Greetings! Although we began this academic year under a cloud of budget cuts and uncertainties, the Women’s Studies Program successfully launched its *Introduction to Women’s Studies* course in Fall 2002, and hosted the NJ Project Fall Conference on *Difficult Classroom Conversations* with guest speaker Allan Johnson on Oct. 18.

For March/April, our extended Women’s History Month at Kean, we have planned many fascinating events, discussions, film screenings, and dramatic performances. Many programs are co-sponsored by affiliate programs on campus. Because of funding uncertainties, other ambitious projects were postponed. However, do not despair; we hope to end the year with a celebratory “open house” in April (details to be announced).

As I reflect upon the progress made, and the setbacks and regressions that women everywhere continue to negotiate, I notice that feminist scholars are asking similar questions to the ones we ask ourselves at Kean. How far have we come in our struggles for gender equality? Has feminist theory and the institutionalization of gender studies empowered women to lead happy, fulfilling lives?

These questions resonate when we consider the impact of the mixed messages of the media and popular culture upon young women regarding issues of identity. Messages are frequently encoded with sexual stereotypes and traditional gender politics. We addressed some of these questions at Kean in a new course, **ID 1300 (Introduction to Women’s Studies)** in Fall 2002. We used team teaching by four faculty members from different disciplinary perspectives: Dr. Ellen Comerford (Economics), Dr. Janet Yedes, (Communications), Dr. Silvina Ituarte, (Criminal Justice), and Dr. Polly Ashelman (Early Childhood Education). I facilitated the team process. The collaborative learning and interdisciplinary format is certainly an unique pedagogical enterprise. Initially conceptualized by Dr. Theresa Choate (Theatre) and developed by the Women’s Studies Curriculum Committee, ID 1300 is one of the first courses to meet the

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High School Athletes, Self-Esteem, and Girls
By Kimberly Homefield, Graduate Student
Department of Special Education and Counseling

A correlation exists between athletics and self-esteem during the high school years of female athletes, for those with athletic potential. Student athletes involved in sports, either team or individual competition, have a higher self-esteem and more positive body image than non-athletes do (Clinton, 2000).

Fitness and Self-Esteem
Extensive research has been conducted on the correlation between self-esteem and physical activity. The effects of self-esteem in athletes and non-athletes have been investigated in relation to age, gender, and type of sports, among other factors. Findings are relatively consistent in demonstrating that self-esteem for participants in sports is higher than for those who are not involved in sports. For instance, Hogenbruen (1999) developed a 4-week sports camp for young adolescent females to determine an effect on self-esteem. Significant and positive change in global self-esteem was found. Improved self-esteem contributes to the perception of personal competence. Further, Fox (2000) concluded that regular exercise correlates to a favorable self-image in the adolescents. Thus, exercise improves or maintains the self-esteem of adolescents.

Spreitzer (1994) focused on the relationship between varsity athletic participation and increased self-esteem and found that high school self-esteem carries over into adulthood. Athletes’ self-esteem is reported to have increased during high school, and these raised levels may continue into the college years.

Conclusion
Participation in high school sponsored athletic teams can promote feelings of confidence, pride, self-assuredness, self-esteem, and dignity in student athletes. For adolescent girls, in particular, participation in sports has demonstrated an increase in self-esteem except for sports with rigid body type requirements (e.g., gymnastics). A young woman, who feels good about herself physically, tends to present herself as a socially strong individual. Title IX has made much of this possible.

References


(Continued on page 3)
Sports Programs in Jeopardy for Girls and Women
By M. Bridget White
Department of Athletics and Recreation

Sport programs for girls and women are in serious trouble. The proposals currently being considered by the Title IX Commission will negatively alter the landscape of high school and collegiate athletics for women and men. Under these proposals, institutions will be allowed to offer up to 78,000 fewer opportunities for female participation at the college level and up to 1.4 million fewer opportunities for participation of girls at the high school level.

Along with fewer athletic opportunities, collegiate women stand to lose $75 to $188 million in athletic scholarships. Astonishingly, these proposals come at a time when women and girls still do not receive equal benefits afforded to male athletes.

If you have been waiting to act, do not wait any longer. Unless you speak out now, 30 years of progress may be lost. Please log on to <www.womenssportsfoundation.org> to lend support and become informed on this important issue. ♦

Title IX, Continued
(Continued from page 2)

athletes. There are some, however, who claim that the law has sounded the death knoll for a number of men’s programs, in a sort of reverse discrimination, and the elimination of men’s programs (such as wrestling and gymnastics) is the result of increased funding for women’s sports. So is Title IX to blame for the cutbacks?

