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Lois M. DeFleur, Sandra Ball-Rokeach, and Marilyn Ihinger-Tallman, **We Few, We Academic Sisters: How We Persevered and Excelled in Higher Education** (Betty Houchin Winfield, Ed.), Pullman: Washington State University Press, 2023, 201pp., $28.95 (paperback).

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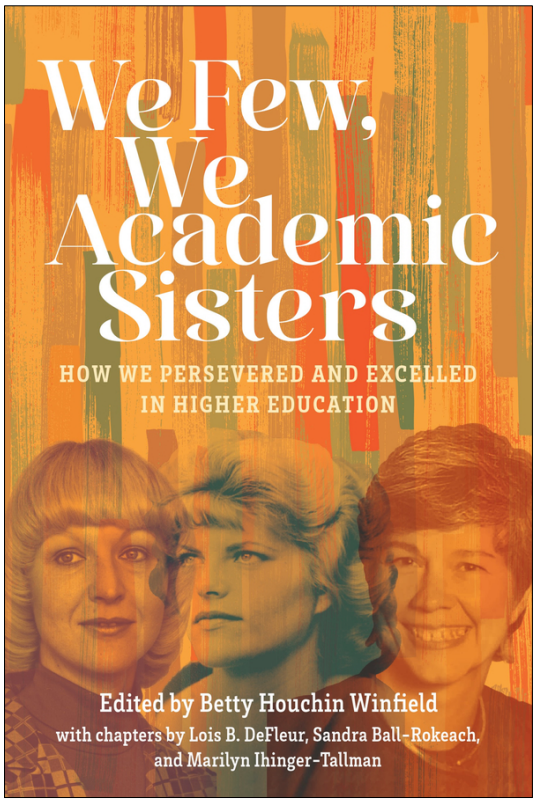

We Few, We Academic Sisters: How We Persevered and Excelled in Higher Education is well worth reading. Lois B. DeFleur, Sandra Ball-Rokeach, and Marilyn Ihinger-Tallman are accomplished sociologists who significantly contributed to academia. They are also friends whose years on the faculty of Washington State University (WSU) had overlapped. They are among the few women of their time who had the joy of working at a university willing to hire married couples. Their autobiographies tell us how far academic women have come, though they still have far to go.

Each faced some similar personal and professional challenges. From sexual passes at sociology conventions to Ihinger-Tallman's need to fight for the promised funded admission to graduate school that men in her class had received as, she hints, their rights as men, all three felt alone as women and experienced discrimination and sexism in academia. They also witnessed racial, class, gender, and national intolerance. I agree with the generalizations about the past that arise as each analyzes her life.

Larry Gross, Professor Emeritus at the University of Southern California, notes, "The story of how academia—and public life in general—have been transformed by feminism and other social upheavals needs to be told in this sort of granularity." Using exquisite detail to tell their life stories of perseverance in the "face of gender-related academics trials from graduate school onward" (p. 186), DeFleur, Ball-Rokeach, and Ihinger-Tallman worked with Betty Houchin Winfield, editor of the book, during the worst COVID-19 years. In weekly Zoom meetings organized by Winfield, all four "shared ideas and our writing and editing" (p. 1) to produce three autobiographies, each containing five chapters essentially about their childhoods, education, early academic jobs, later careers, and assessment of their past activities, as well as Winfield's introduction and conclusion. Winfield is a Professor Emerita at the University of Missouri and, as a graduate of WSU, considered all three women her role models. Jeylan Mortimer, Professor Emerita at the University of Minnesota, added a foreword.

These five women and I are all of the same generation. Born between 1936 and 1943, we started teaching in the late 1960s or early 1970s. We remember the demonstrations about racism, sexism, homosexuality, and the Vietnam War. Although women were roughly half of my graduate-school cohort at then ultraliberal Brandeis University, we all learned to survive in male-dominated departments. My life and publications are quite different from theirs, yet we all faced sexism and discrimination, as most academic women still do. As I read, I sympathized with the women and was delighted to see the names of the men who had helped them. But, since we entered college, too much of the morass they describe has merely been modified.

The involvement of good men is still a necessity for the women's movement. As Ball-Rokeach says, "The situation [of academic women] has changed markedly today—maybe a bit culturally, but not structurally" (p. 70). There are more women in colleges, graduate schools, and academic departments. Women still advise one another as to which faculty will be less helpful than others, including students saying which men should not be invited to join a woman's dissertation committee. (The authors skip these details, perhaps because they had few or no women to advise them.) As its public funding decreases, higher education is becoming increasingly corporatized. It has been caught up in ugly national political attacks, many directed at women and black presidents.

