



## THRESHOLDS, WALLS, AND BRIDGES: JOURNEYS THROUGH THE BORDERLANDS OF HISTORY

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# Are We There Yet? Personal and Historical Reflections on Women in Higher Education

### April 9, 2012

As I've previously confessed, I'm a sucker for historical anniversaries—especially fortieth anniversaries. The number forty in the Bible always signals massive transformations: there were forty days of Noah's flood; the children of Israel wandered for forty years in the wilderness before reaching the Promised Land; Moses spent forty days on Mount Sinai receiving the Ten Commandments. Scholars speculate that this is related to forty weeks of pregnancy.

In 2012, I was drawn to the fortieth anniversary of Title IX of the United States Educational Amendments of 1972. Title IX banned sex discrimination in U.S. education, mandating that "No person in the United States shall, on the basis of sex, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any education program or activity receiving Federal financial assistance." People concerned with efforts to achieve educational equity in the United States know that landmark legislation; it was, understandably, less familiar to Canadians.

Title IX did not, of course, cover higher education in Canada. But Canada, too, celebrated a landmark anniversary in 2012: the thirtieth anniversary of the Charter of Rights and Freedoms. The Charter enshrined the principle of gender equality in employment, public life, and education in Part I, section 15: "Every individual is equal before and under the law and has the right to the equal protection and equal benefit of the law without discrimination and, in particular, without discrimination based on race, national or ethnic origin, color, religion, sex, age or mental or

physical disability." From the standpoints of either anniversary, the challenges to achieving gender equity had been substantial and the changes by 2012 were notable.

Title IX covered discrimination in both academics and athletics. When it became law in 1972, virtually no women got athletic scholarships, and science and math were overwhelmingly male bastions. Women earned 9 percent of all U.S. medical degrees, 7 percent of all law degrees, and 16 percent of all U.S. PhDs.<sup>2</sup>

I have been part of a very fortunate academic generation. I graduated from college and entered graduate school in 1970, the year that the first women's studies program in the United States was established at Cornell University. In 1972, I was assisting the first women's history course offered at the University of Michigan. Although I have never taken a women's history class, I was the teaching assistant for some of the first ones, and I was in the first cohort of graduate students to study women and gender, to get to help invent the field of women's history. At Michigan, I got to work with some gifted, often isolated, feminist scholars with whom graduate students began to research women as subjects and employ gender as a category of analysis. We began a collective project to increase women's participation and status in the university, and to include women's experiences in the curriculum. It has been an extraordinary journey, sometimes exhilarating, sometimes frustrating, occasionally depressing. So, when I reflect on the status of women in higher education, my benchmarks are personal, professional, and, since 1999, bi-national.

My lecture in 2012 moved back and forth across the border and offered personal, structural, and historical measures of change. Forty years after Title IX, thirty years after the Charter of Rights and Freedoms, I asked the questions my students asked me. How far had we come? Were we there yet? The answers depend on where you think we started, who "we" are, and what measures "there" represents. Are we talking about gender equity among undergraduate students, graduate students, academic staff, support staff? About how women students are treated in classrooms and how they are advised on their career paths? How we handle sexual harassment and pay discrimination? How women, genders, and gender as a category of analysis are represented in the curriculum? All of the above? By any of these measures we were not there in 2012. We still aren't there in 2025. I can only hope that gender inequities will indeed be history sometime in the future when someone may read this essay. However, despite persistent

inequities, it was also true that by most measures there had been substantial positive change in the forty years since Title IX became law.

Despite the fortieth anniversary benchmark, I had not intended to speak on this topic in 2012. I was drawn to it by three events. Two concerned students. I was sobered and angered in February 2012 by the experience of Sandra Fluke, President of Georgetown Law Students for Reproductive Justice, when Republican members of the House Oversight and Government Reform Committee refused to allow her to testify at the Committee's hearing on contraception. Then radio talk-show host Rush Limbaugh called Fluke a slut and a prostitute because she wanted student health insurance to cover contraception.3 That spectacle unfolded a few months after I had attended a Brainstorming Session hosted by the American Historical Association's Committee on Women Historians at the 2012 annual meeting of the AHA. A young woman graduate student asked the professors there for advice. "I have been told," she said, "not to wear my wedding ring to job interviews. What do I say if I am asked whether I'm married?" When I told this story to a senior woman colleague at the University of Calgary, she replied, "I didn't wear my wedding ring to job interviews." Both events evoked issues I thought we had settled in the 1970s. I want younger colleagues and students to find new challenges of their own, not grapple with my generation's. But it seems, as with many things, the past is rarely entirely past.

The third impetus for my reflections came on August 30 and 31, 2011, when I got calls from the *Calgary Herald* newspaper and the CBC's "Eye Opener" radio program, asking me to comment on a Statistics Canada report that the University of Calgary had the largest gender wage discrepancy among twenty-nine Canadian universities. During the 2010–2011 academic year, male professors at the University of Calgary earned, on average, \$20,168 more than female professors. The reporters asked me to comment because I had served on the committee that prepared a Faculty Salary Equity Report in 2005 that analyzed the gender difference in faculty salaries that existed in 2004, when the difference was \$16,179. The gap had grown by almost \$4,000 in seven years. On the face of it these figures did not look good. I returned to our findings from 2005 seeking clues to sources of persistent inequities.

All three events represented the residue of past discrimination and gendered social expectations. They were evidence of continuing inequities, but they could also obscure considerable progress. Sometimes I return to the past to remind myself how far we've come.

