

Theoretical Approaches to Understanding College Teaching

Every autumn, at colleges throughout the nation, a rustle is felt on the campus as faculty members, both male and female, put aside unfinished manuscripts, grant proposals, studies, and leisure to prepare for teaching. For some faculty members the students are a bother; having to meet classes is a gross imposition on their time. For others, teaching is a necessary task that pays the bills and provides some measure of personal gratification. For still others, the autumn rustle is one of excitement because teaching is the core of their lives; they can't wait to get back into the classroom.

For nearly all university faculty members, teaching is a salient activity. Male and female professors think about their teaching, interact with students, and are evaluated by those students. Whether it is abhorred, tolerated, or welcomed, teaching affects professors' use of time and energy, and has potential consequences for job retention and promotion. University teaching is also an important issue for society more generally in view of the alarm that has been sounded concerning the current "crisis" in undergraduate education. Several authors have written about this problem in recent years (Bloom 1987; Hirsch 1987), discussing in great detail the supposed erosion of our post secondary system. Although much of this literature focuses on failings in the curriculum, a substantial portion stresses the need for renewed concern with the teaching process itself. The need for "good teaching" (Bennett 1984), for "a new partnership approach" with students is emphasized (Upcraft et al. 1989). Yet, despite the importance of teaching for society in general and for the university professor in particular, little systematic attention has been paid to some essential aspects of this situation. We may gain

important insights by looking at such features as gender similarities and differences in how teaching is perceived and managed, and whether students evaluate male and female professors differently. This study explicitly addresses these issues: What do male and female professors say about their teaching? What do male and female professors actually do in their classrooms? How do students evaluate their male and female professors?

In examining gender differences in teaching styles, we draw upon several theoretical perspectives. The tradition in the social sciences is to construct competing explanations based upon several theories and to search for the most robust explanation, declaring that theory to be "the best." We take a somewhat different approach, however; we begin with the assumption that each of several theories may offer complementary insights into the situation and that each may account for part of our findings, helping to give us a more complete picture.

Our thinking about gender and university teaching evolved in stages; successively we incorporated more advanced thinking about gender as it operates in our society, drawing from developments in the social sciences more generally. When we began to design this study, the literature on sex roles was dominated by the structural role theory paradigm, wherein individuals are assumed to occupy roles or positions with fairly fixed or immutable expectations; the influence of social structure was thought to be primary. Because role expectations were regarded as so unalterable and because individuals occupy many roles simultaneously, much of the research in this tradition dealt with the problem of role conflict. Researchers in this area spent a great deal of time exploring methods for dealing with this conflict—compartmentalizing, setting priorities, and so on. Originally we approached our topic in this way, believing that women professors likely would experience a great deal of conflict between two often opposing roles: female and professor. Because of society's generally negative (and immutable) view of the female role, we also believed that women professors would have difficulty being accepted as competent. We believed they might be caught in a double bind, rejected either for being female (not professorial) or for being professorial (not female).

This approach was fruitful; we did find evidence of these problems, as have other researchers who observe women professionals. Yet, we also discovered that the situation is much more complex. As we began to analyze our data, we were influenced by emerging and changing views of gender, views that reflected elements of symbolic

interaction role theory. Although symbolic interactionism has long existed in sociological thought, it has been incorporated only fairly recently into the literature on gender roles. This perspective focuses less on the structural, immutable, generalizable role expectations that exist across situations and more on the extent to which these expectations are continuously renegotiated and reaffirmed in the process of interaction. In analyzing this microlevel, the level of interpersonal interaction—change rather than stability—becomes more apparent. Role players have the option, indeed the agency, to modify role expectations; they are not faced with totally immutable demands.

By incorporating this perspective into our explanatory framework, we have been able to account for our findings more fully than by using either perspective alone. After all, both processes operate in social life. We face structural pressures, but we can decide whether to accommodate to those pressures, or to negotiate with our role partners to reject them outright or to modify them in part.

The influence of symbolic interaction role theory is seen in the feminist literature on the contextual view of gender roles, which stresses the negotiation process, and in the woman-centered literature, which emphasizes taking the woman's view. Both principles—the importance of negotiation and subjective reality as determinants of social life—are the essential underpinnings of the entire symbolic interaction framework. What follows is an examination and synthesis of these perspectives; in the process we will show how feminist theory can contribute to a mainstream sociological theory such as symbolic interactionism, as well as draw from it.