Ball-Rokeach rightly notes that today's department chairs have less power than the men who had been called department heads. However, many chairs and most of today's departments still will not hire a couple, for fear that the partners would "bloc vote" on departmental matters. Most colleges and universities forbid such hires, yet nepotism still exists in one form or another. Though done surreptitiously today, some professors still have affairs with their students. A man who does so may even jog from one university to the next, since hiring committees rarely, if ever, ask candidates whether they have dated or harmed a student, and a candidate's current colleagues rarely inform a search committee about his dalliances. (If his actions become public, his colleagues are happy to get rid of him.)

Although DeFleur, Ball-Rokeach, and Ihinger-Tallman were each involved with a teacher or colleague, none of them explicitly state how much their career initially depended on him. They hint. As a graduate student, Lois Beditske became involved with Melvin DeFleur, whom after his divorce, she married. When he received a Fulbright to Argentina, she accompanied him and worked on a study of delinquency. These data became vital to her scholarly work, including her job talk at WSU, which, against nepotism rules, hired them both. (It is not clear whether he had to give a job talk).

Because of DeFleur's service to sociology and especially her appointment to a host of university-wide committees, she became interested in administration. Eventually, she became one of two women deans at WSU. Then she served as provost at the University of Missouri and ultimately spent 20 years as president of the then recently formed State University of New York at Binghamton.

DeFleur discloses neither her strategies for remaining a president for so long nor why she eventually resigned. Although DeFleur does not discuss this matter, a college president cannot keep that job if they reveal unpopular political convictions and so displeases either the board of trustees or—in the case of many

public universities—the politicians who run the system. Sometimes such retirements cover up a scandal by a politically important group that reports to the president.

Ball-Rokeach is more explicit than DeFleur. She met Milton Rokeach while working at Michigan State University and simultaneously serving as codirector of the Media and Violence Task Force, part of the 1967 Violence Commission. When she wanted "to consider media effects on the values that legitimated or delegitimated" people's opinions (p. 89), she was advised to consult "star" social psychologist Milton Rokeach, who had been at Michigan State for 24 years and had recently divorced his wife. (Divorces and remarriages are awkward on campuses. Gossip abounds.)

Rokeach and Ball-Rokeach worked together, dated, married, and moved to WSU, he in psychology and she in sociology. They wrote together—first a coauthored chapter by Rokeach and Ball-Rokeach in a book edited by Rokeach, later a book based on joint research. Rokeach decided that his wife would be first author, although unlike him, she had never written a book. Nonetheless, he "harshly criticized [her]—he was not one to sugarcoat" (p. 107). When she once retaliated by scolding him for how he washed the dishes, he replied, "That's not important, but look at this awful sentence" (p. 107). Ball-Rokeach calls this "a classic conflict over women's and men's work" (p. 107). Such interactions also raise another question: Why had not the men with whom she had previously studied and worked taught her to distinguish among a dissertation, an article, and a book as genres with stylistic demands?

Ihinger-Tallman's autobiography raises different questions. From a working-class background, she married at 17, had five children, and saw her husband through his master's degree and part of his doctorate before they divorced. (A mother in her childhood neighborhood might have said, "She was a good wife.") Only then did she enter college and subsequently graduate school.

How did she do all this? Intelligence, hard work, and superb organization would not have been enough. She also worked for and with her eventual second husband during those nine years. When they realized how close their relationship had become, another man took over as her dissertation advisor. Once it was finished, she moved to Washington State; the next year, Tallman joined that university and they married. Ihinger-Tallman proceeded to publish work that established new subfields in family sociology. In part, Winfield suggests, she did so by examining her own life.

I am especially awed by Ihinger-Tallman's long description of the eight years she spent as chair of the WSU sociology department. Winfield noted something that Ihinger-Tallman modestly forgot to mention: "She quietly managed the extant faculty divisions [and so, disagreements] . . ." (p. 189) in a department of 27 dominated by men.

The authors explain that DeFleur, Ball-Rokeach, and Ihinger-Tallman had such success because they worked hard and persisted. Each found ways to amuse herself outside of work and marriage and so reduced the tensions common to academia. They had good friends. They married men who helped them academically; some of their husbands washed dishes and cooked dinner.

But I still do not know how they managed all that. Today almost all academic women, especially women with preschool- and school-aged children, face many of the same problems they did. However, now there are more academic women. I still encounter people (men) who put off departmental votes in the hope that the best candidate (say, a gay woman) will quickly find another job. To be sure, during the reign of the corporate university, there has been progress. More academic men understand what is going on.