

Rose Oliver

Special Pull-Out Section



Credits

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Women Professors At Amherst A survey of the professional difficulties and perceptions of women on the College Faculty

The STUDENT contacted as many women professors as possible for this project. A total of seventeen granted interviews. The followins is a list of some of those interviewed.

Elaine Brighty, Assistant Professor of Biology, came to Amherst this year from the University of Connecticut. A graduate of Smith college, Professor Brighty is completing the first year of her tenure track.

"The reasons I came to Amherst are still valid," she said. "I wanted a smaller school with smaller classes. There is more interdisciplinary action here. At UConn, all I ever saw were Biology professors."

Although Brighty wanted a smaller school, she also needed the facilities of a larger school for her research. She feels that she has found both at Amherst. "Research is encouraged here, and I got the best lab space I've ever had."

Assistant Professor of Fine Arts Lynn Kaufmann is also in her first year at Amherst. Holding a degree in Art History, Professor Kaufman has a three year contract with the Fine Arts Department. She previously worked part-time in large universities including the University of Pennsylvania and Temple University. Like Brighty, Kaufmann sought a small college environment for the advantages of its eager students and personal contact.

Carol Kay, Assistant Professor of English, came to Amherst this year from Princeton University.

Assistant Professor of Romance Languages Nadia Margolis is in her second year at Amherst. She came "for the academics, and because Amherst is a small college, where there are advantages for a professor." Margolis enjoys the predominantly male environment. "I get along well with men. I have always felt at ease with them."

Susan Niditch, Assistant Professor of Religion, was hired last year for a half time position. She came to Amherst from the University of Cincinnati with what she feels were high but not unrealistic expectations for bright, interested and interesting students, as well as an "encouraging" faculty.

Visiting Assistant Professor of Spanish Maria Roloff was hired this year in her words "by default". She taught one course at Amherst two years ago, and substituted last year. When a woman left the Romance Languages Department unexpectedly, Roloff was quickly chosen to fill her spot.

Visiting Instructor Helen von Schmidt is teaching an American Studies course at Amherst as a member of the department, and is currently a graduate student at the University of Massachusetts. She attended Amherst for two years as one of the first women transfers, returning to college after raising a family. She also currently is advising two Amherst Women's Studies majors.

Several of the professors interviewed have been at Amherst for a considerably longer period of time. Elizabeth Bruss, Associate Professor and Chairman of the English Department has been at Amherst since 1977. When she came, she recalls, she never expected that the school

would go coed. "There was great and genuine sentimentality when women first came here," she said.

Rachel Kitzinger, Assistant Professor of Classics, would have been up for tenure evaluation this year, but along with a number of other women on the Faculty, she has resigned her position.

Associate Professor of Dramatic Arts Helene Keyssar has taught at Amherst since 1973. She came from Pittsburgh with her husband Tracy Strong, who formerly held a three year position in the Political Science Department.

Rose Oliver, Professor of Psychology, was Amherst's first female professor. "I was looking for a job near UMass, where my husband worked," she said. "There were openings at Smith and Amherst, and Amherst was closer. It also is a school with a good reputation, and I came from and wanted to teach at a small liberal arts college."

Oliver came to Amherst from a teaching position at Harvard. "I didn't know what it meant to be the only female," she added. "I was more worried about teaching bright undergraduates."

As the first woman professor, Oliver was a novelty. "My colleagues were scared of me and uncomfortable. They were fearful that I would get pregnant. It wouldn't be appropriate for the pregnant woman to be in an Amherst classroom. They were also worried that I wouldn't be able to teach male students."

Helene Scher, Associate Professor of German, taught at four universities before accepting a position at Amherst. Receiving her Ph.D. from Yale in 1967, she held positions at various colleges and universities in Connecticut until 1975, when she decided to come to Amherst. "I had been teaching at Fairfield University and was frustrated by a number of things," she said of her decision. "I wanted a better attitude toward the humanities (Fairfield emphasized sciences), and I also wanted to work with better students."