The Situational Parameters of University Teaching

University teaching traditionally has been considered a male activity; it became even more male-dominated during the first half of this century than previously (Roby 1973). Obviously, it is also a middle-class pursuit in which rationality, logic, and reasoned arguments are preferred, even presumed, and in which emotions and feelings are suppressed, devalued, even presumed absent. Because what is valued in the university has been regarded traditionally as masculine in our culture (Addelson 1983; Cook and Fonow 1984), women may well be at a disadvantage in this context. (But see Shor 1980 for possible differences in community college, working-class environments.) Indeed, many studies document the discrimination that women in academe have experienced (Astin and Bayer 1973;

Roby 1973). In part, it is argued, the difficulty stems from stereotyping on the part of students (Basow and Silberg 1985) and colleagues (Hall and Sandler 1982), which has caused women professors to be evaluated as less effective despite equivalent levels of professional performance.

Women confront similar stereotypes when entering other male-dominated professions (Ward and Grant 1985); barriers to women's success in the professions have long been recognized (cf. Epstein 1970). For example, women physicians are reported to be under strong pressures to outperform male physicians (Brown and Klein 1982); women lawyers find it exceedingly difficult to attain levels of "concrete" success similar to those of their male counterparts (LaRussa 1977); women in health care management face lowered (though improving) odds against mobility (Weil 1986); and women professors still face major hurdles (Theodore 1986). These difficulties persist even though women professionals are well prepared for professional life by the influence of significant others (Lunneberg 1982), show motivational levels similar to men's (Kaufman and Fetters 1980), have improved their publishing records (Mackie 1977), and manage to avoid tedium and burnout despite higher levels of job stress (Pines and Kafry 1981).

Part of the perceived difficulty for women arises from the conflicting expectations experienced by women in academe. These women are expected to demonstrate both female and male sex-typed behaviors—to be simultaneously "warm" and "logical," for example. This conflict is especially strong, it is argued, because the larger context, the university, is male-centered (Langland and Gove 1981). These conflicts have been described and documented by Huber (1973) and by Schwartz and Lever (1973), among others. Managing these conflicting expectations might increase a woman's strain on the job and might decrease her chances for advancement within the academic hierarchy.

From this evidence we would expect the context of the university classroom to call forth and reinforce traditional sex role stereotypes as they exist in the broader society. Other evidence, however, suggests that this might not be the case. Attaining a university professorship is a true mark of distinction that can override normative expectations for gender-appropriate behavior. Such an accomplishment imbues the woman with a certain amount of authority and power that is not ordinarily present in our sex-graded society. The extent to which a woman can use these attributes successfully to negotiate acceptable and empowering self-definitions and to con-

vey them to her colleagues and students will affect the extent to which these role partners value her. Recent considerations of women's use of power suggest that women are capable of breaking through "control myths" (the common understandings that define women as powerless) in order to operate effectively in powerful positions (Lipman-Blumen 1984), although the precise patterns of the use of power may vary in different situations and may differ from those observed among men (Baker-Miller 1982; Gordon 1985). A woman in a powerful position in relation to students—that is, a university professor who has the ability to influence those students' behavior by virtue of her position—may be granted legitimate power—authority—by those students.

Several pieces of evidence suggest that the trappings of the immediate context, the professorial role, may well outweigh stereotypical gender roles in influencing actual behavior. For instance, certain studies (Babladelis 1973) show that students have similar expectations for men and for women professors. Historically, highly educated women have been used to demonstrate the inaccuracy of myths about women's limitations (Beard 1946) and to serve as evidence for the claim that gender is a potentially variable phenomenon. Hence, teaching in higher education may obviate traditional gender role expectations (Bernard 1964). The fact that both men and women face the constraints and expectations of a middle-class culture that places a high premium on intellectual functioning might negate the traditional expectations that women be passive, dependent, and primarily nurturant. Indeed, the passive, intellectually subordinate professor might appear "deviant," regardless of sex. The following sections explore these ideas more fully, relating them in detail to earlier empirical work as well as to theoretical explorations. In subsequent pages we will detail how we have come to construct an argument based on the two versions of role theory—normative and interpretive (Wilson 1970)—with emphasis on the contextual/woman-centered perspective and on the centrality of relationships to women's teaching styles.

Theoretical Perspectives

Earlier Perspectives

Structural role theory, the earliest of these theoretical positions, has generated considerable sociological and communications research. According to this theory, individuals play many roles and

possess different statuses simultaneously (cf. Goode 1960; Merton and Barber 1963). Because particular behaviors are associated with particular statuses, males and females are expected to act differently. This perspective presents a view of highly bifurcated, segmented roles, abstract in their expectations and interpretations (cf. Tresemer 1975). It is seen most clearly in the status inconsistency/role conflict research and in certain areas of the earlier research on communication styles.