The central issue of all of this is the question of fairness for both women and men. Title IX seeks to level the playing field for both male and female athletes by mandating equal opportunities for participation in educational programs that receive federal funding. The National Association for Girls and Women in Sports (NAGWS) and other advocacy groups are deeply concerned that the Bush Administration may be moving to reduce the Nation’s commitment to girls and women in sports.

The concern stems from the U.S. Department of Education Committee that has been directed to collect information, analyze issues, and obtain broad public input in order to improve the application of current federal standards for measuring equal opportunity to participate in athletics under Title IX. The Commission on Opportunity in Athletics is examining whether Title IX has been as fair to men as to women. It will evaluate whether the current standards of Title IX should be revised and how.

A poll of 1,000 adults conducted by the Commission asked respondents how much they had heard or read about the law. Just 43% knew a great or moderate amount. Of those, 20% wanted the law strengthened, 50% wanted it kept about the same, 27% wanted it weakened, and 9% had no opinion. Of those familiar with the law, 61% said its impact has been mostly positive, 25% said mostly negative, 4% said mixed, and 10% had no opinion.

To comply with issues surrounding Title IX is truly complex. The law must be viewed in a larger context as an opportunity for our society to move beyond its long held beliefs about women’s limited participation in sports. ♦

GenderWatch is at Kean University
By Linda Cifelli
Kean University Library

Researchers seeking articles and other publications relating to Women’s Studies will find a wealth of information in the GenderWatch database, one of the research databases accessible through the Kean University Library Home Page at <http://library.kean.edu/>. GenderWatch features abstracts and some full-text articles from publications that examine the impact of gender through a wide range of subject areas, including Women’s Studies, History, Politics, the Humanities, and the Social Sciences. GenderWatch provides coverage of scholarly journals, magazines, newspapers, newsletters, regional publications, and conference proceedings, as well as reports from governmental agencies and professional organizations. Archival materials date back to 1970, in some cases.

Current Kean University faculty, students, and staff may access this Web-based library resource from any computer on campus that is logged onto the University’s network at <http://library.kean.edu/databases.htm>, then click on the link for “GenderWatch” under the heading for “VALE New Jersey.” ♦

5 Web Sites of Interest to Women
(No endorsement is implied)

GenderWatch (see article below)
http://library.kean.edu/databases.htm

The Women’s Health Site
www.thewomenshealthsite.org

Women’s Sports Foundation
www.womenssportsfoundation.org

Jeannette Rankin Foundation
Scholarships for Low-Income Women
www.rankinfoundation.org

Lesbian resources, activism, and the arts
www.lesbian.org

Special thanks to Linda Cifelli and Bridget White for their contributions ♦
A Profile of Fear: A Woman’s Perspective
By Donna Strigari
Department of Special Education and Counseling

When I was an adjunct professor at Seton Hall several years ago, I taught a course on human relations that focused on a variety of issues: emotions, conflict resolution, dealing with difficult people, and many others. While watching a television interview with an author, I decided to incorporate his book into the course. Since my class was entirely female, I thought The Gift of Fear (DeBecker, 1997), would have an impact on their life decisions.

Fear is an emotion. Goleman (1995) analyzes the emotion of fear in depth. With fear, blood rushes to the large skeletal muscles, such as the legs, making it easier to flee. At the same time, the body freezes, if only for a moment, perhaps allowing time to gauge whether hiding might be a better reaction. Circuits in the brain’s emotional centers trigger a flood of hormones that put the body on alert, making it edgy and ready for action. Attention fixes on the threat at hand while evaluating the best response.

After discussing the emotion of fear, a scenario from the book was presented to the class (DeBecker, 1997): After grocery shopping, a young woman, Kelly, was struggling with her bags at the entrance to her apartment building. As a couple of cans of cat food rolled out of her bags, a young man approached her offering assistance. While she initially refused his help, he suggested that they had a hungry cat to feed inside. Kelly gave him her bags as they walked upstairs to the apartment. When Kelly opened her apartment door, the man promised her he would leave as soon as he put the packages inside. She agreed. But he did not keep his promise. At gunpoint he raped her repeatedly.

During subsequent classes, Kelly’s experience was examined in depth. The human violence we abhor and fear most, that which is “random” and “senseless”, is neither. It always has purpose and meaning to the perpetrator. While Kelly’s fear or intuition told her to be wary, she overrode that message. Kelly made several mental calculations at this time. The young man did not appear menacing or violent (her perceptions of criminals). He acted friendly; this is a small price to pay for being unharmed.