Assistant Professor of Philosophy Vicki Spelman received an appointment at Amherst in the Fall of 1973 after completing work for her Ph.D at the Johns Hopkins University. She too plans to leave next year, after being denied tenure. "I thought I would be respected for my work," she said, "and that has not been the case."

Jane Taubman has taught in the valley for twelve years, eight of these at Amherst. After receiving a B.A. and M.A. from Radcliffe and teaching at Smith for four years, she transferred to Amherst in 1972, completing her Ph.D. at the same time. She currently is Assistant Professor of Russian, with a regular part-time appointment. Professor Taubman holds a unique dual identity; while a professor, she is also a faculty wife, as her husband, William Taubman, is a professor in the Political Science Department. "My perspective is different from that of other women," she said. "I've been around here longer, and I'm also a faculty wife."

Marguerite Waller, Assistant Professor of English, was hired in 1974. She holds a B.A. from Cornell, an M.Ph. from Yale, and completed her Ph.D., also at Yale, in 1978.

Table listing Women Professors 1979-1980, categorized by Professors, Associate Professors, Assistant Professors, and Instructors, with names and departments.

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# Hiring Women Faculty

In 1962 Professor Rose Oliver became Amherst's first faculty woman. She joked about hiring procedure during her first years, claiming that "like all token females, I became a gatekeeper." Often when departments interviewed women someone would casually ask Oliver to meet the candidate. "It was easier," Oliver explained, "to say no to a woman if the token female had rejected them."

Hiring has changed drastically since that time. According to Oliver, "The commitment to hire women preceded the commitment to co-education," as a significant number of female professors joined the faculty in 1974.

## Hiring today

Today, six years later, 35 of the 150 Amherst College faculty are women. The women interviewed share one strongly expressed concern: they see the need for more female colleagues. As Kaufmann and others pointed out, this is a long-term problem which requires patience for the turnover in professors is far slower than that of students.

The majority of women interviewed who discussed the College's hiring policies agreed that Amherst commitment to affirmative action is genuine. Said Brighty, "They are really equal-opportunity minded. I think they are really trying to get more women."

Niditch explained, "There is no structured position on hiring women, but a subtle attitude of encouragement." The college is neither overtly discriminatory in its advertising, interviewing, and ultimate decisions, nor is it obviously recruiting women."



Elaine Brighty: "Some people may perceive women (at Amherst) in a political bloc, but some people think the Communists are in control."

The majority of the women interviewed stated that the college community tends to perceive women as a political bloc when, in fact, there is no such organization, nor is there usually any consensus of opinion among the women. Several pointed to the irrational fears and insecurities of certain colleagues as the source of this illogical view.

Professor Brighty summarized this point of view, saying, "Some people perceive us as a political bloc, but some people think the Communists are in control." She distinguished between supportive relationships among women, which are helpful, and political relationships which are non-existent.

Most women saw the notion of a political bloc as rooted in male perception. However, Margolis disagreed, pointing to women as the source. "Some women," she said, "perceive themselves as a bloc, and that's bad."

"There was a time, in the early 70's," said Taubman, "when we felt that we better wear stockings and dresses to faculty meetings, because what we wore was taken as a political statement."

Today Taubman is still acutely aware of the special college politics which surround women. "We were accused of slating a caucus in last year's elections for the Committee of Six," she revealed. "We didn't do it, but because we were a group of just women, we looked suspicious."

Kitzinger, and several others, told the story of a male professor who approached a group of women at lunch and asked, "Can I join you, or is this a caucus?" Kitzinger called this scene typical of "Amherst's paranoia."

"It was meant as a joke," she explained, "but jokes are very telling. The problem is that women, seen as a political unit, are dangerous and trying to destroy the institution." She indicated that this fear exists in the minds of women as

When asked then to explain the wide numerical gap between male and female faculty, in light of affirmative action, comments revealed that the issue is far more complex than raw statistics indicate. Recruitment is intimately linked to the fluctuating job market, the needs of individual departments, and the reputation which Amherst carried in the academic world. Several women noted that, for a variety of reasons, the pool of sufficiently educated women is smaller than that of men. Keyssar quipped, "History is strongly male."

