

## HELP, HALF OUR HISTORY IS MISSING

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Women have been around a long time (5985 years, say the creationists), but students would not know it from taking a history survey course. The great majority of surveys in high schools and colleges omit all the major themes of women's history. Textbooks are not much help. Most of the new revisions have added pictures of women (and Blacks, Chicanos, etc.). Yet pictures and a few inserted paragraphs on newly famous heroines provide little foundation for understanding the many complex roles of women past and present. To integrate women fully into history surveys requires systematic, concerted effort. This paper discusses a project--now in its second year--to integrate material on women into traditional history survey courses. Its strengths, weaknesses, and general reception by college teachers and students across the nation can provide insights into the problems and successes of integration and survey courses.

For the past two years the Organization of American Historians (OAH) has sponsored a project funded by the Department of Education, Fund for the Improvement of Post-Secondary Education (FIPSE), to integrate material on women into American and Western Civilization survey courses. Elizabeth Fox-Genovese, State University of New York, Binghamton, who proposed the project to the OAH, has served as project director. D'Ann Campbell of Indiana University has served as deputy director. Fox-Genovese has had primary responsibility for selecting packet designers and creating the curriculum materials; Campbell has had primary responsibility for generating an interest among college teachers to test the materials, developing a national support network of these teachers, designing conferences in 1980 and 1981 to bring together these testers, and working with program committees to schedule workshops based on the OAH-FIPSE project at national and regional history meetings. Over a dozen such workshops have already been held and over 250 college teachers are using the curriculum packets in their classrooms.

A goal of the project was to develop materials that were suitable for students in all types of institutions; thus, twenty-one target institutions were selected to test the materials. These institutions include small, middle-size and large schools; two-year, four-year, and post-baccalaureate institutions; public and private; elite and non-elite. Over half the freshmen taking history survey courses are found at two-year institutions. As a consequence, we began our project by asking their teachers about their special interests and needs. The University of Wisconsin Center system, which includes fourteen two-year campuses, devoted its entire annual symposium in March, 1980, to integrating material on women into history survey courses.

The OAH-FIPSE project is designed for survey teachers who have no training in women's history and who want advice on what primary and secondary sources they could incorporate into their lectures. The curriculum packets, then, provide a series of suggestions; they are not designed to replace a text but rather to supplement one. The packets were developed originally by fourteen historians for four history courses: U.S. History, Part I and Part II; Western Civilization, Part I and Part II. Authors include Sarah Elbert, Rufus Fears, Margaret George, Joan Gundersen, Sharon Harley, S.J. Kleinberg, Eve Levin, Carolyn Lougee, William Monter, Elizabeth Pleck, Bonnie Smith, Richard Stites, Susan Mosher Stuard, and Harold Woodman. Elizabeth Fox-Genovese made a major contribution to each of the four packets. The curriculum materials include outlines of possible lectures, discussion questions, paper topics, primary source materials, and suggested readings for teachers and students. Some units include historiographical essays which discuss how to integrate material on women when discussing the standard topics such as the French Revolution, the Progressive Era, and World War II. The units are keyed to the major texts in each area.

From the beginning both men and women teachers have been involved in the project. About half of the participants at the two OAH-FIPSE conferences held in Bloomington, Indiana, were men. These conferences provided opportunities to discuss teaching strategies in general and the strengths and weaknesses of the first round of curriculum packet materials. For example, for four days in March, 1980, 100 historians talked about teaching and shared their experiences. They were more than willing to share immediately any new primary source materials or new techniques that captured the interest of their students. Some of the workshops were chronological, others were topical, in order that common problems and needs of intellectual, economic, political, and social historians could be discussed for both American and European survey courses. David Katzman, reflecting on his experiences at the 1980 Conference, concluded, "I had just participated in the most productive and successful conference I had ever attended."<sup>1</sup>

The most frequent question asked by survey teachers at the conferences and workshops is "How do I fit material on women into my survey course when my approach is primarily intellectual (or political or military or economic)?" The follow-up question is how can I fit anything else into my survey courses? Perhaps a few examples from American history will provide the answer.