DeBecker characterizes this perpetrator as the “Persuasive Predator.” Comparing this predator to a shark, he describes how a shark circles his prey and watches his target, noting reactions. Soon, the predator initiates dialogue with the victim. With each favorable response received, he moves in closer. Remember when Kelly relinquished her bags to the young man? Such tactics enable him to test the waters. If responses are unfavorable, he swims off. The goal remains the same: get the target to an isolated spot where she can be victimized.

Few assailants use weapons or force to isolate their targets. Predators utilize persuasion aimed at gaining trust, realizing that misplaced trust is their most powerful resource. According to DeBecker, there were several signs that could have alerted Kelly to impending danger.

Charm. Charm is an ability one chooses to use; not a personality trait. One should think, “This person is trying to charm me,” not “This person is charming.” If Kelly had rebuffed his assistance, he would have moved on, viewing her as less vulnerable. Often, women fear appearing rude or angering people.

Typecasting. When the predator calculatingly said, “There’s no such thing as being too proud to accept my help,” Kelly responded. The best defense to typecasting is silence. The predator is just waiting for a response and dialogue to commence.

Loan Sharking. A predator, like a loan shark, wants his prey to be in his debt. While feeling we owe something, it is harder to be left alone. DeBecker advises it is often more prudent to ask a woman rather than ask a man when needing help.

Unsolicited Promise. When the predator promised Kelly he would leave after putting the packages inside the apartment, she should have realized she never solicited such a promise. It is prudent and acceptable to mistrust this type of promise.

Discounting the Word “No”. This is the clearest signal of all with the “Persuasive Predator”. This predator ignored Kelly’s “no” on two occasions—when she initially said she did not want help and when she did not want to let go of her bags. By ignoring “No”, someone is trying to control you. With strangers, even those with good intentions, it is crucial never to relent on “No.” It is crucial to say, “I don’t want your help.”

After raping Kelly, the predator got out of bed, dressed, and promised he would leave soon. He went into the kitchen, closed the window, and rummaged through the drawers. Kelly recounts that the closing of the window was a subtle signal that warned her, but it was fear that gave her the courage to get up without hesitation. Kelly exited the apartment and was saved. He was searching for a knife to murder her.

A Few Words
Two years after I taught this course, a student came back to see me. With tears in her eyes, she detailed a similar experience to that of Kelly’s. She had been approached in a persuasive manner by a predator, but she was able to successfully extricate herself from the situation. She credits her freedom from victimization to the course, the book, and this professor. What a gift for me!!!!

Violence does not have to be a mystery understood only by men who want to use it against women (DeBecker, 1997). Women need to accept the gift of fear to survive. I refer you to these web sites: www.vawprevention.org, www.feminist.com/violence, and www.now.org/issues/violence/stats.html.

References
WOMEN AND EDUCATION

Spotlight on:
Marta Pisarczyk

Congratulations to Ms. Marta Pisarczyk who will be the first student in recent years to graduate from Kean University with a Collateral Certificate in Women’s Studies! Marta will graduate with Honors in May 2003. She could have graduated in 2002 with a degree in English but delayed Commencement until she earned the Collateral Certificate in Women’s Studies. She has spent this academic year immersed in Women’s Studies courses and has been instrumental in resuscitating the Women’s Studies Student Club. She is planning graduate study in Women’s Studies.

The Women’s Studies faculty congratulates Marta Pisarczyk. We wish you success and we celebrate your achievements. ✩

Collateral Certificate in Women’s Studies
By Nira Gupta-Casale
Women’s Studies Program

Did you know that Kean University offers a Collateral Certificate in Women’s Studies? Unfortunately, most students, faculty, and administrators respond “No.” There is a lack of awareness that Collateral Programs exist and only require a few extra courses beyond requirements for one’s academic major.

Although Collateral Programs publicize and recruit students, we must strengthen our publicity and recruitment efforts and increase our visibility. We must recruit students who express interest in gender issues and direct them to the Women’s Studies Office (J303) so they can be advised and matriculated. Increased student matriculation will improve visibility and increase institutional support for programs which are generally perceived as marginal, simply because there is no overwhelming student demand.

Marta Pisarczyk, graduating in May with a Collateral Certificate in Women’s Studies (see related story above), is perhaps unique among Kean students in that she had the luxury of delaying her graduation until she earned the Certificate. However, she is certainly not alone in her interest in gender issues. We encounter students like Marta who have engaged us in discussions about gender or the history of women. With consciousness raised and intellectual curiosity stirred, they want to learn about women’s struggles to be equal and women’s contributions to world culture and progress.

