

Career Expectations of Female Teachers in British Columbia

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The impact of the Women's Movement in the sixties made considerable progress in raising the consciousness of women to unprecedented levels so that women began to earn qualifications for careers that would lead to higher-paid jobs with more responsibility—the kinds of jobs traditionally considered the male domain. Nonetheless, most women's ambitions, even in undertaking a university education, appear to be circumscribed by traditional career goals which lead women into social work, nursing, day-care, teaching and clerical work.

To determine whether women's career ambitions had changed in the area of teacher education, a study was undertaken as part of a course on *Social Issues in Canadian Education*, at the University of Victoria, British Columbia, during the spring term of 1979. The course was a professional course, with students ranging in level from third to fifth year, and with the majority of respondents being in elementary education. The issue concerned the fact that although there are almost equal numbers of men and women in the school system, positions of power and authority are predominantly held by men.

As Table I indicates there is an imbalance of power in the hands of males and females in the field of education in British Columbia. The problem underlying the issue appears to be the stereotyped roles played by men and women in the school system. The bureaucratic and authoritarian characteristics of the education system seem closely related to a tradition of male dominance.

Teaching, for women, has long been considered a suitable and remunerative way of filling in the time between college graduation and getting married and having children. It has been assumed that women would not remain in the profession too long, and thus there has been little expectation that they would rise to positions of control and authority. In addition, there have been few role models of women who do rise to such positions. It is still the case that the higher the level of education, the fewer the number of women. Men dominate the upper echelons while women function as the base of the educational system. As a Discussion Paper from the B.C. Ministry of Education argues (02-79), there remains much to be done to have these needs met and taken and seriously:

Table 1: B.C. Education System 1975

1. 67% of all full-time elementary teachers are female.
33% of all full-time elementary teachers are male.
2. 69% of all full-time secondary teachers are male.
31% of all full-time secondary teachers are female.
3. 94.5% of principals are male.
5.5% of principals are female.
4. 0% of secondary principals are female.
5. 95.7% of vice-principals are male.
4.3% of vice-principals are female.
6. 0% of district superintendents are female.
7. 0.8% of district supervisors at the secondary level are female.
26.9% of district supervisors at the elementary level are female.
8. 91% of all full-time male teachers have a professional certificate.
86.4% of all full-time male teachers have at least one university degree.
64% of all full-time female teachers have a professional certificate.
59% of all full-time female teachers have a university degree.
9. There is one female senior official in the Department of Education.
10. 16% of the full-time teaching faculty at U.B.C. are females (1975/76).
11. Average gross salaries of full-time teachers by total teaching experience and sex.

Years Experience All School Types	Male Salary	Female Salary	Difference
0	\$11,957	\$11,353	\$ 604
1	12,672	11,939	733
2	13,185	12,404	781
3	13,907	12,868	1,039
4- 6	15,405	13,842	1,563
7-10	18,018	15,472	2,546
11-15	20,568	16,648	3,920
15 +	22,429	17,119	5,310

Sources - Educational Data Services, Department of Education, *Form J*. Table 9L, September 1975.

Educational Data Services, Department of Education, *B.C. Public School Teacher Information*, September 1975 (Blue Book).

While there are exemplary programs for women and some positive recognition of the need for accessing learning opportunities for women, the bulk of the enterprise is ad hoc, peripheral and fragmented.

Where programming for women exists, there are few institutions which have clear policies, or which have provided a sound institutional base. The programming which occurs is often based on good-will and the efforts of committed persons. Their accomplishments have been extraordinary. This indicates that learning opportunities for women are not a high-priority area, despite the fact that women learners are estimated to constitute a significant proportion, if not the majority of enrollees, and that they respond to non-traditional opportunities. (p. 23)

The University of Victoria study attempted to investigate the ambitions of a sample of female and male students, to see where those ambitions lay, and if there were any indication of changing attitudes and role expectations.

