

GENDER STUDIES NEWSLETTER

Fall 2008 and Spring 2009

*This double issue highlights the Helen Gurley Brown Symposium,
the Faculty Research Brown Bags, and the Vagina Monologues.*

Gender Scholars Visit Monmouth for Helen Gurley Brown Symposium

By Felicia Norott

The Helen Gurley Brown symposium was very interesting because all three speakers were incredibly knowledgeable about Helen Gurley Brown. The first speaker, Betsy Israel, set the stage by discussing what was going on during the time period after World War II when Brown began working. I found it was helpful that the speaker had actually worked with Brown in the magazine business because she had some remarkable stories about Brown's professional life. She mentioned how Brown thought it was okay to flirt and dress femininely to get ahead in business. Brown thought that as long as you could get ahead and advance, it was okay to use your femininity. People today tend not to agree with these kinds of ideas.

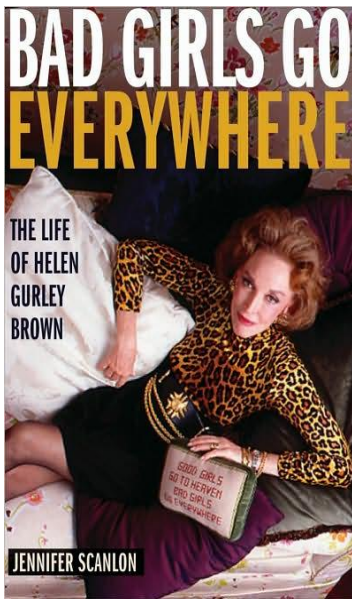


The second speaker, Dr. Julie Berebitsky, focused on gender in the 1960s. She talked about the types of jobs that were available to women, and she then discussed how Brown was one of the few women who was able to work her way up through secretarial positions. Brown then moved on to writing advertising copy, writing a book, and becoming the editor of *Cosmopolitan* magazine. While

Katherine Parkin, Jennifer Scanlon, Betsy Israel, Julie Berebitsky, and Janice Stapley (2009).

she was editor, she focused on empowering and helping single women. This was something new because before this time being a single woman was thought of as something negative; women were supposed to get married at a young age. In her magazine, Brown taught these single women important life skills and encouraged them to be who they wanted to be.

The last speaker, Dr. Jennifer Scanlon, focused on second and third wave feminism in relation to Brown's ideas. The second wave was primarily about making women equal to men. These women normally did not prioritize dressing or acting femininely because they did not want to "act out" their gender. This was different from the third wave, which encouraged women to be themselves. The third wave showed women that it was okay to wear a mini-skirt if they wanted to do so. They also felt that girl power was very important. I think that Brown would be impressed by the women today who are getting these important and successful jobs, especially since these professions were typically associated with men.



Jennifer Scanlon's *Bad Girls Go Everywhere* was favorably reviewed everywhere: the *New York Times*, *O Magazine*, *Wall Street Journal*, *Slate*, *New Yorker*, *Bitch*, and the *Washington Post*.

Dr. Julie Berebitsky analyzed women in the office in the postwar period and Betsy Israel spoke about her insights on single women.

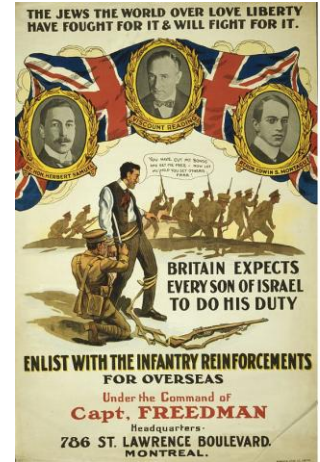


Brown's *Cosmopolitan* Magazine, 1965

Gender Research Center: Faculty Forum “Brown Bags”

Seeking opportunities to showcase faculty research interests and encourage dialogue, the Gender Research Center hosted five “Brown Bag” sessions.

Maryanne Rhett talked about her work "Remasculinization and Militarization: Judaism in Britain at the Outset of the 20th Century," which looks at how Zionists used the language of militarism and masculinity to build a strong argument for the creation of a Jewish national home, while at the same time distancing themselves from Jews opposed to a separate Jewish ‘state.’ A confused muddle of identities emerged in Great Britain's Jewish population as a result of Zionist and anti-Zionist endeavors. Nationalism became a central feature in the defining nature of masculinity and as a result the cultural definitions of Judaism vis a vis gender were reexamined and redeveloped.



Michael Phillips-Anderson presented his ongoing inquiry into the rhetoric of human rights advocate Sojourner Truth, focusing on Truth’s 1851 speech to the Women’s Rights Convention in Akron, Ohio. The speech is commonly titled “Ain’t I a Woman?” though it is unlikely that Truth ever uttered those words. Dr. Phillips-Anderson traced the many versions of the text over time to construct a critical edition of the speech. He argued that the text recorded in the *Anti-Slavery Bugle* (Salem, OH), more accurately reflected what Truth said that day, particularly concerning dialect.