If students seek matriculation early enough, they can adjust their academic plan to include a Collateral Certificate in Women’s Studies without adjusting their graduation date. Marta was unaware of the Collateral Certificate in Women’s Studies until I advised her. We must market our program and pique interest in Women’s Studies. ✩

Spotlight on:
Dr. Sue Gronewold

A recent addition to the History Department, Dr. Sue Gronewold, has revived courses on Asian history that have not been taught at Kean for nearly a decade. One accomplishment is “The Asian Woman” (a spring 2003 course), which has not been taught since 1972! For fall 2003, she will revive “American-East Asian Diplomacy” and will offer “Contemporary China”, a new MALS course.

On campus, she lectured to the Kean University Faculty Seminar on the human rights question in China which profoundly affects women; she invited and introduced Dr. Arati Rao of UNICEF at last year’s Breakfast Lecture during Sexual Assault Awareness Week; she is active in the Women’s Studies Program and the Faculty Seminar; and she is adviser to the revived Historical Society.

Along with her campus activities, she participates on scholarly panels on topics such as “Indigenous Evangelicals: Door of Hope Mission Alumnae in Post-1949 China”; “A Memory of Hope: Chinese mission Alumnae Remember/Reinterpret Western Women”; she has invited and introduced speakers such as Dr. Leon Sigal of New York’s Social Science Research Council to discuss the North Korean crisis; and she publishes on topics such as women in Taiwan and is completing her book in progress, Encountering Hope: The Door of Hope Mission in China, 1900-2000.

Welcome, Dr. Gronewold and we appreciate your expertise in Asian history. ✩

Gender, Language, and Culture
By Janet Yedes
Department of Communications

Throughout the fall 2002 semester, students in COMM 3630 (Gender, Language, and Culture) engaged each other and panelists in thoughtful discussions. Two groups of panelists enhanced ongoing discussions about race, class, gender, and ability: Moving Beyond Gender Stereotypes (Rafael Risemberg, Maria Perez, and Sylvia Cora) and Race, Class, and Gender (Frank Leggett, Mike Worlds, Art Banks, and Karen Howard). We explored multiple and dynamic identities that each person brings to the class, and to a relationship. Based on these rich backgrounds, students explored, challenged, and questioned each other from their “authentic selves.”

For their final projects, students conducted original research and reviewed scholarly literature on gender. Their papers examined actual interactions and everyday discourse. Two students, Jessica Tarnoff and Joe Barone, presented their research findings at a departmental Colloquium. For information contact Dr. Yedes at ext. 74447 or jyedes@kean.edu. ✩
Child Care: It Takes A Village
By Chrysoula K. E. Fantaousakis
Department of Psychology

Each historical era poses its own challenges and hopefully, offers new resources for children and their families. Over the last few decades, the increased entrance of women into the labor force has led to profound changes in the lifestyles of American families. Though combining work outside the home with raising a family is not a wholly new phenomenon, the social implications of the increased number of families pursuing this lifestyle have been far reaching. Sadly, current resources offered to such modern American families do not adequately support them, or address the significant problems they regularly face.

In 1960, the labor force participation rate of married women with children under the age of 6 was 19%; by 1993 the rate had risen to 60%; in recent years the rate has increased to 68% (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 2001). Today, both single and married mothers work outside the home in equal proportions and the lack of appropriate and dependable child care is reaching a level of crisis. Unlike most Western nations, the United States has yet to make child care a national priority, and a comprehensive child care system with high quality standards is unavailable. As a result, the quality and access to child care varies across communities and has become entangled in the limitations of resources and risks accompanying racial, ethnic, gender, and social class divisions intrinsic in the economic and political organization of American society.

The contradiction inherent between the American work ethic, i.e., “if you work hard enough, you will make it” and daily life practices is indicative of the implicit and explicit ways in which these divisions are reinforced. As a case in point, married and single mothers now work both inside and outside the home in record numbers, yet their families still face limitations and high-risk conditions. Much of the child care available to parents is substandard (NICHD Early Child Care Research Network, 2001) and most low-income parents are left with few options but to place their children in poor quality settings.

Another contradiction is inherent in the oft-used cliché “our children are our future,” a regular fixture in American social discourse. Yet we allow our future—the youngest members of our society—it live in poverty and at risk. This contradiction vividly captures the gap between the social rhetoric of child advocacy and our incoherent and haphazard child care practices. Failing to make child care a national priority, in effect, shifts this issue from a social responsibility to a private one. More specifically, child care becomes a “woman’s issue,” and as such, it sidelines as a special interest issue rather than a fundamental family issue.

