

Women's Studies Professors in Canada: A Collective Self-Portrait

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Introduction

WOMEN'S STUDIES APPEARED ON THE ACADEMIC SCENE in Canada at the beginning of the 1970s. This constitutes one of the most important changes in our curriculum, as well as perhaps the most far-reaching re-orientation in modern times of the scholarly paradigm itself. Feminist scholars have questioned the basic assumptions underlying many disciplines, have questioned the status of women—and thereby of men—in Canadian universities, and have started to re-create knowledge in a host of disciplines—primarily but not exclusively in the social sciences and humanities. Most of this work is still on-going.

Nevertheless, the impact on Canadian universities has been considerable. Many international,

national and regional conferences have been held; special journals have been created while other, already existing journals have passed guidelines concerning non-sexist language and some also concerning non-sexist content; five federally funded chairs in women's studies have been appointed, and some granting councils and universities have scrutinized their own structures and attitudes. At the same time as women's studies were introduced at the university level, between 1970 and 1988, the student body has shifted from being primarily male to being slightly more female than male.

Yet we know next to nothing concerning the development and current status of women's studies in Canada, or, for that matter, elsewhere. A search through the literature¹ revealed a profound state of collective ignorance. Looking only at what we

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know about the development and status of women's studies in Canada, we find two early reports on feminist approaches to scholarship, one looking at the exclusion of women from ideological structures (Smith, 1975), the other looking at what feminist research had been done (Eichler, 1975). Both articles are slanted towards sociology. Another early article locates feminist research in its social setting, but provides little information on women's studies *per se* (Eichler, 1977). A more recent article attempts another overview of feminist research and presents a first periodicization of the development of women's studies which is, however, oriented towards the social sciences (Eichler, 1985). The most comprehensive attempt of an overview of the development of women's studies to date is a historical assessment (Strong-Boag, 1983) which is, not surprisingly, slanted towards the developments in history as a discipline. Its depth varies dramatically with respect to certain institutions and geographic areas, obviously reflecting the author's personal knowledge. In particular, only one institution in Quebec is considered. Dagg and Thompson (1988) in their recent book include a chapter on women's studies which is, however, marred by a rather unsystematic approach.

Beyond these few crumbs of information, we have two overviews of existing programmes and courses (Brodribb, 1987; GIERF, 1989, for 13 francophone universities). The rest are very localized and/or personal descriptions of individual courses (Anderson, 1982; Hessing, 1978; Jacobson, 1973; Lequin, 1985; Lightman, 1978; Marsden, 1973; Morgan, 1981), programmes (Devor, 1988; Murdoch, 1981; Verthuy, 1978), descriptions of the status of women and/or women's studies at individual universities (Denis, 1985; Fulford and Pritzker, 1983; Gillett et al., 1976; Kimball, 1985; Porter, 1983; Tite and Malone, 1990; Université Laval, 1980: 99-107; Villemure, 1983) and personal reflections on personal experiences (McCormack, 1985) or on the status of women's studies without a broad empirical base (Brodribb, 1985; Colby, 1978; Eichler, 1973; Gagnon, 1985; Latham, 1985; Nemiroff, 1978, 1978/79, 1985a and b, 1989; Payeur, 1984; Scott, 1980; Staton, 1980; Symons and Page, 1984: 210; Vandelac, 1989; Vellacott, 1985). A bit

of information is contained in accounts on feminist research (see papers in Andrew, 1989; Dagenais, 1986; Tancred-Sheriff, 1988).

Looking at the totality of this literature, we find that we know very little about women's/feminist studies as they have emerged and currently exist within Canadian universities. How, when, where, by whom and in what manner where they started? How did they develop? Is there a difference between women's studies and feminist studies? What are the linkages between women's/feminist studies and the women's movement?² Who are the people who have been influential in shaping the thoughts of professors who teach women's studies courses?

These and many other questions underlie the Canadian Women's Studies Project, of which this is the first report. Overall, the project aims to provide an analysis of a very important academic transformation by focusing on the people who have and still are constructing the field. This paper aims to serve as the basis on which all subsequent papers will rest, by providing a description of the overall project, in all its phases, and giving some of the basic descriptions of who the professors who teach women's studies at Canadian universities are.

The Project

Data collection for the project started in 1987 and proceeded in four phases, of which the last one is still in progress³ at this writing. At each instance, more than one phase of data collection was pursued simultaneously, and data manipulation (such as coding, entering data into the computer, etc.) proceeded while other data were still being collected. In some instances, further data collection hinged on preliminary data analysis.

Phase 1: Writing to Colleges and Universities

Phase 1 involved writing (in both official languages) to all universities and colleges in Canada which offer at least a bachelor's degree, asking for a copy of their calendar and any information on offerings in the area of women's/feminist studies that they might have.

In all, 166 requests for information were mailed. The initial response rate was 76%, which increased to 81% after a follow-up letter was mailed. The information thus obtained was then collated, analyzed and sent back to the universities and colleges for verification, as well as to all those who had not responded in the first two rounds. Some further telephone calls were also made.⁴ This increased the overall response rate to 98%, representing 100% of all universities and independent colleges in Canada.⁵ We are therefore confident that the information obtained reflects the *official* self-identification of universities with respect to their teaching activities in the area of women's/feminist studies,⁶ in 1988.⁷ In a different paper, we have analyzed the discrepancies about the nature and extent of the various activities between such official institutional self-identification and the information supplied by individual professors who actually do the teaching.⁸

In a nutshell, women's studies has achieved some degree of institutionalization at Canadian universities and colleges since the early 1970s when a few scattered courses were taught at a few select institutions. Of the 59 universities and colleges (not counting affiliated colleges or institutions), 29, or about half, offer or have proposed to offer either a minor, major or diploma in women's studies or have some special institute. Counting all forms of activities, at both the undergraduate and graduate level, only 14 universities (25%) have, according to their *official* self-definition, no offerings in the area, meaning that 75% of all universities do provide at least some courses in women's studies.