Niditch explained that increasing employment opportunities for women in other fields tend to draw aspiring female professionals, creating a vacuum in academia. Scher pointed out that "graduate schools nation-wide have not admitted women in certain fields in the past...because of this factor, Amherst hasn't found many qualified women."

Other women were less forgiving and expressed general dissatisfaction with the college's hiring record. "What do they mean by 'qualified women'?" asked Spelman. "Do they mean women who do the same things men have traditionally done?...There will only be a token number of women and people of color on the faculty and administration at Amherst. If Amherst had a large number of women and people of color, the people who have traditionally looked at the school would wonder how Amherst could remain a 'good school' with so many of these people....'Qualified'," she concluded, "is a code word for 'nice white women'."

"I want to dismiss the myth that we are even doing well in hiring," said Roloff.

She pointed out that she is the only Hispanic faculty member, and that there are few blacks and an unrealistically small number of women. "I am not talking about quotas," she emphasized, "but a representative number from these groups." She strongly urged that the College seek an affirmative action officer and create a more definite hiring plan.

Margolis, on the other hand, was quick to place herself on the other side of the issue. "They're hiring as many women as they can. What are they supposed to do? Fire men? Men are the power structure, everyone knows that. We are just starting here at Amherst College."

Several women expressed the concern that, despite the direct efforts of the college to recruit women, many qualities of the college work indirectly to undermine that effort.

Scher qualified her earlier reference to the dearth of qualified women, calling it "the easy answer." "There is also an internal reason," she said. "While Amherst is making a great effort to hire qualified women, many of those women offered positions here don't accept them because the atmosphere is reputed to be unfriendly and closed."

Waller indicated that, of the available pool, "the most exciting women professors are working in women's studies fields and a serious commitment to that does not exist here."

Bruce pointed out that the Amherst area does not have sufficient employment opportunities to attract two career couples.

## Faculty Politics And A Women's Lobby

well as men, creating strong internal resistance among the women to any organized effort to improve their situation. "We have the worst of both worlds—no organization, and yet when we get together, we are perceived as one."

Waller also noted general resistance to organization. She pointed out that at most other institutions there are women faculty groups which perform constructive functions such as making the new women faculty feel more at home. "It strikes me as unusual that we don't have such a group," she said. "Part of the resistance comes from fear that a group would be perceived as something it is not."

Said Professor Kay, "I sense a strong pressure that women and minorities, faculty and staff, not be perceived as a member of a group. There should, however, be some way you can address the community at large with special needs and experiences."

Spelman called scenes like the dining hall caucus joke "silly ways" for men to view women. However, she noted that "because this is a sexist institution, women constitute a political bloc, whether or not they realize it. We're a political bloc in sharing interests," she said, but distinguished between those who are active and those who are not, in pursuing these interests.

Olver, in contrast, saw no strong political bonds. She claimed that the misconception of a political bloc could be cleared up if people examined how women vote on issues at faculty meetings. "Women are diverse," she emphasized. "They have the same range of views as other colleagues."

Roloff saw inherent sexism in the conception of common interests. "The idea that because we are all women, we have to agree, goes back to the notion that all Hispanics or all blacks think alike. Of course we are going to disagree."

Another woman drew a distinction between young women faculty and "the elite women who have adopted the methods of the enemies. They will play the game because it has cost them a lot to learn how. They are my enemies."



Elizabeth Bruss: "People live and think and breathe

Amherst."

# Amherst's

"There has been a whole slew of unhappy women here," said Professor Margolis, "and it is not because of Amherst College. To be happy you have to go in with a positive and professional attitude. Women who get taken here have to be very strong, stronger than their incumbents."

Those women interviewed who expressed disappointment with Amherst took issue with sentiments such as that of Margolis. Generally they pointed to the institutional and social atmosphere of the college community as well as its special relation to women as the source of their discontent. Said Professor Von Schmit, "People who are unhappy here tend to be unhappy with the whole political situation — white, male, upper-class."

