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This special conference issue of ATLANTIS contains papers selected from among those presented at an interdisciplinary conference of research on women, the first of its kind in Canada. The conference, entitled Research on Women: Current Projects and Future Directions, was held in Halifax at Mount St. Vincent University on November 11th to 14th, 1976. It was sponsored by the Department of Manpower and Immigration, Canada Council, Secretary of State, Mount St. Vincent University, St. Mary's University and the Women's Caucus of the Atlantic Association of Sociologists and Anthropologists.

The impetus for the conference arose from attempts of three sociologists, Lynn McDonald, Susan Clark and Linda Christiansen-Ruffman, to collaborate with other people across Canada to promote research on women. It soon became apparent to us that a great deal of research was being done in different disciplines, but that lack of contact among researchers was prohibiting useful exchanges of ideas and identification of current and future issues for study. Consequently, we saw the conference as one of the ways of encouraging contacts among researchers in Women's Studies. Having realized the necessity of interdisciplinary participation, we co-opted five additional people to serve on our committee: Olga Broomfield (English), Patricia Fitzgerald (Business Administration), Mairi MacDonald (Continuing

Education), Wendy Mitchinson (History) and Mary Sparling (Director of the Mount St. Vincent Art Gallery).

Although we had originally thought the conference would be relatively small, the response to our request for papers soon made it apparent that our original plans would have to be revised. Indeed, even after expanding the conference by half a day and including extra sessions, we still had more papers than could be accommodated. Over fifty papers were presented by researchers from across Canada, including government officials, academics, and other interested citizens. Submissions were organized into seven major categories: Women in Literature, Women in Society, Women in Social Movements, Women in the Labour Force, Women in Culture, Women's Work in Communities, and Women in Social Policy. Both the number of papers given and the large number of people who registered for the conference indicated the very high degree of interest in research on women. Approximately two hundred people were in attendance at any one time and an estimated six hundred people attended some part of the conference.

It is impossible to recapture the intellectual excitement and healthy interchange which occurred during those few days and which has continued since then among participants. This volume of ATLANTIS is at least one way of sharing

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some of the interesting papers with participants who were attending other sessions and with those people who were unable to attend the conference. I would like to thank the editors of ATLANTIS for providing this opportunity and for helping with this special edition.

The papers in this volume represent the diversity and multi-disciplinary nature of the conference. Time frameworks and subject matter range from Adam and Eve to the contemporary situation of migrant wives. The role and image of women is analyzed in differing historical periods and under various circumstances by psychologists, philosophers, historians, sociologists, anthropologists, and scholars of English and other languages. Such a diversity of topics and perspectives fosters the emergence of a vibrant intellectual community in Canada which studies women in society. This community is breaking away from the constrictions of traditional definitions of what exists and what should be studied.

The following papers can be considered from a variety of perspectives. I have chosen to organize them according to their basic approaches to the subject of women. The first five articles describe the role or image of women in a particular society or historical period using diverse sources. Payer analyses medieval theological discussions about the sins of Eve com-

pared to those of Adam and highlights certain medieval cultural beliefs about women. Belcher describes a cultural context, the seventeenth century and its ideal "womanly behaviour," in her analysis of a specific book on manners and customs. Skidmore, utilizing the words of parlour music, describes the image of women in North America around 1900 while Wilson's paper contains a content analysis of Chatelaine and MacLean's magazines from 1930 to 1969. The paper by Muir relies on anthropological techniques to analyse the daily work of contemporary women in a French and in an English community of the Magdalen Islands.

The next papers are oriented more directly toward increasing the visibility of women and women's activities. They highlight specific individuals, activities, groups or categories of women which have not previously been noticed or analysed in any detail. Mitchinson describes the missionary societies which permitted women to become significant forces in Protestant denominations in the late nineteenth century. Also using historical methods, Buckley highlights the actions of two women in reducing rates of infant and child mortality in the period between the two world wars, and Pierson details attempts to expand the number of home aides after World War II. Gold, a psychologist, analyses data from questionnaires to uncover the effects of women's employment on male and

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female children. Antler's study delineates explicitly the contribution of women to the economic viability of their households and the changes which have occurred in their roles as a result of changed economic conditions of Newfoundland's fishery.

The remaining five papers are even more explicit about uncovering aspects of women's experience which have been either ignored or invisible previously. Isaak focuses on the education of Eve in Milton's Paradise Lost and demonstrates how a feminist perspective may contribute to our understanding of a traditional area of scholarship. Smith shows how a new use of the Bildungsroman is perceptible in recent fiction written by women. McMullen examines contemporary Canadian literature to uncover the heroic qualities and actions of women characters whose quest is for freedom rather than power or material rewards. Bawden and Greenaway draw our attention to the conspicuous absence of women in art history. The final paper by Matthews, a sociologist, deals very directly with this problem of the visibility of women. She explains how the theoretical and methodological traditions of sociology blinded her to important aspects of women's experiences in migration and and then re-examines her data from a new perspective.

It is interesting that this emphasis on making the experience of women visible

and rethinking past knowledge is present in the work of scholars just beginning their academic careers. Clearly, there is a need for this work to be published so that it can mature in conjunction with the ideas of others and direct our attention to newly developing perspectives. Research on women suggests not only new directions in Women's Studies but the necessity of redefining the focus and conceptual framework of disciplines.

A number of papers and considerable discussion at the conference focused on future directions of research. Some of this interchange was oriented directly toward immediate collaboration on research. For example, interdisciplinary work on social movements was initiated at the conference by Naomi Black (Political Science, York), Lynn McDonald (Sociology, Dalhousie), Wendy Mitchinson (History, Mount St. Vincent), and Mary Kinnear (History, University of Manitoba). Other discussion which took place at the conference focused more directly on identifying shortcomings of existing research and suggesting possible future directions. For instance, one conference paper by Lorna Marsden, which appears in the regular Spring edition of ATLANTIS, discusses some of the factors previously ignored in research on women in the labour force.

Other conference papers not included in this issue of ATLANTIS are

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being published elsewhere in various journals, in the proceedings of "The Working Sexes," a symposium organized by M. Patricia Marchak of U.B.C., and in a forthcoming book being planned by Naomi Black of York University. In addition, those papers at the conference which focused on women in Atlantic communities will be published as partial proceedings available from Susan Clark at Mount St. Vincent University or Linda Christiansen-Ruffman at St. Mary's University.

The papers in this issue give a good indication of current research on women. Obviously much work remains to be done. I hope that researchers will be encouraged to identify gaps, methodological problems, and theoretical issues in their respective areas of interest and to pursue their research further. ATLANTIS, too, should be encouraged to continue as a vehicle for serious and sustained debate in this exciting new area of study.

Linda Christiansen-Ruffman