

Newsletter of the UCLA Center for the Study of Women



update

FALL 2013

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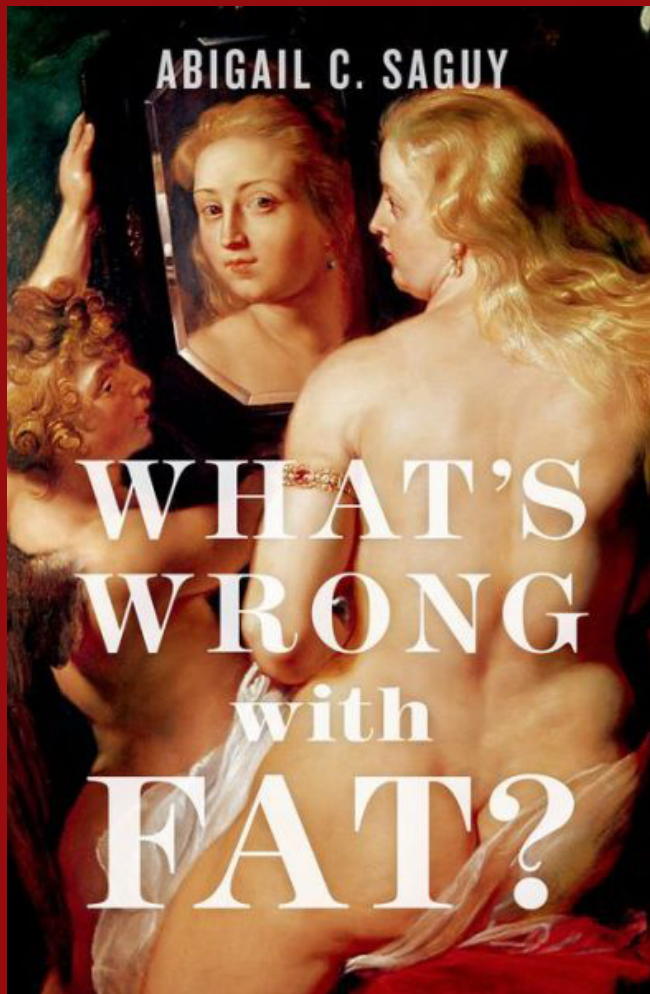
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Department of Sociology
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presents

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Associate Professor, Sociology

will discuss her new book with

Bianca Wilson, School of Law
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MODERATOR

Juliet Williams, Gender Studies

DATE: Friday, December 6, 2013

TIME: 12 noon

PLACE: Royce 314

The Irene Flecknoe Ross Lecture Series is made possible by a gift from Ray Ross in memory of his wife
Cosponsored by the UCLA SOCIOLOGY DEPARTMENT HEALTH WORKING GROUP, UCLA CENTER FOR POLITICS
AND PUBLIC POLICY, and UCLA CENTER FOR THE STUDY OF WOMEN

from the director

Hello everyone and a belated welcome back from summer break.

THIS YEAR, we have a new schedule for the publication of *CSW Update*: one issue each quarter and a special CSW awards issue at the beginning of the summer. This issue is terrific. Our first article is **Latinas and Black Women's Stories: Preliminary Views on the Path to Homelessness**, by Maria Elena Ruiz with Tykesha Thomas, Carlos Contreras, and Rebecca Glaser. Professor Ruiz, who is an adjunct professor in the School of Nursing, at UCLA received a CSW Faculty Development Grant to support this research.

The next article on **College Gender Gaps** is by Mary Ann Bronson, a graduate student in the Department of Economics who received a CSW Irving and Jean Stone Dissertation Year Fellowship for AY 2013-2014.

Alice Wexler, a longtime CSW Research Scholar and acclaimed historian, is author of **Edge of the Map: An Experiment in Science and in Theater**.

The final article of this issue highlights the **Martha Foster Collection** at the June L. Mazer Lesbian Archives, which is being processed as part of CSW's "Making Visible Histories Invisible" project.

I would like to share a couple of highlights from CSW's schedule for this coming year. *Life (Un)Ltd* continues with a robust schedule of events—including Professor Lawrence Cohen's lecture on **The Gender of the Number, the Gender of the Card** on March 5, 2014.

We will be finishing up a couple of longstanding projects and looking for new ideas and projects for AY 2014-15. In Winter, CSW will celebrate the accomplishments and wrap up of the **Women's Social Movements in Los Angeles project**, inviting key figures with whom CSW has conducted oral histories and whose work improved city services in the areas of health, the arts, education, and labor. Featured will be Helen Astin, Jane Bayes, Karen Brodtkin, Sherna Berger Gluck, Sondra Hale, Myrna Hant, Sandra Serrano Sewell, Nayereh Tohidi, and others in a public event on Feb 24, 2014, from 2 to 5 pm—so please mark your calendars.

In May 2014, CSW will complete the three-year NEH project, **Making Visible Histories Invisible: Preserving the Legacy of Lesbian Feminist Activism and Writing in Los Angeles**.

This project, a collaboration with the June L. Mazer Lesbian Archives and UCLA Library Special Collections, will conclude with 91 of the Mazer Archive collections processed, described, digitized, and housed in UCLA

Special Collections as well as 575 hours of audio and 90 hours of video recordings digitally preserved. Thanks to a joint stewardship agreement created by project partner Sharon Farb, UCLA Associate Librarian, the paper collections will all be housed and available through UCLA Special Collections and also through UCLA Digital Library. In the June 2013 issue, *CSW Update* published a special issue on this project and the many collections and people involved.

Please mark your calendars for the project capstone celebration for May 16, 2014, from 2 to 6 pm. This event will feature Colonel Margarethe Cammermeyer, a Vietnam veteran, Bronze Star recipient, and Mazer Archive donor, who, with her lawyer, UCLA Law School Alum Mary Newcombe, successfully challenged the ban on gays and lesbians serving in the military. Cammermeyer and Newcombe will be part of this exciting event as well as other distinguished guests, so look for details in the coming months.

I have just come back from Kigali, Rwanda, where I participated in a partnership project, "Promoting Gender Equity and Female Empowerment," that CSW has formed with the UCLA African Studies Center and the University of Rwanda School of Education—an issue we can all get behind. Looking forward to a wonderful year this year!

– Kathleen McHugh

A photograph of a city street scene. In the foreground, a person is sitting on the ground, surrounded by scattered trash and debris. The person is wearing a dark jacket and a hat. In the background, there are several buildings, including a tall brick building on the right and a white building on the left. A utility pole with wires is visible in the center. The overall scene suggests a state of homelessness or poverty.

LATINAS AND BLACK WOMEN'S STORIES

Preliminary Views on the Path to Homelessness

**BY MARIA ELENA RUIZ
WITH TYKESHA THOMAS,
CARLOS CONTRERAS,
AND REBECCA GLASER**

FOR my entire professional career, I have been working with people on the fringes of society; whether immigrants or exiles, non-English-speaking individuals, homeless, incarcerated young men, uninsured families, victims of violence, farmworkers, or other groups who are vulnerable or who face a harsh sociopolitical climate.

As a Family Nurse Practitioner, medical sociologist, researcher, and educator, I have gravitated towards providing services for the neediest in society. A few years ago, when I first joined UCLA as a faculty member in the School of Nursing, I had no qualms about doing public health in the skid-row areas of Los Angeles. After all, I grew up in Boyle Heights, a Mexican immigrant, and well experienced with living and navigating through “at risk” neighborhoods.

In that first year, I supervised 12 nursing students as they gained their first public-health experience. I did not expect any surprises. However, as soon as we arrived at the SRO (Single Room Occupancy Program) hotel, which would serve as our home base for 10 weeks, the word got around that I and some of the students spoke Spanish. Suddenly, we had a group of older Latino men and women waiting for us to arrive; many of them remained in the lobby throughout the day—eager to converse, socialize, and query us about their health concerns. My thoughts immediately shifted to the stereotypes that

we are frequently taught: that, for example, Latinos predominantly live in multigenerational households, embraced by an extended, collectivist family spirit, where elders are respected, provided for, and cared for by younger family members. Why, then, I thought, were all these older Latinos present and living on skid row? Where is the literature, where is the research, and where is the media on this growing group of homeless individuals? That first introduction to a growing group of Latinos aging on skid row drew me to expand my work with the homeless.

Homelessness in the United States

In general, it is difficult to get a good handle on the number of homeless individuals and families because there is a lack of consensus on how to define and measure homelessness, plus the difficulty in identifying and locating homeless individuals. What figures we do have are only our best estimates of what is a serious public health issue. From various reports, we do know that there is an estimated 1.6 million people homeless in the U.S., with more than 3 million people, including an estimated 1.3 million children experiencing homelessness over one year (AARP 2008, NLCHP 2009).

The latest report from the National Alliance to End Homelessness (LAHSA 2012) also shows that at one point in time in January of last year (referred to as

a point-in-time estimate), almost 644,000 people were considered homeless. We can think of this as 20 individuals per every 10,000 people—an astounding figure for the U.S. While the majority may be staying in emergency shelters or transitional housing units, nearly 4 out of every 10 are unsheltered, which means they are living in the street, under bridges, in parks, in abandoned buildings or cars, or in other places not meant for human occupation. Moreover, most of the literature points to a simple typology of economic/jobs and housing as the primary factors that contribute to individuals becoming homeless.

A national portrait of the homeless also reveals that almost 66% of homeless individuals are men, and while six out of ten are racial/ethnic minorities, the majority of these are Black males (42%), with 20% Latino/Hispanics. Many of these individuals also suffer from various debilitating physical and mental health issues, substance abuse, domestic violence, or trauma.

Growing Diversity of the Homeless Population in Los Angeles County

In contrast to national data, LAHSA's report reveals increasing demographic changes among the homeless population in Los Angeles. Here, slightly fewer than half of all homeless individuals are Black (49%) and approximately 25% are Latino/



Hispanic. Also, a lower percentage is men, with a greater percentage of women (43% versus 34% nationally).

Homelessness among Latinos in Los Angeles

Drawing from our first public health experiences in the skid-row area, the first study explored what older Latino men and women in the SRO community area perceived as contributing to their becoming homeless (funded by the UCLA Chicano Studies Research Center). From the surveys and oral interviews with volunteer participants, we heard stories about how violence, poverty, and war contributed to their immigration experiences; how their vulnerability made them dependent on others for housing (that is, a garage or crowded floor space for sleeping) and how the kindness of others was their only source for a place to sleep and eat (especially for immigrants without family or networks), or how seasonal and low-paying service jobs (that is, day worker, delivery driver, housekeeper/ nanny) all contributed to their homelessness. Additionally, these men and women shared how language, culture, stigma, discrimination, racism, unmanaged physical and emotional health issues, and lack of “los papeles” all intersect and contribute to their becoming and remaining homeless. From the women, we also heard how some had experienced and still fear sexual, physical, and emotional violence. This picture is not one that previous research, literature, or the media have provided, given that these stories move beyond the simple typology of loss of jobs and housing.

Sociodemographics for Latinas and Black Women Study (N=25)

CHARACTERISTICS	LATINAS (N=12)	BLACK/AFRICAN AMERICAN (N=13)
AGE (YEARS) Less than 50 50–59 60–69 70–79	0 6 (50%) 2 (17%) 4 (33%) Range: 50–77 Mean: 77.4	6 (46%) 4 (31%) 1 (.07%) 2 (1.5%) Range: 25–77 Mean: 50
COUNTRY OF ORIGIN U.S. Mexico Puerto Rico El Salvador Other: 1 each for Cuba, Guatemala, Argentina	2 (17%) 3 (25%) 2 (17%) 2 (17%) 3 (25%) *	13 (100%)
LANGUAGE English preferred Spanish limited Both Spanish English	2 (17%) 8 (67%) 2 (17%)	13 (100%) - -
EDUCATION - YEARS COMPLETED 1–6 years 7–10 years 12 years Unknown	5 (42%) 3 (25%) 4 (33%) 1 Mean: 8 years	1 (7%) 1 (7%) 11 (85%) - Mean: 11 years
INCOME - MONTHLY Under \$300 \$600–1,000 Unknown: Missing or did not wish to disclose	2 (17%) 6 (50%) 4 (33%) Range \$3–\$979	2 (15%) 4 (31%) 6 (46%) Range \$182–\$860



While all the narratives leave saddeningly powerful images, the women's experiences do stand apart from the stories provided by the majority of the men.

Experiences of Latina and Black Women

For the present study, we build upon the research on the experiences of older Latina women and expanded our project to survey and interview adult Latinas (12) and Black women (13). Utilizing the same quantitative and qualitative design from the first

study, including the short survey and audiotaped oral interviews (conducted in Spanish or English), we gathered demographic and other information related to health, social support, healthcare-seeking activities, experiences in skid row, as well as their recommendations for improving or ameliorating experiences faced

by homeless women. A preliminary review of the surveys and interviews reveals that changes or breakdowns—in family, job loss, mental health issues, or loss of or lack of social support and networks—all interwove and contributed to their becoming homeless.

Although all the women may have shared similar stories, there are some salient differences between the Latina and Black women, and these need to be carefully and more thoroughly assessed for the final analysis.

For the Latina participants, most were born outside of the U.S. (10 out of 12) and so reported various reasons for immigrating to the U.S. The primary reasons given included a need to escape from war, poverty, and violence in their country of origin and a need to work and support children and family in their home country. It could be said that these women were vulnerable and at risk from the beginning; some may not have been able to move beyond being dependent on others for food or shelter—and so we could say they were homeless to begin with. For these women, as well as others, untreated physical and emotional health issues coupled with loss of jobs were perceived as leading to their homelessness (for those who served as housekeepers or nannies, for example, they can lose their housing and income when the children grow up and they are no longer needed). Also, some Latinas revealed how language, cultural differences, abuse in employment, discrimination in jobs and housing, limited education and occupational opportunities, as well as “los papeles,” contributed to their homelessness.

These women also report a lack of services and resources for the non-English speaking and older population.

For the Black women participants, immigration to the U.S. was not an issue. Instead, most shared how conflicts with their biological family; a marriage breakup; and physical, emotional, or substance abuse have contributed to their homelessness.

Overall, the table on demographics highlights some revealing differences between the two groups of women, including a much younger age pattern, higher educational levels, and hints of higher monthly income level for the Black women. (We can also note that almost half of these Black women did not wish to report their monthly income.) In contrast, the majority of Latinas immigrated from various Latin American countries (most immigrated alone or with a relative or friend) and most were Spanish limited, with a lower educational level, and limited income (several reported they did not know their income, which warrants further exploration).

Interviews/Qualitative Data to be Assessed

In the interviews, several comments stand out, including comments by some Latinas that individuals who speak English, have health insurance and a monthly income are privileged and do not fully appreciate the benefits given to them as well as the services they can easily access. Among the Black women, some comments suggest that the women feel there are sufficient food, housing, health, computer, and other resources available in the skid-row hotels. While the preliminary analysis shows some similarities and

differences, a more detailed analysis will provide us with greater insight for developing programs and policy recommendations.

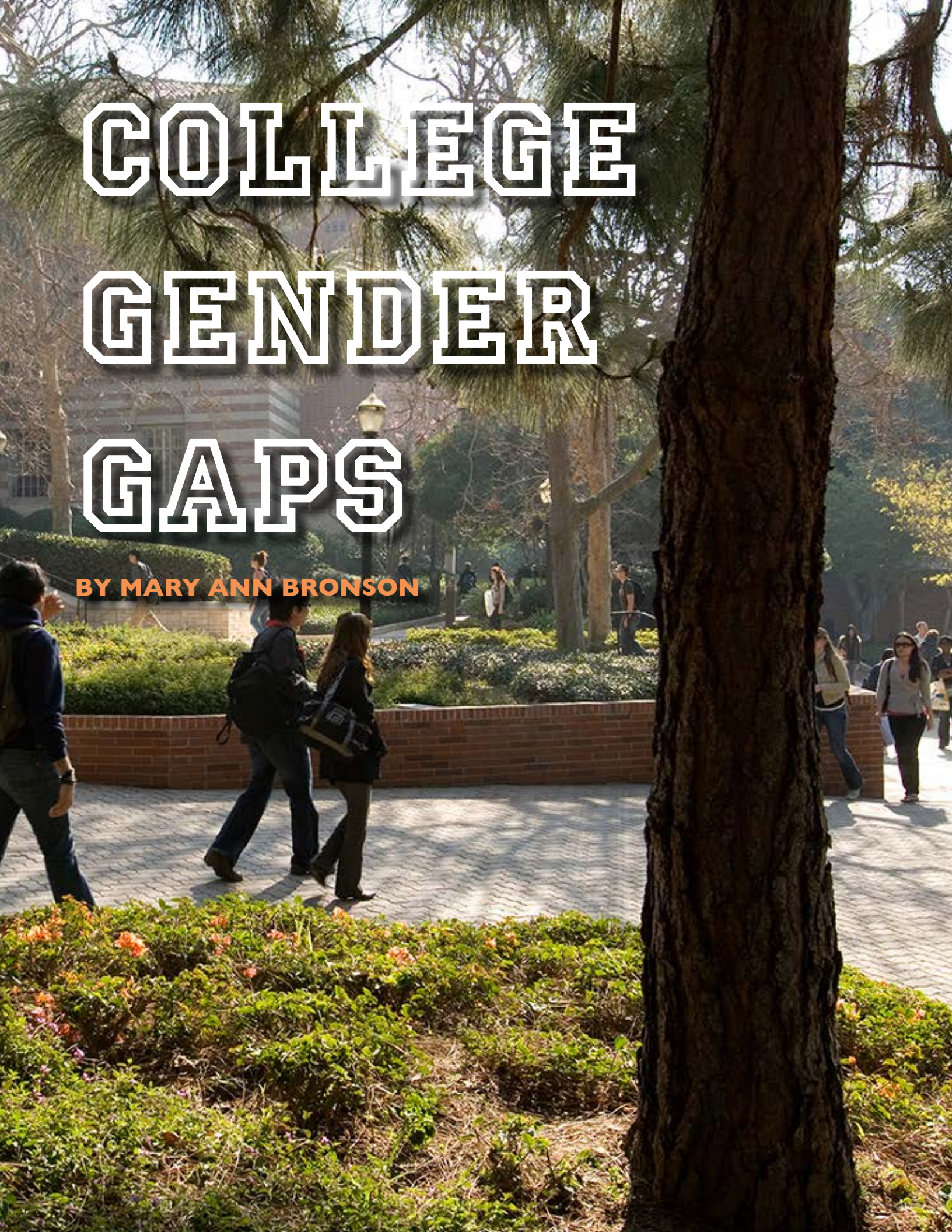
Finally, this study could not have been performed without the invaluable cultural, and language expertise provided by a multidisciplinary team of students from various disciplines, including the departments of Nursing, Philosophy, Chicano Studies, and Education. While some students have graduated and moved on, they remain committed to the projects and to furthering this work.

Maria Elena Ruiz, Ph.D., R.N., F.N.P.-B.C., is an Assistant Adjunct Professor in the UCLA School of Nursing and an Enfermera Especialista Familiar/Family Nurse Practitioner. She served as Associate Director at the UCLA Chicano Studies Research Center from 2010 to 12. She received a CSW Faculty Development Grant to support this research in 2013. Her co-authors include Tykesha Thomas, R.N., a Ph.D. student in the UCLA School of Nursing; Carlos Contreras, who received his B.A. from UCLA in 2012; and Rebecca Glaser, who received an M.A. from UCLA in 2012.

Photos courtesy of Maria Elena Ruiz and Carlos Contreras.

Sources

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A photograph of a college campus scene. In the foreground, a large tree trunk is on the right. A brick wall runs across the middle ground. Several students are walking on a paved path. In the background, there are more trees and a building. The title 'COLLEGE GENDER GAPS' is overlaid in large, white, outlined letters.

COLLEGE GENDER GAPS

BY MARY ANN BRONSON

WHY DO WOMEN ATTEND college at much higher rates than men?

And given women's high college attendance rates, why do they select disproportionately into low-paying majors? Since the mid-1980s, women have made up the majority of college students in the U.S. even as their lifetime labor force participation rates remain well below men's. Between 1960 and 2012 women's four-year college graduation rates more than tripled, from 10% to more than 35%. Men's rates also increased, more slowly, from around 17% to nearly 30% (Figure 1). While women reversed the historical "college gender gap" in the mid-1980s, Figure 1 shows that the convergence in college graduation rates began around 1970. At this time, men's college attainment began to stall and even fall, while women continued to increase their investments in a college education. This general pattern is not just a U.S. phenomenon. Over the 1980s and 1990s, women similarly outpaced men in college graduation rates in Canada, Australia, New Zealand, and almost all of Europe, with the exception of Switzerland (Goldin, Katz, and Kuziemko (2006); OECD STATS (2012)).

In contrast to the dramatic convergence in men's and women's college attendance rates in the 1970s and early 1980s, men and women never fully converged in their choice of college major. In Figure 2, I graph the share of undergraduate degrees in each major awarded to women starting in 1970, the earliest year that such data is available. Figure 2 shows that partial but significant

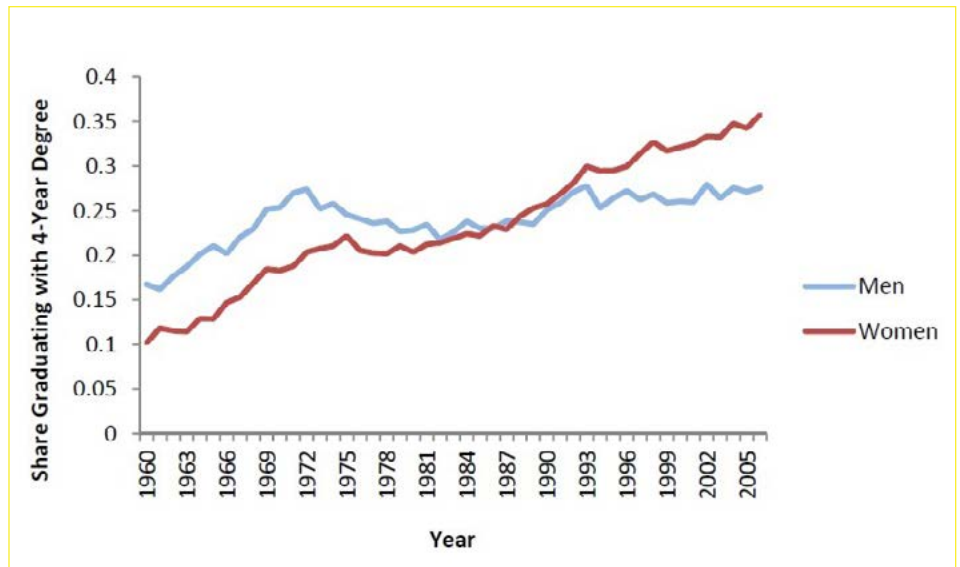


Figure 1: Share of Men and Women Graduating with a 4-Year Degree, 1960-2010. Source: Current Population Survey (1962-2012)

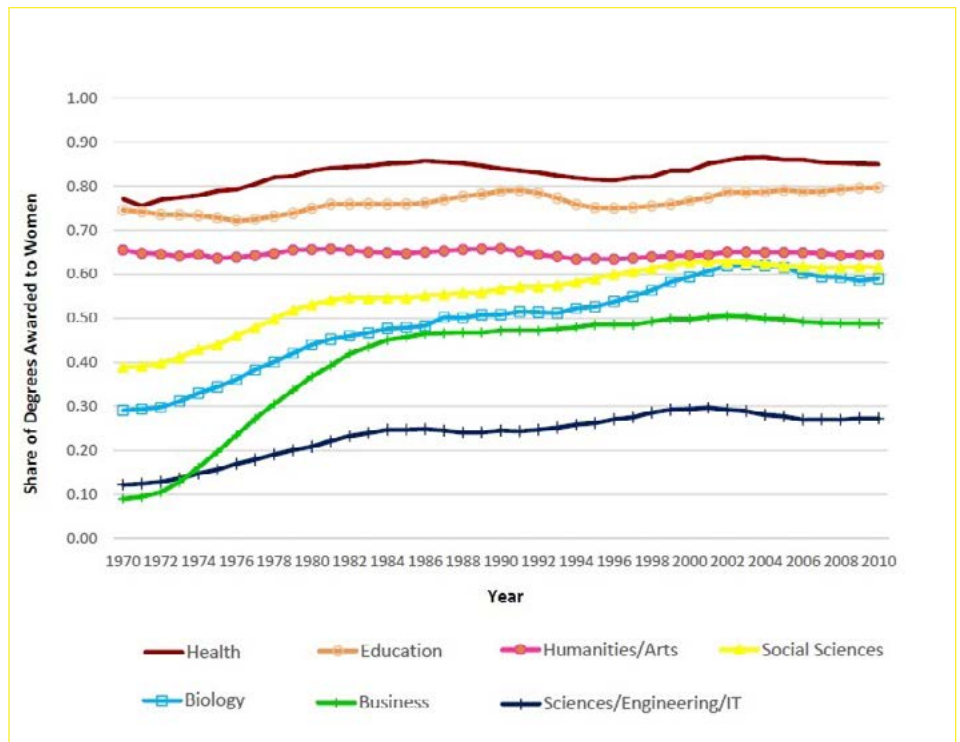


Figure 2: Share of Bachelor's Degrees Awarded to Women By Major, 1970-2010. Source: National Center for Education Statistics, Digest of Education Statistics (2012)

convergence in choices of major by men and women occurred over the 1970s. Most dramatically, the share of business degrees earned by women increased from less than 10% in 1970 to more than 40% by

1985. After the early 1980s, however, gender convergence was at best limited. Strikingly, women earned about a fifth of hard sciences and engineering degrees in 1985 and still earn roughly the same share of these



Returning to the original question—how do we connect the two “college gender gaps?” In both cases, factors related to marriage appear to play an important role. Given the gender wage gap, and in particular the low wages and poor labor market opportunities for low-skilled women relative to men, a college degree may provide important “insurance” value for women as they expect to spend more of their lifetime in a single-earner household.

degrees today. Around three quarters of education degrees and more than 85% of health and social services degrees were awarded to women in 1985 and 2012 alike.

Are these patterns related? If so, is it possible to provide a unified explanation for the evolution of both college “gender gaps”—in college attendance and in choice of major—over time? In my study, “Degrees Are Forever: Marriage, Educational Investment, and Lifecycle Labor Decisions of Men and Women,” I try to provide such an explanation for these patterns. Let’s look at these two college gender gaps one by one.

For economists, a natural starting point in analyzing decisions behind costly educational investments is to look at the educational returns. It is possible that returns to a college degree evolved differently for men and women over time, thus explaining their different college attendance rates over time. One standard way to measure the return to getting a college degree is to look at the “college wage premium,” or the

additional wages an individual with a college degree earns relative to an individual with only a high school degree, controlling for various individual characteristics. In my study, I find that this wage premium evolved very similarly between 1960 and 2010 for both sexes, so that different growth in wage premiums for men vs. women over time cannot account for the strong gender differences in educational choices over time. For both men and women, the college wage premium rose rapidly in the 1960s, fell in the 1970s, and then rose again starting in the 1980s. Today, wages of men and women with a college degree are about 48% higher than those of their counterparts with only a high school degree. Interestingly, Figure 1 suggests that from the standard economic point of view, men roughly made the “right” decisions about college attendance over time. As premiums increased in the 1960s, young men increased their college attendance rates. As premiums stalled or fell in the 1970s, more men decided to forego college. By contrast, women continued to increase their attendance rates as their anticipated college wage premium began to fall in the early 1970s. From the point of view of a standard human capital investment model, a particularly interesting question is why exactly women continued to increase their attendance rates as their anticipated college wage premium began to fall in the early 1970s. What else changed in women’s economic environments?

Many changes during this period likely contributed to women’s increased college attendance, including the women’s movement,

anti-discrimination laws in the 1960s, and the introduction of oral contraceptives that gave women greater control over their fertility and potentially increased their return to college (Goldin and Katz (2002)). But the specific timing of this gender convergence in college attendance rates suggests one important explanation: changes in marriage patterns. In 1970, California enacted one of the first divorce law reforms allowing couples to secure divorce without having to prove “fault,” i.e. without having to testify in court that one of the spouses was guilty of neglect, adultery, or abuse in the marriage. Over the next 10 years, the vast majority of states enacted similar reforms, in what some call the “no-fault” divorce revolution that dramatically reduced barriers to divorce for couples and initiated a period of dramatic increases in divorce rates (Friedman, 1998).

As young women anticipated spending more of their lives relying on their own wages, it is possible that their expected returns to a college education increased substantially more rapidly than men’s expected returns—in a way that is not readily captured by the college wage premium. Given the existence of the gender wage gap and the very low earnings of women with only a high school education (\$27,700 for those employed full-time in 2000, compared with \$36,300 for men), securing the college wage premium may be substantially more important for women than for men, especially as women spend more of their lifetimes in single-earner households. Secondly, women’s income often has to stretch

farther than men’s, given that they are more likely to have custody of children, and given poor enforcement of child support payments. In other words, for many women the college degree can offer a type of “insurance” against very low income, especially in the case separating from their partner.

To test the hypothesis that changes in the marriage market following divorce law reforms increased women’s returns to college relative to men’s, I use variation in the exact timing of divorce law reforms across states as a sort of “natural experiment.” In particular, I test whether it is true that young, college-aged women increased their graduation rates relative to men more rapidly in states just after they passed a divorce law, as compared to young women in the same years in states that did not just pass reforms. I find that this is indeed the case—the college gender gap decreased significantly more in states shortly after a divorce law reform. I conduct a similar analysis to test whether women were more likely select a higher-paying traditionally “male” major in business or the sciences after such reforms, as a way to “insure” even further. I find that young women in states that just passed a divorce law reform bridged the gap in choice of majors more rapidly, again a statistically significant effect.

If securing a higher wage becomes particularly important for women as their share of lifetime spent in marriage decreases, why don’t even more women select high-paying majors, like engineering? Again, a natural starting point for analyzing the gender differences in choices of

major is to ask whether the wage premium specific to each major differs significantly for men and women. In my study I find that, again, the answer to this question is no. I document that the relative financial returns to different majors for men and women working full-time are very similar. For example, the lowest paying major for both men and women is an education major, followed by arts/humanities and social science majors. Nursing degrees are the highest-paying degrees among non-science, non-business majors. For both men and women, engineering and IT degrees provide by far the highest wage premium, about 35% more than the premium associated with a humanities or social-science major. To provide a reference point for this number, the average relative earnings difference between an individual with a humanities major vs. an engineering major is nearly as large as the earnings difference between an individual who only completed high school and one with a college degree.

If women systematically choose lower-paying majors, something else must be compensating them for this choice. One possibility is gender differences in tastes. Another possibility is that women and men value differently other characteristics of majors and the occupations associated with them, such as flexibility in allocating time to work and family. Indeed, data on hours worked shows that despite their high perceived labor force participation rates, college-educated women today still take substantial time off during their childbearing years, and may find such flexibility important.

At age 35, less than 60% of college-educated women today work full-time, compared to more than 90% of college-educated men.

Do different majors offer different levels of work-family flexibility, such as availability of part-time work, and low wage penalties for time taken out of the labor force? My findings suggest that they do. Using data that follows women in different majors over thirty years after their college graduation, I find that women in business and the sciences suffer a significantly larger wage penalty for either taking time out of the work force or choosing part-time work, relative to other college-educated women. Women who do not work in business or the sciences incur around a 6% wage penalty for these choices, compared to a 20% penalty for women with a science or business major who work in their field. Not surprisingly, this is also reflected in women's labor supply choices. I find that among college-educated women with young children, those in the sciences or business work 12 to 16 hours more per week compared to all other college-educated mothers, even while spending almost the same amount of time weekly on household work and child care.

Returning to the original question—how do we connect the two “college gender gaps?” In both cases, factors related to marriage appear to play an important role. Given the gender wage gap, and in particular the low wages and poor labor market opportunities for low-

skilled women relative to men, a college degree may provide important “insurance” value for women as they expect to spend more of their lifetime in a single-earner household. On the one hand, a higher-paying major provides even more insurance, helping to account for the partial gender convergence in choice of college major in the 1970s. On the other hand, the vast majority of college-educated women today marry and choose to have children over the course of their life. Conditional on being in a married household, many families choose to have one of the spouses, at least temporarily, spend more time out of the labor market. Setting aside biology or norms, the existence of a gender wage gap implies that from the perspective of a married household, it is typically optimal for the woman to do this. As such, having a degree associated with high-paying but non-flexible occupations will not always be preferable for many women.

What can we learn from this? Firstly, expected returns to college and to a choice of major are not just about the wage premium, but also about anticipated decisions about marriage, family, and divorce. To understand gender differences in educational choices, one has to understand what is optimal both from an individual's and a household's perspective over the lifecycle. If we want to encourage more women to apply their talents in science and business, understanding this relationship is crucial.

Mary Ann Bronson, a Ph.D. candidate in the Department of Economics, received a CSW Irving and Jean Stone Dissertation Year Fellowship in 2013. Made possible by the generosity of Mrs. Jean Stone, this fellowship supports an exceptionally promising doctoral student whose dissertation topic pertains to gender, sexuality, and/or women's issues and who is at the dissertation-writing stage of their academic career. Bronson's dissertation, currently titled “Degrees are Forever: Marriage, Educational Investment, and Lifecycle Labor Decisions of Men and Women” examines why women have made up the majority of college students, despite lower college wage premiums and labor force participation rates than men. It asks why, while outpacing men in college attendance, women have consistently continued to select systematically lower- return majors since 1980. Her study is one of the first in the economics literature to provide a unified explanation for these two sets of patterns of educational investment choices by gender over time, and to tie them to marriage market changes, particularly falling marriage and rising divorce rates.

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BY ALICE WEXLER

Edge of the Map

AN EXPERIMENT IN SCIENCE AND IN THEATER



It seemed extravagant to fly to Boston from Los Angeles just to see a play, but in the end I couldn't resist.

EARLY IN FEBRUARY OF 2013 I had received an email from my friend Jonathan Beckwith, a distinguished microbiologist and geneticist at Harvard Medical School, telling me about a new project he had organized. Jon had recently participated in a collaboration at the Free University of Berlin with science students and members of the English Theater Berlin. They had all read Caryl Churchill's play, *A Number*, on the subject of human cloning, and discussed the social issues it raised. Excited by this experience, Jon decided to try something similar with his students at Harvard. But instead of having them discuss existing plays, he and a former student, Ben Morris, recruited Sightline theater director Calla Videt to work with students in his "Social Issues in Biology" class to create a new theater piece altogether.

Their collaboration produced *Edge of the Map*, a collage based on real-life and invented scenarios involving ethical and social dilemmas in genetics. One of the texts for the "Social Issues" class was *Mapping*

Mariel Pettee as Leilani Muir in *Edge of the Map*, 2013.
Photo by Chris Masterson, courtesy Sightline.

Anna Hagen as Alice and Eli Wilson Pelton as her father Milton on a road trip, *Edge of the Map*, 2013. Photo by Chris Masterson, courtesy of Sightline.



Fate, an autobiographical book of mine about Huntington's disease experience and research.¹ One of the real-life narratives in the theater piece involved a character named Alice, based on the book, who learns she is at 50% risk for this disease.

It was certainly flattering to learn that I was going to be a character in a play! But even more intriguing was the opportunity to see how experimental theater might engage with difficult ethical and social dilemmas emerging out of the new molecular genetics—dilemmas posed by the increasing number of predictive genetic tests, by new technologies for manipulating genes, and by the commercial possibilities of genetics research. As a long-time lover of theater as well as an influential science activist (he was one of the founders of Science for the People in the 1970s), Jon was excited by the opportunity to explore new ways of communicating scientific knowledge and of investigating the social dimensions of science. He also thought that the process of creating a theatrical performance could open up new ways of thinking about science. Calla Videt too had thought deeply about these issues. As a Harvard undergrad with a major in theater and physics, she had created a highly successful theater piece, *The Space Between*, about theoretical physicist and Nobel Laureate Richard Feynman. Her New York theater company Sightline was specifically interested in exploring scientific questions. Calla and other members of Sightline tossed ideas back and forth with the science students, who sat in on rehearsals with the student actors

Roaming actors blindfolded us. After a while they rolled us into the large concrete space where we were bombarded with genetic and genealogical data from young voices that seemed to be dancing around us. Suddenly we were told to remove our blindfolds, as if we were about to make our own discoveries.

and created materials and visuals for the piece. Everyone wished they had more time.

Genetics was not Calla's field, but she learned fast and the students in Beckwith's class helped focus the major questions for the piece—how much do we want to know about our genetic identities? How much of our biology can we or should we try to control? What do we wish to pass on to our children and what do we think our genes say about who we are? Can theater create new ways of learning and communicating about science? Can science help create new forms of theater?

On Saturday evening, April 13, at the first performance I attended (I went twice!), I joined other attendees seated in rolling chairs lining the corridor outside a converted classroom/physics lab/performance space in the Harvard Science Building. Roaming actors blindfolded us. After a while they rolled us into the large concrete space where we

were bombarded with genetic and genealogical data from young voices that seemed to be dancing around us. Suddenly we were told to remove our blindfolds, as if we were about to make our own discoveries. A somewhat frantic young scientist in front of a whiteboard was explaining the basics of DNA while other actors moved among video projections and changing scrims. Stories unfolded in fragments—a young woman is institutionalized and, on a table surrounded by a screen, sterilized against her will, a sequence based on the historical case of Leilani Muir, who sued the Canadian province of Alberta for forcibly sterilizing her in 1959. A stressed-out young couple try to create a “perfect” baby, producing instead a whining monster. A young man on a TV talk show broadcasts that his sperm is genetically “perfect” and finds himself besieged with seductive phone calls from women seeking a donation. The young scientist we encountered

at the start discovers to his horror that his sperm sample has been mislabeled and lost. And then there is Alice, who learns her mother suffers from Huntington's disease and is confronted with her own 50/50 risk. Her father Milton takes her on a road trip across the country while they consider what to do.

All of these narratives unfold in pieces, interrupting each other across different parts of the space, blending dialogue, dance, physical movement, video and slide projections, sounds, music, and changing lights. Playing out over the course of an hour, the piece disturbs and exhilarates, engaging all the senses at once. At the close the actors walk around and address audience members individually, intoning "your child will inherit your grandmother's blue eyes," "your offspring will possess your uncle's musical talent," "you have inherited your father's weak heart." But they deliver their lines with a sense of irony, knowing that such straightforward predictions are precisely the problem they wish to engage.

What then did we come away with? Certainly the piece focused on the ways that genetics has been exploited for negative social purposes, such as the forcible eugenic sterilization of women deemed inferior and the promotion of stigmatizing notions of biological perfection and control. For this reason, perhaps, my scientist friends were somewhat critical, although they enjoyed the experience. One wanted the piece to include a story about the

medical benefit of a genetic discovery. Another found the fragmented form confusing, the moving chairs distracting and dizzying. A third, a medical student, worried that the piece could have drawn on more recent discoveries.

And yet, for me the multiple dimensions in which the piece unfolded brilliantly evoked the interconnectedness of our biological and social natures and the complexity of our so-called "genes." It beautifully satirized the ways in which our consumerist culture of competitive acquisitiveness and desires for control extended even to our genomes. The sterilization story was devastating (an indication of the historical time frame would have been helpful), conveying the anguish of Muir through the stark beauty and restraint of Mariel Pettee, an accomplished dancer as well as actor. The Alice sequences were also haunting, with Anna Hagen as Alice and Eli Pelton Wilson as her father projecting a sense of ambivalence and uncertainty—feelings I had tried to describe in *Mapping Fate*—as Alice learns of her 50/50 risk for Huntington's and considers the potential consequences of getting more precise genetic information through testing.

I came away from the Sunday evening performance of *Edge of the Map* with a sense of exhilaration that was tempered only by the tragedy of the following day, the day when two young men launched deadly explosives in the midst of the Boston Marathon. At least no one was talking about their genes.

Alice Wexler has been a CSW Research Scholar since 1994. She received a Ph.D. in History from the Indiana University in 1972 after completing a dissertation entitled "Historians, Society, and the Spanish-Cuban-American War of 1898." She has taught at UC Riverside, California Institute of Technology, Claremont Graduate School, Occidental College and UCLA. Her books include *Emma Goldman in America* (1984), *Emma Goldman in Exile* (1989), *Mapping Fate: A Memoir of Family, Risk, and Genetic Research* (1996), and *The Woman Who Walked Into the Sea: Huntington's the Making of a Genetic Disease* (2008).

Note

1. Huntington's disease is a fatal genetic, neurological and psychiatric illness emerging typically in mid-life and causing involuntary movements (chorea), emotional disturbances such as depression, irritability, and apathy, and cognitive decline often leading to dementia.

making invisible histories visible

Mysteries of the June L. Mazer Lesbian Archives: Martha Foster Collection

One of the joys of working in an archive, for archivists and researchers, is coming upon a tantalizing mystery.

MANY, MANY WOMEN have donated to materials to the June L. Mazer Lesbian Archives, ranging from public figures like Margarethe Cammermeyer to lesser-known, but no less historically important, women. Occasionally, a very intriguing collection will come with a minimum of identifying information about the woman to whom it belonged. I recently interviewed Stacy E. Wood, a graduate student researcher working on processing the Mazer collections for the “Making Invisible Histories Visible” project. about one such collection: the Martha Foster Collection.

While looking through the Mazer holdings, Wood came across Foster’s papers, which include a small amount of poetry and many striking photographs, which seem to be taken in her backyard in Echo Park in the early 1930s. “They’re really gorgeous,” says Wood. “They almost look like test costume shots. There are hundreds of them. And I couldn’t find any information about her. Even Angela Brinskele, photographer and board member of the Mazer, couldn’t find a





death certificate or a birth date.”

Wood became fascinated with Foster and went above and beyond the call of duty to try and find out more about her. She and Brinskele emailed friends and colleagues to try and unravel the mystery. Wood even went to Foster’s house to inquire about her.

“There was one letter with her old address on it,” says Wood. “So I went to her house and asked [about her], in case maybe her grandkids lived there. I felt really strange about the pilgrimage, but I did it anyway! I went and knocked on their door and asked if they knew the previous owner and said her name. They said no, and I took it at face value.”

Wood had given up trying to solve the mysteries of Martha Foster when six months later, a new clue emerged: “There is an accordion room divider at the Mazer’s headquarters in West Hollywood, and it’s from the Esther Bentley collection. On it is a collage called ‘The Women in My Life,’ and it’s rumored to be all of her ex-girlfriends. Peeking out, I saw Martha Foster’s face, and I freaked out, because this meant that Foster had real connections, and maybe I could find something about her.”

To her surprise, as Wood continued processing various Mazer collections, more fragments of information and memorabilia about Foster began to emerge. “Looking through Esther Bentley’s collection, I found Martha’s ID card and some tax information about the house they shared in Echo Park,” says Wood. “And then these other bits of her life were in another person’s collection. Nobody at the Mazer knew that [any

of these people] were connected.”

So far as Wood can tell, the Mazer contains the only evidence of Foster’s life: “Angela has been tracking down everything for the collection’s deeds, for legal purposes, and she even asked me to dig out Foster’s tax document because it indicates that she died, and we can’t find out through the city or online that she even existed. The only traces of her are in these collections, and some of them are in the collection of an ex-girlfriend. But we don’t know when they dated, or when they knew each other. There are just these sort of weird suggestions.”

Foster’s relationship with Esther Bentley makes the lack of information available about her even more confounding, since Bentley was a very well-known and well-connected member of the Los Angeles LGBTQ community. “That’s the weird thing,” says Wood. “We know almost everything about her. Her collection is huge, everyone knew her. She was super active in L.A. Everyone at the Mazer knew her. There are all sorts of stories about her. What’s strange is that the picture of Martha in the ex-girlfriend collage was taken when Martha was older, so, I assume people would have known her or had some contact with her, but nobody knew her. She was with somebody who was very known in the community, but she herself doesn’t have any ties. The pictures are so beautiful. It’s like a silent film star posing in her backyard, in these beautiful prints. You imagine who was taking those pictures, and you’ll never know. It drove me crazy for so long, for so many months.”

Before she began processing the Mazer materials, Wood anticipated

that they'd contain more mysteries than they actually do. Her assumption seemed to be confirmed when the first collection she processed belonged to another enigmatic subject, named Tiger Woman: "Her poetry and some of her art work were in the collection, and again she dated someone who ended up being a famous and recognized artist," says Wood. "I tried to contact the artist, and she would never respond to me. It was really frustrating, because I had all of these photos, and she felt more accessible because they were from the early 1990s. I couldn't believe that someone would just drop off the planet, and that there was no trace."

In spite of these archival mysteries, Wood has been surprised at how comprehensive the Mazer is in its historicizing of lesbian identities. She believes that the Mazer can be so comprehensive because of its deep, strong roots in the community that it documents.

"Since Tiger Woman was the first collection I worked on, I expected it to be the norm: some of it due to mystery, and some of it due to a choice made by the subject of the collection," says Wood. "A lot of people have collections that they gave at times in their life, and now they have different identities and politics. So I just expected it to be a little harder to pin things down in a traditional archival way. But [such challenges] haven't happened as much as I would've thought, and I think that's because of the organizational structure of the Mazer and its grassroots nature. If you can't find something out, you activate the network, and it will come back to you.

It might not come back soon, but in nine months somebody will send a Facebook message to somebody else, and eventually it will come back to you: Here is what she is doing now."

Wood admits that her own personal tendency to become passionately fascinated with the subjects of the collections she processes can sometimes drive her crazy. At the same time, it likely makes her perfect for the job. "I get very attached to the collections and like to communicate some sort of story [from them]. There are often false hopes attached to that desire. I think that especially with a project like this, when the idea is to share these lost, hidden, or less-public histories, it seems even more important to represent people in whatever way you can. It's more frustrating when you can't put a complete picture together."

Wood emphasizes that the more identifying information she can find about a collection, the more potentially useful it will be to a researcher. "Ultimately, it's about people using this collection," says Wood. "If you think about it that way, it's important to have as much information as you can, so that people can know it's there and how they can use it. It's hard to fit that sort of affective sense [that surrounds mysterious collections] into a finding aid. It's hard to say: Oh, there are these beautiful pictures, and they'd be great for artists, designers, and period study, and there's this poetry that's not really great, but... It's hard to say why a collection is important without giving it shape or context. It's hard to piece it together."

While there are abundant professional reasons for solving the mysteries of the archive, Wood has become an excellent detective because she loves the work. "I think I have some narrative greed, but that's my own sort of personal problem," says Wood. "I think it is in a lot of ways a hindrance to my actual job sometimes, because within the context of what we're doing it's actually not always practically important to know all of the information that I seek out. But it's hard to work with these materials and not want to know."

-Ben Raphael Sher

Ben Sher is a doctoral student in the Department of Cinema and Media Studies at UCLA and a graduate student researcher at CSW. If you know anything about Martha Foster or Tiger Woman, email Ben at ben.sher.csw@gmail.com!

The finding aid for this collection will soon be available for viewing at the Online Archive of California (<http://www.oac.cdlib.org>). Digitized materials from the collection and the finding aid will be available for viewing on the UCLA Library's Digital Collections website. This research is part of an ongoing CSW research project, "Making Invisible Histories Visible: Preserving the Legacy of Lesbian Feminist Activism and Writing in Los Angeles." Funded in part by an NEH grant, the project is a three-year project to arrange, describe, digitize, and make physically and electronically accessible two major clusters of June Mazer Lesbian Archive collections related to West Coast lesbian/feminist activism and writing since the 1930s.

For more information on this project, visit <http://www.csw.ucla.edu/research/projects/making-invisible-histories-visible>. For more information on the activities of the Mazer, visit <http://www.mazerlesbianarchives.org>

JUST PUBLISHED! Policy Briefs 2013

Women's Reproductive Health Policy in California



CSW'S LATEST COMPILATION of policy briefs includes policy recommendations related to the Covered California, the health exchange set up in California to implement the Federal Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act (ACA), known as "Obamacare." The ACA was enacted in an effort by the federal government to move towards universal healthcare coverage, including healthcare access for all income levels and employment statuses. Although the rollout of ACA and Covered California (California's health exchange) have been subjected to criticism from some quarters, CSW believes the Covered California provides an opportunity to improve women's health status throughout the state. To address the need for comprehensive policies that are sensitive to the needs of women, CSW chose "Women's Reproductive Health Policy in California" for our third volume in a series of publications rethinking public policy on gender, sexuality, and women's issues. We partnered with Julie Elginer, an

esteemed health policy advocate and a Teaching Associate for Master's-level courses at the UCLA Fielding School of Public Health, in developing the theme and attracting submissions from graduate students.

The briefs are by Jennifer Frehn M.P.H., a UCLA Fielding School of Public Health 2013 alumna; Karen Lai, a dual degree M.P.H. candidate at the UCLA Fielding School of Public Health, and an M.D. student at the UCLA Geffen School of Medicine; Katsume Stoneham, a UCLA Fielding School of Public Health 2013 alumna; and Echo Zen, a current M.P.H. student in the Field School of Public Health.

We hope also that those involved with the Affordable Care Act, Covered California, and similar healthcare exchanges will consider the arguments of this group of highly promising scholars. If put into practice, their ideas would certainly improve the overall health of women in California and the U.S.

—Radhika Mehlotra

Radhika Mehlotra is a graduate student in the Luskin School of Public Policy and a graduate student researcher at CSW.



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