Said Professor Kitzinger, "To some degree what I see as wrong with Amherst is what Amherst sees as right with Amherst." She described the College's identity as "a very complex mask which the institution presents. It is created, in part, by history, the composition of the alumni, who they choose to be faculty here, the President, the Board of Trustees, and the students. I see the institution as defined by both how those elements look at themselves and how the world looks at the mask those elements present."

Kitzinger offered two examples: first, the College looks to its American Studies department with pride. "European Studies doesn't have the same kind of propagandistic force in terms of how the College presents itself to the world." Second, Amherst points to its law and medical school admissions statistics and widely advertises itself as an institution which insures its students places in the best of these kinds of graduate schools.

"Amherst's identity," Kitzinger continued, "has to do, in part, with the persona Amherst presents when asking for money. There is a disparity between that persona and the reality of the situation."

When asked if her decision to leave Amherst had any effect on the institution, Kitzinger said, "In so much as my objections have to do with the persona, they are irrelevant. I suppose that in so much as my objections have to do with hypocrisy, I would hope that they were effective... Unexamined assumptions go on and shape the College. I don't object to that; rather, I object to the institutional dishonesty which makes the College pretend to be one thing and in its actual functioning be something quite different."

"They now advertise themselves as a co-ed institution; how much they have really let women in, in more than a token kind of way? They advertise themselves as a liberal arts college, and yet at the same time have a high percentage of pre-professional students. How much have they dealt with the contradictions this implies?"

Professor Scher has confronted a similar institutional identity. "I have had a number of frustrations since I came here," she revealed, "which came from my lack of knowledge about a place like Amherst. One problem is the degree of elitism here and a lack of awareness of other classes. I have encountered a narrow-minded attitude, and find it difficult to discuss other cultures with people here. I was surprised at the degree to which this close-mindedness existed at Amherst. These attitudes tend to be self-perpetuating; they are disturbing and detrimental, but I felt challenged by them."

Another Professor, who asked that her name be withheld, stated, "This is a small town and acts like it...I would do anything I can to undermine the elite structure."

Said Professor Spelman, "Amherst lives off its appeal to middle and upper class white students and the approval and proceeds of those white upper class graduates."

Professor Jane Taubman, however, feels, "Amherst is less closed a community than when I first came here. The young faculty think they're missing something, but they're not, because nothing goes on."

The women professors saw varying degrees of this elitism manifest in different ways at the College.

"Amherst is still a clubhouse, complete with code words and slingshots," said Spelman. "So long as there is an economic crunch, the traditional concerns and interest —



Rose Oliver: "Like all token females, I became a gatekeeper."

## Atmosphere

which are white and male — are the ones which will be taken care of. The others will be told to wait." Specifically, she said "The College is becoming less open to academic work, research, and courses which stand apart from the traditional concerns."

Professor Keyssar pointed to "a kind of conservatism, subtle fears about being a sexual person," which appear in the curriculum and classroom. She often tries to raise issues of sexism and racism in connection with class material, but finds students hesitant. She expressed a desire to see the curriculum make more sensitive to these concerns thus focusing important conversations which may at present appear tangential.

Professor Scher saw evidence of elitism in the fraternities. "They perpetuate the close-mindedness. They are merely a place for groups to get away on their own terms."

Several women also saw a general lack of communication at Amherst, though, as one woman pointed out, "We, the women, need things open and above board."

Said Spelman, "President Gibbs tells everyone to be civil when we're just stabbing each other in the back. If people have a chance to stab you in the back, they will. I would advise distrusting those who talk about civility — what's lurking under that is that there's plenty of nasty business going on, but they don't want to call it by that name."

Professor Roloff said there is "A lack of dialogue, real dialogue, here. Where you engage in real dialogue, you hear things that are unpleasant, and at Amherst College you have to be civil. In real dialogue there is room for anger and emotion. When you get to that level, people here are turned off."

