyramid with the top consisting of the "public institutional life of nations, of governments, of militia, universities, churches and corporations" (1983, p. 5). "We are taught that civilization has a clear top and a clear bottom. The liberal arts curriculum has been particularly concerned with passing on to students the image of what the 'top' has been" (McIntosh 1983, p. 5). The world of paid work and the study of occupations, especially those defined as having great prestige, are clearly on the peaks and pinnacles. The world of the home and family is well below them. A sociology that does not challenge this world view and its priorities will be most comfortable drawing a line between the two social realities and studying work and family as distinct entities rather than focusing on the similarities between the spheres and their interconnections.

In addition to fostering the separate study of these two worlds, the pyramidal shape of patriarchal culture explains why, currently, occupational sociology is seen as a fairly prestigious specialty within the discipline and why family sociology is near the very bottom of the status hierarchy. Understanding the pyramidal social construct that, as McIntosh argues, influences our institutions, our behavior and our psyches (1983, p. 5) can also explain some of the omissions the content of the courses in both of these areas as they have traditionally been taught. Courses in the sociology