Status inconsistency/role conflict. In the structural perspective on roles and statuses, individuals are perceived to hold clearly demarcated roles that often call for competing behaviors. Hence, not only are male and female roles perceived to exist in dualistic opposition to one another, but such dualism also is perceived to exist within individual lives. This perspective holds that all individuals play many roles and possess different statuses simultaneously. Often the roles carry conflicting expectations and the statuses have conflicting prestige. Supposedly, these conflicts are problematic for individuals; one cannot possibly perform two opposing behaviors at once (Goode 1960; Gross, Mason, and McEachern 1966; Merton and Barber, 1963), nor can one respond simultaneously to two widely divergent prestige attributions (Goffman 1957; Jackson 1962; Lenski 1954). A great deal of research has been directed at documenting the supposedly adverse effects of these conflicts on the individual (cf. Burcharth 1954; Gross, Mason, and McEachern 1966; Jackson 1962).

Women professors, a distinct minority, are thought to face two types of potential conflict: (1) role expectations for females (warm, nurturant, supportive, nonassertive; cf. Lewis 1972; McKee 1959; Sherriffs and Farrett 1953) conflict with the expected behaviors of the university professor (directive, assertive, knowledgeable); (2) the university professor is given a fairly high prestige rating in contrast to the low prestige attached to the sex status of female (Hodge, Siegel, and Rossi 1964; Mischel 1974). Thus, difficulties arise for the woman professor in the form of both role conflict and status inconsistency. The mode of resolving these conflicts is crucial. Whether she resolves the conflict along gender-stereotypic or gender-innovative lines, such resolution might create secondary problems. For example, if she adopts a male-typed teaching style, she might be resented strongly by her students; if she adopts a female-typed teaching style, she might be judged incompetent. Such a situation represents the classic double bind (Bateson 1960). Men are not expected to experience this double bind (cf. Babladelis 1973;

Bernard 1964; Graham 1978; Schwartz and Lever 1973d; Wikler 1976). Consequently, according to structural role theory, a woman's teaching experience will differ qualitatively from that of her male colleague.

Although recent evidence suggests that professional women in general and academic women in particular have made great strides in managing the tension between the personal and the professional and between femininity and competency (Gray 1983; Williams and McCullers 1983; Yogev 1983), previous evidence suggests that a double bind exists. It was perceived to exist, for example, among the women interviewed by Wikler (1976). These women professors described painful dilemmas in which they were either resented by students for lacking "femininity" or undervalued and perceived as incompetent for lacking "masculinity." Ferber and Huber's (1973) study of more than 1,000 undergraduates at a large Midwestern university found that both male and female students preferred male teachers.

Communication patterns. A second body of earlier research, the literature on communication patterns, suggests that women professors might encounter teaching difficulties. Some of this literature posits the existence of consistent sex differences in behavior. According to this research, female-typed behavior patterns are likely to incur judgments of incompetency, even when the women's actual contribution is as great as the men's (Eskilson and Wiley 1976). Men are judged to be more competent in part because of their use of "power" speech (O'Barr 1984; Thorne 1979), which includes such male-typed strategies as giving directions, offering opinions, interrupting others (West and Zimmerman 1983), and referencing oneself as an authority. Women, on the other hand, are found to use disempowering speech tactics such as waiting for someone else to state ideas and then agreeing with them strongly, rather than introducing ideas. Women also make a larger proportion of supportive conversational utterances such as "uh-huh" and "mmm" and, generally, aid the conversational success of others at their own expense (Fishman 1977). Indirect means of making contributions to the group result in lower competency ratings by group members, even though the women often have as much influence as the men on the group's eventual decision (Eskilson and Wiley 1976). Other studies yielded similar results (Meeker and Weitzel-O'Neill 1977). More recently, West (1982) has found that women's contributions continue to be devalued regardless of the communication style they use.

Some evidence on elementary and secondary school teachers suggests that these gender differences in communication apply to the teaching situation. Whereas men teachers are more achievement-oriented, more concerned with communicating ideas, more authoritarian, and more likely to give corrective, sharply critical feedback, women teachers give more positive feedback, encourage and receive more contributions from students, and refer continuously to students' ideas when elaborating or making a point (Brophy and Good 1974; Frazier and Sadker 1973; Good, Siber, and Brophy 1973; Griffen 1972; Lee and Wolinsky 1973; Moore 1977). Some of these findings also have been observed at the university level. Male students were found to make and receive more comments in classes taught by males, whereas both sexes participated and were attended to equally in female professors' classrooms (Karp and Yoels 1976). Thus, men may adopt a more aggressive male sex-typed style, which emphasizes their competency, whereas women may adopt a more nurturant female sex-typed style, which deflects attention from their expertise in the subject matter (by making extensive use of students' contributions in the learning process).

In general these perspectives lead us to expect that women will adopt a defensive management strategy, attempting to "cool out" students' resentment of their authority and competence while trying at the same time to establish that authority. The net result would be a great deal of stress for the woman professor as she deals with pressures that men professors do not have to face. Perhaps she must demonstrate competence and mastery of the subject matter in a particular way in order to reduce students' resentment and to simultaneously enhance her authority.