"Amherst College should be more human and understanding," summarized Margolis. "That will come with evolution. Amherst is professional; people come to dump their personal baggage."

Nevertheless, many women felt that their professional and social lives are closely intertwined. As Professor Bruss pointed out, "People live, think, and breathe Amherst."

### Amherst Community Exclusive

Relating a tale from an earlier era, Oliver said that when she first came to Amherst, she found that many of her male colleagues were uncomfortable with her outside of purely professional circumstances. This tension came to light when the Board of Governors of the Faculty Club searched their by-laws for a means of excluding her. They found none but asked a senior member of Oliver's department to recommend that she refuse the forthcoming invitation. Oliver did so her first year, but joined the second, when the men had become more comfortable with the idea of a woman in their midst. It was imperative to becoming a full faculty member that she join and meet her colleagues on an informal basis. "The Faculty Club was part of the intellectual life of the College."

Some women felt that this kind of exclusivity still persists, though in a far more sophisticated and subtle manner. Said one unmarried woman, "I have been told that most of the college policy gets made on Woodside Avenue. If you don't have a house and are single, you are at a disadvantage. A lot of important professional relationships form from similar social interests."

Professor Taubman, however, feels, "Amherst is less closed a community than when I first came here. The young faculty think they're missing something, but they're not, because nothing goes on."

Many of the married women complained of difficulty in balancing their job and family, particularly when appointments are often scheduled with the assumption that a professor's spouse handles the bulk of household and parental duties.

Said Professor Waller, "If you make it so difficult for a woman to have a career and a family, you will lose the best people from the profession. Why are you taking the best women and putting them in an impossible bind? It is ridiculous that men and women have to fit families around jobs instead of vice versa."

# Tenure Evaluation

The question of tenure is a complex and disturbing one to many at Amherst.

Two women will not be returning to Amherst next year for reasons relating to tenure. Professor Vicki Spelman was denied tenure earlier this year on the grounds that her work was "not valid," in her words. According to Spelman, her work was accepted without question in 1975, when she was being evaluated for reappointment. In 1978, however, she claims that she was told "with no explanation" that the same piece was "worthless."

"The only papers I wrote that they thought were alright were the ones that didn't mention anything about women," she said. "They didn't like the ones which raised questions about the implications for women of certain lines of thought."

"What does it mean to be a woman at Amherst when you're likely to be penalized for teaching courses or doing research having to do with women?" she questioned. "I do want to point out that, for women who do stay here, they pay an enormous price for the drain on their lives."

Professor Rachel Kitzinger has decided not to return next year because, as she declared, "I wanted some way of making a statement about what I perceive the problem of the tenure decisions to be." She added that she wants to "make them apparent in the context of the College as a whole."

Kitzinger would have been up for tenure this year, and as she perceived the situation, she had two choices: to refuse tenure if granted it, or to refuse to stand for a tenure decision. "Over the years I came to realize that decisions I was continually making about involvement in the community and my intellectual pursuits indicated to me that I would not get tenure," she said.

Like many others, Kitzinger feels that the criteria of tenure evaluation are not clear. "What I see as most pernicious

about the tenure process [is that] the criteria are left purposely unclear," she said. "The argument goes that this leaves the most flexibility. But a whole set of criteria which no one talks about [are present]. Those criteria work towards not flexibility, but the opposite, a kind of exclusivity of the most pernicious sort." She cited such considerations whether a person dresses properly, is present at the proper functions, and how they fit in in a very nebulous way with the community" as examples of this criteria.

**"We are operating within a system that is telling you what you should be not in terms of who you are, but in terms of what men of a comparable age are doing."**

### Women Perceive Discrimination

These two women are not the only ones who feel that tenure is discriminatory. "Women are at a disadvantage because they are not in the core subjects," said one woman. "They either tend not to train for the popular departments, or they take an unusual slant in their research of a well-known area," said Kitzinger. "I think that affirmative action should extend to tenure decisions. The criteria should take into consideration the fact that women have been at a disadvantage."