In a study entitled *The Achievement Motive in Women* by Rhoda Baruch (1967), it was found that:

- a) there was a decline in the achievement motive for women between five and ten years out of college—a decline that correlated with marriage and childrearing;
- b) after fifteen years away from college, more women became concerned again about their achievement. This group reported dissatisfaction with the limitations of women's role activities and were eager to resume careers;
- c) there was an association between achievement motive and age, in college women aged 35-39.

Bearing in mind these facts, and the still predominant sexist nature of our culture, the Victoria study proposed the following hypotheses:-

- 1) That generally fewer women than men would aspire to positions of power and authority.
- 2) That women would show higher ambition at age 35 and over, when their children were older, or (if they did not have children) when they had had more experience and gained more self-confidence.

A questionnaire entitled *Ambition in Education* (see Table 2) was distributed to all sections of a 3rd year Education course.

The subjects were 100 undergraduate students, of whom 26 were males and 74 females. No mention was made of the fact that it was women's ambition that was especially being considered, as it was felt that such information might influence the responses of both sexes. One hundred responses were obtained, of which 26 were from males and 74 from females. The chronological ages of the men ranged from 20 to 35 while those of the women were from 20 to 41. (See Table 3).

The first statistic of importance relates to the high ambition (HA) groups. (see Table 4)

- 1.) All the younger males had high ambition, despite no teaching experience; whereas only 50% of the younger women with no experience had high ambition. It seems reasonable to infer, therefore, that males are primed to expectations of higher positions right from the start. Lack of experience does not inhibit them. Women in all groups generally had more experience than the men, but did not appear to see this as sufficient reason for aiming at higher positions.
- 2.) Of the women aged 35 and over, 50%

Table 4: **Experience and Ambition**

UNDER 30		OVER 30	
Females Without Experience	Males Without Experience	Females Without Experience	Males Without Experience
High Ambition 50%	100%	25%	—
Low Ambition 68%	80%	20%	100%*

* n = 1

Table 5: **Age in the High Ambition Groups**

	FEMALES HA	MALES HA
Age 20-29	63.6%	90%
Age 30-41	36.4%	10%

showed HA, whereas of those aged 20-34, only 27% showed HA, thus supporting the second hypothesis that women aged 35 and over would show more ambition than younger, less-experienced women or those still raising families and under 35.

- 3.) In the HA groups, the breakdown of HA and age was as shown in Table 5.

There are more younger ambitious males, therefore, than younger ambitious females. The low figure for HA older males again may be due to the fact that older men in the education system have already reached their goals. Certainly, in this sample, they are far outnumbered by older women. Traditionally, also, women have sacrificed their own careers in order to put their husbands through to more highly-qualified levels. So more women would be returning to university to try and catch up.

- 4.) Of the 100 responses, three quarters were from females. Thus, women in this course outnumbered men almost 3:1. This ratio reflects the data in Table 1. When broken down into levels of education, the traditional pattern of female teacher-prevalence at the elementary level, and male teacher-prevalence at the secondary level, is once again reflected in the population taking this education course.

Summary and conclusions

It would appear, therefore, that the majority of students on the course, reflected traditional tendencies and expectations in education. Any hope for rectifying the imbalance of power in educational administration seems to lie in the hands of older women.

Change in the culture will only come slowly, and with the support of the major institutions of our society. The university is one of these institutions, and should act as a model and leader

for others, by constantly monitoring its own attitudes and values, and acting upon what it finds. The predominant use of one-sex pronouns in lectures and essays, for example, appears to have a subtle stereotyping effect. Laughter accompanying references to women as sex objects, would seem to fall into this same category.