Phase 2: All Women's Studies Professors

The second phase involved a massive effort to, first, identify, and second, survey all professors who had ever taught at least one credit course in women's studies or from a feminist perspective at a Canadian university or college that offers at least a bachelor's degree.⁹ We were interested in identifying both part-time and full-time faculty, as well as former faculty who are no longer teaching at a university.

Not surprisingly, this was far from easy. We used a variety of means to identify names and addresses. We used mailing lists of relevant organizations;¹⁰ attended relevant conferences and handed out sheets with requests for names and addresses of eligible teachers;¹¹ we questioned particularly knowledgeable informants about other eligible respondents; we searched through old documents for names of current and former teachers, we checked through, each and every document that we received through Phase 1, including all the calendars; and we included a snow-balling question on the questionnaire used in Phase 2. Every lead provided by the first 600 respondents was followed up.

Some of the problems included coping with innumerable duplications, wrong or illegible addresses, and misspelt names.¹² In total, 1,872 names were received and mailed questionnaires in either English or French. Of these, 892 declared themselves as eligible and returned the filled-out questionnaire—after up to four follow-ups. We reached double the number of professors than we would have reached if we had restricted ourselves to such names as we obtained through calendars and other official publications.¹³ Another 350 returned the questionnaire, declaring themselves as ineligible. This constitutes a response rate of over 80%.¹⁴ We thus feel confident that we have reached the vast majority of eligible university teachers,¹⁵ and that we can draw on our data with some confidence as reflecting the views of women's studies professors in Canada in general.

Phase 3: Telephone Follow-Up Interviews with a Selected Sample

When designing a questionnaire that is supposed to be applicable to professors across the country, in very different types of institutions, in all disciplines, for people who are still at universities as well as those who have left them, for part-time as well as full-time instructors, all of whom have started their careers at very different points in time, and when all items must be precoded to allow for judicious data manipulation within a given time framework, it is not possible to ask many open-

ended questions, or to probe for interpretive comments. This being the case, we had planned to do a follow-up interview with a random sample of our study population to pursue some of the qualitative issues that could not be properly addressed in a large-scale questionnaire.

Although we originally planned on a random sample for purposes of generalizing to our entire population, some preliminary runs of the data¹⁶ from Phase 2 revealed that there were more men among our respondents than we had anticipated. This being so, we decided that a random sample would reduce our female respondents more than we wanted, while not including enough men to allow us to draw conclusions about them. The position of men in teaching women's studies is obviously different from that of women; men do not have women's experiences. There is also quite a controversy around the participation of men in women's studies (see, for example, Green and Piette, 1989; Jaggar, 1977/78; Kampf and Ohman, 1983; Klein, 1983; Lightman, 1978; McCormack, 1985:8; Rowland, 1982). We therefore applied for and obtained some additional funds which allowed us to interview a random sample of 100 of the *women* in our population, as well as all the men who could be reached (83 men out of a total of 108).

The follow-up interviews were conducted by a number of people¹⁷ (in French and English) and addressed a variety of issues, including how people first got involved, where they see women's studies going in the future, how they see the relationship between women's studies and the women's movement,¹⁸ and how they see the role of men in women's studies (the same questions were asked of both sexes).¹⁹

If we compare the population of women in Phase 3 with all remaining women, we find that, in most crucial areas, the match is very good. With respect to the highest degree, 64% of the Phase 3 women versus 70% of the remaining women had a doctoral degree, 32% of the Phase 3 women versus 28.1% of the remaining women had a master's degree, and the rest had other degrees. The compa-

table figures for the men were 89.2% of the Phase 3 versus 89.7% of the other men with a doctoral degree, and 7.2% versus 10.3% with a master's degree.

With respect to language in which professors taught, there is a direct correspondence for the women: 82% of Phase 3 women indicated English as the language of instruction versus 82.6% of the remaining women—not surprising, since we carefully stratified the sample of women by language of instruction. With the men, we had no such control, since we tried to interview all of them, but could not reach 29 out of the total number of 112 men (or a 74% response rate). Of those we missed, 3 were francophones out of a total of 8 francophone men.²⁰

Concerning their continued presence at a university, 13% of our Phase 3 versus 8.2% of the remaining women had left university employment, compared to 3.6% of the Phase 3 men versus 3.4% of the remaining men.

Finally, with respect to rank, 79.1% of our Phase 3 compared to 74% of the remaining women and 94.8% of the men compared to 92.8% of the remaining men were in some professorial rank rather than some other position. Overall, then, our Phase 3 respondents constitute a reasonably representative sample of our total population of women and men professors.

All interviews have been transcribed²¹ using a text base system²² that allows retrieval of information by any keyword.

Phase 4: Influential Thinkers

One of the questions asked of all the respondents in Phase 2 was:

Keeping in mind your own personal work, please list up to ten contemporary feminist authors/thinkers whose work you personally have found most useful in developing your own thinking. [These authors may be either within or outside of Canada as the case may be.]

Our intent was to identify the 20 most frequently named contemporary²³ authors and to interview them, by telephone, about their own work, their perception of women's studies, and so on. Altogether, to our surprise, 1,565 names were thus generated.

When looking over the list of the 20 most frequently named thinkers, we realized that the list as generated by the entire population was almost identical to the list generated by anglophone respondents alone, but varied by 50% from the list generated by francophone respondents alone. This is a function of numbers: 81.3% of our respondents have taught in English only, 14.9% in French only, and the other 3.8% in both languages.²⁴

We therefore decided to add the ten authors out of the twenty who were most frequently named by francophone respondents but who were not part of the list named by the total population to our list of thinkers to be interviewed, in order to facilitate a comparison between those thinkers who have been influential for anglophones with those who have been influential for francophones. This increased the number of people to be contacted by telephone—around the world—from 20 to 30.²⁵ In order to pay for telephone costs, transcribing costs, interviewing costs,²⁶ and so on, we needed additional money. Our first attempts to secure additional funds were unsuccessful, but we have now been successful and the interviews are currently proceeding.