Professor Keyssar stressed that consideration for tenure over the past years has begun to emphasize public research without announcing such a shift. "The criteria are unclear," she said. "Public research that is publicly acknowledged has become a major factor, but that hasn't been made officially clear."

"A professor must be a published scholar in order to receive tenure," said Professor Bruss. "The problem is, with new subjects, it can be hard to develop new brilliant ideas. I'm afraid this might hurt less developed and new trends of fields of study." Bruss added that these fields are the ones in which most women are working.

Said Professor Scher, "The College does not consciously discriminate [in consideration for tenure]. The factors involved in discrimination are subtle. The most important dimension of this subtle discrimination is that women are questioned about whether they can handle a heavy workload and family life. This question is never asked of a man; men are assumed to be able to separate their families from their jobs. Women are assumed to allow their family lives to interfere with their professional lives."

Professor Waller expressed concern that tenure evaluation is discriminatory because it is not flexible enough to allow for varying female lifestyles. "The structure was set up for and by men, and it cuts off a woman's childbearing years," she said. "The same years that you are supposed to be growing the fastest as a professor are when you are also the most likely to want to have children."

"It is a case of structural estrangement," she continued. "We are operating within a system that is telling you what you should be not in terms of who you are, but in terms of what men of a comparable age are doing."

"With very, very good women, there is no problem with tenure," admitted Professor Taubman. "However, few tenure cases are cut and dry."

## The Old Boys

Among the traditional institutions perceived as sexist at Amherst is the "Old Boy Network", a web of professors of predominantly higher quality colleges and universities. This professional network serves to promote the careers of its members, through intellectual stimulation and protection. Though potentially very beneficial to those in its circle, this "predominantly white male" institution has often been charged with being sexist and exclusive by many women. "I would rather call the 'Little Boy Network'," quipped Professor Spelman, "because a friend said to me once, 'Those guys sound like little boys in men's suits.'"

"I don't think that legally it is discriminatory," stipulated Professor Keyssar.

Another professor stressed that the Old Boy Network was "so overt", with men "doing the College gossip" all too frequently.

Other women feel less strongly about the network itself. "Women are trying to take a leaf from that notebook, and create an 'Old Girl Network'," Professor Waller said, adding, "There is nothing wrong with friendship. It is only pernicious when it is discriminatory."

Both Professors Scher and Taubman feel that they have been involved in it, yet are quick to emphasize its disruptiveness. "It has affected me positively, because I have a Ph.D. from Yale," Scher said. "It has enabled me to communicate effectively with alumni."

"However," she continued, "I tried to keep a sense of humor about it. It is disruptive, and I hope it has seen its best days."

"I sometimes have the feeling that it's trying to involve me in it," said Taubman. "I feel a part of it, but not all women have felt this way. I feel uncomfortable by the extent to which I have been included in it. On the other hand, it has given me some good ideas and contacts."

Professor Margolis feels close to the Old Boy Network as well. "They've been nice to me," she said. "One of the reasons I get along with them is that I meet them halfway. You respect them; they deserve it — they've gone through here. It is infantile to look at them as a bloc. To approach them apriori is not good — you ignore them as (individual people). Part of being professional is getting along with people you don't agree with."

For most of the women, though, the Old Boy Network at Amherst has done little to their advantage. "The Old Boy network was at work when my grievance was going on," claimed Spelman, referring to her protest against her denial of tenure. "I know it exists because there are men on this faculty who refuse to challenge the Philosophy Department publicly. It makes me sick."



Vicki Spelman: "Amherst is still run like a clubhouse, complete with code words and slingshots."



Rachel Kitzinger: "To some degree, what I see as wrong with Amherst is what Amherst sees as right with Amherst."

# Burdensome Committee Workloads

Committee workload is frequently a major concern of faculty members who must serve terms on various committees, yet also wish to use any spare time for preparing classes and do doing research. Unfortunately, because of the small number of women in the faculty, a heavy committee workload often falls to the women, leaving them behind, some feel, in their research.