Both men and women professors are affected by students' expectations, at least to some extent. After all, demonstrating successful teaching is an important requirement for retaining an academic position (Martin 1984). Evidence of this success is based in part on students' evaluations. Therefore, any behavior pattern that systematically elicits negative responses from students will seriously harm professors' chances of job retention. Several types of expectations are important. Some involve judgments of competency; most professors strive to appear competent. A related dimension is hostility. Even if students evaluate positively women professors who use behaviors expected of competent men, they might resent women professors for placing them in an uncomfortable and normatively stressful position. Their ensuing hostility then would magnify the woman's discomfort about her ambiguous position and thereby

would increase her anxiety, a state that lowers job performance in a myriad of settings.

Further, and more subtly, because the professorial role includes a research and service component, the greater time and energy that the female professor gives to managing her teaching role will reduce the time and the other resources available to her for fulfilling other requirements for tenure. Consequently she might find job retention more difficult than her male colleagues.

One possibility suggested by these arguments is that women professors might encounter job strains that their male counterparts do not experience. The deck may be stacked against women, reducing their chances of professional success. Thus, even though women are allowed entry into these high-level positions, their work setting might not be equitable in demands on time or energy—not because the institution is discriminating but because women face the additional tasks required to deal with normative ambiguity and with the accompanying reactions that their presence in academia creates. We also might expect students' reactions to reflect this double bind. For example, students might prefer women who use female-typed approaches but might regard these same women as less competent than men.

Interactionist Role Theory

In recent decades, emphasis has shifted away from viewing role behavior as a process of enacting prescribed roles to focusing on the creation of new roles through interpretive role taking. This more interactive approach assumes that actors themselves define a social situation and that congruence of these definitions enables efficient and organized behavior (Stryker 1959). Roles are not simply enacted; they are created and continuously modified. Through defining the social situation and anticipating how others will respond, actors can create and modify conceptions of their own roles and the roles of other actors (cf. Stryker and Macke 1978; Stryker and Statham 1985; Turner 1962; Turner and Killian 1972). Thus, in any social situation, the self and other role definitions are likely to shift, requiring concomitant adjustment on the part of all participants (Blumer 1969). When confronted with conflicting role requirements, the actor can choose which sets of expectations to honor; intentional creation of a third role and the unintended emergence of a new role are also possibilities (Turner and Killian 1972). In our analysis we view this plasticity in role definitions and behaviors against a background in which roles are said to be interrelated in three principal

ways: (1) in the person, (2) in interaction, and (3) in the social structure (Turner 1975). Here we focus on understanding how role definitions are negotiated and portrayed at these three intersecting levels of social experience. Moreover, we focus on understanding how individuals come to create, redefine, and maintain role relationships.

At the individual level, interactionist versions of role theory focus on the individual's psychological adjustment to and acceptance of roles and role relationships. Moving away from the notion of internalization, for example, the interpretive framework considers individual reactions and accommodations to the emotional dimensions of role experiences (Turner 1975). Also acknowledged are individuals' freedom to bring role portrayals into line with personal preferences (Stryker and Statham 1985) and the notion that this personal accommodation changes over time as actors "grow into" their roles (Thornton and Nardi 1975). This acknowledgment of the self as an important motivator of behavior recognizes that demands come from internal as well as external sources.

A second level of the interpretive approach, that of social interaction, traditionally has been the focus of ethnomethodologists, who seek to uncover the actors' interpretive rules for dealing with a typified world (Cicourel 1970; Garfinkel 1972; Schutz and Luckmann, 1973). This approach contains the important insight that unequal distribution of power between role partners influences the ways in which the interpretive process is carried out (Pfohl 1975). As a result, one actor's resistance to the interpretation and negotiation of another becomes a focus for those trying to understand the outcomes of the role-taking process (Daniels 1967; Douglas 1970). Interaction with role partners also is acknowledged as an important early stage of the process by which actors adjust psychologically to their roles (Thornton and Nardi 1975). Moreover, attempts to engage in role alignment with one's role partners are accomplished as both partners enter into a testing, probing, negotiating process that occurs during interaction (Stokes and Hewitt 1976). From this perspective, a broadly viewed role such as gender affects the allocation and performance of other roles, ultimately influencing the extent of "role-person merger" or the acquisition of role-appropriate attitudes and adherence to the role in the face of more advantageous roles (Turner 1978).

Social structure is a third level of the interactionist perspective. As Turner states:

A woman nurse has been more likely to be perceived as a person through her occupational role than a woman in business

and a woman elementary school teacher more than a woman professor, if our inference is correct (1978, 11–12; emphasis ours).