I entered kindergarten in 1952. By 2012 I had spent six decades in educational institutions in the United States and Canada and for each of those sixty years gender had mattered. I knew in my gut the answer to "Are we there yet?" "No, but we have come light years from my years as a student." My high school physics teacher asked me and the only other girl in his class to drop the course so he could discuss the subject "with greater frankness." We stayed and endured his repertoire of lame sexist jokes. My statistics professor in graduate school announced that he didn't expect any women to pass the course and tried to ensure that outcome by making every question on the first exam about football.<sup>6</sup>

When I entered graduate school at the University of Michigan, there was only one woman in the history department, Sylvia Thrupp, a medievalist. She was there because someone had endowed a chair for a woman, the Alice Freeman Palmer Chair, named for the founding president of Wellesley College who was a Michigan alumna. Dr. Thrupp was hired in 1961 only after the department tried and failed to break the terms of the bequest so it could hire a man. This would not have surprised Sylvia Thrupp, who earned her BA at the University of British Columbia in 1925, her MA there in 1928, and her doctorate in medieval history at the University of London in 1931, but who found it hard to find work in Canada. She wrote Walter Sage, her mentor at UBC, that she was somewhat discouraged in her job search by the "anti-feminist feeling in the eastern universities." "At McGill," she wrote, "they once had a woman in history whom they didn't like and have never taken the risk again and never will while the present staff lives." Chester Martin, head of the University of Toronto department, "also made it clear," she wrote, that "he would appoint only men." Thrupp worked as a non-tenure-track instructor at UBC from 1935-1944 and taught a year as a special lecturer at U of T before getting hired as an assistant professor at the University of Chicago in 1945, fourteen years after she earned her PhD. She was a distinguished scholar, the founder and editor of Comparative Studies in Society and History, whose books and articles on guilds and on demography broke new ground in medieval social history. When she died, her University of Michigan colleague Raymond Grew wrote that "Thrupp had made her way in a scholarly world reluctant to grant women permanent positions, battling without bitterness for ideas more than status." I have no idea whether she battled without bitterness; I do know that in 1970 some of her male colleagues felt she was hired only because she was a woman. I know she did not make full professor for

almost three decades after earning her last degree; that she did not marry until age eighty-three.<sup>7</sup>

Dr. Thrupp, like many Canadian women of her generation, left Canada for graduate study and employment. The situation was slightly better in the United States because Alice Freeman Palmer and other women founded women's colleges which, by the late-19<sup>th</sup> century, employed women faculty. Most of these women were single, though "singleness" at that time covered a spectrum of intimate realities. At a time when women were virtually required to choose career or marriage, they chose career, but not necessarily as a choice over marriage to a man. Some of these educational pioneers had intimate partnerships with other women, and they all had access to the support of feminist colleagues and communities.

Although the wedding ring question that prompted my lecture concerned a heterosexual woman's marriage, by 1972 the "marriage issue" was even more fraught for lesbian academics, who could not marry their partners. Canada did not legalize same-sex marriage nationally until 2005; the United States did not legalize it until 2016, when the Supreme Court struck down all laws banning same-sex marriage. Some provinces and states legalized same-sex marriages before the landmark national policies, but for lesbian and non-binary academics, decisions to discuss their partnerships or to come out to their students were infinitely more difficult than straight women's very real dilemmas about how much personal information to share with potential employers. In an interview situation, even after same-sex marriage was legal, there were no reliably safe answers to questions about intimate partnerships. The unspoken questions for all women concerned institutional fears about partner hires and pregnancy, adoption, and maternity leaves, as well as sexist and homophobic biases.

After the 1920s, as women faculty retired, they were most often replaced by men, even at the Seven Sisters colleges that pioneered U.S. women's higher education. I attended Antioch College, founded by abolitionists in 1853, the second college in the United States to admit both African Americans and women. When I arrived there in 1965, there were fewer than five women among the fulltime tenure-stream faculty.

There were enormous changes after my years in college and graduate school in the numbers of women earning degrees and entering the faculty ranks. In both Canada and the United States, women gained access to higher education in increasing numbers and became a majority of undergraduate students. In the United States, women of all racial ethnic groups earned the majority of degrees in 2008–2009: 62 percent of

associate's degrees, 57 percent of bachelor's degrees, 60 percent of masters, and 52 percent of doctorates. The figures were higher among African American students, among whom women earned 68 percent of associate's degrees, 66 percent of bachelor's degrees, 72 percent of master's degrees, 62 percent of first-professional degrees, and 67 percent of PhDs. Among Hispanic students, women earned 62 percent of associate's degrees, 61 percent of bachelor's degrees, 64 percent of master's degrees, 53 percent of first-professional degrees, and 57 percent of doctoral degrees. White females earned more degrees than White males at each degree level except first-professional degrees, of which they earned 46 percent. This was enormous progress since 1972, when women were outnumbered at all levels.

In Canada and at the University of Calgary, the gains were also impressive. Among Canadian university students in 2010, 58.1 percent of undergraduates were women, 54.1 percent of master's students, and 46.4 percent of doctoral students.<sup>10</sup> At the University of Calgary, the figures were somewhat lower but still good: 53 percent of undergraduates and 51 percent of graduate students.<sup>11</sup>

Yet increased access to higher education did not mean economic or social equity for women after they graduated. In March 2011, the White House released the first comprehensive report on the status of American Women since 1963 when President Kennedy's Commission on the Status of Women published its findings. The 2011 report found that women were a majority of American undergraduates, that younger women were more likely than younger men to earn university or graduate degrees, and that the proportions of women and men in the workforce had nearly equalized. Women's wages constituted a significant share of household income. 12 In both Canada and the United States, women's incomes maintained the middle-class status of many two-income households. But the White House report found that women's wages still lagged significantly behind those of men with comparable educations and that "gains in education and labor force involvement have not yet translated into wage and income equity." At all levels of education, women earned about 75 percent of what their male counterparts earned in 2009—still an improvement over the 59 percent when the U.S. Equal Pay Act was signed in 1963.<sup>13</sup> Women were more likely than men to live in poverty, in part because of these lower earnings and in part because unpartnered and divorced women usually raise and support their children. These economic inequities were even more acute for women of color.14