All men are created equal, or so they claimed in 1776. Did they mean women too? In other words, was the word "men" used generally? No, Linda Kerber concludes in Women of the Republic; Mary Beth Norton in Liberty's Daughters draws a similar conclusion. A political or military focus to the American Revolution could include a discussion of the consequences for both men's and women's status. Those interested in an intellectual approach can trace the origin of a female ideology which is embodied in Kerber's term, "Republican Motherhood."<sup>2</sup>

A lecture on the 1830s and 1840s often includes a discussion of the movement to establish utopian societies. It would be logical to start such a discussion by examining the Shaker societies which constituted the largest and most permanent of all the nineteenth-century communal societies. Mother Ann Lee was the founder of the Shaker experiment. Over 300 books and articles have been written on the Shakers, but the women of the Society have been largely ignored by scholars. The women's diaries describe what young sisters, elderly sisters, and sisters in the next family over were doing on a given day. Their diaries also described the work and play activities of boys and Shaker men. In contrast, the diaries of the Shaker men were often limited to comments like "hoed today, plow tomorrow."<sup>3</sup> The Shaker women provide us with a much richer, broader, and more complete picture of Shaker life. They also provide new insights into why people joined and remained Shakers. For example, by comparing the census records of the Shaker societies and the nearby general communities, it appears that Shaker women of childbearing and childrearing ages were disproportionately represented in the Shaker settlements.<sup>4</sup> The diaries and letters of the Shaker women talk about coming from broken families and fearing childbirth. The pain of bearing children and the anguish generated by burying many infants was too much for these women. Peter Uhlenberg's study of Massachusetts women between 1820 and 1850 demonstrated that only one in five female babies born would experience a preferred life cycle of marriage, children, and living with a husband until age 55.<sup>5</sup> With this additional information, we can rethink our lectures on the Early Republic. We can talk about the precariousness of life for both men and women and the economic and political consequences of such fundamental factors. An excellent starting place for such a discussion is Lawrence Foster's book comparing the Shakers, Oneida Perfectionists, and Mormons. Foster's approach is anthropological, theological, and sociological, as well as historical.<sup>6</sup>



The Westward movement is another standard topic which can benefit from the inclusion of materials on the female experience. The frontier fascinated Americans for the challenges it posed, both environmentally and psychologically, to the courage, strength, and determination of the pioneers. The heroes of the frontier, in fiction, film, and scholarship, have invariably been men. The role of women, if mentioned at all, is limited to delicate damsels in distress, sex objects, superwomen such as Calamity Jane, or suffrage leaders. Thanks to scholars such as John Mack Faragher, Julie Roy Jeffrey, Sandra Myres, and Glenda Riley, the trails and homesteading experiences are now seen as family adventures.<sup>7</sup> An excellent historiographical essay by Joan Jensen and Darlis Miller demonstrates how our ideas of the Western experience must be modified or completely changed in light of the experiences and contributions of women pioneers.<sup>8</sup>

For the twentieth century, a lecture on the homefront during and between wars can also force us to rethink our traditional conclusions. Maureen Greenwald's study of women in World War I, Winifred Wandersee's study of women in the 1930s, and Karen Andersen's study of family life in Seattle all appeared in book form in 1980 or 1981.<sup>9</sup> For example, a demographic profile of the American population during World War II illustrates that 88% of the housewives had their husbands at home throughout the war. Only 8% had husbands in the service, 4% were abandoned. Marriage rates soared just before and during the war as prosperity returned and unemployment rates dropped from 17% in 1939 to 5% in 1942. Women and men who had postponed marriage or families made up for lost time. The baby boom began during the war, not afterwards. Unbroken families were the norm throughout the war.<sup>10</sup> Such a demographic profile forces us to rethink the war years. Hollywood has helped us imagine that husbands and fathers were off and women remained home pining away or taking "Rosie the Riveter" jobs for the duration. This picture is simply inaccurate. The men overseas were primarily teenagers or young single adults. Their mothers and girl friends were the ones who worried about them. The women who remained on the homefront did work at a variety of jobs, especially teenagers and women whose children were in school or grown. They did not take a job and stick with it until the end of the war, but rather constantly fluctuated in and out of the labor market.

The labor force history of women offers still more variety. Young married women were having their babies and not working full-time. Moreover, only 5% of all women who did work were given skilled craftsmen positions such as Rosie the Riveter. Most of the jobs were unskilled or semiskilled positions which were not nearly so glamorous.<sup>11</sup> Economists are now studying female labor force participation rates because they fluctuate so dramatically. In contrast, male labor force participation rates make a boring study since 97% of the men follow the same linear pattern of entering the labor force and remaining until retirement.