Thus, for the actor and for his or her role partners, the possession of other roles and their structural societal importance condition the extent to which the actor identifies and is identified with a particular role, especially “master roles” or “statuses” such as gender. Structure is also important in the formulation of Hewitt and Stokes (1976), who argue that while negotiating new role arrangements actors must reaffirm cultural ideals in order to ease tension and to allow role stabilization. Thus, even when redefining roles innovatively, an actor must pay lip service to the old ways of perceiving the role, to its obligations, and to the societal values that underlie it. Our theoretical synthesis, then, must recognize the structural overlay of certain primary roles that influence the portrayal of additional roles in the actor’s role constellation. According to this perspective, women professors are seen as freer than men to discount sex-stereotypical behavior and freer to be innovative performers of the professorial role, but not free to dismiss totally the underlying cultural ideals about “femininity” or the obligations that underlie them. Women professors, then, could diverge considerably from female sex-stereotypical behavior but still would be restrained by it.

The Contextual/Woman-Centered Perspective

The contextual nature of gender. Elements of this interactionist tradition are seen in the contextual and woman-centered views of gender, which we call the contextual/woman-centered perspective. The contextual component reconceptualizes gender itself, viewing it as a “variable variable” and not as a set of rigid traits and behaviors inherent in the individual (cf. Broverman et al. 1970). One behaves differently according to the specific demands of the situation. From this newer perspective, gender is regarded as a continuously constructed social identity (Gerson and Peiss 1985) that can be separated from sex both conceptually and empirically (Gerson 1985). Because gender identities are socially constructed, the immediate social context is undeniably salient (Thorne, Kramare, and Henley 1983). Moreover, because sex and gender are distinguishable and distinct, men in certain situations display behavior traditionally thought of as “feminine,” and women in certain situations display behavior traditionally thought of as “masculine.”

Evidence exists to suggest that gender behaviors and attitudes are far from universal, even within ostensibly the same culture. For

example, recent evidence suggests that gender differences in communication styles are not nearly as pervasive or as all-inclusive as suggested by earlier findings (Thorne et al. 1983). In fact, certain characteristics formerly regarded as true only of women's speech, such as tag endings, have been found in some situations to be more prevalent in men's speech (Dubois and Crouch 1977; Johnson 1980; Lapadat and Sessahia 1977). The differences that do exist may be reinterpreted not as reflecting weakness but as demonstrating women's attempts to "build rather than contest, share experiences . . . do interaction work" (Thorne, 1983, 8). These strategies might be quite effective in the context of teaching.

A great deal depends on the context in which individuals must function, on the social actors involved, and on their perspectives and preferences. From this perspective, the assertion of the more traditional view that rigidly distinct and separate gender worlds exist (cf. Rosenberg 1982) is regarded with suspicion. Such a perspective "can easily revert to innatist assumptions and separatist solutions" (Bandarage 1983, 14). Although gender differences in approaches to many of life's activities are acknowledged to exist, the immediate social context is a variable condition that creates deviations from the expected pattern. This perspective, then, drawing upon major components of interactionist theory, accounts for instances when gender differences *fail to appear*. From this standpoint we would seek an explanation in overriding aspects of the immediate social context, for just as surely as gender colors our enactment of other roles (Turner 1978), other features of our social setting color our enactment of gender roles. The failure to consider these other features might account for the apparent contradiction in the literature cited above concerning the existence of role conflict for women professors; some studies confirmed its existence, others did not. In our study we consider the impact of professorial rank (assistant, associate, full professor) as a mitigating feature of the social context; role conflict may be less pronounced among women of certain ranks.

Taking the woman's perspective. Another, more recent approach argues that researchers need to take the woman's perspective, both to expand our knowledge and to explore male biases in social theory (cf. Eisenstein 1983). This approach emphasizes the interactionist notion of the actor's perspective, recognizing that different social groups and even individual actors or role partners will view a single phenomenon quite differently. If research is to be meaningful for women, it must make women the center of inquiry.

Taking a contextual, woman-centered approach focuses on women's interpretations and experiences and relates those experiences to ongoing social structures and values that affect women's choices and chances. This body of work focuses often on the theoretical usefulness of women's own interpretations of their experiences, as well as on the implications of these interpretations for women's empowerment.

Stanley and Wise (1983), for example, start from the premise that women's experiences constitute a separate ontology or way of making sense of the world. Their notion of a female world of meaning, grounded contextually in women's experiences, recognizes similarity in form but wide variation in content and expression of women's consciousness. Their emphasis on the importance of routine, mundane, taken-for-granted aspects of women's everyday lives acknowledges that experiences at this level help to perpetuate female subordination and argues that changes must address this sphere.