In neither the United States nor Canada had the gains in educational attainment translated to women's representation in the professoriate, nor to gender equity in hiring, promotion, tenure, or salaries. In 2003, Canada ranked below Australia, New Zealand, the United Kingdom, and the United States for women among full-time faculty.<sup>15</sup> By 2010, women comprised 20 percent of Canadian full professors, 31.4 percent of associate professors, 42.9 percent of assistant professors, and 15.4 percent of university presidents—a figure that rose to 23 percent with the appointment of Dr. Elizabeth Cannon as the first woman president of the University of Calgary in 2010. 16 South of the border, women earned doctorates at record rates, but our position in the academy had not kept pace. Despite enormous gains, women remained more likely than men to be part time, not tenure track, or in colleges and community colleges rather than in graduate research universities. In 1972 women were 27 percent of all faculty; in 2009, women's representation had increased to 42 percent of full-time faculty. Women were only 9 percent of full professors in 1972, 28 percent in 2009. Given these trends, it was estimated in 2006 that it would take almost sixty years for women to be half of the full-time faculty.<sup>17</sup>

Yet as women entered the profession, the numbers of full-time faculty began to shrink, and women remained over-represented in the growing ranks of part-timers and sessional instructors. By the fall of 2009, threefourths of all U.S. teaching faculty were in contingent positions, including full- and part-time non-tenure-track faculty and graduate students.<sup>18</sup> As more women joined the professoriate, the status and job security of those positions declined. And there were scattered signs, too early to be considered trends, that bore watching as indicators of slowed or reversing progress. In 1980, women comprised just 14 percent of all U.S. history faculty; by 2008, women approached 31 percent of historians compared with 42.5 percent representation throughout all fields, and the rate of growth had slowed. The cohort who entered the discipline in the 1980s and 1990s was advancing to the higher ranks, but the numbers of women entering the field as assistant professors had dropped by about a fourth, and far fewer women, proportionately, were entering the profession than were earning doctorates. In 2003, 32.8 percent of assistant professors were women, compared to 41 percent of recent history PhDs.<sup>19</sup>

Women earned less in every rank than our male colleagues, in all types of institutions. The salary disadvantage in all U.S. institutions was about 7 percent for assistant and associate professors in 2011, 12 percent for full professors. Because women remained over-represented in the

lowest ranks, in less lucrative fields, and in less prestigious institutions, faculty women's salaries had remained about 80 percent of men's since the 1970s.<sup>20</sup> Which brought me back to the still unsolved issue of pay equity.

The report I co-authored in 2005 was not the first to address the gender gap in pay at the University of Calgary. In 1979, Wayne Kelly of the Office of Institutional Analysis conducted a "Faculty Salary Study." In 1996 Dr. Jim Frideres prepared "Income Distribution for Males and Females at the University of Calgary, 1966-1995." The Status of Women at the University of Calgary, 2001 recommended regular reviews and listed pay equity as one of the top five priorities to improve the status of women in the university.<sup>21</sup> In 2003, the Academic Women's Association conducted a Faculty Salary Equity Study with support from then-President's Adviser on Women's Affairs, Dr. Hermina Joldersma, to determine if much had changed since the Frideres study. In 2004, we found that full-time women faculty earned approximately 82 percent of men's salaries, a 2 percent gain since 1996.22 In 2011, despite the larger dollar difference in average salaries, rising faculty pay scales meant that the gap had narrowed proportionately while the dollar amount had increased; women's salaries were 84.6 percent of men's.23

For the 2005 study, Dr. Jean Wallace conducted a multiple regression analysis to account for variables that might affect earnings. She found that men were more concentrated in the upper ranks and had worked on average 6.6 years more since their last degree. However, even taking into account differences in rank, education, work history, and years since the last degree, we could not explain \$2,643 of the difference between men's and women's salaries. He should be noted as well that none of these figures included honoraria, research supplements, and market supplements (that is, salary increases to make some fields competitive with what scholars could earn outside the university). Market supplements in particular tend to be concentrated in faculties with proportionately more men. <sup>25</sup>

There were other troubling indicators. Part of the wage discrepancies began at hire: there was a significant \$2,898 gap in starting salaries for women assistant professors, and women were disproportionately concentrated at the assistant and associate ranks at hire. Three times more men than women were hired in as associate and full professors. <sup>26</sup> Part of the difference was related to the gendered representation in fields and faculties. Women earn more doctorates in the Humanities, Arts, and Education, and have made the biggest gains in admission to the ranks of these faculties. At the University of Calgary, in some largely female faculties like

nursing and social work, fewer faculty have doctorates. Also troubling was the fact that all faculty with "prior work history at the University of Calgary," earned on average \$732 less annually than faculty without prior work experience there.<sup>27</sup> While years since the last degree can result in some salary differences, it did not explain why men earned on average \$1,233 per year for each year since their last degree, but women only \$758, or 61 percent of the annual increase for men.<sup>28</sup>

Factors such as maternity leaves and dislocation due to partner moves did not explain this difference. There were, however, gendered differences related to family and life cycle. Significantly more women than men had taken leaves in the prior five years. There had been only thirty-six adoption, maternity, and parental leaves, and men took only three of them. The fact that men don't take maternity leave and that parental leaves are unpaid explains some of this difference. But three women in ten under age forty took a family leave, although 83 percent of male faculty were married compared to 65 percent of the women.<sup>29</sup>

These patterns are not unique to the University of Calgary, and considerable research has sought to explain continuing gender differences. A number of studies, including one at the University of Calgary, have found that women faculty in particular and shorter people with higher voices in general tend to get lower student evaluations.<sup>30</sup> The ranking of journals in some fields assigns lesser value to journals devoted specifically to gender research, or to knowledge directed at practical application more than theory. Studies over several decades have found that women spend more time teaching on average than men, and specifically on undergraduate teaching and advising. Hermina Joldersma's survey of 67 faculty from Science, Engineering, and Kinesiology for her 2005 Next Steps report found that women spent on average 55.74 hours a week on work compared to 51.42 for men, and 14.53 hours on childcare or other caring work—over twice the 7.22 for men.<sup>31</sup> A 2011 study found that disproportionate time spent in teaching and service presented a significant obstacle to promotion for women associate professors. All associate professors worked an average of 64 hours a week, but men spent seven and a half hours a week more on their research. The women spent an hour a week more teaching, mentored an additional two hours a week, and spent five hours more on service.32 The need to have women represented on committees—a goal that I endorse—has meant a disproportionate service load for women throughout my years in the academy, particularly at the higher ranks.