One professor in her first year foresees that she will be appointed to a major committee because she is a woman, while her male peers will be able to "sneak away with being on committees of lesser importance, thus concentrating on their special research."

"The committee workload is repressive on women," confirmed Professor Taubman, explaining that "when Amherst hired women, they wanted a woman's voice. Unfortunately, there are only so many women to go around. Many men really want to be on these committees."

These problems are all created out of an excess of good intentions," she added.

Professor Olver recalled the extent of her committee work since she came to Amherst, assessing the amount as "a little more than men who came at the same time." She attributes it in part because she is female and because the woman's perspective is desired in general. "In a way, I approve it," she

said, "but it is a burden."

Professor Bruss had had one of the heaviest committee workloads among the women on the faculty because she too was one of the first women. "I was literally a physical wreck after my sixth year," she recalled.

Said Professor Keyssar, "Many women are grossly over-worked. They are put on committees to be 'the woman on the committee'." She noted that the same situation is true of ILS.

Professor Niditch, who was appointed to the Affirmative Action Committee, asserted, "I probably wouldn't be on it if I weren't a woman." She fears that she'll be appointed to more committees, and feels that the committee work will take away from work in her profession.

Professor Roloff, who at present serves on four committees, claims that the major committees have too few women in their membership. "I see certain powerful committees here — the Committee of Six, the Committee on Educational Policy — which have only one woman on each." She further noted that the new Long Range Planning Committee has no women on it. Roloff serves on the Copeland Committee, European Studies, the Five College Latin American Council, and WFCR Advisory Board.

## How Should Amherst Change?

When Professor Olver joined the faculty in 1962 as the only female professor, prejudices and restrictions on her were numerous. She was asked not to become a member of the Faculty Club; her colleagues were fearful that she would become pregnant, and didn't want a pregnant woman teaching men. Amherst has obviously improved its situation for women since Rose Olver's first days, and the women feel that there are many more improvements to be made.

"There are certain substantive indicators of improvement," commented Olver, citing maternity leave and the hiring of more women as two of these indicators.

"Large numbers of female faculty and students will solve the problems," said Professor Niditch. Another professor agreed. "There is a need for more women," she said, adding, "but there shouldn't be a quota."

Some of those who have been at Amherst for several years notice the increase in the number of women. "Originally, there were just single, divorced women — no support systems," commented a

professor. "Now there is more banding together. Fewer women are feeling depressed and beaten down."

Said Professor Scher, "For very many years, very few women taught at Amherst. There are still very few. Any beginning professor has a tough time, and any ordinary problems here are compounded by a feeling of isolation. Women have really only recently come into the mainstream of Amherst life. It'll take a couple of years before we're used to it."

Other women believe that the men of the faculty are afraid of any show of strength by the women. "If men weren't so frightened of women working together, talking together, and being together, it would help," said Professor Spelman.

Spelman also sees room for improvement in the present curriculum. "The faculty lacks imagination about how to incorporate the effects of sexism or racism into the curriculum," she asserted. "It would help if the curriculum would take women into account, to take a bearing on

women's work and lives, and to try to understand ways in which our society is sexist." She pointed out the fact that pre-meds are "not at all" encouraged to study the treatment of women as an example of this sexism.

Professor Taubman feels that sensitivity among the senior faculty members is a necessary improvement. "It's lonely and scary — you're on trial for six years," she said. "A mentorship of the young faculty is needed, to help them along. We need a sense of collegiality, with the exchange of support and ideas, and this duty doesn't seem to be easily accomplished."

Taubman pointed out further that "we need to make the faculty more sensitive to unconscious omissions", referring to the senior faculty's all too common refusal to help younger colleagues.

"The attitude of some departments is 'okay, baby, we hired you and heard you're the smartest thing on wheels. Now prove it.' People just aren't comfortable with that kind of attitude."