Similarly, Dorothy Smith (1979) proposes social analysis *for* women, not *about* women. Her method involves starting with the situation of the woman as she finds herself, focusing on her practical activities within her social context and from that point reconstructing the meaning she derives for her life. Smith's approach allows the investigator to study social relations within the very contexts organized by these relations and to examine reflexively how properties of social relations are incorporated into the analytical and interpretive procedures used by the investigator. By doing so, Smith argues, we come ultimately to findings that can and will be useful to women's empowerment.

Illustrations of this new perspective include Richardson's work (1985) on the "other woman," the single woman involved in a long-term affair with a married man. By grounding her findings in her respondents' everyday lives and interpretations, Richardson was able to understand these women's motives and the definitions of their hidden relationships and could discover similarities in the developmental histories of these liaisons. She came to recognize the positive aspects of the affairs as well as the constraining features. In a similar vein, Cook's work (1988) on mothering the chronically mentally ill used the context of the enormous practical and emotional burdens facing women who care for psychiatrically disabled offspring. By focusing on these women's own definitions of mothering their sick children, Cook showed how one could understand maternal behavior beyond the "overinvolved" or "schizophrenogenic" mother stereotypes. Equally as important, her analysis explained

how a contextualized, empathic understanding of mothers' behavior could be integrated by clinicians attempting to support women who care for our large deinstitutionalized population of mentally ill. Likewise, Statham (1987) studied women managers from their own viewpoints, discovering a unique and unrecognized management model in the process. Again, a negative view of women (incapable of managing) was corrected; new management models were explored and articulated.

Other proponents of the woman-centered perspective focus on the changed assessment of women, *per se*, arising from the analysis. A final key consideration is that women's styles and strategies should be evaluated on their own terms, not as deviant from or inferior to men's styles and strategies (cf. Belenky et al. 1986; Eichler 1980; Fishman 1978; Gilligan 1982). The female style is not judged deficient or inadequate; rather, the strengths and weaknesses are evaluated in a given situation. Women's ways are viewed simply as a different strategy to achieve the same goals. For example, Gilligan (1982) reexamined Kohlberg's (1963) study of the development of moral reasoning and showed that young girls were classified erroneously as less well-developed morally than young boys because they were using a different set of criteria to determine appropriate behavior in a given situation. Men, she argued, would act from an ethic of autonomous decision making and a search for the existing higher moral order. Women would address the impact of any decision on existing relationships and on the well-being of the individuals involved. Who is to say that one approach is superior to the other? They are simply different. Had Kohlberg recognized this point, his classification scheme certainly would have been more complex. Findings from other studies reinforce this difference between men's and women's basic orientations. Belenky et al. (1986) find that women prefer a more "connected mode of learning" than men. Rubin (1983) finds that women desire closeness and connection in intimate relationships, whereas men value autonomy and fairness. Some of these differences also are seen in children's play patterns (Thorne and Luria 1986).

Whereas Gilligan's framework has been the subject of recent critiques (cf. Auerbach et al. 1985; Greeno and Maccoby 1986; Kerber 1986; Stack 1986; Luria 1986), her response to these criticisms (1986) underscores points relevant to our analysis. Critics of Gilligan state that a woman-centered analysis may result in a dangerous oversimplification (Kerber 1986), which exaggerates rather than illuminates gender differences by reifying stereotypes about

women (Auerbach et al. 1985; Luria 1986), such as women's reputation for attributes like altruism and empathy (Greeno and Maccoby 1986). The methodology we employ, however, allows us to discover whether such differences exist and also permits us to look more closely at situations where gender divergence is *not* apparent. Moreover, incorporating this woman-centered perspective into the analysis provides the possibility of presenting in our study a new moral or normative voice regarding university teaching. Like Gilligan (1986) we see this possibility as outweighing difficulties with and objections to the perspective. As Smith has argued, one attempts to give a voice to those "deprived of authority to speak, the voices of those who know society differently" (1974, 12). Thus the perspective alerts us to the goal of "reworking cognitive styles (p. 146) . . . naming and legitimating a female-centered inquiry" (p. 142) (Swoboda and Vanderbosch 1984).

The woman-centered perspective also warns us not to disassociate women's experiences with their thinking in the analytic process (Gilligan 1986, 327). Given this ontological commitment in our approach to teaching styles, we focus on what women do, how they feel about it, and how students, colleagues, and others react to it, as well as the relationships among these different aspects. This emphasis on the grounded nature of women's experiences focuses on their actual activities while simultaneously taking account of the women's own reactions, their interpretations of their own and others' attitudes and behavior toward them, and how all of these influence and are influenced by the reactions of others.