So far, I have presented a lot of numbers that follow a pattern almost as predictable as salary equity reports. The reason the numbers matter is the people behind the averages, and the clues the numbers offer to the history and the lives they represent. I interpret the numbers at least partly through the lens of my own experience. So, in the interests of transparency and to suggest some patterns and changes, I leave the seemingly concrete world of statistics for the more suspect terrain of the personal.

I began thinking about some of what I shared in this lecture in 2004, during a health crisis—thankfully long resolved. For two months, as I recovered from surgery, I had time to think. I had always accepted that it would be a long struggle to achieve gender equity. But I realized that somewhere in the ahistorical recesses of my mind I had assumed that we would reach equity in the academy before I retired, or at least before I died. The equity I imagine includes equity in education, hiring, promotion, and pay, for starters. I also hoped that some of the particularities of women's professional life cycles might influence the rules and culture of the profession. And I hoped that we would not just add women to the curriculum, but that we would rethink it from the perspectives of women, people of color, people of all classes and genders, and so on. I wanted not simply to add women to existing structures and textbook narratives, but also to achieve equity of knowledge production.

I had to confront that my timeline, if not my hopes, represented an ahistorical fantasy— that a lot would remain to be done long after I would be part of the effort. I began thinking about what I needed to do to nurture my hopes toward fruition. I had somehow gotten to be a senior member of the profession, and it seemed time to tell the stories I had not been telling for fear of seeming to make excuses or of being pigeonholed as an "abrasive woman." Mine is only one life; all women have their own stories. But I think that those of us who have lived through changes in higher education need to tell our stories, as benchmarks of how far women have come and as a caution about where, without continued vigilance, we could return.

I thought again about the troubled connections of the personal and the professional on January 7, 2012, at the American Historical Association conference when I attended the annual breakfast meeting of the Committee on Women Historians. The speaker, Barbara Young Welke, who holds a dual appointment in law and history at the University of Minnesota, moved many to tears with her paper, "Telling Stories: A Meditation on Love, Loss, History, and Who We Are." With clarity, grace, and an extraordinary balance of openness and restraint, Welke structured

her talk around the letters she had written daily for a year and half to her daughter Frances, who died suddenly from a cerebral hemorrhage just after her eighteenth birthday. Welke periodically interrupted the words that maintain her daughter's presence, to ruminate on how her personal tragedy influenced her scholarship, which deals with how flammable fabrics have devastated children who suffered disabling and fatal burns. Acknowledging her empathy for burn victims' parents while recognizing what separates their losses from her own, Welke urged historians not to drown out the emotions that draw us to our subjects, not to leach the humanity from our subjects to get at larger theoretical or historiographic principles. She did not ask us to abandon general conclusions, just not to forget the people behind them. My statistics matter. So do the life experiences they suggest.

Welke, from the vantage of an intensely personal loss, asked how we should account for personal factors in professional contexts. How should we record such catastrophic interruptions as the loss of a child on a curriculum vita? Curriculum vitae. The words mean the record of a life. And yet women have for good reason erased from our vitas personal details like marital or partnership status and children. The normative male faculty member when I entered college had a wife who did the household chores and primary parenting. Being married helped men's careers. Families were assumed to be liabilities for women, and those assumptions limited women's access to degrees and to academic careers. It was very important for my generation to separate the personal from the professional—to insist that our minds and our work mattered, but not our intimate partners or children, not our biology or our reproductive systems, not our personal lives. And yet I became convinced that to make sense of the numbers and to safeguard the gains made since 1972 we must address what connects the personal and the professional. The marginal notes that don't appear on my CV record the not-so-hidden assumptions I encountered in the 1970s. I use them to return to the subtexts of the statistics: the impacts of family on careers, the assessment of women's teaching and scholarship, the value assigned to different kinds of knowledge, and the continuing projects of equity in education, in professional advancement, and in knowledge production.

Family. Mine was extraordinary. Both of my grandmothers earned university degrees, one of them before 1900, at a time when gender and Jewish quotas at many universities made their achievements doubly extraordinary. My parents married in 1943, when my mother was 18. My Dad

put her through her last two years of university and then through medical school. She earned her MD, practiced psychiatry until she retired at age 80, and had four kids without stopping. My parents joked that I made it half-way through the second year of medical school before I dropped out. There was never any question that I would go to college, only where I would go and what I would study. My Mom showed me I could do anything—and that it would be hard. Although she pioneered in child and adolescent psychiatry, she spent decades longer than her peers as an associate professor and earned far less.

When I got to college, I encountered conflicted messages about being smart and being female. Some of those messages came from me. During my third year, I suddenly had trouble reading. I could read, but I couldn't tell you what I had read. At some deep level I was trying to become a dumb blonde, certain that that was the only way to attract a man. I was blessed with a perceptive faculty adviser, a philosopher named Jim Green. At the beginning of the next quarter Jim told me "There's a great class on the European Enlightenment. You should take it. There were some great thinkers then. You'll love it." The professor was Hannah Goldberg, a large, vibrant, brilliant woman who taught part time because her husband was in the English department, and who had a young daughter. Hannah was a galvanizing teacher and an even more important model. Sometime during that class, I began to be able to read again. When I accused Jim of deliberate manipulation, he just shrugged and said, "You wouldn't be able to hear anything I could say—you had to see what you can be."

Hannah was an exceptional mentor, but she did not get hired fulltime until her husband suddenly died. She and several male professors encouraged me to think about graduate school, but the chair of the history department encouraged me to consider high school teaching the same day he advised my friend Steve to go on for a doctorate.