Whether a teacher adopts an economic, social, political, or military approach to World War II, information on women's roles can enrich the lectures. Moreover, studying a dyadic relationship with both men and women forces us to re-evaluate our interpretations. Such lectures are fuller, more accurate, and more interesting to students. Indeed, one two-year college male teacher explained that his male students told him his course was much more interesting when he started using material on women than it had been the previous semester. This professor plans to incorporate even more material for the next semester.<sup>12</sup>

Some teachers never get past World War II in their survey courses; but more and more student evaluations are asking for courses to include contemporary material as well as to draw parallels throughout the course between the past and present. For those teachers including material on the 1970s and 1980s, a lecture on politics which focuses on the 1980 election and the role of women can be

illuminating. For the first time women voted as a bloc in a way distinguishable from men. Since public opinion polls were started in the 1930s, women have voted the same way as their parents or their husbands. The only major departure from this pattern appears on questions of war. Women of all socio-economic backgrounds are 10-20% more dovish than men of similar backgrounds. Men and women usually vote exactly the same for major candidates. In 1980, however, women split evenly between Jimmy Carter and Ronald Reagan, while the men gave Reagan a huge landslide. The 20% gender difference noted in the 1980 election is attributed to two factors. About half the difference was related to the war issue: to some women, Reagan seemed more likely to get the country into another war. The remaining half was due to women's rights issue. Some women voted against Reagan because of his stands on ERA, abortion, and other women's issues. Yet women who voted for Reagan did not list his stands on women as the primary reason they voted for him. The implications of the 1980 election are manifold, and the attitudes and behaviors of men and women must be scrutinized to understand the complexities of the issues.<sup>13</sup>

These few examples provide a sample of the ways our understanding of the American past has been enhanced, strengthened, and even altered by integrating material on women into traditional courses. Those interested in learning more about the theoretical underpinnings of the OAH-FIPSE project should consult Elizabeth Fox-Genovese's article in the History Teacher, "The Crisis of our Culture," and her address at the March, 1980, OAH-FIPSE conference on "Writing Women into History."<sup>14</sup> Gerda Lerner has edited a pamphlet for the American Historical Association which also has a theoretical focus.<sup>15</sup> Teachers may also write D'Ann Campbell at Indiana University for copies of the US I, US II, WC I, and WC II curriculum packets (specify those you teach).

Evaluation forms from the first semester of using the curriculum materials provide us with a preliminary assessment of the usefulness of the packets.<sup>16</sup> The evaluations reflect a wide variety of teaching approaches and experiences. Most teachers in this experiment are veteran survey teachers, averaging five to ten years of teaching experience. During the first term they altered between 5% and 90% of their previous courses content, with an average of 10% change. A difficult problem experienced by most teachers was cutting out old material to make room for the new material. An even more difficult task for most teachers was finding the time to re-develop their courses. As one teacher explained, "Even reading the material given us took a considerable amount of time." Another agreed: "My main difficulty with the packet materials have to do with time. Released time is not easily acquired at my institution, therefore, effective immediate use of all the material is difficult." Another concluded: "It will probably take me three years rather than one year to make women's history an integral part of my survey."

On the whole, both male and female students have been enthusiastic about the materials which have been integrated. One high school teacher related that "The most positive response has been from mothers of male students." Of course, reactions by students vary. As one teacher explained, "Female students will bring up questions relating to women, male students never do." It helps if material on women is included on tests so that the students know that they must take it seriously. As one teacher explained, he spent "A considerable amount of time . . . re-writing and re-structuring the course. However, both from my professional vantage point and from student reaction, it was time well spent." Another concluded: "Not only have I added interesting new topics and material, I have begun to rethink and reorganize my course." Another summarized the views of many: "Looking back over my experiences at the conference last March and during the fall semester, I feel that I have come a long way. Beginning with a course which deliberately ignored the role of women rather than treat that superficially, I have revised my syllabus substantially and now devote a



significant percentage of my course to women and related topics in social and economic history."

Where do we go from here? Over the next few years the curriculum materials which have been developed will be revised. We hope to publish a version of the outlines and suggested readings as well as a teachers guide and pull together a book of primary documents. We are planning to build on the project's base by expanding our efforts to include a teacher's guide and workshops for secondary teachers. A long range goal is to develop material for a World History course at both the high school and college level. Some teachers who are specialists in Black or Chicano history are adding source materials to our packets and using them as a model to integrate material on minorities into traditional survey courses. The American Political Science Association has submitted a proposal to FIPSE to integrate materials on women into American Government survey courses. Slide packets, movies, slide-tape presentations, and simulation games can also be added. In fact, the possibilities are both exciting and endless.

#### NOTES

<sup>1</sup>David Katzman, "OAH Conference on Integration of Women into the Basic Surveys: A Personal View," OAH Newsletter, VIII (October, 1980), 3-4.

<sup>2</sup>Linda K. Kerber, Women of the Republic: Intellect and Ideology in Revolutionary America (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1980), passim; Mary Beth Norton, