

Women's Experience, Women's Knowledge and the Power of Knowledge: An Illustration and an Elaboration

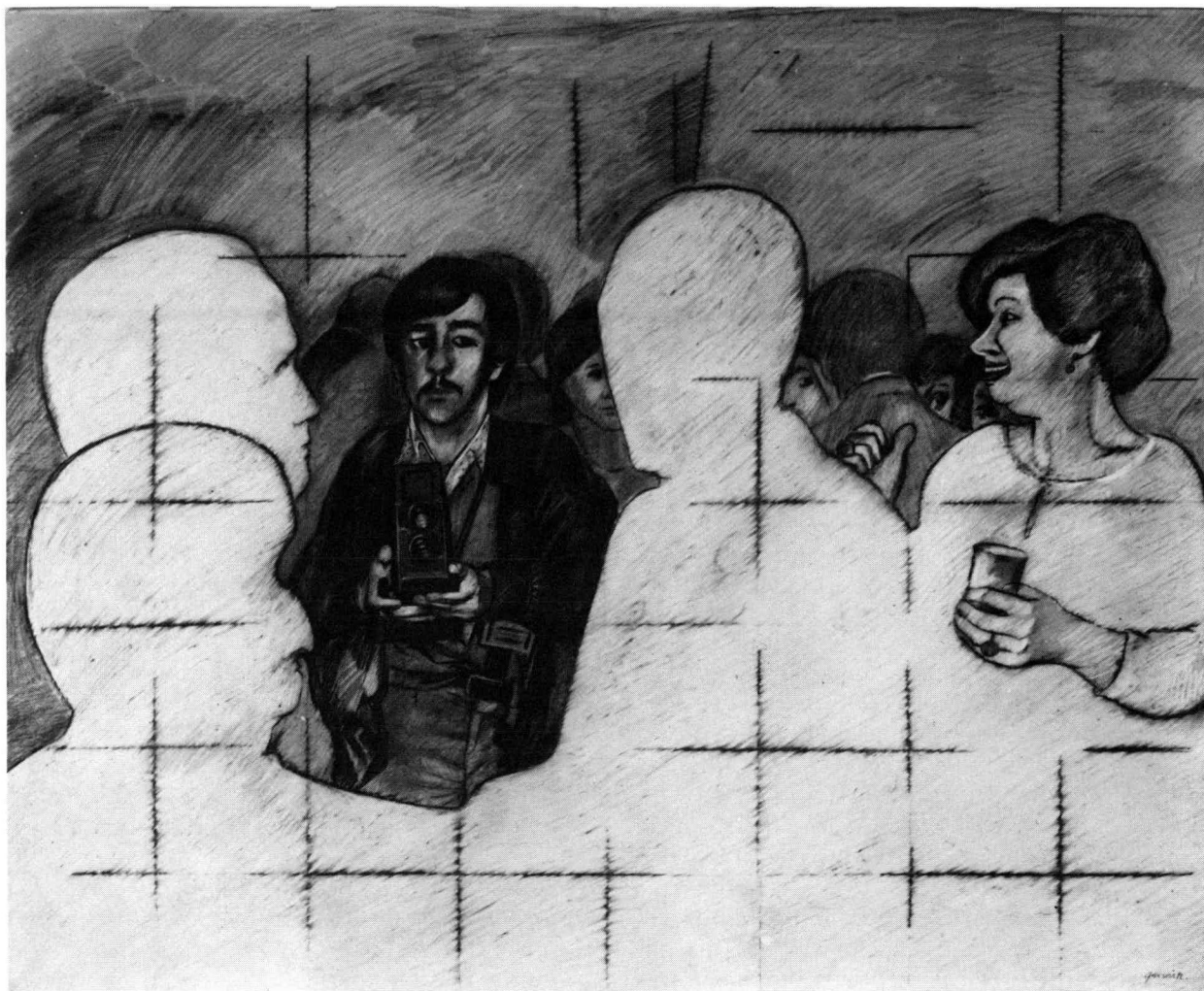
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ABSTRACT

Within the framework of women's contribution to knowledge creation, this paper presents data on two linked research projects. In the first instance, women's contribution to a prestigious knowledge area is examined and their relegation to peripheral roles is emphasized; in the second, women's participation in a secondary knowledge area is outlined and the mechanisms for the continuing containment of the whole knowledge area are highlighted. The paper concludes with comments on the importance not only of women's relative absence from knowledge creation, but also of the mechanisms through which woman-created knowledge is contained and denigrated.

Recently, feminist writers have argued forcefully that the creation of knowledge is predominantly a male domain in contemporary capitalist society, underlining that so-called scientific knowledge, of a variety of hues, is in fact dominated by male values, and that women's perspective has had little effect on the various disciplinary specialties and on cultural creation in general. Dorothy Smith underlined in her early work that women have participated marginally

in "...producing the forms of thought and the images and symbols in which thought is expressed and ordered" (1975:354; 1978:281). Dale Spender has devoted several recent publications to highlighting the absence of knowledge about women in the school system (1982) and the masculinity of Western language and thought (1980) though she exudes some optimism in her examination of the impact of feminism on traditional disciplines (1981). Mary Daly (1978), through her



L'EMINENCE BLANCHE, 31" x 38" pencil and coloured pencil on mylar, by S. V. Gersovitz, Montreal.

creation of non-sexist language and Mary O'Brien, through her formulation of the term "male-stream thought" (1979:100) have also reminded us of the distortion of female experience through its expression in male containers. A recent Canadian collection of articles summarizes the discussion by highlighting that "...language and theory as we know them are shot through with self-serving masculist assumptions" (Miles and Finn, 1982:259).

Hidden within this discourse are two co-existing strands of thought. The first is the argument that the modes of thought which do exist concerning women's experience are largely invalid for they are created by men for men and do not accurately characterize our lived experience. This argument not only puts into question the validity of male models of thought, but also the universality of topics emphasized by male thought processes. In effect, knowledge which is mainly created by one gender is limited in applicability and scope. The second strand running through the discourse concerns the marginal participation of women in the creation of this male-stream thought and their assimilation to the dominant male definition of reality in those instances where they do participate. This is ultimately a question of power - that women who are relegated to the periphery of the knowledge-producing apparatus tend to share in the centrally defined parameters of that knowledge and they only affect, in a marginal manner, the creation that is taking place. It is not only the ability to participate in the creation of knowledge, but also the power to define the significance of the knowledge created that is at issue.

The present paper addresses, in an empirical manner, these questions of the particularity of women's experience, their participation in knowledge creation and their inability to raise the knowledge they have created to the plane of significance because of processes maintaining male hegemony. It aims to elaborate upon the literature delineated by illustrating the process of

knowledge creation within two sociological specialties, the first of considerable prestige and influence and the second of secondary status and leverage. The paper examines the contributions that women have made to each area and the way in which their contributions are marginalized, either through their location at the periphery of a prestigious specialty, or through the firm containment of the overall influence of a secondary area. The data are drawn from two linked research projects.¹ The first is concerned with women's contribution to a relatively prestigious sub-field of Sociology - the Sociology of Organizations - and links their contribution to their lived experience, within organizational settings in general and within the university in particular. The second project focusses on the study of women's status in a particular academic (and thus organizational) setting: the knowledge created falls within the field of Women's Studies, of secondary status within the academic discourse. The study traces the mechanisms through which this knowledge creation is firmly contained at a secondary level.

These two sets of data facilitate the raising of certain questions concerning an important component of the knowledge-producing apparatus - the university - which should help to shed light on the general processes which are at work in knowledge creation. In particular, the data facilitate the empirical illustration of the link between organizational experience and organizational knowledge, but they also illustrate very poignantly that the creation of knowledge is merely an initial phase in the significance of such knowledge. Not only has "male-stream thought" conceptualized experience within categories that are foreign to the majority of the population, but it has also established the definition of what is important to experience. Marginal experience remains marginal even if conceptualized validly by those who participate in it. The feminist project confronts the monumental task of reformulating the hierarchy of knowledge, and not only the categorization of knowledge.

Women's Experience: The Knowledge-Producing Apparatus

In this paper, I take for granted that universities are an important component of the knowledge-producing apparatus, if not the most important component.² It appears unnecessary to "prove" this point which has been expressed so eloquently in the literature on academia, for the research function is finally the creation of intellectual raw material which is then percolated through the educational system, carrying within it the priorities, prejudices and penchants of its creators (cf. Tancred-Sheriff, forthcoming (a)).