Antioch students alternated quarters working off campus with quarters studying on campus, and I had to decide whether to apply to graduate school during the fall of 1969, while I was in Boulder working at the Western History Collections at the University of Colorado. So, I sought advice from a senior western historian in the University of Colorado history department. He told me I should not go to graduate school because I would just get married, and I would be taking a slot that should go to a man. I got mad enough to send in my applications.

I faced similar messages when it came to funding. In the spring of 1970, I was interviewed at Ohio State University by a selection committee

for Woodrow Wilson Graduate Fellowships. There were four senior historians on the committee, three men and one woman. The woman looked down and doodled except when she asked me a question. Most of the interview was predictable—questions about the Gilded Age, my research interests, Andrew Carnegie's attitudes about inheritance, and so on. And then, after forty-five minutes, the Chair of the Committee suddenly said, "And now, Miss Jameson, I must ask you—are there any young men in your life?" I was lucky. The woman looked up, smashed her fist on the table and said, "That is an inappropriate question. I will not allow her to answer it. Don't you open your mouth." I stayed obediently silent, and was, I think, the only woman or one of very few who made it through the selection process at OSU that year.

That woman, Mary Young, was one of the rare women, like Sylvia Thrupp and Hannah Goldberg, hired in U.S. history departments after World War II, who made an enormous difference for my generation. I did not want to study medieval history, and Dr. Thrupp was the only woman in the University of Michigan history department when I got there. But over in the Residential College, the University of Michigan honors college, there were some magnificent women professors, including Marilyn Blatt Young and Kathryn Kish Sklar, who were there because they were married to men in the history department and nepotism rules forbade hiring spouses.33 The catch was that history graduate students were not allowed to work with them because they weren't history department faculty. But I was in an interdisciplinary program in American Culture, and my program chair sensibly said that they were perfectly qualified scholars, and I should go work with them. They taught me much more than history. Marilyn told me that it was perfectly possible to combine career and family if I accepted that my family did not have to be able to eat off every surface in my house. One would suffice. I got lessons in teaching as well. Although I've never taken a women's history course, because there weren't any, I did readings in women's history with Kitty Sklar and assisted the first women's history class she taught.

I hadn't intended to study women. During my first year of graduate school I resented being assigned what I called the "women and" papers—about Margaret Fuller, the leading U.S. intellectual of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, and Kate Chopin, whose literature was just being rediscovered. Then I got engrossed. One day, standing in the History department, I told a friend I was really getting into women's history. An eminent historian stuck his head

out his office door and intoned: "Women's history? Why, that's just the history of dishwashing!"

My first reaction was anger. He meant, of course, that women had always done the same trivial things and were therefore unchanging, ahistorical. Women, I fumed, had done the same things men had: they had thought great thoughts, fought political battles, worked professionally. But the remark rankled. After fuming for several months, I decided he was right: women's history *is* in large measure the history of dishwashing, if by "dishwashing" we mean domestic labor, physically and socially reproducing human beings, and reinforcing or changing human cultures through daily acts.

When I assisted Kitty Sklar's women's history class, she assigned me two lectures, one on women and work in colonial America, and one on women and work in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. So, I headed off to the graduate library in search of sources. For the first lecture, I found Alice Morse Earle's classic *Colonial Dames and Good Wives*, published in 1895. I had to cut the pages—the book had not once been opened since the library acquired it. The assumption that women were private and trivial, men public and consequential had left Earle unopened on the library shelf for seventy-seven years. I cribbed my first lectures from books like Earle's and Edith Abbot's *Women in Industry* and the publications of the U.S. Women's Bureau of the Department of Labor—all legacies of the first generations of university-educated feminists.<sup>34</sup>

So began the unfinished project of recovering women's lives and women's stories. A generation of feminist scholarship has spanned academic discourses, the personal and the political, private lore and public history. It has always been a collective endeavor. During 1972–1973, a group of women professors and graduate students collectively taught the first Introduction to Women's Studies class at the University of Michigan. It was an extraordinary group. The faculty included Kathryn Sklar from History, Judith Bardwick from Psychology, Norma Diamond from Anthropology, and Linda Nochlin from Art History. My graduate student colleagues included names now familiar in many disciplines: Gayle Rubin and Rayna Rapp in Anthropology, Nancy Faires Conklin in Linguistics, and Lee Chambers Schiller in History. I am astounded now at the company I got to keep. The first semester we organized the course by discipline—women and history, women and psychology, women and art, and so one. The second semester we rethought our conceptual framework and organized it in three parts: Myths about Women, Socialization to the

Myths, and Resistance. We worked as volunteers, got over two hundred students a term, then refused to work for free anymore, and organized to establish a Women's Studies program, a journal, and a university day care center.

We had learned the importance of breaking isolation, and the extraordinary empowerment of beginning to see women as subjects of our own lives and authors of our own histories.

I was taken a bit aback, then, when I hit the job market. At my first job interview I was asked what form of birth control I used. Knowing there was no correct answer, and the job was lost, I replied, "Why are you asking me that question? Are you asking every candidate?" Sandra Fluke's experience reminded me of that moment, and of the combination of prurient interest and neglect with which the academy treated women's sexuality. When I assisted Robin Jacoby's first women's history class in the University of Michigan History department, the first student who came to my office didn't come to talk about history. She wanted advice and support about an unplanned pregnancy. She was not the last student who came to me simply because I was a woman. The university health services were not prepared to provide contraception or advice. The health service at Antioch would prescribe contraception only if a student had a note from her parents. For many years I gathered the names of professionals better prepared than I to counsel students and did my best, sharing publications from women's selfhelp collectives. My favorite pamphlet was from the University of Toronto: How to Have Intercourse Without Getting Screwed.

