

CANADIAN HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION

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Highlights of the CHA Survey on the Status of Women, 1989

by Linda Kealey

In the spring of 1989, a survey was conducted of individuals and departments of history (in universities primarily) in order to update information from a previous survey and to examine both the actual career paths of women and men in the profession and their attitudes toward the status of women. One hundred and twenty-three men and 192 women were asked to answer the individual questionnaire and 66 departments chairs/heads were sent a departmental questionnaire. The return rates were: 52% (men); 63% (women); and 55% (departments). The following is a summary of the results. Individual responses are summarized first, followed by the information provided by department chairs/heads. Brief conclusions are indicated at the end.

I. Individual Survey Results

Men answering the questionnaire were older than the women; the median age for men was 49 and for women, 44. While men and women were nearly equally represented at the associate level, women were under-represented at the full professor level and over-represented at the lecturer and assistant

levels. The previous survey conducted in 1976-77 demonstrated an even higher proportion of women at the lower levels.

Ninety-four percent of male respondents were employed in tenured or tenure-stream positions, compared to 74% of the female respondents; 51% of the women were tenured as compared with 82% of the men.

Women had less experience in administrative positions as well: while 34% of the men had experience as department chair/head, only 14% of women had this experience, for example. Thirteen percent of men and 3% of women had served as deans or associate deans.

Further examination of the results

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Historians Use Computers to Hold Conferences and Move Mail

by José Igartua

Here is some news from the CHA Committee on Computing, (described in the Fall 1989 issue of the *Newsletter*). The Committee would like to receive comments and suggestions from members of the Association.

User Services

Part of the mandate of the Committee consists of suggesting to the CHA ways in which it could help its members in matters relating to computing. If you have suggestions, please do not hesitate to get in touch with members of the Committee. The electronic mail conferencing system, described below, is an example of the type of service that has been set up in response to suggestions from computer users.

Electronic Mail Conferencing

The CHA Committee on Computing has set up an electronic communications system for the members of the CHA who would like to discuss issues relating to computing. The system may be used by any member who has access to the NETNORTH electronic mail network. It will function as an electronic conferencing system by using a piece of software

called a "list server". The list server receives messages from participants and dispatches them to all the members included in the list. A given message, therefore, is sent to all participants, who can then reply at will. The list server keeps a log of all messages it receives. This log can be retrieved at any time by any participant.

The first topic of discussion has been the question of coding data that is to be made machine-readable, that is, assigning codes to the original data. Participants have expressed their opinions on the subject and this will serve as input to the committee's deliberations.

To be allowed access to the list, one must send an electronic message to that effect to José E. Igartua through the NETNORTH network. The E-mail address is R12270@UQAM.BITNET.

Notice to Those Who are Preparing Grant Applications

The Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada intends to strengthen its rules governing the conservation of data gathered through

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indicated that women experienced more career interruptions and unemployment than the men (36% compared to 19%). Family responsibilities were commonly cited by the women respondents and women were more likely to have taken time out of their careers. Career interruptions occurred for women during graduate school and in employment. Thus on average, women spent 10.8 years between the B.A. and Ph.D., while men spent 9.3 years. While women on average began as assistant professors at age 33.6, men began at age 32. Once in the academic job stream, women were promoted more slowly as well. In sum, an examination of the average career path indicated that women spent two years more moving from assistant to full professor.

A number of questions probed attitudes of male and female respondents regarding perception of discrimination toward women, the status of women's history and the status of women in the profession generally. More women than men expressed a belief that women were not treated equally with regard to initial salaries, promotion and tenure. When asked to assess their own experience in these areas, women consistently felt more discriminated against.

In responding to questions regarding discrimination in assignment to key departmental committees and informal consultation, nearly a third of the women felt unfairly treated in committee assignments and 43% felt left out of informal consultation, compared to 7% of men responding to both questions. Perceptions of discrimination among the women had increased since 1976-77 in all these areas.

A large "gender gap" is apparent in perceptions of the status of women's history; while 67% of the men rated the status of women's history as satisfactory to very good, only 29% of the women did so; **seventy percent** of the women rated its status as very poor or poor. Similarly, the status of women in the profession was rated as poor or very poor by 73%

of the women and 47% of the men. In 1979-77, 65% of female respondents indicated their dissatisfaction with the status of women in the profession.

An examination of established women within the profession and more marginal women suggested that women who had been teaching for some time in secure positions were only slightly older on average, but had obtained their degrees in the 1970s while women hired on contracts or per course tended to have obtained their degrees in the last decade. In addition, these latter women had more children and had a higher incidence of taking time off for parenting. While a tighter job market may explain some of the problems faced by women on the margins of the profession, a number of them indicated that they felt their inability to obtain a regular appointment stemmed from their gender, in other words, from discriminatory treatment. This survey underrepresented the position of women in marginal positions because of the survey population; it is an area of concern which needs more study and action.

Finally, the survey examined a cohort of men and women born between 1940 and 1944 to test whether the age factor explained the relative positions of men and women in the historical profession. In short, women's career paths still diverged from men's despite shared age; differences in educational paths, rank and administrative experience persist for women in the same age group, as do attitudinal differences generally.

II. Departmental Responses

The thirty-six institutions reporting indicated a total of 77 women and 547 men in tenured/tenure stream positions, or 12% women, 88% men. Fifty-two percent of the women and 81% of the men occupied secure positions in their institutions. Twenty-seven of the 36 institutions employed women, 9 employed no women in secure positions. Fifteen departments employed between three and six women, while 12 employed

only one or two. Women as a percentage of tenured/tenure stream appointments, ranged from 5 to 25%, with one exception of 38%.

Examination of historical data provided from 31 institutions indicated no change in 11 (8/11 reported no women ever), slight increases in 15, decreases in 2 and significant increases in the number of women (3 to 6 new appointments) in only three universities. The most common pattern has been the hiring of one or two women over the years. For men, some negative change has occurred; in 12 departments, the number of male professors dropped over the years, but in only two clear cases did women replace men; in four others, women made gains, but the drop in numbers of men exceeded their replacement by women. In the other six cases, either the number of women did not change or the drop in the number of men far exceeded the number of women hired. No change was experienced in 12 other institutions and seven reported increases in the number of men teaching in their department.

While proportionately more women than men (48% compared to 19%) found themselves in limited contract or sessional teaching positions, men accounted for nearly two-thirds of all such appointments. Over half (57%) of the institutions indicated that such positions accounted for between 21 and 40% of their teaching staff, a statistic that raises the question of future permanent employment prospects for these instructors.

Institutions were asked about their graduate enrolments by gender. Sixteen provided information for both 1984-85 and 1988-89. The data suggested that women seem to be increasing their enrolment at the Ph.D. level while forgoing the M.A., while men increased their participation at the M.A. and decreased at the Ph.D. level, relative to women. Statistics Canada data indicate that in 1987 women earned 47% of the doctorates in history, a substantial increase over earlier years, thus

suggesting that the pool of available candidates for jobs is increasingly female.

III. Conclusions and Recommendations

1) Career interruptions, especially family responsibilities, affect women more so than men. The "normative" male career model does not take this reality into account and should be changed. This survey demonstrates that women have been appointed at lower ranks, spend more time in each rank and are promoted more slowly than male

colleagues. Fewer women than men have administrative experience within the university. "Marginal" women, especially those in contract or sessional positions, find these career models particularly penalizing. **Career interruptions must be taken into account and the normative career model made more flexible.**

2) A considerable gender gap is apparent in the responses to questions on perception of discrimination and on perception of the status of women in the profession. Women respondents consistently indicated that they felt

poorly treated in a number of areas, including salaries, promotion and tenure, as well as in the areas of informal consultation and participation in key committees. While a significant proportion of men thought that the general status of women in the profession was problematic, a much larger proportion of the women indicated their concern. **Departments and universities must act to ensure that women colleagues are treated fairly in these areas; department chairs/heads can play an important role in initiating changes within their jurisdiction and by supporting affirmative action and employment equity within their institutions.**

3) The place of women's history within the curriculum is perceived very differently by women and men; an overwhelming majority of the women felt that women's history and sensitivity to gender issues were not taken seriously within their departments and perceived the status of women's history as poor. **Departments of history must deal with the issue of gender within the curriculum in general; department chairs/heads can initiate departmental discussion and revision of the curriculum to integrate gender as a category of historical analysis within the curriculum.**

4) The departmental survey indicates that women are largely under-represented within departments of history. Data from this survey, as well as from the annual gathering of department chairs/heads, indicate that little positive change has occurred, even in the last five years, despite the increasing representation of women in graduate programmes. **Real commitment to affirmative action measures at both the departmental and university level is required.**

Note from the CHA Secretariat: Copies of the full text of this survey, with tables (39 pp.) may be obtained at a cost of \$3.00 (to cover photocopying and postage). Please send your cheque or money order to: Secretariat, CHA, 395 Wellington Street, Ottawa, Ontario K1A 0N3.

CONFERENCES

The Canadian Council for Multicultural and Intercultural Education is sponsoring **Multicultural, Intercultural and Race Relations Education, Ottawa, November 24-26, 1990.** For information write: CCMIE, 252 Bloor St. West, Suite 8-200, Toronto, ON, M5S 1V5; 416-966-3162.

The Public Sector Under Declining Resources: Changing Ideologies and Innovative Technologies, Jerusalem, December 1990. Contact: Daniel Ben-Natan, Office of the President, Hebrew University of Jerusalem, Sherman Building, Mount Scopus, Jerusalem 91905, Israel; 972-2-882-803.

The Public History Group of the University of Victoria and the BC Government Employees Union will host the Committee on Canadian Labour History's first annual **Symposium on Canadian Working Class History, Victoria, May 26, 1990.** The symposium will consist of a 'research in progress' round table and three panel discussions: "The Writing of Working Class History in the 1980s: Ten Good Years?"; "The BC Working Class: New Perspectives"; and "Labour Historians and Unions: Assessing the Interaction". Registration is \$12 and includes lunch. Send registration fee to: Public History Group, University of

Victoria, Victoria, BC, V8W 2Y2 before April 30.

Atlantic Studies Conference, Orono, Maine, May 16-19, 1990. The Canadian-American Center at the University of Maine presents this 3 day conference with sessions on: the Rural World, the Industrial World; the Maritime World; Migration; Reform Movements; Literature; Working Women; Perspectives on Culture; and Newfoundland. For registration write: Canadian-American Center, Canada House, 154 College Avenue, Orono, Maine, 04469, USA.

Mormons in Canada: Local and Comparative Perspectives, Lethbridge, June 20-24, 1990 is the theme of the Canadian Mormon Studies Association Conference. This multi-disciplinary conference will include folk as well as scholarly components. Enquiries to: Conference Services, University of Lethbridge, Lethbridge, AB, T1K 3M4; 403-329-2244.

The Kelsey Tricentennial, The Pas, July 6-8, 1990. The conference focuses on Henry Kelsey and the Native Peoples he encountered. For registration: The Kelsey 300 Committee, Box 547, The Pas, MB, R9A 1K6; 204-623-3802.