Underlying woman-centered research is the implication that women's behavior has been studied and interpreted (misinterpreted) from a male-centered perspective. To document women's behavior truly, without androcentric value judgments, the observer must forsake the deficit perspective that takes all typically female behavior to be problematic or less valuable than males' behavior. Working from the woman-centered perspective involves recognizing that women's approaches may represent strengths, not weaknesses. Several researchers make this argument specifically concerning women's teaching styles (Richardson 1982; Fisher 1982; Wikler 1976). In our research we consider how women professors' styles of teaching may be equally valuable as men's styles.

A Unified Perspective

This study and its interpretations are guided by an integration of the various theoretical perspectives presented previously. First,

we accept the concepts of role theory as informed by interactionism—the notion of shared gender role definitions, existing alongside conflicting gender role expectations—and we recognize that actors work out individual solutions in the course of interaction.

In addition, various insights from the feminist theories discussed above inform our application of interactionist role theory, enhancing its explanatory power in accounting for women's experiences. Of critical importance is the concept of the *relationship*, embodying the notion of bonding or connection (cf. especially Gilligan 1982). Much recent feminist writing includes this concept, the notion that connection—caring about and tending to relationships—distinguishes men's lives from women's in a radical, basic manner. Women are assigned the task of tending to personal relationships while men tend to the "public realm." (See Eisenstein 1983 for an elaboration of this idea.) Hence, theories constructed to account primarily for men's experiences typically ignore the centrality of caring and connection. Indeed, the view of the *relationship* as an underpinning for much of social life is expressed in such well-known feminist sayings as "The personal is political."

Role theory, even interactionist role theory, is lacking here. Although this formulation is based upon the notion of reciprocity (which by its very nature entails a relationship), it has not focused explicitly on the relationship as a powerful motivating force for individuals. The implications of the relationship, the degree of attention paid to it, actors' concern with variations in its quality, and ways in which the enactment of new roles are filtered through it are of central importance to women, but these themes have seldom been explored systematically in role theoretical literature. For the most part, this traditional theory has held the *self*, the *individual*, to be the prime motivator for social action. Subjective reality, reflected appraisals, and many of the classic concepts in this perspective from Mead and Cooley to the present day have been concerned with self-judgments and self-presentations. Significant others are important for the feedback they give us about our selves; role partners confirm or call into question self-images. This list of applications is endless, and all concern the individual. Feminist theory emphasizes the relationship—the concern with and the attempt to maintain certain types of relationships—as the primary motivator for social action.

This insight allows us to see the tremendous complexity of the situation, as shown by Mead, but with an additional layer that he ignored: our gender-typified social world, how it is perceived and

approached by the two sexes, and how the relationship actually may be an important motivator of behavior for many social actors. The importance of "perspective," of the definition of the situation, thus becomes heightened. It can affect basic approaches to social life, making one theoretical formulation less relevant for certain groups.

As for our own study, understanding the importance of the relationship to this process may help us to account more fully for the behaviors we see among men and women professors, and for how students respond to any existing differences or similarities. It is not only one's sense of self that guides the process of role negotiation and role conflict resolution, as discussed previously by interactionist theorists (Stryker 1980). Certainly the self is a vitally important concept. Equally important, however, and perhaps more so for the study of women's behavior, is the notion that individuals influence their social environments by creating certain types of relationships with role partners that emphasize caring and concern for the nature of the interpersonal bond; they are motivated to behave in certain ways because of their concern for that bond.

Belenky et al. (1986) found that women in academic settings are more comfortable with learning environments that enhance their personal power rather than imbue them with some higher authority stemming from their dissemination of knowledge, and that permit an integration of knowledge with their personal experiences rather than requiring that they suppress those experiences. In view of these findings we might expect women to attempt to provide that type of learning environment for their own students. They could accomplish this goal by forming relationships with students that encourage them to bring their personal experiences to the classroom and empower them as independent, autonomous learners. Certainly this effort might lead to the formation of relationships more personal than men professors find comfortable and would cause more personal experiences to be incorporated into the learning/teaching process.

We come now to a major insight. We propose that the woman professor's ability to create a classroom atmosphere where relationships can be formed and can influence learning will determine in large measure her ability to negotiate the complex array of competing role expectations that she faces: the demands that she be both feminine and professorial, personally likable and competent. We expect that her concerns with connection and with nurturing these relationships will not serve as ends in themselves but will become the mechanism for accomplishing the task at hand, namely teaching

effectively. Further, we expect this strategy to be especially pronounced among women at lower professorial ranks (assistant and associate professors), who are most involved in establishing their professorial identities and with negotiating competing role expectations. We anticipate that more senior professors, at later stages of role acquisition, will mold the professorial role more often to fit their own personal needs.