My ill-fated first job interview notwithstanding, I did get a job at the University of Virginia, which had admitted African American students under court order in 1969 and women under court order in 1970. It was still highly gendered and racialized terrain when I was hired in 1976. Every year there was a lottery to select graduate students who got to live in the original slave quarters, which still lacked running water and were heated with wood stoves. I joined over sixty colleagues in the History department, a faculty that included one other White woman and one African American man, both untenured assistant professors. My office was on the first floor, where two White secretaries shared one office, two African American secretaries another office across the hall. We had an understanding. If they had news for me, they would signal me to meet them in the women's room, where no suspicious colleagues could hear us. That is where they told me that the African American woman who cleaned our offices had just had her electricity cut off because she couldn't pay her

bill on her University of Virginia pay. They wanted me to help pay her bill and to help hit up colleagues likely to contribute.

When I went to my first (obligatory) faculty cocktail party, a well-meaning senior colleague refreshed my drink for me, then turned red, and stammered, "Well, uh, mah deah, uh, well—have you managed to find a good gynecologist in Charlottesville yet?" He wanted to welcome me but simply didn't know how to think about or talk to a woman colleague. During my first year at Virginia, the other woman in my department, Susan Hirsch, came up for tenure. She, and three other equally well-qualified women in other departments, were all denied tenure, all for allegedly inadequate scholarship. Sue's tenure book, *Roots of the American Working Class: The Industrialization of Crafts in Newark, 1800–1860*, published by University of Pennsylvania Press, was one of the first histories of pre-Civil War class formation.<sup>35</sup> The day after her tenure denial, my department chair came to my office, discreetly closed the door, sat down, and said, "Don't worry my dear. We know you're a good one."

I left Virginia and took a less prestigious job at Loretto Heights College in Denver, directing its Research Center on Women and Women's Studies Program. The Sisters of Loretto founded Loretto Heights as a women's college. By the time I got there, they had left the convent, admitted male students, and turned the college over to lay trustees. It is, however, the only predominantly female institution in which I have worked, and I might be there still except that the trustees wearied of negotiating with a faculty union dominated by radical nuns. As they prepared to close the college and sell it to the local Jesuit men's school, they abolished my job and the profit-making childcare center. They did offer me \$4,000 a year to continue teaching. When I turned them down, the President asked me what my husband did for a living that I couldn't accept their offer.<sup>36</sup>

This brings me to an awkward period on my own CV. During 1984–1987 I taught as an adjunct at Denver-area universities and community colleges, consulted with the Colorado Department of Education, and worked as an independent contract historian for the Colorado State Council of Carpenters. I had no full-time appointment. During that time, I published eight articles and two books. I was fortunate finally to find Dean Julius Erlenbach at the University of Wisconsin – La Crosse who looked at my CV and said, "Well, you've done it in unusual order, but you've earned your rank," and hired me as an associate professor and chair of the new Women's Studies Department. But when I joined the faculty of the University of New Mexico, the History department there made me

agree in advance not to receive credit toward tenure for my two previous books, because they were completed before I entered the tenure stream, and later refused to credit them toward promotion to full professor.

I tell these stories to think about how far we have come in a generation and to think about the challenges ahead. Although some people may still *think* some of the sexist remarks I heard as a young historian, we've pretty much learned that it's gauche to say them. We can gauge some of the progress and some of the remaining inequities through numbers—numbers of women undergraduate and graduate students, numbers of women earning doctorates and winning teaching positions, numbers of women in each academic rank and in university administration, numbers of women in the indexes of survey texts and on syllabi, and—yes—the numbers on men's and women's paychecks. But numbers alone provide neither the analysis of how gender operates in higher education nor the roadmaps to achieving greater equity.

The numbers of women in higher education matter because education should help women achieve better lives for themselves and their families. Numbers matter because it is hard to work in isolation. I remember sitting in a department meeting at the University of New Mexico in the early 1990s and realizing that I had six women colleagues, that we were a fourth of the department. I thought, "Oh wow—I can sneeze and they can't say 'All Women Get the Flu'." Because the pressure of being the only woman carried with it the pressure to represent *all* women. It was an enormous luxury to be able to be as idiosyncratically myself as any male colleague.

Increased numbers and increased diversity in the professoriate bring new perspectives and new experiences to scholarship. When I began to consider the history of dishwashing, I did not expect to find women in other times and cultures doing what I did, but I did use my experience to ask new questions about the histories of housework and childrearing and reproduction. Shortly after my angry reaction to "dishwashing," Juliet Mitchell visited the University of Michigan. Dr. Sklar had used Mitchell's article, "Women the Longest Revolution" in her Women's History class, and I had read Mitchell's *Woman's Estate* shortly before her visit. I was influenced by her model for analyzing women's histories by considering women's relationships to production, reproduction, sexuality, and the socialization of children.<sup>37</sup> Those analytical categories offered ways to think about histories of domesticity and how, for instance, household production or the socialization of children might be linked to industrial production and the children's views of their own adult options. Mitchell's categories

informed the questions I asked miners' wives in oral histories I recorded a few years later, and how I taught women's history. The early 1970s were a heady time as scholars in many fields began to think about how to put women at the center of our scholarship, and how to forge more inclusive curricula.

Certainly, we've come a long distance toward adding women to the curriculum in many fields. At the same time, we have not yet re-evaluated all canonical standards from the diverse perspectives of an expanded cast. History remains largely framed by the nation or the region and inevitably privileges the public arenas of war and politics from which most women have been excluded for most history. I once turned down a job because my primary responsibility would have been teaching great books to engineering students, and it would have been my responsibility to add women to a great books curriculum that at that point included only one woman, Jane Austen. By the Great Books criteria most books by and about workers, women, or people of color would be excluded. To some extent, the unexplained gaps in women's salaries represent assumptions about what is canonical, what scholarship is most valuable, which journals are top tier.