We have also started to learn something of the role played by women within the university setting. Preliminary work on Canadian universities (McDonald and Lenglet, 1973; Ambert, 1976; Smith, 1975; Vickers and Adam, 1977) documented the generally subordinate role played by women in this important institutional setting. As Vickers and Adam conclude in their survey of women in academia as of 1969-70:

In general, women in the profession are concentrated at the lower ranks, are less likely to have the security of a full-time tenured position, are less well paid at every level than their male counterparts and with very few exceptions, are absent from the positions and bodies with any influence and power within the universities (1977:99).

More recent data provide little evidence of change. A useful summary is contained in the Symons and Page report (1984: Ch.9); in general, the data show that the proportion of women holding full-time teaching posts in Canadian universities has risen marginally from 12.8% in the early 1970s to 16% in 1982-83, such that over a period of more than a decade, the female majority of the Canadian population has raised its representation by 3.2% (Statistics Canada 1982-83: Table II). While the proportion of women in

the senior ranks (Associate and Full Professor) has risen from 22% to 41% between 1969-70 and 1982-83, it should be noted that the proportion of men in these ranks has gone up drastically (from 40% to 75%) over the same period reflecting the gradual aging of the Canadian professoriate and illustrating that the gap between the proportion of women and men in these ranks has increased rather than decreased (Calculated from Vickers and Adam, 1977:124 and Statistics Canada, 1982-83: Table 1D).

A closer examination of the general data shows that women who hold full-time teaching positions (Statistics Canada, 1982-83: Table II) are concentrated in Education, the Health professions and Fine and Applied Arts (in that order), and if we note that the Health professions include Nursing, we can simultaneously recognize that we are not dealing with the most powerful segments of academia. It is also useful to underline that third place in this ranking of sectors by proportion of women was occupied by the Biological Sciences until the early 1970s, giving way later in the decade to Fine and Applied Arts. In some ways, the marginalization of women has increased rather than decreased over the period. The lowest proportion of female university teachers is to be found in the Applied Science and the Physical Sciences and this aspect of the distribution has remained constant since the early 1960s (*Ibid*).

This dismal image is well known and merits little elaboration. Less well documented is the dearth of female influence within the formal decision-making bodies of Canadian universities. Unfortunately, the only available study of this topic dates from the 1970s, but it shows that women faculty constituted 4% of the membership of university Senates in Canada as of 1970 and fewer than 1% of Boards of Governors as of the same date (Vickers and Adam, 1977: 109), figures which graphically illustrate the peripheral location of faculty women within the formal influence structure of Canadian universi-

ties. Even if one argues, with Noble and Pym (1970) amongst others, that university Senates are largely powerless and the significant decisions are taken elsewhere, we can be sure that women occupy a marginal position in informal decision-making forums as well. Data on such a subject are practically impossible to obtain, but one of the research projects covered by this paper includes a study of decision-making in four Canadian universities. Interviews were conducted during the period 1981-83 with all university personnel who appeared, on the basis of documentation and general opinion, to have played some role in the decision-making process for a total of 8 university-wide decisions. Of the 159 interviews conducted, 20 (or 13%) were with women, despite the fact that one of the decisions covered focussed on women's situation within the relevant university and the representation of women in this particular decision was high. If we exclude this one "women-oriented" decision, the number of women involved in general decision-making in these universities as 12 out of 151 i.e. a limited 8% (See Brodribb and Tancred-Sheriff, 1983, for a discussion of the methodology involved).

As to formal administrative posts, the 1970 study demonstrates the limited participation of women, except in female-dominated fields (related to Nursing, Home Economics and the office of the Dean of Women). At that date, a total of 15 women across Canada occupied positions as Chancellors, Presidents or College Heads, Vice-Presidents, Deans or Vice-Deans outside these fields (Vickers and Adam, 1977: Table IV-14). In a more limited area, the American Sociological Association recently commissioned a study of women departmental administrators in Sociology in both the United States and Canada. The authors of the report conclude sadly that for Canada "...the number of women chairs was so small [6 in 44 institutions]...as to render analysis virtually meaningless." (Dill *et al.*, 1980:11).

