

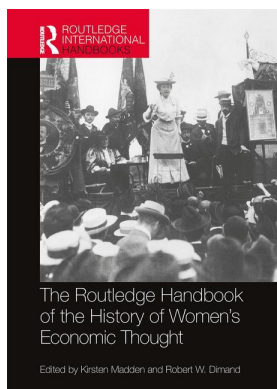
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## **The Routledge Handbook of the History of Women's Economic Thought**

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### **Anecdotes of discrimination**

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# 9

## ANECDOTES OF DISCRIMINATION

### Barriers to women's participation in economic thought during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries

*Kirsten Madden*<sup>1</sup>

#### Introduction

As a class and historically, women are the recipients of sex discrimination. Sex discrimination is the adverse and unjust treatment of women because of their sex. The adverse treatment includes women being considered inferior, having less access to resources, and finding fewer opportunities.

Between 1861 and 1890 less than three percent of the approximately 1,000 U.S. doctoral degrees were earned by women (25 women in total) (Fitzpatrick, 1990, pp. 74–5). In 70 university catalogues dated 1920, 1921, or 1922, Lonn (1924) identifies 7,499 faculty. Of this total, approximately nine percent were women. Of the women faculty, 488 were instructors, 129 assistants, 35 associates, and 28 were full professors. In comparison, Lonn identifies 2,110 male full professors (p. 5). During the early to mid-twentieth century women earned fewer than eight percent of all doctoral degrees in science and engineering, and although that number grew, it was still disproportionately lower through the twentieth century (Kohlstedt, 2004).

Women have always made up a minority of economics Ph.D.s. According to Libby (1990), women wrote 18.3 percent of economics Ph.D. dissertations in 1918, 15.6 percent in 1919 and 15.0 percent in 1920. In the next decade through 1990, this percentage fell and hovered around 10 percent (p. 121). Moving into the twenty-first century, women earning economics Ph.D.s rebounded. By 2007, the ratio of women earning economics Ph.D.s to the total was at a record high of roughly 33 percent (Broder, 2010, p. 659).

Many sources convey anecdotal examples of sex discrimination. These anecdotal examples turn up in autobiographies penned by women economists, in academic studies rooting out sex discrimination during the twentieth century, and in the secondary literature about women's contributions to the history of economic thought. To date though, there is no single source documenting the variety of evidence that exists of sex discrimination in the history of economic thought.

Who is an economist and what is economics are open questions during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Madden, Seiz and Pujol (2004) addresses these questions in detail

(pp. xx–xxii). For purposes of this study, if a woman contributed to literature that falls within the realm of economics, her experience of sex discrimination is reported.

How did women economists experience sex discrimination during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries in the West? This chapter organizes the anecdotal experiences of sex discrimination. Cultural norms expressed in parental attitudes as well as social beliefs about the inferior nature of women affected women economists. Women who wished to pursue higher education received discouragement and discrimination as students. For the women who earned advanced degrees, discrimination in employment, salary, promotion and tenure was problematic. The institution of marriage brought discriminatory barriers to academia in the form of anti-nepotism rules. There is some documentation of student sexism toward women professors and generally in careers requiring Ph.D.s, women economists documented difficulties accessing facilities. Finally, from some of the anecdotal evidence it can be inferred that some women unwittingly colluded in sex discrimination.

### **Anecdotes about parental attitude and societal beliefs in inferior intellect and abilities of women**

Parental opinions toward the role of women in society shape the outcomes for their children. There is not likely to be much evidence of the majority of cases where parents perceive or desire a limited role for women if their daughters succumb to their parents' views. But the case of Jessica Blanche Peixotto is one in which the daughter overcame the prejudices of her father. A high school graduate in 1880, Jessica's wish to attend the University of California at Berkeley was put off by her father's narrow views for women's education. To father Raphael, "university life was not appropriate for a young girl to whom were available the rich opportunities within a cultured home circle" and Jessica was further educated with private tutors. Nonetheless, by age 27, Jessica was a student at Berkeley, and by 1900 at the age of 36, she was the second woman to earn her doctorate from this institution (Lobdell, 2000, p. 328; Dzuback, 2006, p. 156). In contrast, the father of Sophonisba Breckinridge was an advocate for women's education, including the education of his daughter (Fitzpatrick, 1990, p. 4). Breckinridge earned both a Ph.D. and a law degree.

A common socially held belief through the early twentieth century is that women were intellectually inferior to men (Clifford, 1983, p. 32). Women economists experienced this prejudiced attitude. Some succumbed to this belief and others transcended it.

Economist Mabel Newcomer documented an account of a sexist belief in intellectual inferiority while she took graduate courses at Columbia University circa 1914. Newcomer wrote:

A university professor of my acquaintance once told a friend of mine that she should not take his courses because the subject was beyond the comprehension of the female mind. While this did not deter her, and she proved to be the best student in his classes, he was able to recognize and acknowledge the quality of her work, but his conviction remained unshaken. He explained her achievement by the fact that she had a "man's brain."

*Newcomer, 1959, p. 26, as cited in Shackleford, 1995, p. 20*

Married to the neoclassical economist Alfred Marshall, Mary Paley Marshall was an economist in her own right (McWilliams Tullberg, 1995). In 1871, Mary Paley Marshall was one of the first five women to attend "Lectures for Women" at Newnham College in Cambridge at the age of 21. Mary lectured in economics at University College, Bristol as well as Oxford and Newnham. At Newnham she also had administrative responsibilities over students. After her marriage to

Alfred Marshall, she co-authored with him a short book titled *Economics of Industry*. In honor of Mary, John Maynard Keynes wrote a lengthy obituary about her in 1944. Keynes presents his understanding of Alfred Marshall's view of women's minds in Marshall's later years:

In spite of his early sympathies [for women's academic opportunity] and what he was gaining all the time from his wife's discernment of mind, Marshall came increasingly to the conclusion that there was nothing useful to be made of women's intellects. When the great trial of strength came in 1896 over the proposal to grant women's degrees he abandoned the friends of a lifetime and took, whatever his wife might think or feel, the other side. But Mary Marshall had been brought up to know, and also to respect and accept what men of "strict principles" were like.

*Keynes, 1944, p. 276*

The Fabian socialist and major player in the socio-political structuring of Great Britain during the early twentieth century, Beatrice Potter Webb discussed her intention to shift from studies of women's employment to cooperative industries. Alfred Marshall described as "pernicious" her intention. In response Webb perceived that she was up to the task, as she possessed a "masculine intellect." Arguably, with this gender-ification of intelligence, Webb succumbed to the culturally prevailing notion that feminine characteristics did not include higher order intellectual capability (MacKenzie and MacKenzie, 1977, p. 133).

When the College of Economics and Business Administration was established at the University of Washington in the early twentieth century, the economist Theresa McMahon was the only woman professor in the College. She identifies that she was an outcast because she treated the subject of economics from the perspective of a social scientist with training in sociology. She raised (and challenged) women's alleged intellectual inferiority as a reason that the men of the college considered that she "didn't belong in their school of thought":

Besides, I was a woman. I think there are still some men who think they are intellectually superior to women working in the same field simply because they are men. This has always amused me, especially when I realize the mediocrity of many of the men; the more mediocre they were the more conceited they were about being males.