This subtle shift of social responsibility undermines the very foundation of American family life and creates stressful, often hazardous conditions for both the care of our young and the maintenance of marital/family stability. Even nontraditional couples (those who share the burden of child care and housework) find their work at odds with their family roles. Dr. Nira Gupta-Casale (English Department and Women’s Studies) asserts that though she and her husband are committed to both their family and professional obligations, external expectations often disregard their parenting responsibilities, as though work obligations and child care roles operate independently.

Dr. Celene Krauss and Mary Lou Mayo (Sociology Dept.) study the sociology of the family and urge us to take the “family values” platform seriously. We must make child care a national priority and recognize its importance as integral to a family policy. By allocating appropriate resources and support systems for the family as a whole we will create a “family friendly” child care and employment system and will minimize the stress families feel, enhancing their effectiveness in both domains.

Both Dr. Krauss (who raised her daughter as a single mother) and Dr. Mayo (who raised her son in a nontraditional supportive marriage), made the observation that the competitive nature of our social organization makes it extremely difficult for low-income married and single mothers to provide for and attend to their children’s needs. In fact, our attitudes on racial and social class divisions become apparent when assertions are made that “welfare mothers should go to work and earn the public assistance they receive” while middle class mothers are encouraged to stay home and nurture their young. Such attitudes indicate the self-defeating biases inherent in our social organization that are at odds with our “family values,” subsequently undermining the very foundation of the family itself.

Regrettably, American children today are our country’s poorest age group; 25% of children under age 18 live in poverty and in high-risk conditions. However, poverty in our society is not only related to social class division but to other divisions such as race, ethnicity, gender, and disability, among others. For example, among the poor, minorities are disproportionately represented: 67% of African-American children and 40% of Hispanic children live in poverty; compared with 17% of White children.

Our popular work ethic assures that in America “if you work hard enough, you will make it.” But this adage makes it all too convenient for us to place the responsibility on the minority groups that are disproportionately represented among the poor, as though they are not working hard enough to “make it.” The assumption is that their less industrious work ethic relegates them to poverty. But such assumptions merely illustrate the contradictory premises on which our flawed work ethic is based. African-Americans have always worked hard and have made many contributions to our society. In fact, African-American women were among the first to combine work outside the home and family care, long before White women. In 1975, 50% of married African-American women with children less than 12 months old worked outside the home.

Obviously, African-American women did not need the Women’s Liberation Movement to start working. Their work ethic and family values provided the guiding principle in their effort to provide for their young. Dr. Sharon Boyd-Jackson

(Continued on page 8)
Semi-Comical, Yet Totally Serious,
Advice to New Parents
By Adrian Restivo-Levitt
Department of Special Education and Counseling

Welcome to the wonderful world of parenting. You will have many opportunities every day to be completely humiliated. You thought you would be reading and perhaps singing to the infant, and instead, you are scraping poop off of everything you own. Look at you, you had a baby and your entire life has changed. Just like watching training films and attending childbirth classes isn’t like giving birth, being a parent isn’t like in the movies or in the books; neither is sex, but you probably won’t be doing that for six weeks either. No matter who you are and what you did before you had the baby, your life, as you knew it, is over.

So, what is the point of all of this? Face it, even if (especially if) your baby is only two pounds, he or she is the brains and brawn of this parenting operation. If you think you have power over the baby, your life becomes unmanageable. If you align yourself with the wisdom of the baby, life is smoother. Babies know what they want, and what they want is what they need.

**Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs**

Just in case you missed the Psychology lecture on Abraham Maslow and his Hierarchy of Needs, people are motivated to meet their basic needs. Babies are small people with needs and have no way to meet them alone. That is your job.

**Physiological Needs.** The basic physiological needs are food, clothing, shelter, clean water, and sex. Babies’ physiological needs are best met by breast-feeding; it’s species specific. Enough said. If you want to breast-feed, contact La Leche League Int’l at (1-847-519-7730). You may not be able to breast-feed or may not choose to do so. Just remember to incorporate breast-feeding techniques and change the hand you hold the bottle in so both of the baby’s eyes get a workout. Have just one person feed the baby for as long as possible. Babies need one special person for as long as possible during the first year of life.

**Safety Needs.** Babies know what scares them. Loud noises scare them and they fear falling. They need to be held to feel safe. The world has changed a lot since we lived in caves and had to fear being eaten by woolly behemoths, but no one told the babies! Society changed, but babies’ needs remained the same. All you have to do to make babies feel safe is keep them fed, dry, and clean. And hold them; this takes all day and all night. I’m not joking.

**Belongingness/Love Needs.** If you love your partner, you are creating a loving environment for the baby. Work to maximize your relationship with your partner. When you belong to each other, the baby feels he/she belongs to you and all is well.

**Esteem Needs.** With babies, if you are meeting their basic needs all else follows. We first learn to feel good about who we are from the outside, then we can feel good about ourselves on the inside. Meeting needs consistently, builds self-esteem.

**Self-Actualization Needs.** If all of the four needs are satisfied, accept that a new discontent and restlessness will soon develop. Musicians must make music, artists must paint, poets must write if they are to be ultimately at peace with themselves. What humans can be, they must be. They must be true to their own nature. This is called self-actualization. A baby has to do what a baby has to do: eat, sleep, poop, gaze at the mobile, and find hands and feet.

“I’m going to give the baby a nap”
and Other Myths about Sleeping

You’ve satisfied the baby’s needs. Let’s hope the baby wants to take a nap if you’re giving out naps. You can’t make babies do anything. If you get into a power struggle with any child you have adopted or given birth to, you both will lose.

What to do if the baby doesn’t sleep through the night? Here’s the answer! GET UP! Babies don’t sleep through the night; whoever told you that was lying to you so you’d give them grandchildren! You didn’t sleep through the night until you had wisdom teeth! Get over it, you’ll sleep when they have children, maybe. Breast-milk, the superior infant food, gets digested fast, so they will want more. There is no way of knowing when to stop, so don’t, just keep filling them up. Once they get other, less superior food, they will still not sleep through the night because they will have hives or be teething or have seen “The Shining”, so don’t get your hopes up.

**Final Note**

If you are thinking, “But what about my needs?” GET HELP! Babies certainly aren’t here to meet our needs. Help comes in many forms: household help, psychological help, financial help, and AAA roadside help. Help is for people who want it, not for people who need it. ASK for help. Ask safe people. If you were abused by your parents as a child don’t invite them over to help because they will abuse you and start right in on the next generation. If you have the American Gothic type of parents, with a good work ethic and a pitchfork, invite them over. (Teach them to smile at the baby and remind them to bring the pitchfork; they can sort dirty laundry with it.) If visitors say, “I’d like to help, is there anything I can do?” try to determine if they are serious or just being polite. If they are serious put them right to work, it will make them feel so good and useful! If you determine they aren’t serious about being helpful decide if you ever want to see them again. If you do, (suppose they give good gifts and are pleasant), say, ”No, no we are fine.” If you never want them to darken your door again, ask them to clean the bathrooms. They will have a story to tell, you’ll have clean bathrooms, and you will never have to deal with them again.

So, let’s summarize: (1) your life as you knew it, is over. Have a good cry and get on with your new life, it will be the most fun you ever have (remember they said that about high school too; they were lying); (2) get all the help you can; (3) meet your needs, the baby’s needs, and then rest; and (4) buy everyone lots of underpants. Adrian Restivo-Levitt, Ph.D. is the mother of four grown children, so it is easy for her to give advice. She got a full night’s sleep!
Child Care, continued

(Psychology Department) argues that “racist and White supremacist attitudes” make life difficult for African-American parents in our society. The system seems to work against their effort to “take control and empower their families.”

Dr. Barbara Wheeler (Africana Studies Department), also rejects such racist attitudes, arguing that “it takes a village” to raise our children. In fact, she reminds us that the African-American work ethic and family values have always sought to create a protected and nurturing environment for their young as well as the children of their young. Such a support system would be ideal for most families across all races. However, the mobility that is characteristic of contemporary American society makes the reliance on family members increasingly difficult, and at times, impossible.

But, of course, it still “takes a village” to raise our children and we, as a society, can create this village, enabling the family to maintain a central role. Perhaps taking a close look at the Swedish “Equal Roles Family Model” set in place as a result of the women’s entry in the labor force, can help us appreciate the benefits of having child care within the context of a family policy. The Swedish model takes into account equality in career objectives for both parents as well as for the caring needs of the family as a whole. Also, to prevent the exploitation of a less privileged class of women for care giving and domestic work, high quality child care centers are readily available outside the home for all families.

Of course, to create an “Equal Roles Family Model” that would address our needs as a nation, we must take into account the demographics that constitute the American social profile. As a nation, we enjoy a rich diversity of people, and we must capture this cultural wealth in our organization of child care and in the available curriculum. We must organize a program that values all our children and does not differentiate based on race, ethnicity, gender, disability, religion, and social class. This will provide a culturally rich experience for our children and cultivate a greater appreciation for all people.