What these few data suggest is that Canadian women faculty have a marginal experience of university reality. They are few and isolated, scattered across the country. They are largely powerless in both formal and informal terms - mainly junior in rank and almost absent from the positions and forums of formal influence as well from informal structures. They are essentially peripheral to this knowledge-producing institution. While these data only concern Canadian universities, there is no reason to suspect that they are atypical of women's experience in universities abroad, for the information suggests, on the contrary, that this is the modal pattern (cf. for example, Cass *et al.*, 1983).

Yet a few women *do* participate in academia and, presumably, participate in some way in the knowledge created within this institution. The question at this point is: in what way? In particular, if we select an area of endeavour which could be considered to be directly linked to women's lived experience of academia, in what way do these women translate this experience into conceptual terms? Living within one specific type of organizational reality, how have they contributed to the "form of thought" which constitute the tools for reflecting on this type of reality?

Women's Knowledge: The Sociology of Organizations³

The hierarchy of knowledge not only ranks knowledge areas and activities, but also manifests a gendered division of labour. While this phenomenon occurs in most fields, in the Social Sciences in particular, sectors of knowledge are hived off and become gender-specific rather than gender-neutral. Thus, domains which are public and therefore important, tend to be male-dominated whereas the private sphere is left to the intuitive care of female practitioners. Within Sociology, this has meant that specialities concerned with work and politics are male-domin-

ated fields while women have made their major contribution in areas such as the family and women's studies, which are closest to women's lived experience.

The Sociology of Organizations is no exception to this image. Concerned as it is with the public sphere, defined broadly, it has been dominated by male practitioners who have set the priorities in terms of types of organizations to be studied, ways of approaching this reality and appropriate conclusions to be drawn. As we say in the study concerned with this issue:

...développée par des professeurs et des consultants mâles, du point de vue de la position qu'ils occupent au sein des structures hiérarchiques dominées elles-mêmes par des mâles, cette discipline met l'accent sur les réseaux de contrôle et d'autorité qui sous-tendent ces positions ([Tancred-] Sheriff and Campbell, 1981: 114).⁴

Women have played a role as "objects" of study rather than as reflective subjects concerned with knowledge-creation. For example, as Acker and Van Houten point out so graphically, the gender of workers has been underlined infrequently and some of the landmark studies in the field (the Hawthorne Studies of Roethlisberger and Dickson, *The Bureaucratic Phenomenon* of Crozier) have drawn conclusions based on a study of women, and have generalized these to *all* workers. Perhaps it would be more accurate to say that wage labour is assumed to be homogeneous in gender terms and the minority of women who participate are part of an undifferentiated mass which is considered to be predominantly male. Thus, women as objects of study have been assumed to be exceptional and the results have been integrated into the predominant male definition of the workplace.

But there have been exceptions to the general treatment of women as objects, and a few women have contributed towards the creation of knowl-

edge about the workplace. In the whole history of the Sociology of Organizations, which is usually considered to start with the work of Max Weber, three women stand out as having taken an initiating role with respect to the development of the field. These are Mary Parker Follett, who worked early in this century to emphasize a more human approach to management, Joan Woodward whose work in the 1950s presaged the development of the so-called "technological" school of organizations and finally, Rosabeth Moss Kanter who has taken the lead in the study of women within organizational settings. What is remarkable about all these women is the extent to which they were prompted to collaborate with industrial management in their contribution to the field. Follett had an enormous admiration for managers and generally acted as a free-lance management consultant. Woodward was a strong advocate of close collaboration between researchers and management and Kanter has even set up her own organizational consulting firm, Goodmeasure Inc., in order to ensure the widest possible practical dissemination of the results of her research. Whatever one might think of this particular political stance, all women shared in the central definition of the field - that it was a discipline devoted to the advancement of industrial capitalism, whose tools should be honed and consecrated in the service of this system. They accepted the definition that it was the industrial sector which predominated and collaborated by reflecting on this core sector. In effect, one might argue that their success did not derive from their exploitation of women's typical experience - which would certainly be elsewhere than in industrial management - but rather in their willingness to participate in the male definition of the significant priorities of the discipline. None of the women specialized in the study of hospitals, schools or other types of organizational reality where women's participation is more frequent. Rather than challenging the prevailing male definition, they participated in it - and their relative success arose from such acceptance.

For we must recognize that their success was relative. Follett is largely forgotten in modern treatments of the field and it took the male researchers concerned with the later Hawthorne studies to convince management that a human approach was good business as well as more humane. Woodward⁵ is certainly acknowledged by the technological school, but it was succeeding researchers, particularly Charles Perrow, who extended the technology paradigm in such a way that, ironically, it could be used to encompass non-industrial organizations as well as industrial, and thus presage a wider scope of application. Finally, Kanter's work differs from that of her predecessors in highlighting the situation of *women* in organizations and in attempting to theorize about this female experience. However, her collaboration with management is still marked, for the study of women in work organizations is of paramount interest to contemporary managers as they attempt to cope with the influx of women into wage labour in the post-war period. Kanter follows the tendency of male-stream sociology in analyzing a burning management problem. She describes and categorizes women's behaviour; she does not question the structure within which they are located but rather their proportional representation within the structure.

In contrast, those women who have reflected a gender-specific perspective on the field have been relegated to the lower rank of the hierarchy of knowledge. By this, I mean that women writers in the Sociology of Organizations have played three additional roles within the area - what we characterize⁶ as the Service Workers, the Oppressed and the Optimists. The first of these categories is intended to designate the number of women writers who have served the predominantly male theorists by testing or elaborating concepts, synthesizing the existing literature and generally performing the "drone" functions for the kingpins of the organizational field. In general, these tasks might be viewed as the "house-keeping" services of the organizational litera-

ture, and while it is not my intention to denigrate the progress that is made in the scientific field through this incremental type of work, it should be noted that the minority of women working in the area have taken on more than their share of this type of task.

The second category - the Oppressed - symbolizes the consciousness of several women researchers⁷ that issues of power and authority are the key topics within the organizational setting, and a significant number have turned their attention to inequalities in power terms -either within the organization or between officials and clients in service organizations. We note that this view of power differentials takes the system as "given" and concentrates on the strategies and maneuvers of powerless groups in their dealings with those in authority. It is as if the women's "view from the bottom" has sensitized them to the problems of those who are deprived of power and are thus "oppressed" and has highlighted the means of dealing with such situations, not by revolutionizing the system, but rather by attempting to go around the formal power differential.

Finally, the women writers in the field whom we characterize as "Optimists" have concentrated on the nature of alternative organizations to the bureaucratic model which predominates in contemporary society. Recognizing that current organizational reality is skewed in favour of male values, modes of operation and early socialization, they hasten to investigate the nature of more open organizational models which might be closer to female experience and which might enhance women's organizational position. However, despite the idealistic note which runs through this literature, there are cautionary contributions from writers who recognize that alternate organizations are merely "alternate" to the predominate bureaucratic model and will never come to predominate in contemporary society, to say nothing of the salient argument that while innovative organizational structures might assist in minimizing handicaps for women in wage la-

bour, the patriarchal traits of society at large would succeed in maintaining women in a subservient role even within more loosely structured, open organizational settings.

What this brief glance at women's contributions to the organizational literature suggests is that the few women who have contributed conceptually have done so while participating in the male definition of the nature and priorities of the field. Those women who have drawn on gender-specific experience have contributed important insights to particular types of literature - but this literature in itself has been considered either marginal in dealing with aberrant organizational forms or peripheral to the main conceptual concerns of the domain. Women's contributions have assisted in completing the image of organizational functioning, but have not constructed the main scaffolding for an understanding of organizational reality. It is in this way that their contributions have been relegated to the lower ranks of the knowledge hierarchy; within a male-dominated (and therefore "significant" area) they have performed peripheral roles.

The Power of Knowledge: The Organizational Status of Women

The study of the organizational literature has suggested that when women do participate in prestigious knowledge areas, dealing with the "public" sphere, they are largely relegated to peripheral tasks. But what of denigrated knowledge areas, dealing with the "private" sphere? Here, it is argued, women play leading roles, as they have clearly done in the study of the Family or in Women's Studies, but their resulting role is marginalized by the minimal power of the area involved. Denigrated areas lead to low leverage in terms of execution; while the knowledge content may be impeccable and the building blocks rest on solid foundations, the opportunity to take the data garnered to their logical conclusion can be minimal.