## Amherst Problems In Perspective

Though many of the women interviewed were candid in expressing their complaints, many hastened to defend their individual departments and to guard against sweeping generalizations. Said Professor Spelman, "I have received personal support from men and women on the faculty for which I am very grateful."

Several others qualified their statements by viewing Amherst in the context of other institutions. Professor Scher called Amherst's troubles "growing pains," and said, "The problems here are not particular to this college, nor are they particularly bad. Because Amherst went co-ed so recently,

people haven't relaxed yet."

Professor Kay emphasized the term "civil rights" as a "phrase by which people know that what women do to improve their circumstances is related to what anybody has done at different points for social justice. This isn't at all depressing," she added, "There is a lot of support and progress and respect that you get when you work in a directed way on problems."

Professor Kitzinger issued a more guarded warning. "Inevitably things get better for both men and women. I'm not



Jane Taubman: "The Committee workload is repressive on women."

## Women Counseling Women

Most of the women professors agree that they see equal numbers of men and women outside of the classroom for counseling, but that women more frequently came to them with personal, as well as academic problems. They agree that this is a positive part of their job. Said Professor Margolis, "The beauty of Amherst College is the chance to spend time with students."

"I do a great deal of counseling in all areas — academic, personal, emotional," said Roloff, "and often it is the women who feel that they don't have anyone else to turn to...I remember that I went home a couple of Fridays exhausted and I wondered if it hasn't been that I was representing womanhood and Hispanichood."

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Roloff was quick to note that the support is mutual. "My saving grace has been the contacts I have had with students. If this had been solely an academic job, I would have found it very unpleasant. If I have not had any influence at the college or departmental level, I have had influence at the personal level, and I can be happy with that."

Said Professor Kitzinger, "Female students are more comfortable with me and feel easier being familiar. I serve a different purpose; I can function as a role model. I can serve as a role model to fewer men and less convincingly."

Another professor noted a difference in the academic problems of male and female students. "The men tend to be under-achievers," she said, "while the women are more conscientious and come in to stay on top of their courses." She also feels that the men who come for help during office hours genuinely do not understand the material, while the women may underestimate their knowledge because of "a problem of confidence."

Professor Taubman has exclusively women advisees. "They have different problems and different perspectives than the men," she summarized. "It's hard sometimes to forget you're female."



Helene Scher: "The problems here at Amherst are not particular to Amherst nor are they particularly bad."

## Male and Female Professional Styles

There has long been a stereotype of male and female professional styles in the world of academics. Men have been categorized as aggressive and demanding, women submissive and less formidable.

So dictates the stereotype. Do these differences in style exist at Amherst? Said Professor Scher, "I have never perceived any difference between the men and women in the Romance Language Department."

Most of the women interviewed, however, admit that there is a certain stereotype, and that this stereotype can be constraining and oppressive. "There are differences in style between men and women, although there is a great deal of overlap," said Professor Olver. "The style that is most appreciated at Amherst is a masculine style. If you can't or won't use this style it may hurt. In relation to tenure, it's the whole context of Amherst rather than something that happens at the moment of tenure."

Although Scher has not witnessed any evidence of a disparity in professional styles, she admits that the stereotype exists. "From hearsay, I understand that students generally perceive male professors to be ag-

gressive; they supposedly have a reputation for not being tolerant of any difference of opinion," she said. "Women, on the other hand, are supposed to be more flexible, and not as aggressive. I personally don't like to ridicule or bully students in class. I don't think that's a sound educational policy."

Added Professor Waller, "The same style in a woman and a man will be seen completely differently. If you're tough and aggressive, that is cool and strong in a man; it is aggressiveness in a woman."

"I do have different values," asserted Professor Bruss, emphasizing that most women are brought up not to be competitive, and that a great deal of self-censorship can exist in women.

Professor Margolis admits a stereotype, yet, like Scher, hasn't seen much of it. "It goes back to Judeo-Christian typology," she explained about the original separation of styles. "I don't know how much of this really exists or is a figment of...imagination." Said she of her own stylistic preference, "I don't [exhibit] a difference. I have modelled myself on male professors."