Results

Who, then, are the professors in women's/feminist studies? To begin answering some of the questions posed in the beginning, we will look at some simple frequencies from Phase 2 of our study. As already stated, our basic criterion for including a professor in our population was that she or he had taught at least one course on women or from a feminist perspective at a Canadian university which gives at least a bachelor's degree.²⁷ Eight hundred and ninety-two professors identified themselves as fitting this description and returned a filled-out questionnaire. This basic description as to who constitutes the women's studies/feminist profes-

	Females n	Males n
Still in University Full-Time		
Still Teaching WS	395	60
No Longer Teaching WS	124	32
Information Missing	8	1
Still in University Part-Time		
Still Teaching WS	83	4
No Longer Teaching WS	14	2
Information Missing	4	0
Still in University, Full/Part-Time Unknown		
Still Teaching WS	35	5
No Longer Teaching WS	39	3
Information Missing	8	1
No Longer in University	69	4
TOTALS	779	112
Missing	1	

sorate in Canada may sound rather modest as a selection criterion, but we chose it advisedly. We wanted to know whether universities used young lecturers to staff these courses on a flow-through basis, and if so, what happened to these lecturers, or whether courses were taught by regular faculty on staff, and if so, whether or not they had tenure or were in tenure track positions. The overall distribution of our respondents by sex, employment status (whether employed full-time or part-time at a university or no longer employed by a university) and by whether or not they still taught women's/feminist studies courses in 1988 is contained in Table 1.

As we can see, 527 of our women and 93 of our men are still employed full-time at a university, 101 of our women and 6 of our men are still employed part-time at a university, and 69 women and 4 men are no longer employed by a university. Adding up the figures differently, 513 of the women and 69 of the men are still teaching women's studies courses in 1988. The paper will provide some basic information about the characteristics of those professors who teach women's/feminist studies courses. Some of the figures may seem a bit confusing, since the population base shifts. It is in order to counteract this possibility that Table 1 has been provided.

To set the stage for the analysis, we will first compare our women's studies professors with all Canadian professors on those variables for which we have comparable information.

Professors Who Have Taught Women's Studies Courses As Compared to All Professors at Canadian Universities

How typical or atypical are our women's studies professors compared to all professors at Canadian universities?

Looking at the most basic issue first, namely sex, it is not astonishing to find that the majority of women's studies/feminist professors are female, namely 780 or 87.4%, compared to 112 or 12.6% male. Indeed, we were surprised that we found as many men teaching these courses as we did. This distribution more than reverses the usual overall composition of the Canadian professorate which is 83% male and 17% female.²⁸ Of the 112 males in our sample, 93 are full-time and still in the university system. That means that, among full-time male professors (n=29,184), women's studies professors make up 0.3%. By contrast, the 527 female professors who are currently full-time university teachers and who are part of our women's studies population represent 8.8% of the entire female full-time professorate (n=5,987). This is quite a stunning proportion. It has, I believe, important consequences for hiring: the chances that a female professor will adopt a feminist/women's studies

perspective in her courses is almost 30 times greater than that of a male professor doing so.

Turning to age, in 1985/86, the median year of birth for all full-time female professors in Canada was 1944 and for all full-time male professors 1940. The median year of birth for our female professors still in the university system was 1944, and for male professors, 1942.²⁹

With respect to citizenship, a slightly lower proportion of female women's studies professors than of all female full-time professors at Canadian universities are Canadian: 78% of the female women's studies professors versus 81.3% of all female professors. For men, the picture is reversed. While of all full-time men 84.9% are Canadians, 91% of the male women's studies professors are Canadian.

Looking at both the women and men, we find that our women's studies professors are, to no one's surprise, mostly female, of the same median age as all professors, and have a similar proportion of Canadian citizens versus non-citizens.

We can expect more discrepancies when we ask in what disciplines they teach, what their highest degree is, and what rank they hold. Given the tiny number of men as a proportion of all men, it makes no sense to compare the male women's studies professors against all male professors. Tables 2 to 4 will, therefore, compare our female full-time women's studies professors with all full-time female professors.³⁰

Female Full-Time Professors Who Have Taught Women's Studies Courses As Compared to All Female Full-Time Professors in Canada

We shall look at four factors on which we have comparable information with Statistics Canada data: disciplines in which the professors work, highest degree, current rank, and senior administrative functions.

In what disciplines do female professors who have taught women's studies courses work? How do

Discipline ^b	All Female Profs in Canada		Women's Studies Profs ^a	
	n	%	n	%
Education	806	13.5	32	6.2
Fine & Applied Arts	354	5.9	15	2.9
Humanities & related	1228	20.5	188	36.5
Social Sciences & related	1432	23.9	252	48.9
Agriculture & Biol. Sciences	397	6.6	7	1.4
Engineer. & Applied Sciences	62	1.0	0	.0
Health Profs. & Occupations	1366	22.8	7	1.4
Math. & Physical Sciences	264	4.4	1	.2
Other, inclu. WS	0	.0	13	2.5
TOTAL	5987	99.9	515	100.0
Missing			12	

(a) Only full-time female professors still employed by a university. (b) Coding scheme in cases where respondents cited 2 disciplines: (1) Women's Studies and other discipline — coded according to non-WS designation; (2) Remaining doubles — coded to match with disc. of highest degree.

DEGREE	All Female Profs in Canada		Women's Studies Profs ^a	
	n	%	n	%
Doctorate	2832	47.3	422	80.1
Master's	2132	35.6	98	18.6
Prof. Degree	259	4.3	3	.6
Bachelor's	596	10.0	2	.6
Other	168	2.8	0	.0
No degree			2	.4
TOTAL	5987	100.0	527	100.0

(a) Only full-time female professors still employed by a university.

RANK	All Female Profs in Canada		Women's Studies Profs ^a	
	n	%	n	%
< Assistant Prof.	633	10.6	24	4.6
Assistant Prof.	2045	34.2	141	27.0
Associate Prof.	2038	34.0	204	39.0
Full Prof.	751	12.5	117	22.4
Other	520	8.7	37	7.1
TOTAL	5987	100.0	523	100.0
Missing			4	

(a) Only full-time female professors still employed by a university.

they compare to the overall distribution of female professors in Canada within the various disciplines? Table 2 provides some answers.

As we can see, women's studies professors are clustered in the social sciences and humanities, in which they are better represented than in the other disciplines; however, in all the disciplines, they are more or less grossly underrepresented. This is particularly so in health professions and occupations.