The second research project covered in this paper sheds light on this very issue of the power of knowledge to influence subsequent events. In this instance, the knowledge area is a denigrated one, for it concerns the study of women, a powerless topic even when located within the significant university setting, it seems. Very briefly, the research was concerned with a Committee on the Status of Women⁸ which was set up in 1979 at one Québec university. The Committee, which was entirely female in membership, received a mandate to isolate the recommendations contained within a provincial government report (*Pour les Québécoises: égalité et indépendance*) that were applicable to the university. Committee members moved quickly to renegotiate this mandate to facilitate a general study of the situation of women within the university in keeping with the intention of the government report. Early investigations revealed that a great deal of information that was necessary for a comprehensive report on the status of women was not available; it would be necessary for the members of the committee to undertake original research to answer a number of pertinent queries about women's situation.

We argue that knowledge of women's situations within this university was almost a structural imperative in the sense that the societal context of the mid-1970s included a strong women's movement within Québec, the publication of the provincial report on women's situation within the province which followed on the studies of the federal Royal Commission on the Status of Women and the celebration of International Women's Year in 1975. These societal developments were accompanied by a dearth of knowledge of women's situation within francophone universities in general. By 1978, twenty Canadian universities had produced reports on the Status of Women within their own universities (Boyd, 1979:4), but not one francophone university had done so. As a result, there was a lack of policy to redress any existing inequalities. Even in the late 1970s, as one informant indi-

cated in an interview, there was little accurate information on the distribution of women in this particular Québec university and there was a great need to uncover the parameters of women's existence; furthermore, the provincial report was destined to oblige the university to take certain measures and it would have been in the interests of senior administrators to be prepared in advance. The need to clarify the situation of women in the university setting appeared urgent for a rather traditional university that wished to give the impression of leading the province. In brief, the knowledge sought was salient and clearly overdue.

However, while information may be of political import, it does not necessarily form part of a prestigious area of knowledge. We noted in our research that a special status was accorded to this study of women's situation. In contrast to a variety of university committees, the Committee on the Status of Women was appointed directly by the head of the university instead of passing through the normal democratic procedures. The official explanation for this method of appointment was that the topics covered were not directly related to either teaching or administration⁹ so that the bypassing of university procedures provided a more flexible formula. However, it was also clear that the Committee was contained by its dependence on the university head, and despite committee members' confidence in the intentions and understanding of the individual concerned, there was the distinct impression that any desirable "bias" or "exaggeration" could thus be avoided.¹⁰ An additional consequence of this procedure was that the work of the Committee was hived off from the main university activities and the marginal status of its knowledge product was thus assured. It was through this set of mechanisms that knowledge of women's condition, which was clearly considered urgent to obtain, was simultaneously marginalized and denigrated.

In arguing this interpretation of the data, we recognize that the *avoidance* of democratic procedures, which are inevitably dominated by male colleagues, is sometimes considered an advantage by women's groups in their attempt to effect change in the university setting. However, as we argue in the detailed presentation of these data, the overall effect of skirting normal procedures is to "privatize" an issue. In some instances, for example in connection with major decisions concerning lay-offs or the effects of financial constraints, a Presidential or Rectoral Committee can effectively limit the dissemination of information and derive power in so doing. With respect to the women's situation outlined, the administrators also "contained" the information gathered, but to *their* advantage rather than to the advantage of the women concerned. In both examples, "privatization" centralizes rather than decentralizes power, and since women are located at the periphery of the system, they cannot participate in the effects of this centralization. It should be added that the women in this case study welcomed the rather paternalistic protection they were accorded by the unusual procedures employed, for they espoused the view that they benefitted from their attachment to the Rectoral offices which they perceived to be all-powerful. But to be attached or protected by power is not to participate in the exercise of such power, as the women were to discover during the implementation phase of their report.

For while information may be considered important to obtain, recommendations derived from the relevant data collection are not necessarily considered important to implement. The women who served on the Committee were aware of this problem from the start and attempted to obtain control over the implementation as well as the formulation of their recommendations during the renegotiation of their mandate. However, while they were successful in extending the range of information that they were mandated to collect, they were not successful in convincing the university authorities from the

outset of the importance of their continuing appointment to oversee implementation. Instead, they were obliged to resort to an indirect strategy - that of ensuring that the report was of such high quality that its recommendations could not be ignored. Imbued with a sense of mission, they took tremendous care to ensure that their report was based on a vast amount of work, that it employed so-called "hard" data which would be convincing for male administrators, that the demands posed should be moderate and that it should be "scientific" rather than political.¹¹ They deliberately avoided responding to individual complaints, considering their mandate to be one of analysis rather than confrontation.

This strategy was partially successful and the quality of their work was clearly recognized. As one senior administrator stated: "C'est un excellent rapport....Ce qui m'a impressionné...ce sont les données, les statistiques dont on s'est servi pour appuyer les recommandations...."¹² (Brodrigg and Tancred-Sheriff, 1983:18). However, the quality of the data collection was not sufficient to convince their male colleagues, who occupied significant decision-making positions within the university, that the resultant recommendations should be implemented. The early definition of their mandate as slightly ridiculous (*op. cit.*: 16) survived into the post-report phase so that certain recommendations were considered "scatter-brained" or "trivial," such as those emphasizing security provisions or non-sexist language. Despite the Committee's ultimate success in gaining a three-year mandate for one of their members to oversee the implementation of their recommendation, this "Coordonnatrice" for the Status of Women expressed disappointment in the results of their work. In her extensive final report, she quantifies the degree of acceptance of the Committee's recommendations over the period of her mandate and indicates that only 19% of the recommendations, have been implemented and 36% partially implemented (Tancred-Sheriff, forthcoming (b): Chapter VII). However, as she indicates in the text,

this quantitative image is overly optimistic, for often implementation has been effected in a temporary or *ad hoc* manner and the limited accomplishments could disappear quite easily (*Ibid.*).¹⁴ One might add that the procedure employed for the appointment to this post reflected the continuing marginality of women's issues for many university authorities; the "Co-ordonnatrice" was appointed in the same manner as committee secretaries and directors of support services instead of passing through the main university forum for appointment to even the most junior of academic appointments. Clearly the standing of this post was not considered to be very elevated.

The foregoing case study illustrates that while a particular sphere of knowledge may have been considered significant for political reasons, once the data were collected, the matter was deemed to have received due attention. In fact, once the information was possessed, one of the means of "containing" the data was to denigrate the whole area of knowledge. What had originally been considered significant information for a clarification of the situation then became insignificant within the overall organizational framework. One of the means of accomplishing this transition from significance to insignificance was to define the knowledge collection as an irregular and special activity, to treat the data collecting body differentially and to claim from the beginning that the knowledge area had little connection with core organizational concerns. In effect, the whole issue was "privatized." This study of women in a public domain became a private matter. The definition of the knowledge area as female, and therefore private, predominated over the public setting in which the women were working.

Ridicule was also employed to transform an area of political importance to one of marginal import. As a result, the implementation of recommendations arising from the information collected could be minimized; "trivial" recom-

mentations arising from an area which had been set apart from the core concerns of the university would be easy to ignore. The handling of this knowledge area ensured political advantages through attention devoted to the topic while little, of practical importance, would follow on the information collected. The "forms of thought," so carefully created by the women, continued to occupy their proper sphere - that of women and therefore of lesser relevance to overall reality.

Conclusion

This paper has covered an important knowledge-producing organization of contemporary society and has examined women's contribution to the creation of knowledge. In one instance, women participate with male colleagues in the work of a prestigious domain - but their mitigated success arises from their collaboration with the male-defined parameters of that domain and when they insist on expressing their gender-specific experience in the knowledge created, this whole experience is marginalized. In the second instance, women are invited to create knowledge based on their own experience and despite their attempts to appeal to the logic of the male-dominated university, the results of their labours are denigrated through mechanisms of privatization, ridicule and the male-defined aura of insignificance which is attached to the data on women's situation. The paper has illustrated the chinese-box nature of women's oppression. Within the framework of prestigious knowledge activities, they are relegated to denigrated roles; within the framework of denigrated knowledge areas, their attempts to raise the area to significance are contained.