Thus, we add another level to the argument that combinations of factors in particular situations might cause role enactment to change. For example, as faculty members advance through the ranks from assistant to full professor, they become more professionally confident and less dependent on others' immediate feedback to confirm their occupational identity as a professor. If Thornton and Nardi's (1975) formulation is valid, the developmental process of role acquisition becomes more and more internal to the individual over time. Thus, the nature of the role might change for established faculty members. Specifically, if actors become more secure in their roles the longer they hold them, tenured faculty may come to feel freer to violate any of the role demands found to exist for men and women professors in general.

A developmental view of roles. In the literature on both structural and interpretive role theory several investigators have noted that actors' role performances and definitions change over time (Thomas and Biddle 1966). Not only is role performance assumed to improve with practice the longer an individual enacts a role (Cook 1984); time is also a factor in negotiating new role attributes, in the "alignment" of roles with those of other actors, and in the societal requirements for role stability (Stokes and Hewitt 1976). By taking a developmental perspective on role acquisition, for example, Thornton and Nardi (1975) detail a series of stages in an actor's psychological acceptance of and conformity to new roles. These stages move from an initial anticipatory stage where adjustment to the role begins, through a formal stage guided by role partners' expectations, into an informal stage in which the actor's own role expectations assume central importance, and finally into a personal stage during which actors modify roles to fit their internal personalities and psychological needs.

Such a perspective is relevant to our study in light of the nature of our academic sample. By including women and men at three career points—assistant professor, associate professor, and full professor—we can examine the developmental issues that arise for

men and for women in the process of acquiring the role of university faculty member. Men and women might appear more similar at some points in their careers and more divergent at others. Shifts in the power relationship between a professor and students, for example, also may occur over time, changing the leverage of each party in influencing the role performance and role bargain (Goode 1960). In view of evidence that university women are concentrated at the lower ranks, such as assistant professor, instructor, and graduate teaching assistant, a look at those women who have ascended their university's academic hierarchy will reveal how professorial women's views of their roles and students' reactions are related to academic rank.

Summary and Predictions

This study can be seen as an important empirical test of several recently developed sociological theories of gender relations. These theories stress the variability of gender, the importance of the immediate social situation in determining gendered behaviors, and the importance of taking the woman's perspective in an attempt to avoid androcentric valuations of women's behaviors. These theories, based upon an interactionist version of role theory and role conflict resolution, combine the notion of negotiated social order with the insights into structural sources of role conflict offered by the historically dominant structural version of gender role theory. In our analysis we integrate the insight from feminist theory regarding the importance of the relationship for women's behaviors with the principles contained in traditional structural and interactionist role/status inconsistency theory to enhance the explanatory power of these more traditional approaches. Thus, we offer a test of recently emergent theory *and* a way of integrating theoretical innovation into the mainstream of sociological thought.

Gender Differences in Teaching Approaches

The structural version of role conflict/status inconsistency provides valuable insights into the differences that can exist between men and women professors; from this perspective we derive the concept of the double bind. The interactionist version of role conflict/status inconsistency emphasizes the negotiation process that occurs between role partners. Thus it helps us to account for similarities we might find (i.e., men and women can negotiate to behave in less stereotypical ways in certain situations) and also to explain

the existence of gender differences in teaching that are accepted with relative ease by everyone involved (again, negotiations with role partners can lead to such acceptance).

The new feminist theories of gender provide us with the mechanism for resolving the conflict predicted by structural role theory, namely negotiation of the role relationship. We can arrive at this insight by taking the woman's perspective, by attempting to understand what the woman is trying to accomplish with her behaviors, and by examining the immediate social context of the bond itself. From this standpoint we expect women professors to create certain types of relationships with their students that allow them to execute their teaching functions in a way that is acceptable both to their students and to themselves.

Student Responses

With respect to students' responses, the structural version of role conflict/status inconsistency predicts that a double bind exists, such that women professors who use a female-typed style will be liked for doing so but at the same time will be judged less competent. From this perspective, when role demands are viewed as immutable, the woman cannot win; she will be either disliked or judged less competent.

From the interactionist perspective, including the newer theories dealing specifically with gender, we argue that gender differences are negotiated in the course of interaction and can have quite positive effects on role partners. According to this perspective, strengths exist in women's approaches; at the very least, students will accept both strategies (to the extent that differences exist) as equally appropriate and effective. In fact, students actually may *expect* men and women professors to differ in certain ways, and may even reward them for doing so. We have the data to test these different notions.

Feminist Pedagogy

Our predictions about women's teaching behaviors bear a strong similarity to the styles espoused by the feminist pedagogy model. Feminists using this model seek to empower students (Schuster and Van Dyne 1985) by sharing the power of the professorial role with students (Freedman 1985; Shrewsbury 1987; Weiler 1988). The goal is to build a collaborative relationship in which students become self-directed learners (J. Fisher 1987).¹ Cooperative learning using a democratic process is the norm (Schniedewind 1987;