Computing the percentages *within* a disciplinary grouping, we find that a minimum of 18% of all full-time female professors in the social sciences and of 14% of all full-time female professors in the humanities have taught courses in women's studies. Since we did not reach 100% of all women's studies professors, this somewhat underrepresents the women's studies population.

When we compare the qualifications of professors who have taught women's studies courses with those of all female professors, we find that *as a group, women's studies professors are greatly more qualified in terms of their degrees than are all female professors*. While less than half of all female professors hold a doctorate, 80.1% of those who have chosen to go into women's studies do so.³¹ This is not a function of age, because, as we have seen, our female population has exactly the same median age as the total population of full-time female professors.

Since on average women's studies professors are more highly qualified than the totality of full-time female professors, we would expect to find women's studies professors to be more concentrated in the senior academic ranks than all female professors.

Table 4 demonstrates that this is in fact the case. While 46.5% of all female professors are in the associate or full professor rank, 61.4% of the female full-time women's studies professors fall into these two ranks. Since it is often maintained that women's studies professors are, as a group, in a marginal position (see, e.g., Dagg and Thompson, 1988: 47-52; Nemiroff, 1985; Staton, 1980), this is an important finding. While, of course, many indi-

vidual professors *are* in vulnerable and insecure situations, and while individual programmes and courses *do* get slashed, *as a group, women's studies professors are in more senior positions* (and, as we will see below, are also more likely to be tenured or on tenure-track) *than all female professors*.

One possible explanation of this rather astonishing finding is that it could be an artifact of the distribution of the female professors in the various disciplines. Female professors who have taught women's studies courses are largely concentrated in the social sciences and humanities, accounting for 84.1% of our total female full-time population (see Table 2). If it turned out that female professors in those two discipline areas held higher ranks than those in other discipline areas, this would explain the pattern. We therefore checked the rank of all female full-time professors in the humanities and social sciences and compared it to the rank of our full-time female professors. Of all female full-time professors in the humanities, 53.9% hold the rank of associate professor or professor, as compared to 68.5% in our population. For the social sciences, 44.8% of all full-time female professors are in these ranks as compared to 57.2% in our full-time female population. *Even when controlling for disciplinary area, then, female professors who have taught women's studies courses are more senior than all female professors in those areas*.

Turning towards the last issue for which we have some information, namely administrative functions, the information we have from Statistics Canada and from our study is not strictly comparable. However, some conclusions can be drawn. According to Statistics Canada, 11.9% of all full-time male professors versus 7.4% of all full-time female professors held a higher administrative office³² in 1986. By contrast, we have information on whether the professors *ever* held certain administrative positions. Using the Statistics Canada definition of "higher administrative position," 24.8% of our female versus 34.4% of our male professors stated that they had ever held such an office. The female/male ratio is somewhat higher for our population (0.72) than for the overall professorial population (0.62). Assuming that the male women's studies professors are similar to all

YEARS	Females		Males	
	n	%	n	%
Before 1970	7	.9	3	2.7
1970-1974	109	14.6	8	7.3
1975-1979	174	23.3	25	22.7
1980-1984	269	36.0	44	40.0
1985-1988	189	25.3	30	27.3
TOTAL	748	100.1	110	100.0
Missing	32		2	

Based on full population of professors.

male professors, this suggests that female women's studies professors are somewhat more likely than all female professors to have held (or to currently hold) a higher administrative position.

Overall, then, our *female full-time women's studies professors are most likely in the social sciences and humanities. In terms of age and citizenship, they are similar to all female professors; however, in terms of qualifications, they are more highly qualified than the average female professors and they are more likely to be in a senior professorial rank than all female professors. One quarter of them have held (or are currently holding) a higher administrative office.*

Turning now to some of the questions posed above concerning the nature of the involvement in women's studies, we will look at a few selected basic issues for all our female and male professors currently still within the university system, whether full- or part-time.

The Nature of Involvement in Women's Studies

It is of some interest to know when women's studies courses first started, what motivated professors to teach such courses, at what stage in their careers they were, and in which disciplines professors were located, in order to have some base data against which to assess the situation at later points.

(a) Years Women's Studies Were First Taught. The big bulge of entries into the field happened in the '80s, rather than in the '70s.

From 1980 to 1984 alone, 313 entered the field, which is almost as many people who entered it in the years before 1970 to 1979 (326). Women entered the field somewhat more quickly than men, not counting the few who started teaching these courses before 1970;³³ nevertheless, the pattern of entry is remarkably similar for women and men, although, of course, the numbers are much larger for the women.

As far as the nature of the activity was concerned, we wanted to know whether teaching a course in women's/feminist studies was a temporary activity, or led to a permanent commitment in the area.

(b) Increasing Commitment to Teaching Women's/Feminist Studies. As it turns out, most professors seem to increase their commitment to teaching women's studies/feminist courses once they have taught one: 69.2% of all female professors and 63.9% of all male professors who had ever taught one course (prior to 1987) were still teaching such courses in 1987, our reference year. These figures include professors no longer employed in the university system.

If we look at those professors who ceased to teach such courses and examine their reasons for this, we find that only 10.6% of all women and 12.7% of all men did so for what could be seen as negative reasons:³⁴ either their personal commitment or that of their department was insufficient to

TABLE 6
Reason for Teaching First and Most Recent Women's/Feminist Studies Course^a

REASONS	WOMEN				MEN	
	Still in University		No Longer in University		Still in University	
	1st course	most recent	1st course	most recent	1st course	most recent
	n=541	n=458	n=49	n=34	n=80	n=65
The subject area was of interest to me	3.1	3.1	2.5	3.0	2.2	2.7
Desire to develop the area of women's/feminist studies	6.2	5.3	5.2	4.3	8.3	8.3
Political motivations aimed at improving position of women	6.2	5.6	5.0	4.2	7.8	7.2
Desire to improve/challenge mainstream theories of discipline	6.7	5.2	5.6	4.8	8.1	8.6
I was asked to teach the course	9.7	11.0	8.6	8.9	11.0	11.8
The department needed someone to teach the course	10.1	10.5	9.8	9.7	9.1	10.0
Response to demand of students in department	10.2	8.7	10.6	8.7	9.4	8.0
The positive influence of my colleagues working in the area	10.5	10.1	9.8	9.4	10.5	11.0
Women's consciousness raising	11.2	12.0	10.5	11.6	12.6	12.4
The positive influence of professors working in the area when I was a student	11.9	12.2	10.6	11.0	12.4	12.6
Administration outside the department was promoting the area	12.4	12.3	12.4	12.6	12.2	12.2
Others	12.3	12.0	11.8	12.2	12.3	12.3