The data on salary differentials with which I began mirror similar data in similar studies for many institutions. The numbers explain large portions of salary inequities but leave significant amounts unexplained. I am concerned, as I was in 2004, not only by what the numbers say but also by the models we use to generate them and how we interpret them. They leave unaddressed, untheorized, and unremediated the persistent differences. But equally concerning is the tendency not to interrogate the explanations that we can account for: last degree, years in rank, publications, work experience, employing institution, and so on. Think, for instance, about the \$4,000 salary loss at hire for those with prior experience working at the University of Calgary. What it says essentially is that after working as a sessional for low pay and with little time to publish, a colleague earns less at entry, a deficit that compounds throughout a career. I think about this in the context of Sylvia Thrupp's fourteen years as an adjunct after her last degree, of my three "lost" years teaching and writing between 1984 and 1987, as I watch women graduate students decide whether to apply for jobs because they might not be compatible with a partner's career. Our colleagues lose money; we risk losing the benefit of their experience.

Equally problematic, many of the gendered differences are often explained as the consequences of women's individual choices. Women, this argument goes, "choose" disciplines that pay less, choose (sometimes) to

have children, choose to spend more time caregiving rather than taking full-time tenure-track jobs, and just don't choose to put in the time and effort to advance professionally. We do not expect most men to choose between career and family. Women's choices are constrained by our options, by gendered jobs at home and at work, by implicit biases against women, by caregiving and service, by stereotypes about female competence, by the physiology of human reproduction, by socially constructed gendered expectations, and are compounded by race, gender, sexuality, and other marginalizing factors. Part of the issue is the female academic life cycle, which may include more years in part-time employment before ever getting into tenure-track position and which may involve, for some of us, a different productivity cycle.

So, I offer a final story and a few modest proposals. In 1988 I found myself with a two-year-old, a new job where I chaired a department and taught three classes a term, and an embarrassment of success. I had applied to present papers at five conferences, thinking I'd get accepted at two or three. But I scored all five, to the profound irritation of my husband, and to my exhaustion. At the fifth conference in six weeks, I found myself rooming with Louise Tilly, who I knew only slightly but admired enormously for her pioneering work in European women's history. When I'd been at Michigan, her husband, Charles Tilly, had been a senior member of the Sociology department. Louise had earned her BA and MA by 1955. She taught part-time at the University of Michigan-Flint, Michigan State University, and the University of Michigan while raising four children and earning a PhD in 1973 from the University of Toronto. Finally, the University of Michigan hired her as the first Chair of the new Women's Studies Program. Her pathbreaking co-authored Women, Work and Family followed in 1978, and after nearly a decade at Michigan, the New School for Social Research wisely offered her and Charles Tilly positions founding a new graduate program in historical studies.<sup>38</sup> In 1992 Louise Tilly was elected President of the American Historical Association. In 1988 I poured out my doubts to her: "I have a young child, I have an intensive teaching schedule, I'm in my early 40s, I'm tired, and I just don't know if I can make it in this profession." She calmly replied, "You are measuring yourself against a male model, dear. Don't worry. We do our best work in our 50s and 60s." Louise Tilly's model is not every woman's, but it helped me stop measuring my productivity and potential against a professional model generated by elite men with substantial domestic support.

Professional life cycles, like everything else, are historically constructed, changing, and changeable. Many of us, especially younger colleagues, have different assumptions about how to combine personal and professional lives, and those of their partners, and we have new policies to support childbearing and adoption, to address sexual harassment, and to enable spousal hires. Still, it is not easy, and the fact that women bear children and men earn more often means that women's careers are delayed or compromised to other goals. After years of part-time work, we may be so grateful to get a job that we don't bargain very hard over starting salaries.

I don't have answers for the hard questions and hard choices behind these numbers and lived realities. To destabilize and disrupt them, I think we need to interrogate how the normative academic career path was constructed, and how those normative expectations have devalued and penalized women. I offer a few immodest proposals, not as carefully formulated solutions, but as invitations to the conversations that may lead us there. For starters, I suggest that we cannot achieve equity or diversity if we measure achievement against a single standard, or a fixed hierarchy of value. Anthropologists have long since abandoned the 19th-century model of a hierarchy of cultures that progressed from hunters and gatherers to herders to farmers. Even the categories contained gender biases, based as they were on men's jobs. Now we grapple with cultural relativism, and the complex and contested nature of relationships in any culture. What if we apply this concept more broadly, to the ways we assess academic achievement? What if there were not a single measure of what made a good novel, or a good history? What if there were not a single standard for what constitutes a top-tier journal? What if we rewarded meritorious service and teaching as we do scholarship? What if there were not a single normative academic career path?

And I suggest, with some unease, that we cannot assume a clear separation of the personal and the professional. One step toward gender equity might be crediting more generously at hire the experiences of colleagues who have previously worked in public sectors or as sessional instructors. Most of Sylvia Thrupp's female classmates worked in public history if they found jobs at all, as did most women who earned graduate degrees in history before the 1980s and a growing number since then. They built archives and museums and did research for government agencies. Like my own work from 1984–1987, their labor could have brought new perspectives to any faculty that hired them, but they were likely to be paid as newly minted PhDs. Part of the unexplained difference in what women and men earn

for each year since our last degrees may lie in measures of productivity that do not account for the diversity of our professional experience and what we produce and contribute. The gender difference in faculty salaries is better than income differences in the population as a whole, and it has improved light years since the 1960s, when women in the U.S. earned 59 cents for each dollar a man took home. But the \$7,000 annual difference in University of Calgary faculty salaries adds up over a lifetime, to lower pensions and greater stress juggling finances, family, and work. We may continue to make progress, but until we read the data about gender inequality to fix it rather than explain it, we won't get to equity.