Dr. Verneda Hamm-Baugh (Psychology Department) uses a child care center that has been fairly adequate for her needs, but wishes it had demonstrated a better representation of the diversity in our society. More specifically, as an African-American, she wanted her “son exposed to images of young Black girls; to interact with them, and develop an appreciation for them.” She did not want her son’s experience of beauty limited to that of “blond girls with blue eyes,” because it is an incomplete representation and it also undermines beauty in the African-American context.

Dr. Emily Filardo (Psychology Department), whose work focuses on gender and race issues, has a daughter who has recently been through the child care system and she has related concerns about gender and racial stereotypic practices. She alerts us to “the need to provide for our young both multicultural and anti-bias learning experiences as early as at the preschool level.” The achievement of such a program would require highly trained and adequately supported staff who could coordinate: (1) a child-centered experience along with pertinent social service programs and resources; (2) developmentally-appropriate activities that address diversity issues involving gender, race, disability, religion, ethnicity, family lifestyles, and social class; (3) a developmentally appropriate curriculum that is adequately connected to the community’s cultural strengths; (4) an effective family involvement component; and (5) community-building activities for children and their parents.

This level of coordination can be made possible if child care is part of a family policy that readily lends itself to community-building and supportive life structures for all families. Dr. Suzanne Bousquet (Psychology Department) used a child care facility that was quite supportive. As she explains, she especially appreciated the opportunity for her daughter (who is an only child) “to have same-age playmates” and be able to form a community of friends for herself. Also, as a parent, Dr. Bousquet was grateful for the chance to become “a part of a community of children and professional parents.” However, if the child care facility is not supportive for the whole family, then it becomes a different experience. Dr. Gupta-Casale, who has placed her children at various facilities that were not as supportive to the whole family, asserts that the lack of community-building activities in the current system makes the combination of work outside the home and child care more stressful; at times, an isolating experience that is quite challenging.

The practice of such curriculum would prepare our young to handle the rigors of confusion in our social discourse that they will experience in middle childhood and adolescence. Here, a botanical metaphor of the preschool child as a “budding flower” can nicely illustrate how the child care environment must be a safe and fertile field that nurtures optimal and healthy growth. At the age of 5, many children “graduate” from preschool to kindergarten, a “garden for children” from the German “kinder” [children] and “garten” [garden]. Extending this botanical metaphor, 3- and 4-year-olds are not yet ready to handle the rigors of the garden. Like the seedlings of a local nursery, children are more likely to be prepared for transplanting into the garden if they grow in a protected, stimulating environment that nurtures the mastery of the skills for the rigors of the garden outside.

I especially like this botanical metaphor because it captures the growing nature of our young, and our social responsibility to create a safe, nurturing, and stimulating environment for them. As a child psychologist who specializes in cultural cognition in human development, I am often amazed at the level in which we, as a society, neglect the needs of our young and their families. The aggressive and violent behavior American children display in middle childhood and adolescence is very much the product of this neglect. We, as a society, have not provided a protective environment for our young that nurtures a sense of
I had the pleasure of seeing Kean’s fine production of Tennessee William’s A Streetcar Named Desire. Although written and set in the 1950s, this play still addresses issues of women’s empowerment and dis-empowerment in compelling ways. I was moved to feel anger, frustration, and empathy as I witnessed the psycho-sexual dynamics of the brutish Stanley Kowalski and his co-dependent wife Stella, and the sad unraveling of the lonely, disturbed sister-(in-law), Blanche Dubois. Stanley’s aggressive, cruel, and sexist bullying was familiar, and Stella’s complicity was familiarly heart-breaking and annoying, but I was not prepared to be so moved by the character of Blanche.

In the past, I had stereotyped Blanche as a sexual predator of the fallen-aristocratic Southern ilk; a woman who has betrayed her culture and gender. But, this time around, I found myself responding sympathetically to the dilemma of a woman who has seen every illusion of genteel, cultured womanhood destroyed by years of care-taking of invalid and fiscally irresponsible elder relatives. The mounting expenses of protracted care and funerals led to the forfeiture of her family home, a grave loss, because Blanche, raised to be the genteel belle, with a taste for poetry and art, was forced into economic desperation with no experience and “no head for business.” Equally disturbing was Blanche’s vulnerability to heterosexual male desire, especially as her status as a single, financially-strapped woman gave her the air and reality of availability and desperation. In the characters of Blanche and Stella there is not much room for female independence (sexual or otherwise) outside of the male prerogative. Certainly this says something about Tennessee William’s penetrating understanding of gender politics during the conservative 1950’s.