(a) Based on the population of professors who have taught more than one women's studies course and who rank ordered the items. Discrepancies in Ns for first and most recent course due to missing information. Scores represent mean rankings, with low scores indicating higher rank, high scores indicating lower rank or not ranked at all.

keep them involved in teaching such courses. The other professors stopped teaching courses of this type for positive or neutral reasons.³⁵

Overall, then, once started, professors seem to continue to teach women's studies/feminist courses.

(c) *Motivations for Teaching Women's/Feminist Studies Courses.* What were the reasons for getting involved in teaching such courses in the first place, and how do these reasons compare to why they are

continuing to teach such courses? We asked all our respondents³⁶ a question to this effect, which specified twelve possible reasons, including "other."

In order to obtain a composite picture of the relative importance of each reason, we gave an item a score of 1 if a respondent ranked it first, a score of 2 if she or he ranked it second, and so on. Any time a respondent did not rank an item at all, we assigned the lowest possible score, namely 13. We then computed the average score for each item.³⁷

As we can see, by far the most important reason for women (in and out of the university system) and men is, "The subject was of interest to me." This is followed by three other intrinsic reasons: desire to develop the area, political motivations aimed at improving the position of women, and desire to improve/challenge mainstream theories in the discipline. At the other end, teaching such a course as a response to an administrative push is just about irrelevant as a reason, nor do any of the other reasons weigh as heavily as the intrinsic reasons.

If we compare the responses that describe the motivations of female professors to teach their first course in the area with their motivation for teaching their most recent course, we find that, with one exception ("the subject area was of interest to me" for the women no longer in the university system), the intrinsic reasons gain in importance between the first and the most recent course. For the men, the picture is not so clear-cut. What seems to be happening for the women is that an initial attraction to the subject area increases the professors' desire to develop the area further, their political commitment to women, and their desire to improve or challenge mainstream theories. In all instances, the importance of student demands also rises from the first course to the most recent course, suggesting that the response of students must generally be quite positive.

(d) Centrality of Women's Studies. We asked respondents about the importance of women's studies in relation to their entire work.

At the time you taught your first course in women's/feminist studies, how would you describe the centrality of the area in relation to your entire work (including teaching, research, as well as other activities)? How about now?

Taking only a summary measure of the overall interest, with 4 indicating "primary interest," 3 "major secondary interest," 2 "minor secondary interest," 1 "marginal interest" and 0 "no interest at all," we find that the average score for all female professors is 3.1 at the time of their first course in the area and increases to 3.5 for the present, while men as a

group have an average score of 2.6 (that is, between major secondary and minor secondary interest) at the time of their first course which increases to 2.8 for the present.³⁸

Thus, while both sexes experience an increase in the interest between the time of their first course and the present, *the interest in the field is more marked for women, of whom fully 92.1% declare that women's studies is their primary or major secondary interest, compared to 65.5% of the men.* Nevertheless, it is remarkable that so many men do see the area as clearly central in their own work.

That the commitment of the professors to the area is extremely high is also expressed in the follow-up interviews. To provide just one example:³⁹ When asked what it would take for her to give up working in the area, one woman responded:

I can't imagine that... My whole sense of what teaching is about, and what knowledge is about, and what sociology is about is ... completely tied up with what I think feminism is about and vice versa. ... I can't ... imagine anything else, or [imagine] ... putting it on hold for some other kind of notion about what knowledge is.

(e) Career Stage at Time of First Women's Studies Course and Currently. We have three measures of career stage: rank and nature of appointment—whether full-time or part-time and whether tenure track or non-tenure track at the time of their first women's studies course and currently.

As to rank, altogether, 41.5% of the women were in a non-professorial position at the time they taught their first women's studies course, not counting those with other university appointments or other positions, compared to only 14.4% of the men. Stated the other way around, 53.7% of the women versus 84.6% of the men were in a professorial rank when they taught their first course on women.

What about their current rank? Here our data base shifts a little, because we are looking only at those women and men currently still teaching at a university. (See Table 7.)

TABLE 7
Rank at Time of Teaching First Women's Studies Course and Currently

RANK	At First Course ^a				Current Rank ^b			
	Females		Males		Females		Males	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
Undergraduate Student	3	.4	0	.0	0	.0	0	.0
Graduate Student	55	7.2	2	1.8	10	1.5	0	.0
Part-Time Instructor	151	19.6	5	4.5	55	8.5	2	2.0
Sessional Lecturer	43	5.6	2	1.8	14	2.2	0	.0
Lecturer	67	8.7	7	6.3	20	3.1	1	1.0
Assistant Professor	250	32.5	32	28.8	148	22.9	12	12.0
Associate Professor	115	15.0	39	35.1	217	33.5	39	39.0
Full Professor	19	2.5	21	18.9	81	12.6	43	43.0
Professor	28	3.6	2	1.8	48	7.4	1	1.0
Other University Appointment	27	3.5	1	.9	41	6.3	2	2.0
Other Position	11	1.4	0	.0	13	2.0	0	.0
TOTAL	769	100.1	111	99.9	647	100.1	100	100.0
Missing	11		1		64		8	

(a) Based on total population of professors who have ever taught women's studies courses.
 (b) Based on those professors who have ever taught women's studies courses and are currently still employed by a university.

As we can see, both women and men have moved up in rank—not surprisingly, since there may be a considerable time lag between the current situation and the time that they first taught a women's studies course. Of course, some of our respondents are recent entrants into the university system who would naturally be clustered in the junior ranks. The number and proportion of both women and men in non-professorial ranks (not counting those with other positions and appointments) has decreased to 15.3% of the women and 3% of the men. Of the women, 76.4% and 95% of the men are now in professorial ranks.