*McMahon, 1989, p. 269*

Dean of Women at Berkeley from 1906–1912, Lucy Sprague remembered that "most of the [male] faculty thought of women frankly as inferior beings" (Dzuback, 2006, p. 162). According to Dzuback, this prejudice influenced choices economist Jessica Peixotto made not to attend meetings of the Berkeley economics department even though Peixotto was a department member. Before earning her Ph.D., Berkeley economist Emily Huntington studied for a year during the 1920s at the London School of Economics. According to Dzuback (2006), Huntington recalled Professor Charles J. Bullock openly "criticized women for being 'illogical'" (p. 163).

With a 1926 Ph.D. in economics from Radcliffe College, by 1952 Eleanor Lansing Dulles worked with the U.S. State Department. Her task was to support the reconstruction of Berlin during the Cold War era. Dulles titled a chapter of her autobiography as: "Sex Discrimination in the State Department." Among other factors, she describes attempting to work around the constraint imposed by men who doubted women's professional capacities.

The belief of women's inferiority extended beyond the brain. Some academic women were haunted by fears of not being able to live up to high academic production standards. Women "felt obliged to ensure that their health would not fail while they equaled or exceeded the academic

accomplishments of their male counterparts” (Clifford, 1983, p. 32). In her autobiography, the industrial relations expert and University of Chicago economist, Mary Barnett Gilson, wrote specifically about this concern when she spent a few months researching labor relations on Hawaiian sugar plantations. A rupture in her appendix while doing field work tested her resolve “not to disgrace my sex by any physical incapacity to assume any task performed by my [all male] colleagues.” Gilson documents that she transformed her health crisis into an opportunity to “investigate plantation hospitals at uncomfortably close range” (Gilson, 1940, p. 236).

Obviously many women transcended specific cases of male gender bias. Ryan and Vaitheswaran (2000) document a high-profile case involving the British international economist, Barbara Ward. According to Lady Bird Johnson, wife of former U.S. President Lyndon B. Johnson, “Lyndon listened to [Barbara Ward] ‘which he doesn’t always do, especially to women’” (Ryan and Vaitheswaran, 2000, p. 448).

### **Discouragement from pursuing an economics career**

Strober (1975) reports preliminary results of a 1974–75 Committee on the Status of Women in the Economics Profession—American Economic Association Survey of Economists. The study found that the existence of one or more role models during high school was influential toward pursuing a career for 70 percent of the women respondents. In contrast, approximately 30 percent of the women sampled received some form of encouragement to *abandon* aspirations of a professional career while in college (p. 98). An open question concerns how many women might have pursued economics had they not been dissuaded because of their sex.

Evidence on the missing women economists is mostly lacking. But at least one anecdotal example suggests that some men economists discouraged women from pursuing the field. Born in Fall River, Massachusetts in 1911 to an immigrant proprietor of a shoe store, Adelaide Schwartz studied economics at Wellesley College. Completion of her undergraduate thesis titled “The Effects of Business Conditions on Radicalism in the United States Since 1900” earned her an undergraduate degree in 1931 at the age of 20. Shortly after completing her degree, she married the Providence, Rhode Island physician, Henry Weyler, born 1893. Henry encouraged Adelaide to play chess. During the 1930s she was ranked among women chess players. In Providence, Adelaide attended Brown University. From all accounts, she performed well in pursuit of her graduate degree. Adelaide completed her master’s degree in economics writing her thesis, “Milk Control with Special Reference to Rhode Island,” in 1935. Adelaide seriously considered pursuing a Ph.D. in economics. As recalled by Adelaide to family, Brown University Economics faculty members told her in the 1930s that she would never get an academic job and that she really should look to do something more immediate. Adelaide dropped her goal of a Ph.D. She became a statistician for the Providence Council of Social Agencies, a group of charities in the Providence area. In 1942 she did an innovative report on “Statistics for Census Tracts of Providence,” which extensively used correlation analysis, but warned that correlations did not indicate causality. Adelaide kept friendly relations with the Brown economists and their families for the rest of her life. She worked with Teresa Branstetter Taft whose husband was a well-known labor economist at Brown University; the wife of economist Hyman Minsky served as an assistant to Dr. Weyler. After working for a time as a statistician, Adelaide had a child and became a housewife.<sup>2</sup>

### **Discrimination women economists received as students**

Historically, women had limited access to literacy, advanced education, and scholarly credentials in the U.S.A. and Western Europe (Clifford, 1983, p. 6). That sex discrimination

excluded women from higher education is not a disputable point. In the U.S.A. up until the mid-eighteenth century, U.S primary education was also not easily available to girls. Clifford (1983) identifies the late eighteenth to early nineteenth centuries as a time when girls saw sharp increases in primary schooling. For example, in this time New England's publicly financed town schools opened to girls; the result increased female literacy in a proportion previously only seen for males (p. 15).

It was not until 1870 that seven public Midwestern universities became coeducational institutions (Clifford, 1983, p. 25). Though it was the second oldest state university, the University of Georgia was the last public university to become coeducational in 1918 (p. 26). The private institutions of higher education were originally closed to women. Opened in 1755, the University of Pennsylvania did not admit women until after the Civil War. By 1900, women could only attend 61 percent of the 389 degree-granting universities and colleges in the U.S.A. (p. 26). Opened in the 1740s, it was not until 1969 that a Princeton University education was available to women, and even then one rationale was to "make Princeton more attractive to men" (p. 29).

According to Dzuback (2003), the men's colleges of Great Britain were emulated in the U.S.A. during the colonial period. Women of the United States had no analogous academic institutions of higher learning until the second half of the nineteenth century. Women's academic options were to find instruction from tutors or to "attend one of the academies or seminaries that offered more than a post primary curriculum" (p. 173). Before 1860, the handful of U.S. colleges that were open to women limited women "to a less rigorous, feminized curriculum or, in the case of Oberlin, [women were] asked to perform domestic chores for their male counterparts" (p. 173). Women's options for training in higher education began more seriously after 1865, including the opening of women's colleges on the east coast.

Women's access to colleges and universities continued to be constrained well into the twentieth century. Rostek (2014) reports, for example, that the 2009 Nobel Prize winner Elinor Ostrom recounts that the UCLA economics department discouraged her from seeking a Ph.D. circa 1960 (p. 22).

In 1959, the Vassar College economist Mabel Newcomer identified with concern the national waste of leaving uneducated the high school girls who were in the top ten percent of academic achievers. Newcomer asks a series of questions which document the level of entrenched sexism in social attitudes about educating women:

[I]s it as important to our society to have highly educated women as men? And if it is important, how are we going to persuade the women and their families of that importance? Also, if it is important—important for what? Are women to be only transmitters of knowledge, as mothers and teachers? Or are exceptional women to be encouraged, as exceptional men are encouraged to make their contributions to the store of human knowledge and culture as scholars and artists? And if we are going to encourage women in creative thinking, research, and expression, are we going to encourage them to explore any field that catches their fancy, or only those which social usage has designated as of feminist concern?