To return to some of the concerns about knowledge creation with which the paper started, one must underline that the opportunity for women to create their own knowledge arising from their lived experience is an initial step - but only an initial one - in the accomplishment of

full female participation in knowledge creation. The really important second step is the ability to promote such knowledge to the level of significance; otherwise, the valid expression of such experience will be set aside and denigrated. It is also necessary to reiterate that it is not merely women's participation in knowledge creation that counts, though additional numbers of women would help. It is also the ability to achieve "success" in knowledge creation *not* through participation in male-defined parameters of a field, but through escalating women's concerns to an important level. The mechanisms of knowledge creation and women's participation in this process are undoubtedly important. However, it is the hierarchy of knowledge, the recognized power of certain areas in contrast to others, that merits attention. There is little point in creating if one's creation is relegated to insignificance. The mechanisms for both creating and maintaining the importance of the resulting creation are the central concerns for feminist action. In her article on knowledge creation, Smith has poignantly described the conversational denigration of women's contribution (1975:364-5). In fact, the whole creation of knowledge is one long societal conversation in which women's participation will continue to be denigrated until we are more conscious of the mechanisms of our conversational marginality.

NOTES

1. I would like to express my early and sincere appreciation to my "collaboratrices" on these projects - Jane Campbell, who worked with me on the first topic, the results of which were published in French in *Sociologie et Sociétés*, 1981, and Somer Brodribb, who worked with me on the second, the results of which were presented to the CSAA meetings in Vancouver, 1983. See [Tancred-] Sheriff and Campbell, 1981 and Brodribb and Tancred-Sheriff, 1983.
2. By this statement, I do not intend to deny that knowledge creation takes place in a variety of other locations - private and State research institutions, mass media, for example and through the efforts of independent scholars. However, I am suggesting that the concentration of the *research* endeavour lies within the university sector which is therefore a particularly salient example of the knowledge-creation problems under discussion.
3. This section is based very largely on: [Tancred-] Sheriff and Campbell, 1981. An English version of this text is available, on

- request, from the author. This reference should be consulted for a definition of the literature covered.
4. "...developed by male academics and consultants from the perspective of positions in male-dominated authority structures, the discipline focusses on the organizational networks of control and authority which underlie those positions."
 5. It is interesting to note that Woodward, with whom I worked in the late 1960s, was characterized by her staff as "not reading the work of others." Despite this reputed avoidance of the literature (for whatever reason), she participated profoundly in the parameters of that literature, and in some ways, was more deeply embedded in its assumptions than succeeding scholars who were male.
 6. See [Trancred-] Sheriff and Campbell, 1981.
 7. cf. *Ibid*:123ff.
 8. See: Brodrribb and Tancred-Sheriff, 1983, for an account of the functioning of this committee and the decision-making surrounding its appointment and the implementation of its recommendations. Interviews with those involved in the decision-making process are contained in this paper, both in the original French and in English translation.
 9. Interview with a high-level administrator: "...ça ne touchait pas les études proprement dites, ça ne touchait pas l'administration proprement dite."; "...it doesn't affect the academic side, it doesn't touch the administration, strictly speaking."
 10. Interview with another senior administrator: "...on voulait... que ça reste bien chapeauté, et que tout soit coordonné surtout que ça ne prenne pas des biais parce que, encore une fois, on peut exagérer dans ça aussi, hein?"; "...we wanted to keep a lid on things, and that everything be coordinated, especially that it not become biased because, once again, you can exaggerate with that too, eh?"
 11. See: Brodrribb and Tancred-Sheriff: 15-18. Among the many quotes on the subject: "tout le monde va nous attendre avec une brique et un fanal au point de vue méthodologie et réflexion; il faut qu'on soit inattaquables"; "everyone is going to be waiting for us with a flashlight and bricks to attack us from a methodological and theoretical point of view. We must be unassailable."
 12. "It's an excellent report...what impressed me was...the data, the statistics which they used to support the recommendations...."
 13. It should be added that this university appears to be typical of many others in this respect. As Symons and Page (1984:209) point out:
Universities and colleges have very nearly buried the real injustices concerning their treatment of women beneath an avalanche of well-meaning reports. Having solved their collective conscience with this plethora of documents, they are now tending to return the issue to the bottom of the agenda. While the actual mechanisms of burying injustices cannot be generalized from one university to another, the fact of their burial is obviously general.
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