Looking at the nature of their employment—whether it is full-time or part-time—we find that at the time of their first women's studies course, 34.6% of the women were employed part-time and 65.4% full-time. This compares to 16.1% of the women who are presently part-time employees, and 83.9% who are full-time. The figures for male part-time employees are substantially lower: only 9% of the males were teaching part-time when they taught their first women's studies course, and 91% were full-time. At present, 6.1% of the men still in the university are part-time as compared to 93.9% who teach full-time.

With respect to tenure, we find that at the time of their first women's studies course, the majority of women were untenured, while the majority of men were tenured. At present, the majority of women are also tenured, and about

three quarters are either tenured or on tenure track, as compared to over 90% of the men who are either tenured or on tenure track (see Table 8).

If we make a comparison by sex, *in all instances men are favoured with respect to their position in universities*, reflecting the overall picture of professors in Canada in general. Nevertheless, the overall pattern for the female women's studies professors puts the statement made by Dagg and Thompson (1988: 50) into perspective when they state: "A few tenured professors regularly teach women's studies courses, but since there are no

tenured professors of women's studies in Canada, the discipline could be easily wiped out at any time should university administrators decide to do so."

Clearly, the picture is not quite as bleak as that. While the hundreds of tenured professors, with a few exceptions, are not tenured in women's studies, they are nonetheless tenured. Should university administrators decide to wipe out women's studies, they would have to do so by wiping out courses and programmes rather than by dismissing people. At present, we are seeing the opposite. Courses and programmes are expanding, not contracting.

(f) Disciplines in Which Professors Who Have Taught Women's Studies Courses Locate Themselves. The question in what disciplines professors who have taught women's studies/feminist courses locate themselves is not as straight forward as may be thought at first glance. We approached the issue in various ways in our questionnaire. We asked people in what discipline they worked (they could list more than one and three were coded). Of the women still in the university, 357 listed at least two disciplines, and 112 listed at least three disciplines. We also asked them in what disciplines they had received their various degrees, and in what type of department or programme they taught their first women's studies course.

Although there is an overlap between the various answers, there are also considerable discrepancies. Looking at only three of the various possible discipline measures, namely the discipline in which respondents received their M.A., Ph.D.

TABLE 8
Position at Time of First Course and at Present

POSITION	At First Course ^a				Current Rank ^b			
	Females		Males		Females		Males	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
Hired on course basis	152	20.0	6	5.4	57	9.0	3	3.1
Contract. limited position	205	27.0	17	15.3	84	13.2	5	5.1
Tenure track	192	25.3	29	26.1	131	20.7	10	10.2
Tenured position	182	23.9	59	53.2	337	53.2	79	80.6
Visiting professor	12	1.6	0	.0	3	.4	1	1.0
Other	17	2.2	0	.0	22	3.5	0	.0
TOTAL	760	100.0	111	100.0	634	100.0	98	100.0
Missing	20		1		77		10	

(a) Based on total population of professors who have ever taught women's studies courses.
(b) Based on those professors who have ever taught women's studies courses and are currently still employed by a university.

and which they identified as the most important discipline in which they presently work, we find considerable movement between them, looking only at the most important (numerically speaking) disciplines.

Table 9 does not strictly represent people. The intent is, in this table, to demonstrate how disciplines are represented, and what movement, if any, occurs between them. Professors who gave a double discipline as an answer in any of the three instances are therefore coded twice. For example, education and philosophy is included both under education and philosophy. All percentages are computed with respect to the total number of respondents having an M.A. (n=793), a Ph.D.⁴⁰ (n=623) or who identified a discipline in which they worked (n=809). The base is therefore different for each of the columns.

TABLE 9
Disciplines of Master's and Doctoral Degrees and Work^a

DISCIPLINE	Master's n=793		Doctorate n=623		Work n=809	
	n	%	n	%	n	%
Anthropology	34	4.2	31	4.9	27	3.3
Education	40	5.0	38	6.0	42	5.1
History	79	9.8	83	13.0	88	10.6
Modern & medieval lang.	138	17.2	118	18.5	121	14.6
Philosophy	56	7.0	43	6.8	39	4.7
Political Science	39	4.9	36	5.7	28	3.4
Psychology	65	8.1	57	8.9	55	6.6
Religious Studies	42	5.2	33	5.2	50	6.0
Social Work	34	4.2	2	.3	33	4.0
Sociology	136	16.9	127	19.9	162	19.5
Women's Studies	1	.1	0	.0	37	4.5
Other Humanities	36	4.5	24	3.8	45	5.4
Other Social Sciences	57	7.1	22	3.5	63	7.6
Other	47	5.8	23	3.6	39	4.7
TOTAL	804	100.0	637	100.0	829	100.0
Missing	99		269		83	

(a) Respondents who gave a double discipline were coded twice. The amounts by which the totals exceed the Ns indicate the amount of double coding.

Numbers are based on total respondents.

Missing cases include those no longer at a university.

Looking at Table 9 we find some disciplines which are net winners and losers. At the Ph.D. level and in terms of their work, the largest number of professors identify with sociology, followed by modern and medieval languages.⁴¹ The fact that there is a loss in relative and absolute figures from the Ph.D. to the discipline of work for philosophy and political science could either mean that these

two disciplines are more hostile towards feminist scholarship, or that no jobs were available (or both of these), or that there is some characteristic in people who take a doctorate in these disciplines which makes them susceptible to switching out of them once they have their Ph.D. Psychology lost two Ph.D.s who do not work in the discipline, while sociology gained a remarkable 35 people.

It is, finally, noteworthy that only 35 people or 4.3% of the total population define women's studies by itself (25) or women's studies and some other discipline (10) as their field of work. This is relevant to our understanding of how we conceptualize women's studies: as a field of study or as a perspective that cross-cuts disciplines. For the moment, it appears that the vast majority of people active in the area see themselves as working with a feminist perspective in a variety of other disciplines, rather than in a new discipline.⁴²

Conclusion

Overall, then, this first snapshot of the women's studies professorate has shown us some expected and some unexpected features. Compared with all Canadian professors, women's studies professors are relatively average in terms of age and citizenship. To no one's surprise, most women's studies professors are female, and clustered in the social sciences and humanities. Anyone who has actively participated in the area for a while would have expected to find just that.