*Newcomer, 1959, p. 246, as quoted in Shackelford, 1995, p. 22*

Like the U.S.A., European institutions of higher education imposed constraints on women's access. Students of Radcliffe College intent on studying abroad, Emily Greene Balch and Mary Kingsbury had gender-specific barriers to overcome in order to study at the University of Berlin. Because they were women, they were required to obtain permission from the Reich

Cultus Minister, from the University Rector, and from the professors they would study under. Fulfilling these requirements, Kingsbury and Balch were “curiosities” at the University of Berlin in 1895–96 (Dimand, 2000a, p. 22). The experience of being barred from a German university was not unique to Balch and Kingsbury. Wobbe (2000) identifies that a closed door policy toward women of Vienna University’s doctoral programs between 1910 and 1920 was the reason that the socialist, Käthe Leichter earned a doctorate at Heidelberg instead (p. 254). Becchio (2018, this volume) writes that before 1919, the “first generation” of women of the Austrian economics paradigm earned their degrees in other European countries because Austrian universities were closed to women students. Cambridge University hired women economists such as the American Marjorie Tappan Hollond as early as 1926, but it was not until 1948 that women could study economics and receive degrees from Cambridge (McWilliams Tullberg, 2004).

Beginning in the late 1800s in the U.S. and Europe, a relatively small number of women did find training open at advanced levels in political economy. Where institutions did allow women entry, segregation by sex was the norm. During a year of study at the London School of Economics in the 1920s, Berkeley economist Emily Huntington recalls that Professor Frank W. Taussig segregated women economists in the class room (Dzuback, 2006, p. 163). When the Newnham College–Cambridge “Lectures for Women” opened to five women in 1871, the classes were obviously segregated by sex. Mary Paley Marshall recollects: “We had practically the same lectures as the men, but as mixed classes were improper the lecturers had to give their lectures twice over” (Marshall, 1934, p. 14). The women’s classes were chaperoned, as their instructors were men (p. 15). Mary studied political economy under Alfred Marshall. Henry Sidgwick was also one of her instructors. In 1874 Mary informally took the Moral Sciences Tripos. The Tripos were examinations intended for men, so that it “had to be very informal by agreement with the examiners” in order for a woman to take the exam (Keynes, 1944, p. 272).

In 1862, Julie-Victoire Daubié became the first French woman to take and pass a baccalaureate exam from the University of Lyons. In 1861, this exam was open only to male students. When the French Minister of Public Instruction received Daubié’s application to take the exam, it was dismissed on account of her gender. The following year Daubié resubmitted her application; it was considered in response to intervention by a French empress (Ivory, 2000, pp. 125–6).

Where women did have formal entry rights into some U.S. universities, they did not always have equal access to courses. Harvard University opened its doors to women via creation of Radcliffe—a women’s college—in 1879. The 1915–16 Radcliffe College section of the Harvard University Catalogue states:

a considerable portion (during the present year 43 courses and 41 half-courses) of the advanced instruction offered by the Faculty of Arts and Sciences of the [Harvard] University which is designed primarily for Graduates is open to properly qualified students of Radcliffe College.

*p. 898*

The 1920–21 Catalogue includes the identical paragraph except that in parentheses the list of openings are 36 courses and 48 half-courses (p. 594). Unstated in the Harvard Catalogues is the portion of the Harvard University graduate courses that were closed to qualified women because of their woman-ness.

Though Harvard established Radcliffe College as its annex for the education of women and Harvard professors were allowed to include Radcliffe women in their classes, a rationale for

including women had nothing to do with equal access or educating those most likely to facilitate the growth of knowledge. It was that “some Harvard professors were willing to teach women in order to supplement their incomes” (Clifford, 1983, p. 31).

Mary Barnett Gilson’s autobiography, *What’s Past is Prologue*, describes her work experiences and research in industrial relations during the first four decades of the twentieth century. She worked 12 years managing employer–employee relations in a clothing manufactory. She studied labor relations in the Hawaiian cane sugar industry and wrote a book on British unemployment insurance. Gilson (1940) expresses with pride that her later academic insights were founded in real world employment experience. Gilson’s first choice of academic study was Harvard in the 1920s. She learned that women were unable to sit in the Harvard labor seminars, the only field which made sense for her study based on her work experience (p. 215). Women were also denied the opportunity to work at the Harvard library past 6 p.m., though men could work there until 10. Gilson settled on graduate work in economics at Columbia University where she would expend less energy “kicking against medieval stone walls erected in a dead past when women were not people” (p. 216). By 1940 she had a position with the University of Chicago Economics Department.

According to Fitzpatrick (1990), from its inception the University of Chicago stood out relative to other institutions of higher learning in welcoming women into graduate study. Nearly 23 percent of 110 newly arriving graduate students to Chicago were women in 1894; in 1903 19 percent of 89 were women (p. 29). Though women entered Chicago’s graduate programs in a relatively high proportion for the time period, there was a call to segregate women students. Folbre (1998) describes a resolution to segregate classes by sex in 1902 which passed the faculty senate and was approved by the board of trustees. Clifford (1983) suggests this classroom-by-classroom segregation plan was an attempt to prevent “sex repulsion” of men students in higher education as classrooms were filled more and more with women (p. 43). Implementation proved difficult and the issue “seemed to fade away” over a couple years (Folbre, 1998, p. 44).

Dzuback (2006) identifies the unwillingness of male faculty to hire female assistants as a constraint to academic development of the women. Without opportunities for academic work or mentorship, women students would be less likely to develop deep academic skills. In contrast, women faculty members of the Berkeley economics department, such as Jessica Peixotto, asked for and received administrative permission to hire women assistants for teaching support (p. 160).

Gilson documents the constraints women could face doing field research in reflections about her Hawaiian cane sugar study. To collect information field work was necessary but “sugar planters were not accustomed to women in any executive or supervisory capacity,” and even lacked women clerical employees (Gilson, 1940, p. 224). Her path to field work was paved by Arthur Young who flew “in the face of custom and tradition when he recommended [Gilson] as a member of the survey staff” (p. 225). She was

grateful to the men who have been sufficiently scornful of tradition to make gangway for a mere woman . . . it is a man’s world and men govern most passages to worthwhile jobs in industry, in universities, and in politics. The attitude of men . . . has much to do with opening opportunities for women.

*p. 225*

Financing a Ph.D. level education has been an issue for the overwhelming majority of graduate students across the twentieth century. Prejudicial issuance of financial support during graduate training might have been an impediment for women. Fitzpatrick reports that from 1894–99



only one of 18 University of Chicago sociology department fellowships went to a woman (1990, p. 80). There is no reported evidence from political economy, though inter-departmental cross-pollination was the norm during this time period. After earning a degree from Stanford University, Mabel Newcomer was accepted into the economics graduate program of Columbia University in 1914. She received a financial package to support her studies, but during “this time university fellowships were offered only to men” so the economics department funded Newcomer out of its departmental allocations (Shackleford, 1995, p. 5).

In the 1970s, respondents to an American Economic Association survey identified fellowships and teaching and research assistantships as important sources of financial support (Strober, 1975). Even in the 1970s, men continued to receive more assistantship aid than women. A primary policy conclusion of this study is that, for those women who dropped out of Ph.D. studies in the 1970s, “better financial aid . . . could have induced them to continue their studies” (Strober, 1975, p. 98).

During graduate training in sociology at the University of Wisconsin in the early 1900s, Theresa McMahon was surprised at receiving a fellowship. In response to her surprise she was told, ““You have been married a number of years and you haven’t any children so you probably will stay in a profession and will be a credit to the University of Wisconsin”” (Howe, 1989, pp. 232–3). In her autobiography, McMahon *justifies* decisions to withhold funds and promotions from women. The justification is that women terminated their careers with marriage in order to establish homes and families, “not a very good foundation on which to claim promotions” or funding (McMahon, 1989, p. 258). Sometimes McMahon subsidized student costs of higher education out of her personal income after becoming a professor. McMahon attests that she only provided personal financial support to men students but not to qualified women students. In McMahon’s opinion, “[i]t wasn’t sex prejudice as much as it was the lack of stability on the part of the good [women] students” (McMahon, 1989, p. 258). In this pronouncement McMahon made no systematic survey to determine how many men dropped out of higher education before earning degrees. Women on the receiving end of logic used to justify sex discrimination sometimes also propagated that logic.

Sophonisba Breckinridge identifies sex discrimination in financial fellowship awards for women when she started her doctoral studies at the University of Chicago in 1897. Though her field was political science, Breckinridge studied under economist J. Laurence Laughlin and her dissertation topic was in monetary history. Writing to her father, Breckinridge doubted she would receive a \$500 fellowship to pursue her doctoral degree because women tended to marry:

I don’t believe they will ever give one of them to a woman again, except under extraordinary circumstances, when she has done a large amount of work and is fairly well on in years. A good many of the officers of the University are down on the women fellows for marrying off so, and I don’t blame them, and I feel sure that no woman in our department will get a \$500 fellowship for years.

*Fitzpatrick, 1990, p. 50*

It is noteworthy that Breckinridge sympathized with the university administrators and not the women students. She gives no additional insight as to what became of the married women fellows. Fitzpatrick identifies the social expectation in the early twentieth century that “a serious woman scholar would forego marriage” (p. 49), a decision Breckinridge made.

Newcomer suggests “that the acquisition of knowledge can be a road to women’s own fulfillment and independence” (Newcomer, 1959, p. 247, as quoted in Shackleford, 1995, p. 22). Newcomer lays out her concern that, given the social stereotypes, women would find fewer spots in higher education:

the overcrowding of the universities and colleges threaten increased discrimination against women students. The fact that women with professional training have not used it as regularly as men for professional ends appears to justify giving preference to men, both in admission and in conferring fellowships.

*Newcomer, 1959, p. 247, as quoted in Shackleford, 1995, p. 22*

### **Employment discrimination**

In the responses of approximately 1,050 university women to a survey, a primary finding summarized by Hutchinson (1928) is: “the discrimination that many women find in appointment, promotion, and salary as they compete with men for positions for which the Ph.D. is required” (p. 592). A federal government Biennial Survey of Education carried out during the second decade of the twentieth century estimated there were four men for every woman employed as teachers at institutions of higher learning and that the gender imbalance had been growing since the 1890s (Fitzpatrick, 1990, p. 72). A 1921 American Association of University Professors report counted only two women out of approximately 2,000 professors at 29 men’s universities and colleges. The same report documented 1,600 women out of 13,000 professorial positions in 104 coeducational institutions of higher learning (p. 73). In contrast, women did find employment at 14 women’s colleges: 738 of 989 faculty were women in 1921 (p. 74).

Nine women earned doctorates in political economy, political science or sociology at the University of Chicago between 1892 and 1907. Whereas two-thirds of the men with these doctorates became faculty at coeducational universities upon graduation, none of the nine women were so appointed. In a 1901 speech, University of Chicago President William Rainey Harper asked whether this was a result of increased sexual prejudice (Fitzpatrick, 1990, p. 72). In autobiographical notes, the University of Chicago Ph.D., Sophonisba Breckinridge identified this unequal post-graduate placement outcome between her and the male students of political science and economics. Five men with whom she had earned a Ph.D. received academic appointments after 1901. In contrast, Dr. Breckinridge worked as the Assistant Head of a women’s residence hall immediately after earning her degree (Hammond, 2000, p. 82).

Mabel Newcomer (1959) depicts discrimination in hiring in her mid-twentieth-century review of higher education job prospects for women:

[T]he opportunities for women scholars have been greatly restricted. While the women’s colleges have taken the position that the best faculty will be one with a good representation from each sex, the men’s colleges have for the most part, assumed that women would be out of place on their faculties. And while coeducational institutions have employed some women, the women are a relatively small minority except in the teachers and junior colleges. Research opportunities are also greater for men than for women.

*Newcomer, 1959, pp. 191–2, as quoted in Shackleford, 1995, p. 21*

Clifford notes how difficult it was for women to market advanced degrees (p. 42). Consider an early example in the United States. Ellen Swallow Richards studied astronomy at Vassar and pursued graduate studies at M.I.T. in chemistry circa 1870. Richards “inadvertently founded the field of home economics in order to have scientific work to do” (p. 42). Some of Richards’ home economics publications overlapped economics, as in a cost of living study.

The historian and economist Caroline Farrar Ware experienced hiring discrimination before 1940. She had been hired for summer employment at the University of Wyoming. When

university officials learned that Ware was married, her appointment “was abruptly canceled.” Ware was also informed that women “would not be considered for a post” within the University of Maryland History Department (Scott, 2006, p. 184).

Sadie Tanner Mossell Alexander was the first African American woman to earn a Ph.D. in economics. She did this in 1921 after completing her dissertation, “The Standard of Living among One Hundred Negro Migrant Families in Philadelphia,” with the University of Pennsylvania. According to Malveaux (1991), employment opportunities were unavailable to Alexander in economics in the Philadelphia area because of her race, and employment at some African American colleges was unavailable because she was a woman. Her daughter Rae Alexander-Minter stated that “there was no way for her to make a living” in economics in the 1920s (Malveaux, 1991, p. 308). By 1923, Alexander exited the economics profession. She shifted into law.

Walter Beach and Theresa McMahan were two job candidates for a position with the Economics Department at the University of Washington in 1909. Theresa McMahan was not hired: the “very able man” Walter Beach received the appointment (McMahan, 1989, p. 251). McMahan summarizes her impression of this employment outcome:

I have an idea that [University of Washington] President Kane suggested that they bring Beach in instead of bringing me in, knowing that there would be some opposition to my appointment just because I was a liberal, and secondly, or perhaps primarily, because I was a woman. Women at that time were not appointed to positions in the economics department; they still are rarely found there. Our universities are the most conservative institutions in the country when it comes to the question of recognizing women on the intellectual level with men.

*McMahan, 1989, pp. 251–2*

Though the early twentieth century brought the appointment of four women economists to Berkeley (Jessica Peixotto, Lucy Stebbins, Barbara Nachtrieb Grimes Armstrong and Emily Huntington), from the 1930s until the 1980s there were no new appointments of women faculty in the Berkeley economics department (Dzuback, 2006, p. 165). It is vaguely feasible that the lack of women appointments was because there were no qualified women applicants, but it seems reasonable to investigate whether sex discrimination in hiring played a role.

In her autobiography, economist Eleanor Lansing Dulles (1980) writes little of her graduate training experiences. She does note that at “Harvard women were treated politely and even in a friendly manner” in the 1920s. This politeness did not extend to job market support. Dulles writes:

All the graduate economics courses were taught at the main campus by the prestigious Harvard professors, but there was no professional equality. After the men got their doctor’s degrees those who had done well were offered a choice of staying at the colleges as instructors or going elsewhere with strong recommendations. For the women, the possibilities were more limited. There were no women faculty members at Radcliffe in those days, I was told.

*p. 117*

Given these limits, Dulles accepted the one offer she received from her undergraduate alma mater, Bryn Mawr, and served with its economics faculty from 1928 to 1930 and 1932 to 1936.

Although women economists with Ph.D.s had substantial intellectual potential, in some cases even when they did hold formal positions of employment, they were “not getting appropriate work” (Dulles, 1980, p. 230). The Bretton Woods conference of 1944, for example, had a highly trained secretarial staff member. Her Radcliffe-Harvard economics Ph.D. earned Dulles a position with the International Secretariat. Her job each night was to prepare that day’s minutes for distribution to conference participants the next morning (p. 171). Though the conference probably benefitted from a highly trained economist as the transcriptionist of its minutes, it is likely that Dulles’ skill set was underutilized.

When women were in the position to make hiring decisions, some intentionally provided employment outlets for other women. Eveline Mabel Burns was trained at the London School of Economics and the first woman economist to be hired at the rank of lecturer for the Columbia University economics department in 1928. Burns worked for the U.S. National Resources Planning Board in 1939. Reviewing oral history files, Kasper (2012) finds that Burns primarily hired people of Jewish heritage and women for her Planning Board staff because, in Burns’s words, “they were the people who had difficulty . . . good people, having difficulty in getting jobs” (p. 333).

### **Marriage and academic employment**

Many women who pursued academic lives in the early twentieth century did not marry, unlike academic men. Clifford unearthed a study in 1930 of all the women who earned doctoral degrees from 1877 to 1924. The study reports that 75 percent of these women Ph.D.s were unmarried (Clifford, 1983, p. 45). Marriageable and married women faced academic job market discrimination. Many social biases limited the academic employment opportunities for these women. First, academic employers feared that young unmarried women would desert their academic posts after finding marriage partners. Second, some women in heterosexual relationships might have received pressure from their partners to give up academic positions. Third, application of anti-nepotism rules constituted a formal institutional barrier to married women’s employability.

One consistently applied belief against the hiring of women was: if she is young she will marry and leave her academic post. Dean Marion Talbot of the University of Chicago was approached by President R.H. Jesse of the University of Missouri concerning hiring political economist Katharine Bement Davis for a domestic economy teaching position. Jesse wrote explicitly of his institution’s objection to hiring any women, “that if they come young enough to have a future ahead of them they are liable to get married about the time comes when they begin to become really useful” (Fitzpatrick, 1990, p. 76).

Jesse’s correspondence with Talbot about potential women job candidates identifies a woman’s physical appearance as a screening device for employability in *academia*: “she is I fear rather young. Further more it seems to appear between the lines that she is pretty. While men never hunt for homely women . . . it is not always an advantage to have them too handsome” (Fitzpatrick, 1990, p. 76). At least in this case, women were screened out of academic positions if they possessed physical characteristics that men found appealing, beauty interpreted as a signal of future marriage.

Fiancés and husbands could emit pressure on women economists to forego professional opportunities. In 1927 Eleanor Lansing Dulles made plans to marry. Her fiancé urged her to leave her position at Bryn Mawr but Dulles refused. Her fiancé desired “the conventional pattern of expecting a woman to fit her career to the needs of her husband” but Dulles’ drive

to preserve independence prevailed. They settled into a commuting marriage with Dulles in Philadelphia and her husband in Baltimore (Dulles, 1980, p. 135).

Sarah Scovill Whittelsey completed undergraduate training at Radcliffe College in 1894 and earned a Ph.D. from Yale University in 1898 when she was 26 years old. Her dissertation focused on Massachusetts labor legislation in relationship to economic theory. She served as an instructor at Wellesley College in 1902–3. In 1905 she married a Yale chemistry professor. The marriage correlates with the end of Whittelsey’s teaching in higher education. At the turn of the twentieth century, “[e]ven the women’s colleges, committed to hiring women, employed a marriage bar against them. Conversely, male professors at women’s institutions were expected to be married” (Hammond, 1993, p. 364). After marriage, Whittelsey engaged in independent scholarship (p. 365).

In a letter to a London School of Economics colleague in 1927, Eveline Mabel Burns documented her frustration with the cultural norm of expecting married women to be housewives:

“I’m going to show these disgusting anti-feminists that there are some women who are keen on their career, who can permanently be interested in those branches hitherto regarded as men’s, and that the old view of a woman giving up her job because [*sic*] she is married isn’t [*sic*] necessarily a true one” (Burns to Morgenstern, November 11, 1927).

*Quote in Kasper, 2012, p. 333*

In her published address to the 1933 Biennial Convention of the American Association of University Women, Dr. Sophonisba Breckinridge identifies formalized institutional constraints for women who wished to pursue both family and an academic career:

Two great land grant colleges are denying the right of married women to continue in employment or the right of the academic woman to round out her experience by marriage. In one institution the vote on the subject was unanimous, although there was a woman on the board of trustees, and as a result of this vote a dean of women of experience, who happened to be married, was replaced by an unmarried woman. And when an appeal was made to the representative of this organization in the state, because there was no League of Women Voters or Women’s Party to whom an appeal could be made, the reply was that after all, “marriage itself was for a woman an adequate career.”

*Breckinridge, 1933, p. 198*

In her mature years, Breckinridge understood the importance of women having the freedom to pursue both family and academic career:

That women should be given an opportunity to equip themselves for practice in these fields and that they should later find opportunity for the practice of their professional skill without denying themselves the privileges and enriching experiences of family life seems to me of immediate and great concern.”

*Breckinridge, 1933, p. 195*

Anti-nepotism rules were applied to university faculty hiring processes beginning in the first half of the twentieth century with the intention of preventing political appointments based on patronage. An unintended consequence was that these rules blocked the hiring of qualified Ph.D. women who were married to doctorates employed at institutions of higher learning

(Simon et al., 1966, p. 344). The Great Depression reduced job availability, including within the economics profession. Married women economists were disproportionately displaced from the academic job market during the Depression, positions they might have filled going to men and single women. Anti-nepotism legislation at the federal, state and local levels reinforced this discriminatory hiring trend. “The federal legislation was repealed in 1937 but anti-nepotism rules lingered on in the academic world. These rules forced women” out of desired academic positions (Libby, 1990, p. 126). It was not until 1960 that the American Association of University Women studied anti-nepotism rules to understand the negative effect on women’s hiring. Ultimately, the outcome of anti-nepotism studies was to dismantle this employment barrier (Simon et. al., 1966, p. 344), but over most of the decades in the twentieth century, women economists found their employment prospects formally frustrated if they were married.

Documentation exists for a number of women economists with stymied academic careers due to anti-nepotism rules in the first seven decades of the twentieth century. According to Keohane (2003), anti-nepotism at the University of Chicago was a source of employment frustration for Dorothy Wolff Douglas. Married in 1915 to Paul Douglas, the couple intended a two-academic career marriage with numerous children. Dorothy published in 1919 in the *American Economic Review* and in 1920 in the *Quarterly Journal of Economics*. In 1920, Paul received a position at Chicago but Dorothy could not work there because the university applied its anti-nepotism rule to wives. It was not until 1924 that Dorothy became employed at Smith College.

At the University of Washington in the 1930s, President Sieg attempted to impose a nepotism ban on women hires: the university was not to employ the wife if the husband was employed (McMahon, 1989). Theresa Schmid McMahon experienced a threat of job loss due to anti-nepotism. A sociologist by training, McMahon and her husband Edward held academic posts at the University of Washington in 1910. In 1916, Theresa was employed by the economics department after a joint social science department was split. Called into the university president’s office, Edward learned that the state governor was pressuring the university to dismiss a family member where two were employed. Specifically, the president signaled that *Theresa’s* “resignation would be welcome” though this was not to pass (Dimand, 2000b, p. 304).

Jacobsen (2000, p. 196) identifies anti-nepotism as the reason that Margaret Gordon was not employed by the University of California-Berkeley in the late 1930s due to the tenure track post that her husband Robert held. Mary Jean Bowman was a Ph.D. from Radcliffe in 1938 who taught at Iowa State College and worked for the Bureau of Labor Statistics. Bowman moved to the University of Chicago with her husband C. Arnold Anderson in 1949. Anderson’s Chicago appointment in the department of education precluded Bowman’s hire at Chicago as recently as 1958 because the university applied its anti-nepotism rules to qualified academic wives. It was in 1969 that Bowman finally received a joint academic appointment in the education and economics departments (Guide to the Mary Jean Bowman Papers).

Alison Comish Thorne’s daughter documents nepotism as a leading reason that Alison did not hold a permanent faculty position. Alison Thorne earned her Ph.D. in 1939 from Iowa State College after completing a dissertation in consumer economics. Married in 1937 to Wynne Thorne, the couple moved to Utah around 1940 so Wynne could take a position at Utah State Agricultural College. Daughter Barrie Thorne writes, “Mother used to say that she and Dad were a ‘pair-a-docs,’ but it was obvious that these docs had quite different opportunities.” Specifically, Alison had limited employment options in Logan, Utah because the college applied its anti-nepotism rules to the Thornes (Thorne, 1997, p. 104). Alison was not officially appointed a lecturer until 1965 (in sociology, home economics, and consumer education) (Thorne, 1995, p. 68). She attributes her appointment to the Civil Rights Act of 1964 that illegalized the application of the nepotism rules in academia (p. 70).

Unmarried academic women had caring relationships. Caring responsibilities were not for husbands and birth children, but rather for partners, parents, siblings, foster children, etc. This care-taking role extended to students by voluntary choice for some women faculty and by employment mandate for others. For example, women faculty were expected to live with female students in dormitories in the American South: “Ensuring ‘ladylike’ behavior and southern women students’ virtue were part and parcel of the unmarried women faculty member’s responsibility well into the 1940s” (Dzuback, 2003, pp. 192–3). Though northern academic institutions also initially imposed a maternal role on women faculty in their work responsibilities, by the early 1900s northern women faculty members were moving off campus and into “homosocial domestic commitments in which two women lived and cared for their household together.” By the second decade of the twentieth century, relationship opportunities also slowly opened for women academics with the option of heterosexual marriage while pursuing careers (Dzuback, 2003, pp. 192–3). As the examples in this chapter suggest though, nepotism barriers continued to be problematic past mid-century.

### Salary, promotion and tenure

In the responses of approximately 1,050 university women to a survey, a primary finding summarized by Hutchinson (1928) is: “the discrimination that many women find in appointment, promotion, and salary as they compete with men for positions for which the Ph.D. is required” (p. 592). What follows is the anecdotal evidence available for women economists who documented unequal treatment in salary, tenure and promotion.

Salaries were likely lower for women economists compared to men, but there are only a few anecdotal records documenting discrepancies. A news article in the *Seattle Post-Intelligencer* in 1938 concerned the nepotism rules that the University of Washington attempted to apply to reduce the number of married women working at the institution. In the article, retired, self-described liberal economist Theresa McMahon is quoted about her salary over the course of her career. She said, “I have always been discriminated against in my salary. Whether it was because I was a progressive or because both of us were working I do not know” (Howe, 1989, p. 233). Though it was generous that Theresa offered a non-sex discrimination rationale, her husband, Edward McMahon, was also a liberal and there is no record of his salary being lower. Alison Comish Thorne acknowledges two mentors while she worked on her Ph.D. at Iowa State College: Margaret G. Reid and Elizabeth Hoyt. According to Thorne, both Reid and Hoyt “knew they received less pay than men with comparable training and experience” (Thorne, 1995, p. 65). In a survey of women academicians, Hutchinson (1930) documents an anonymous woman economist who reported: “I work just as hard but get 1/2 pay.”

There is some documentation of difficulties women faced in promotion and job security. Lonn (1924) provides a general overview of the situation with regard to rank. Analyzing 70 university catalogues in the 1920 to 1922 timeframe, Lonn identifies 7,499 faculty members, of whom 9 percent were women. Of the 2,138 university full professorships, 28 were women (0.37%), and the absolute “number of women increases, naturally, with the descent in rank” (p. 5). In the Hutchinson (1930) survey of women academicians, an anonymous woman economist documented that “I work just as hard but can’t get a tenured position.”

A Texas labor economist, Ruth Allen earned a Ph.D. from the University of Chicago in 1931. Allen had a career-long appointment at the University of Texas until her retirement in 1959. After her death in 1979, a university memorial resolution explicitly identified barriers to women’s academic promotion during the time of her tenure at Texas: Allen “made her way

to the professorship in times when this was close to impossible for a woman” (Bernasek and Kinnear, 2000, p. 8).

At Columbia University, E.R.A. Seligman hired Eveline Mabel Burns as a lecturer in 1928. She was promised “a regular position as soon as obstacles in the form of funding and certain objections to the hiring of a woman were overcome” (Rutherford, 2004, p. 47). The promise never materialized. Burns was still a lecturer when she was let go by Columbia in 1942 (Kasper, 2012, pp. 332–3).

The 1929 promotion of Theresa McMahon to full professor at the University of Washington was slipped through the university system via administrative finagling. The dean of her school said: “We’ve got to promote that woman” because she was widely respected among the student body. The University President Suzzallo decided, “wait until summer when nobody is paying attention, and we’ll promote her then” (McMahon, 1989, pp. 272–3).

In a letter to a colleague, Eveline Mabel Burns provided a simple economic explanation of how marriage interfered with women economists’ promotion prospects: “it is known that even if we dont [*sic*] get the promotions we are unlikely to move because of the problem of “joint supply” . . . Take my warning, and never marry a fellow economist! It ruins your bargaining powers’ (Burns to Morgenstern, February 2, 1931)” (quote in Kasper, 2012, p. 333).

Academic women’s experiences with sex discrimination in the early twentieth century were highly contingent on circumstance. If colleagues or administrators held sexist views, a woman had difficult circumstances to contend with; if colleagues and administrators believed in equal regard across the sexes, fewer discriminatory experiences were likely. At the University of Washington in the early twentieth century, a president by the last name of Sieg held office. Economist Theresa McMahon

was prejudiced against him right from the start. Why? Because he didn’t have any use for women teachers. It was all right for them to teach home economics, or perhaps music, or physical education, but they had no place in the other departments. These departments were exclusively for the superior sex. All during his administration I don’t think a woman ever got a promotion outside of the home economics department.

*McMahon, 1989, p. 270*

After working on post-war Austrian reconstruction, in 1948 Eleanor Lansing Dulles returned to Washington D.C. to work with the State Department. She describes this job as “the worst” in her professional experience, “rooted in sex discrimination” (Dulles, 1980, p. 228). Dulles was told she would not receive promotion “to second place because the chief did not want a woman for his deputy” (p. 230). Dulles summarizes the situation as “hopeless”, with her State Department career void of both advancement and pay increases (p. 230).

With turn-of-twentieth-century economics training as doctoral students from the University of Chicago, Edith Abbott and Sophonisba Breckinridge later founded the social work department of the University of Chicago. By 1925, the lack of promotion of these two women to full professor gave partial impetus for formal intervention by Dean Marion Talbot. The University of Chicago was charged “with violating the terms of its charter by failing to provide women with equal ‘opportunities’.” Fitzpatrick writes of this charge that it was both “accurate and embarrassing” and the board of trustees duly promoted the women (1990, p. 214). Furthermore, Hazel Kyrk used this University of Chicago sensitivity to the issue of gender imbalances as a bargaining chip. Kyrk negotiated a dual appointment in the departments of household administration and economics. She received her post in household administration in 1925 but it took until 1930 for the economics department to honor its commitment (Folbre, 1998, pp. 47–8).



### Student sexism toward women professors

Women who served as professors faced additional discriminatory pressure from sexist male students. Annie Marion MacLean (1932) reflects on a sociology course she taught over a 20-year period. She wrote of a German student who lived in Berlin. The German signed up to take her University of Chicago Introduction to Sociology correspondence course in the early twentieth century. The student dropped the course, informing MacLean that “it is not to be supposed . . . that a female can teach me” (p. 465).<sup>3</sup>

After earning her Ph.D. at the University of Chicago with an award-winning thesis, Hazel Kyrk taught at Oberlin College in the 1920s. A dean writing about Kyrk’s departure identifies the unwillingness of male students to accept a woman professor as a primary reason for Kyrk’s departure. The dean writes that Kyrk was well trained, had an “agreeable personality,” and was “of rather unusual natural ability.” Kyrk’s teaching is described as clear-headed and applying reasonable standards. But the dean identifies that “any woman would have enormous difficulty trying to teach subjects as banking and transportation to classes composed almost entirely of men” [emphasis in the original]. The dean speculates that, “a man doing exactly the work that Miss Kyrk did and in the same way would have seemed satisfactory in every way” (Beller and Kiss, 2008, p. 5).

### Inaccessible facilities and materials

Segregated facilities undermined the work activities of women economists. Women economists experienced ostracism from receptions, office space, libraries, dining areas, conferences and living quarters. When women could not utilize shared spaces of interaction, they had “little or no chance for the kind of enrichment which comes from unself-conscious and informal contacts with members of their profession” (Gilson, 1940, p. 214). And in one documented instance, a male colleague withheld information that was necessary for a woman economist’s work to advance.

Since its inception in 1885, the American Economic Association (AEA) has had women economists as members. Women participated in the annual meetings, including the first one in Philadelphia. But social norms in Philadelphia led to the women participants’ exclusion from the first annual meeting reception. The Philadelphia reception was open only to the male members of the AEA. An alternative reception was set up at the last minute for the 15–20 women participants. The women boycotted their segregated reception (Hammond, 1993, 366–7).

Physical segregation by sex of office space occurred in at least one instance. Alison Comish Thorne was the first woman Ph.D. student completing her degree in economics at Iowa State College in 1937 with 14 men degree candidates. Thorne’s mentors, Margaret Reid and Elizabeth Hoyt, worked as economists in the economics and sociology department which was chaired by Theodore W. Schultz (Thorne, 1995, p. 60). Hoyt and Reid had offices in Margaret Hall, a building that housed the home economics department. “The remainder of the economics faculty, all male, were in Ag Annex some distance away” (p. 62). Thorne elaborates: “Matters of power were rarely discussed, yet we women sometimes sensed discrimination” (p. 65). She describes the Ag Annex as “overcrowded” and that she did not know if Reid and Hoyt regretted having offices segregated from the male faculty.

The industrial management specialist, Mary Barnett Gilson sensitizes readers of her autobiography to the career effects of seemingly small resource control factors (1940, p. 214). That Harvard University did not permit women in its library after 6 p.m., though men could use the facilities until 10 p.m. in the mid-1920s was one reason that Mary Barnett Gilson decided

to study economics at Columbia University instead (p. 216). Gilson describes that women academicians were “on the periphery” in faculty dining facilities in the early twentieth century.

Women faculty members’ exclusion from the faculty club also occurred at Berkeley in the early 1900s. The women were relegated “to a corner of one room,” restricted “to visits only on special occasions,” and admitted “only if they were accompanied by a male member of the club.” Perhaps unique to Berkeley, the woman economist Jessica Peixotto helped raise financing to construct a women’s faculty club after 1919. This club became an important networking site for women academicians (Dzuback, 2006, p. 162).

Harriet Elliott was the consumer representative to the federal U.S. National Defense Advisory Commission in 1940. Economist and historian Caroline Ware was appointed as Elliott’s deputy. The women found

that the other members of the commission took a dim view of the whole idea of including consumers in the focus of their work as well as a dim view of women commissioners. They made their feelings clear in unkind comments and in such actions as forbidding the women to use the Executive Dining Room, to which the men went for lunch, and failing to include Elliott in policy discussions.

*Scott, 2006, pp. 10–11*

Ware was told by the man who set up the commission: “if you think your [female] commissioner is going to get the same treatment as the head of General Motors [. . .] you have another guess coming” (p. 11).

Eleanor Lansing Dulles, economics Ph.D. from Radcliffe, worked for a stint with the U.S. Social Security Board. After World War II, Dulles was appointed to Austria to support reconstruction. She was assigned official rank of lieutenant colonel and served as a financial attaché; her rank and position was higher than that of 20 women secretaries but she “received from the men the treatment accorded a woman secretary” (Dulles, 1980, p. 190). Dulles attempted to reside in villas where the men were located but was told “This is a boys’ club . . . You must stay in town with the women secretaries. We don’t want you here” (p. 190). She does not state how much this hampered her work supporting economic reconstruction of Austria. Nonetheless, Dulles managed to make significant contributions. According to her account, Dulles worked to learn about the economic constraints impeding Austrian rebuilding and negotiated with various parties to obtain resources for industry: cotton for idle textile mills, artificial rubber for Austrian tire production, coal for steel mills. Working with others, Dulles wrote a report on the Soviet destruction of their occupation zone in Austria and hypothesized the effects on the rest of the country (p. 209).

Dulles moved from Austria to the State Department in Washington D.C. Her State Department male assistant told her “*he* had been told by the division chief that because [Dulles] was a woman, [the assistant] would not have to take [Dulles] seriously” (Dulles, 1980, p. 229). According to Dulles, one of his regular habits was to hide informative cables from her.

Dulles left and then returned to the State Department in 1952 where sex discrimination continued to be a part of her work experience. She describes as “killing with kindness” that she was barred from night work at the State Department because a “woman should not work eighteen hours a day” although foreign service officers often did (Dulles, 1980, p. 237). She was excluded from participation at international conferences even though she had years of foreign service experience (p. 237). Dulles reports providing substantial contributions to the State Department even with the discriminatory barriers. Her position in 1952 was to run the “Berlin Desk” where she “was charged with the reconstruction of Berlin and concerned with

policy toward the city” (p. 241). Her official title was “Special Assistant to the Director, Office of German Affairs, responsible for Berlin matters” (p. 277). As in Austria, she was to funnel resources into the Cold War-torn city and to rehabilitate it. In West Berlin this work included constructing a conference hall and a hospital. Though she made contributions, she continued to face barriers to full participation in Berlin policy. In 1959 she was barred from participating both in preparatory meetings in Washington D.C. and the main conference on Berlin in Geneva. She knew she would not be able to participate as “[n]o woman had participated in any international Berlin conference” (p. 276).

There is one documented experience of a woman’s unanticipated inclusion in men’s space. Katharine Bement Davis earned her political economy Ph.D. in 1900 at the University of Chicago. En route to that accomplishment, she writes of unjustified ambivalence about using a seminar room that the male students used:

The men fellows used for working purposes a seminar room opening off the small library of the department. I had rather understood that they had not favored the innovation of a woman in the department, so I naturally hesitated about joining them there. But one day one of the young men, I think it was Herbert Davenport, now professor of economics at Cornell University came out to me and suggested that I bring my work in and join the other Fellows. I did. And from then on I had a beautiful time.

*Fitzpatrick, 1990, p. 75*

In the example of Davis it seems her acquiescence to perceived exclusion based on sex was the driving factor in her initial isolation from inter-collegial interactions.

### **Women’s contributions to experiences of discrimination**

As the Davis seminar room example suggests, women economists sometimes subconsciously colluded in their own oppression. Repeated recipients of messages of inferiority, it is not unusual that some of these messages become internalized. Once oppressive beliefs become internalized, women economists might have contributed to the discriminatory forces that undermined their full participation. There are many ways that the discriminated can participate in their own oppression. In the examples below, this participation manifested in expectations of relatively poor performance, behaving tentatively in interactions with colleagues, submitting to prejudicial views, and perpetuating discriminatory beliefs.

Caroline Ware reminisces in a letter to a friend about Ware’s year at Oxford circa 1921: “The thing that used to dishearten me was the women’s own expectation of inferiority which made them surprised when they achieved better academic records than the men (which they usually did, being a more rigorously selected group etc.)” (Scott, 2006, p. 70). Eleanor Lansing Dulles explicitly identifies that if women were uncertain or hesitant in workplace activities, they could reinforce sex discrimination (Dulles, 1980, p. 240). Katharine Bement Davis specifically wrote that it was her hesitancy that undermined her ability to profit from collegial interactions with men students in a seminar room.

John Maynard Keynes identifies that Mary Paley Marshall respected and accepted men’s “strict principles”: although she was one of the first women to receive college level training in economics in Great Britain, there is no public record of her admonishing husband Alfred’s belief in the intellectual inferiority of women. Keynes also describes that Mary never asked for or expected “anything for herself. It was always in the forefront of her thought that she must not

be a trouble to anyone” (Keynes, 1944, p. 276). Though Mary Paley Marshall was co-author of a book in economics with her husband, Alfred Marshall, and an economics lecturer:

she never, to the best of my [Keynes’s] recollection, discoursed on an economic topic with a visitor, or even took part in the everlasting economic talks of Balliol Croft. For the serious discussion she would leave the dining-room to the men . . . and the most ignorant Miss could not have pretended less than she to academic attainment.

*Keynes, 1944, p. 277*

In two documented cases, women on the receiving end of logic used to justify sex discrimination propagated that logic. Both Sophonisba Breckinridge of the University of Chicago (in her younger years) and Theresa McMahon of the University of Washington colluded in the predominant opinion that withholding funding for women graduate students was justified because of the belief that any woman receiving funding would ultimately withdraw from studies to marry. In contrast, the African American woman economist Phyllis Ann Wallace met discriminatory obstacles with an attitude of: “You do your work and that’s it” (Malveaux, 1997, p. 133).

## Conclusion

People involved in the construction of economic thought absorbed and reinforced societal norms of sex discrimination in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Women economists were indoctrinated into beliefs about their alleged inferiority, had less access to resources and fewer opportunities than their male counterparts. This chapter highlights the documentation of discriminatory treatment toward women contributing to economic thought. The evidence on these pages is mostly uncluttered with analysis, intentionally so—to allow the accumulation of anecdotes to speak directly to the reader. Given that cultural norms reinforced non-communication of such experiences, the information available for any given case is anecdotal and incomplete; and documented sources likely exclude offenses that society shuttered, those glares too harsh to bear.

To date, there is only one formal case of academic discrimination in early twentieth-century economics—that of Edith Abbott and Sophonisba Breckinridge at the University of Chicago. Incomplete information of the other specific claims about discrimination leave each case open to questions of validity, thus these are “anecdotes.” Did the discrimination exist and impede a woman’s abilities? Or was the woman alleging discrimination hiding inadequate ability? No single example suggesting sex discrimination is itself immune from such questions as the latter. But by drawing upon so many distinct examples of discrimination from a variety of sources, it is obvious that in the aggregate, women attempting to do economics faced exclusion and ostracism because of their sex.

Beyond questioning factuality, the term “anecdote” evokes humorous intent in conveying an incident. How often do we people—women and men—wink or nod, shrug shoulders, raise hands palm-side up, feigning sarcastic resignation to yet another case in the historically persistent deluge of belittling treatment afforded womanhood? The reality is that discrimination and ostracism wound. Sarcastic receipt is social wrapping over each welt that emerges in heart-consciousness. And the examples presented here are the easier ones, the ones that were more socially acceptable to document.

It is doubtful that there is much more detail on the cases of sex discrimination present in this chapter. Preserved papers collections of women economists in many academic archives and other institutional records likely hold additional fragmentary accounts. Whether women

contributing to economic thought through the twentieth century faced even more severe forms of sexual harassment or outright abuse than what is in these anecdotes is a relevant question worthy of deeper inquiry. Surveys and interviews of middle- and end-career women economists might yield insight into the mid- and late twentieth century.

Women economists' responses range over a wide spectrum: succumbing to discrimination, drawing upon resources to manage in spite of it, excelling because of it. The ability to carry on and contribute to the production of economic knowledge seems stronger for some than others while discrimination and harassment take a toll. Better understanding of the mechanisms that both undermine and support women economists' abilities to transcend discrimination is warranted in future research.<sup>4</sup>

Discrimination is typically considered problematic because it reduces human capability. But discrimination in academia has another important negative implication: it affects the growth of knowledge. Effective discrimination suppresses voice, narrowing academic scope, perspective, insight. But academic discrimination of women was only partially effective. Some women did carry on and contribute to economic thought. How do exclusionary and harassing experiences shape world views, assumptions, methodological preferences, mental compartmentalization of evidence, theoretical ideation, etc.? The effect of sexual harassment on the construction of economic knowledge by the harassed is an important area for future exploration.

## Notes

- 1 Thanks to Zach Cober for research support on women in the sciences.
- 2 Personal communication with Joseph Persky, April 2016.
- 3 This anecdote was initially identified in Bumb (n.d.).
- 4 Women also received support from men in the pursuit of economic knowledge. Research documenting support and inclusion would provide a fuller picture of the experiences of early women economists because of their sex.

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