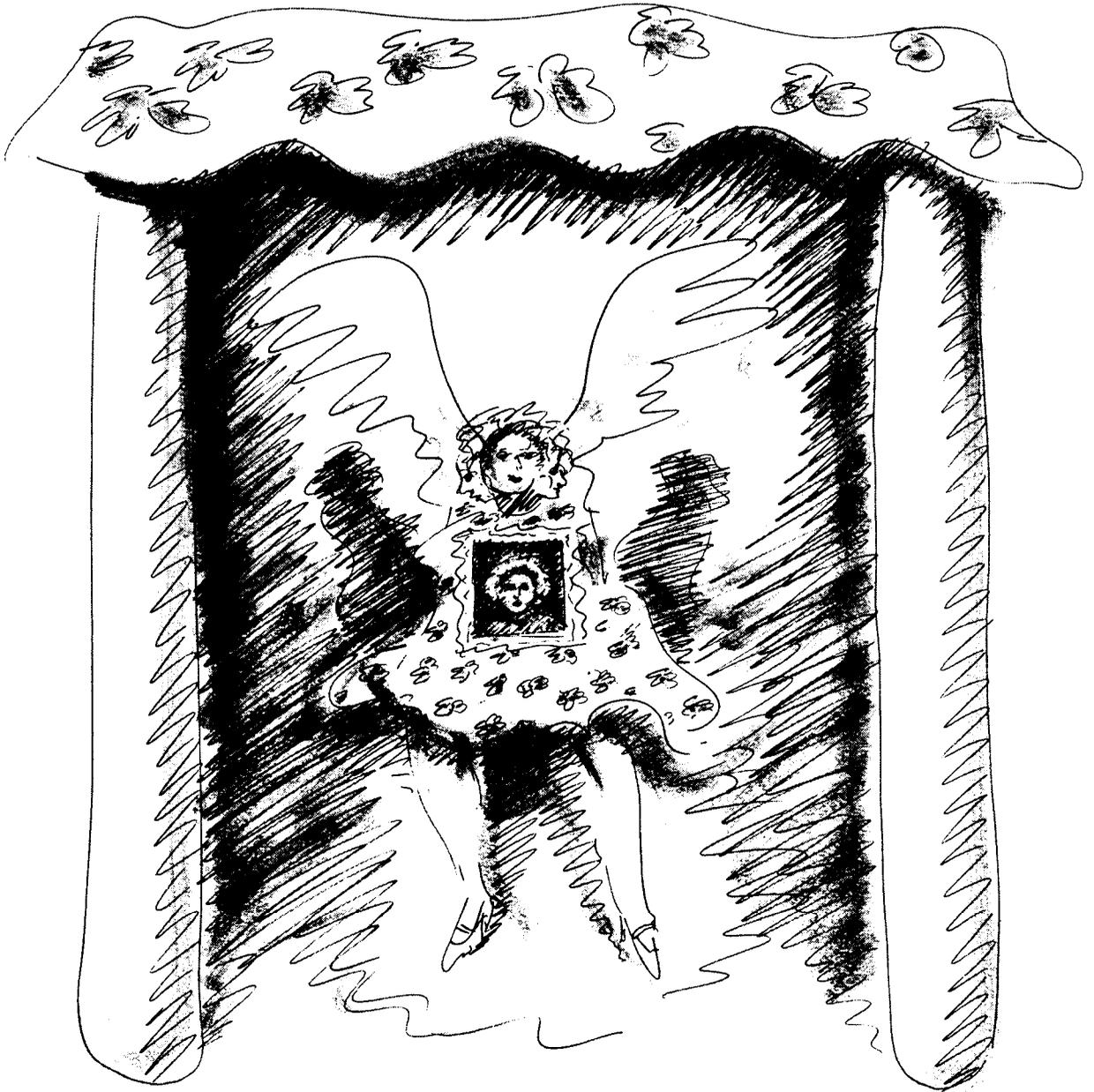
As Jane Gaskell states in "Stereotyping and Discrimination in the Curriculum" (in *Precepts, Policy and Process*, by Stevenson and Wilson, 1977).

. . . . the changed ideology must be held by powerful groups in the society before it can be reflected in the school curriculum. (p. 272)

Until the people training to teach that curriculum are exposed to such an ideology, it would seem that traditionalism will triumph.

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