I make these suggestions with trepidation. It is comforting to think that quantitative measures are fair, that student evaluations and numbers of articles are fair and objective standards, and there are huge dangers in opening up multiple criteria and subjective assessments. Yet the objective measures are not addressing the unexplained differences, and they can flatten out the richness that diverse perspectives bring to teaching and learning. I have told my own stories to illustrate both what has changed and the challenges we face, but I tell them with misgivings. I do not wish to appear either egocentric or representative—I do not presume to speak for all women, or for all White middle-class women. I fear reinforcing the stereotype of the self-involved and self-referential American. And I feel uncomfortably vulnerable. Linda Hall, an eminent Mexican historian, and my colleague at the University of New Mexico, once said "I think every woman in this business secretly thinks she's an imposter." For my lecture, I chose to wear a brown and white houndstooth jacket with leather-covered buttons and brown elbow patches that reminded me of the uniforms many men wore when I was in graduate school—corduroy or tweed jackets with leather buttons and elbow patches. And pipes. I was delighted when I found a feminine version, but I knew it was female academic drag. Showing my vita is dangerous because you may figure out that beneath the drag I'm really an imposter. Until we can confront the historical residues and normative expectations that fuel that fear, we can't achieve equity.

And I risk sharing my stories because I still hope. As I told the "Eye Opener" and the *Herald*, I am hopeful about the potential for progress at the University. Sandra Fluke gave me hope. Rush Limbaugh tried to intimidate her and sparked a much bigger reaction than he bargained for.

Feminists in the 1970s would say, "The personal is the political." The personal is also the professional and the institutional. Breaking silence and sharing our stories can establish common ground, can help us

analyze when differences are rooted in institutional constraints, and when we need to acknowledge individual shortcomings. The changes I have lived through were won collectively, with the support of other women and of many supportive men. Forty years after Title IX we hadn't reached the Promised Land, but we were no longer in the wilderness. We hadn't achieved equity, and I no longer expected to before I left higher education. I hope that my experiences may become an amusing story about how it used to be. There are plenty of challenges for the future. Full-time faculty are shrinking, particularly in the "softer" disciplines gendered feminine because they are about caregiving or art or beauty or non-utilitarian knowledge. In this context, gender equity is not a women's issue; it matters for anyone who cares about the arts and humanities. Universities remain, despite increasing numbers of women, profoundly gendered spaces, where women are concentrated in specific disciplines, most support staff are women, and immigrant women clean our offices. In 2011-2012 the University of Virginia students struck to increase custodians' pay. I take enormous strength and pride from how far we have come. It has been a lot of fun, in no small part because I've had great companions on the journey, like those who came to hear my talk. And I take heart from Louise Tilly: our best work does not come in the first forty years. It lies before us in the decades ahead.

#### NOTES

The issues addressed in this article remain pertinent. See my concluding remarks in chapter 14. I am grateful for the help of wonderful research assistants, Amy McKinney and Andrew Varsanyi; thanks, too, to Shawn Brackett for his assistance as I prepared the essay for publication.

Additional Sources: I based my comments on discrimination against LBTG+ faculty on my own observations and conversations with colleagues. In 2014 a study based on interviews with ten lesbian and queer women faculty at Calgary institutions of higher education was published, documenting their decisions about whether and how to disclose their sexuality in the classroom. See Elly-Jean Nielsen and Kevin G. Alderson, "Lesbian and Queer Women Professors Disclosing in the Classroom: An Act of Authenticity," *The Counseling Psychologist* 42:8 (2014): 1084–107. See also Christi R. McGeorge, Thomas Stone Carlson, and Candice A. Maier "Are We There yet? Faculty Members' Beliefs and Teaching Practices Related to the Ethical Treatment of Lesbian, Gay, and Bisexual Clients," *Journal of Marital and Family Therapy* 43:2 (2017): 322–37 and Darcy Hango, "Harassment and Discrimination among Faculty and Researchers in Canada's Postsecondary Institutions," Statistics Canada, *Insights on Canadian Society*, Release Date July 16, 2021, concludes that women, sexual minority groups, and persons with disabilities are disproportionately likely to experience harassment and discrimination. https://www150. statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/75-006-x/2021001/article/00006-eng.htm, accessed January 17, 2024.

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- 3 Sandra Fluke and her conflicts with Committee member Darell Issa and conservative talk-show personality Rush Limbaugh were well known in 2012. For contemporary coverage, see for instance Tom Shine, "Rep. Darrell Issa Bars Minority Witness, a Woman, on Contraception," ABC News, February 16, 2012, https://abcnews.go.com/blogs/politics/2012/02/rep-darrell-issa-bars-minority-witness-a-woman-on-contraception-2, accessed May 6, 2021; "Sandra Fluke Finally Testifies before Congress," Press Release, House Committee on Oversight and Reform, February 23, 2012, https://oversight.house.gov/news/press-releases/sandra-fluke-finally-testifies-before-congress, accessed May 6, 2021; Maggie Fazeli Fard, "Sandra Fluke, Georgetown student called a 'slut' by Rush Limbaugh, speaks out," Washington Post, March 2, 2012.
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- 10 Postsecondary Pyramid Equity Audit 2010, Canadian Federation for the Humanities and Social Sciences, http://www.unb.ca/PAR-L/Pyramid2010.pdf, accessed March 7, 2012.
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The gendered correlation between field and salary: The salary gap between Faculties (Appendix A) is much more significant than between genders. However, the lowest-paid Faculties are also those with the highest proportion of women. That in some of these latter Faculties proportionately fewer PhDs are held (e.g. NU, SW) can partly explain this, but not e.g. the \$10,750 difference between Humanities and Kinesiology (note that market supplements were not included in this study). This appears to confirm studies elsewhere showing that fields perceived as "masculine" receive higher status and rewards than those perceived as 'feminine'.

- 28 Faculty Salary Equity Report, tables 18 and 20.
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- 31 Joldersma, Next Steps, 17-26, 95, 112, tables 13 and 112.
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- 35 Susan E. Hirsch, *Roots of the American Working Class: The Industrialization of Crafts in Newark*, 1800–1860 (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1978).
- 36 See Elizabeth Jameson, "Reflections on the Backlash," *Frontiers* 8:3 (1986): 79–82.
- 37 Juliet Mitchell, "Women: The Longest Revolution," *New Left Review* no. 40, December 1966; *Woman's Estate* (New York: Random House, 1971), 101.
- 38 Louise A. Tilly and Joan W. Scott, *Women, Work, and Family* (New York: Holt, Rinehart & Winston, 1978).