Deanna Shoemaker presented Mamafesto. She writes: I began composing bits and pieces of this performance over five years ago, when I was writing my dissertation and nursing my new baby. After becoming a professor, my research on mothers working as professors in universities expanded, and I realized I wanted to convey through performance both the intensely intimate pleasures of parenting and the often hidden struggles that working mothers (and all caregivers) go through. I wanted to put mundane, often gendered domestic labor and everyday life joys in dialogue with entrenched social inequalities. As a scholar/artist specializing in the interdisciplinary field of performance studies, I strive to use performance not only as an aesthetic presentation

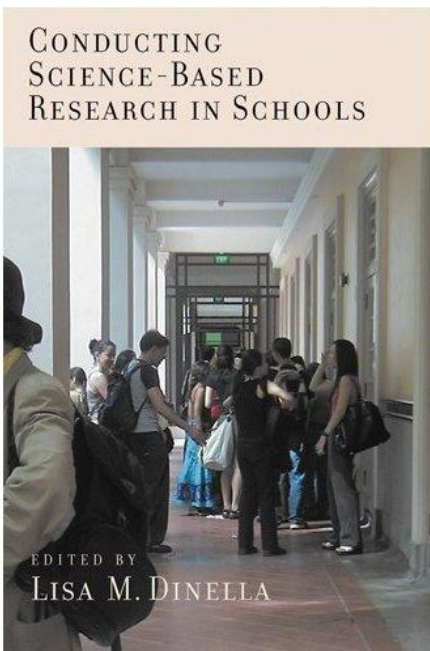
but also as a critical method of investigating individuals' relationships to institutional forms of power. Ultimately, this performance is intended to inspire dialogue about the complex “balancing acts” required of mothers who work full-time and to envision positive social change for all caregivers.





Eleanor Novek presented research in progress entitled: "The prison of masculinity: A feminist rediscovers gender oppression behind bars." The presentation argued that prisons are important sites of critical cultural study because they reveal provocative truths about power relations in society. Prisons are gendered as male spaces where domination is performed as violence-centered hegemonic masculinity; my critique argues that the state uses these behaviors to feminize and devalue non-violent alternative masculinities throughout society. My comments were based on ethnographic thick description drawn from observations taking place over more than five years at three correctional facilities.

Marie Mele discussed her research on domestic violence in her presentation, "Women's decisions on restraining Orders: Why they withdraw orders against abusive intimate partners." Much of the research on intimate partner violence focuses on why women stay in abusive relationships or return to abusive partners, but it does not specifically address why women withdraw restraining orders against their abusive partners regardless of the status of their relationship. This study sought to address this gap in the literature and contribute to a better understanding of women's experiences and their decisions with regard to restraining orders. The study found that concrete change (especially the defendant attending counseling) and emotional attachment (especially no longer fearing the defendant) interacted to create a situation where the woman's faith in programs aimed at helping men overcome their abusive behavior and the women's emotional attachment to their partner lead them to believe the restraining order was no longer necessary.



Lisa Dinella presented on the new book that she edited entitled *Conducting Science-Based Psychology Research in Schools*. The book provides detailed information on how to build and maintain research programs and avoid common problems, and it includes insights from both researchers and the education professionals with whom they collaborate. Her presentation focused on the chapter that she co-authored with Dr. Gary Ladd about building and maintaining relationships with school stakeholders. She then showed how she applied these in her current empirical works, including her studies on *The role of gender identity in young adults' career decision-making processes*, and *Children's Halloween costume choices: Artifacts of gender socialization*.

The Vagina Monologues

By Amy Kasak

The Vagina Monologues is the cornerstone of the V-Day movement, and for the past five years Monmouth University has been participating in this worldwide event. Benefit performances of the show take place each year in 120 different countries between February 1 and March 31. Eve Ensler started the Vagina Monologues in 1996 and now it is a global movement to end violence against women and girls. As of 2008, the V-Day movement has raised \$60 million and Monmouth has added to that total. This year Monmouth raised \$2,276. Ten percent of the proceeds are going to the V-Day Spotlight: Women and Girls of the Democratic Republic of Congo. Forty-five percent is going to the local organization 180 Turning Lives Around and the other 45% will be given to the Monmouth County Child Advocacy Center.

Monmouth University also awards local women and men who are working to end violence against women and girls and who volunteer their time to enhance the lives of women and girls. The Vagina Warrior award nominees included Claire Manning, Nora Smith, and Mary Ann Troiano. The recipients of this award were **Emel Senman, Karen Nugent, and Molly Walker**. Congratulations!



Heather Kelly has been overseeing the Vagina Monologues here at Monmouth for the past five years and she is extremely pleased with the turn out. "It gives people a window into a woman's view," Kelly said. "It brings an awareness to the tragedies in the world." She has seen with each new cast that the women become more comfortable talking about their vaginas and even the men who were hesitant to come to the play leave with a better understanding.

The Gender Studies Department is pleased to be a part of this wonderful movement and congratulates all the people who helped make this performance a success!



Vagina Monologues, 2009 cast