Yet how, some fifty years and three generations of feminism later, does one account for the haunting resonance of this play? Why does a “pre-feminist” era play speak so profoundly in our “post-feminist” age? Shouldn’t we be able to walk away from the theatre, satisfied in our knowledge that today, women like Blanche, who desire or need to earn their own living, could be assured of earning equal wages commensurate with their educational backgrounds, and could express sexual desire outside the confines of marriage? Shouldn’t we expect that a woman in Blanche’s situation would no longer be subject to rape and violence from family members and suffer mental breakdowns from societal rejection? The play is prescient for its depiction of female desire and objectification because it still begs the question: how far have women moved from the male prerogative of Stanley Kowalski? How far have women moved from the male depiction of female desire and objectification because it still breaks the question: how far have women moved from the male depiction of female desire and objectification because it still breaks down from societal rejection? The play is prescient for its and violence from family members and suffer mental breakdowns from societal rejection? The play is prescient for its

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Dr. Green’s most recent play, “Just Desserts,” is about a divorced middle aged couple who maintain a remarkable friendship that survives ambition, betrayal, illness, and years of separation. It is a play about the past, the present, and the perhaps.

“Just Desserts”
An original play by Dr. Andrea Green
Directed by Ed Matthews
April 3 & 5, 2003 at 8:00 pm in the Little Theatre
Admission is free

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Co-sponsored/funded by Part-Time Student Council, Graduate Student Government Association, Woman Studies, and Counseling Center. For more information, call Robyn Rajs (x74850).
Women’s Studies Courses: New and Improved

By Nira Gupta-Casale
Women’s Studies Program

This academic year has witnessed a record number of new or revised Women’s Studies course offerings at Kean. The expertise of our recent and senior faculty in various disciplines with academic backgrounds in gender studies, the commitment of many chairpersons who encourage their faculty to teach courses that reflect a strong gender component (or radically revise current courses), and the active support of the deans have strengthened the Women’s Studies Program. In particular, I thank Dr. Cathleen Londino, Dean of the College of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences and Dr. Carole Shaffer-Koros, Associate Dean of the College of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences and Director of the School of Visual and Performing Arts, for supporting the Women’s Studies Program. Institutional support and student enrollment are vital to the sustained growth of Women’s Studies. In fact, student enrollment is strong. For instance, 25 students enrolled in the Introduction to Feminist Philosophies course (offered for the first time in many years). Additional course offerings and rising student enrollments reflect the growing demand for gender-based instruction at Kean.

I strongly urge all faculty to strengthen Women’s Studies course offerings by developing new courses and revising current courses to reflect a strong gender component. There are many areas, especially in education, science, and business, where gender is germane. I welcome additional courses to the Women’s Studies Program.

Call for New Courses

Women’s Studies seeks new course offerings on all topics. Curriculum committee members are available for guidance on topics and ideas. Also, we maintain sample course descriptions from comparable Women’s Studies Programs in New Jersey.

Latest News, Continued

requirements for the GE Program’s Interdisciplinary Course Cluster and has been selected as a Paired Reading Course. This GE connection certainly boosted enrollment to 33 students and exceeded expectations for its first offering.

One major concern was students’ ability to cope with frequent disciplinary and faculty changes in one semester. However, student feedback was positive and only one or two students dropped out. Most students were enthusiastic about their learning experiences and were surprised at how much they valued the opportunity to engage in readings and discussions about gender issues. This feedback reconfirmed our strongest convictions of the relevance and necessity of women’s studies courses.

Much of the course’s success can be attributed to the wonderfully cooperative efforts of the team in selecting the text and planning of the actual syllabus (which allowed for smooth transitions to each successive instructor and discipline). The use of two kinds of assignments was an asset: one assignment was disciplinary specific and completed in the 4-week period assigned each instructor and a comprehensive, final project incorporated the semester’s experience. I think I can speak for all members of the team in saying that teaching ID 1300 was a radical and exciting pedagogical experience that we are eager to

Child Care, Continued

belonging, self-worth, pro-social behavior, and the mastery of adaptive problem-solving skills.

Despite the experience of a period of great affluence over the last few decades, we have neglected child care, allowing it to reach its current level of crisis. As a society, we must attend to this crisis. We must make the care of our young a national priority and create a supportive, caring system for all families, a system that will provide child care and facilitate the efforts of community building among families across racial, ethnic, and social class boundaries. It will, indeed, take a village to make this transformation a reality for all of us.