However, as a group, women's studies professors are more qualified, in higher ranks, and in more secure positions than all female full-time professors. They are also quite likely to have held a higher administrative office. This turned out to be a surprise. It is at a variance with what the (exceedingly sparse) literature suggests, and with what a first glance at the qualitative interviews shows. There, a sense of fragility, of

vulnerability, of insecurity is expressed quite strongly. This apparent paradox can probably not be explained in terms of the personal situation of individual professors, but in terms of a collective perception of the place of women's studies or a feminist perspective in the academy and—possibly—also in society at large. As this is being written, three major feminist periodicals⁴³ just suffered a 100% cut of their funding from the Secretary of State. Unfortunately, then, the fragility may be real, and not imagined.

With respect to women's/feminist studies as a field, we found more professors—including male professors—than we had expected; we found more courses and programmes than we had been aware of or than had previously been documented, and we found an extraordinary commitment on the part of people who are involved in developing this area. Nevertheless, approximately only 9% of all female professors and less than half of one percent of all male professors have ever taught a course in women's studies or used a feminist perspective. There is a long way to go yet.

NOTES

1. An extensive search of the feminist and women's studies journals, educational journals, and some major academic journals from 1972 through 1989 was conducted using a combination of conventional and computerized techniques. While hundreds of articles exist under the descriptors "women's or feminist studies," very little of this work is related in any way to the nature, development or practise of women's studies. Indeed, these terms seem to function as a catch-all for any and all articles which focus on women.
2. See Eichler, in press, and Lenton, 1990a for some results.
3. For theoretical reasons, we decided to extend the data collection for Phase 4. See description below.
4. All of this work was done by Margaret Malone.
5. The missing 2% consist of 3 affiliated colleges of universities for which information was obtained.
6. Throughout the data collection process, we used the term women's/feminist studies so as to be inclusive rather than exclusive and not to impose some restrictive definition on people's (and institutions') activities. In a different paper, we examine what labels professors use to identify themselves, whether they see a difference between women's studies and feminist studies, and how they describe this difference. See Eichler, 1990.
7. The original information was collected for 1987/88, the follow-up extended until February 1989, and thus covers 1988/89. The information is therefore in either case accurate for 1988.
8. See Tite with Malone, 1990.
9. The exact wording for the question on the basis of which professors included or excluded themselves from our population was:
Have you ever taught at least one credit course at a Canadian university or college (which offers at least a bachelor's degree) in women's studies or from a feminist perspective?
Among the various reasons for formulating this criterion in this manner was the intent to capture the entire population of professors, including those to whom teaching such courses was not necessarily an on-going activity.
10. We used the following mailing lists: the Canadian Research Institute for the Advancement of Women, the Canadian Women's Studies Association, Resources for Feminist Research, Groupe interdisciplinaire d'enseignement et de recherche féministe and Groupe de recherche multi-disciplinaire féministe. We also wrote to the Social Science Register at the University of Western Ontario but, since they told us that they could provide us with approximately 150 names (for a very steep fee) at a time when we had already collected around 400 names, we decided not to go that route.
11. We received help from Jo-Anne Elder and Helen Shaw in addition to the work done by the four researchers.
12. One respondent received six copies of the questionnaire, because her name had been misspelt in various ways and each one was treated as a different person. Only when she protested in exasperation were we able to correct this error. Other respondents had changed their names (due to marriage, divorce, and other reasons) and were contacted twice.
13. See Tite, 1990, for an analysis of the discrepancies.
14. There are various ways of calculating the response rate. The figures are as follows: Of the 1,872 names received and mailed questionnaires, 892 declared themselves eligible and returned the filled-out questionnaire; 350 returned the questionnaire and declared themselves ineligible; 182 were wrong addresses; 131 were duplicates, and 317 questionnaires were not returned. If we adjust the total by deducting the known duplicates, we arrive at a total of 1,741. Of the original total, 7% were duplicates and 20% were ineligible, constituting together 27%. Assuming that these proportions also apply to the non-responses (317) and the wrong addresses (182), we deduct 27% of 499, or 135, from our non-respondents and wrong addresses: 499-135=364. This number, 364, then represents the number of non-respondents who are likely to be eligible and non-duplicates from a total number of 1,741 responses. This represents a response rate of 79%. Alternatively, assuming that duplicates and wrong addresses do not overlap much, wrong addresses represent 10%, duplicates 7%, and ineligible 20%, together 37%. Thirty seven percent of the 317 (the non-returns) equals 117. We then adjust the response number of 317 to eliminate the proportion of those that were likely duplicates, wrong addresses, or ineligible: 317-117=200. The number of people who were eligible, non-duplicates, and for whom we had the right address then constitutes 200. In that case, the response rate is 892/1092 = 81.7%.

- We feel that the second way of calculating the response rate is more accurate, since it excludes the ineligible from the calculation.
15. Indeed, it is possible that, in spite of our heroic efforts, we missed some eligible professors altogether. However, judging from the amount of duplication of names in the latter stages of the search for respondents, we estimate that the number of people who were missed altogether is small. Of course, everyone who started teaching later than 1987 is not included in the population.
 16. The coders were Margaret Gray, Nicole Groten, Margaret Oldfield, Laurie Williams, Zeng Gang, Stella Bandera. The data inputters were Margaret Gray, Nicole Groten, Margaret Oldfield and Laurie Williams.
 17. The interviewers were Michelyn Lafleche, Marg Malone, Margaret Oldfield, Denise Veillette.
 18. See Eichler, in press.
 19. Eichler with Vandelac, 1990.
 20. The usual reason why we could not reach respondents was that they were on sabbatical, or otherwise out of the country or at least not to be located at their usual university. We received not a single refusal, either from a woman or a man whom we managed to contact, to participate in the follow-up. In that sense, our response rate was 100% for both women and men.
 21. The transcribers were Jill Given-King, Nicole Groten, Riva Love, Martha McGinn, Phebe Poole, Kathy Popaleni and Caralee Price.
 22. *Nota Bene.*
 23. Originally, the question asked for the ten *living* authors/thinkers whose work had been most useful for respondents. Francophone respondents protested in the pre-test that this would rob them of their most prominent author/thinker, namely Simone de Beauvoir. We consequently altered the formulation of the question. The protest was well taken—Simone de Beauvoir did emerge as the most frequently named author/thinker for the total population as well as for the francophone sub-population.
 24. For a first analysis of francophone/anglophone differences, see Vandelac, 1990.
 25. In actual fact, the number is slightly different. See Lenton, 1990b.
 26. Originally, we had not budgeted for interviewing costs, on the assumption that we would be doing the interviews ourselves and hence need not pay for the labour. This turned out to be impossible because of another unforeseen circumstance. One of the principal investigators (M. Eichler) was listed herself as an influential thinker by the overall population, another one (L. Vandelac) was listed as an influential thinker by the francophone sub-population. After discussing this, we decided that I would have to drop out entirely from data collection and most interpretation of Phase 4, and that L. Vandelac would have to do the same if we managed to include the additional thinkers named by the francophones. The English part of the interviewing was thus done in its entirety by R. Lenton, R. Tite being busy with getting the data into the computer within the given time. To interview in French, with L. Vandelac out of the picture and no one else on the team fluent enough in French to conduct such highly qualitative, open-ended interviews, we needed to find additional francophone interviewers. The vast majority of the interviews with francophone feminist thinkers was conducted by Irene Demschuk and Christiane Bernier. A few interviews still need to be completed at this time.
 27. We thus excluded—after a great deal of soul searching—community colleges and CEGEPs for practical reasons. Unfortunately, we lost some respondents due to the wording of the questionnaire. Some professors ruled themselves out declaring that they had never taught a "women's studies course," but had taught their course from a feminist perspective. Here is what one such respondent wrote on the questionnaire she returned to us unanswered:

You've changed the focus of the questionnaire. I teach courses from what I consider to be a feminist perspective, but not so far any of our WS/ Feminist Studies courses. I guess I shouldn't fill out the rest of the questionnaire. I would have liked to. Now of course, I feel people such as myself are excluded from your category 'Feminist Professors.'

Not all of those who declared themselves ineligible took the time to comment. Of the 64 English respondents who did, 23 or 35% made remarks that they had taught courses or parts of courses from a feminist perspective, but not courses in women's studies or feminist studies. Many other respondents interpreted the questionnaire differently and included themselves under the same circumstances. This attests both to the fluidity of our collective conceptualization of what exactly we are involved in, as well as to the complex construction of the field, where some practitioners perceive what they do as part of a new field of study, even a discipline, while others see it as a perspective that cross-cuts existing disciplines. For a discussion of some of these issues, see Eichler, 1990.
 28. Computed from Statistics Canada, 1987, t. 2e, p. 35. All other national data in the subsequent section are either taken or computed from this source.
 29. Unfortunately, we cannot compare the respective age distributions, since Statistics Canada does not provide that information.
 30. The reason part-time teachers are excluded from this analysis is that we did not find information about them in Statistics Canada. Likewise, all categorizations follow Statistics Canada categorizations, for reasons of comparability. All Canada-wide data are from Statistics Canada, 1987.
 31. This finding is particularly interesting in view of the polemic by Bercuson, Bothwell and Granatstein (1984) which classifies women's studies as "other useless studies" [along with Canadian studies] and charges that they have fallen "into the hands of the academically weak" (p. 140). Our study testifies that the opposite is more likely: it is the best and highest qualified who enter women's studies.
 32. Their definition includes chairperson or up.
 33. In another paper, we will examine in detail the professors who started teaching classes on women before 1970. At least two possible interpretations come to mind: they were either remarkably ahead of their times, or they have a very old-fashioned interpretation as to what it means to teach a women's studies course and, in fact, taught quite conserva-

- tive courses that were oriented to women. Both interpretations may be applicable in different cases.
34. These were reasons which suggested that teaching such course(s) was either too low a priority to continue in the face of other demands, or that the department gave it too low a priority to have them taught on a regular basis. The three most frequently cited reasons were that the professors had too many other course demands, were too busy, or that the courses were taught only in alternate years.
 35. We define as positive or neutral all those reasons which indicate that the choice was made for reasons other than not wishing to teach such course(s) or that the department gave the course(s) such low priority that they were not able to teach them. The three most frequently cited reasons of this type are that the professor took on added administrative responsibilities, that she was no longer employed at a university, or that the course assignments were rotated. We include leaving the university system as a neutral reason, because it does not necessarily mean abandoning concern with women's issues. For instance, 81.1% of the people no longer employed at a university but holding a job stated that their current work was in some way related to women's concerns or research.
 36. The table includes only those professors who taught more than one women's studies course.
 37. The table distinguishes between women still teaching in the university system and those who are no longer doing so, since one might have expected a difference in motivation between the two groups. Of the men, only those still teaching in the university system are included, since those who have ceased to do so are too few (n=4) to be included.
 38. The population base is different for the first and most recent course, because some people only taught one course (some of them because 1987/88 was their first year of teaching such courses). The full female population for the first course was 780, for the most recent course, 616. As far as men are concerned, their full population for the first course was 112, and for the most recent course, 88. This includes people who taught more than one course but are no longer teaching at a university.
 39. See Eichler, in press, for some qualitative analysis of this question.
 40. There is, at present, no Ph.D. programme in women's studies in Canada.
 41. This analysis only considers aggregate shifts. Individual shifts may be considerably greater. If, for instance, one professor shifted from history to sociology while another shifted from sociology to history, this does not show up in the present analysis. Detailed shift patterns with respect to two disciplines, sociology and anthropology, are contained in Eichler, 1990 May.
 42. See Eichler, 1990, for a discussion of some of these issues.
 43. *Resources for Feminist Research, Healthsharing and Canadian Woman Studies.*

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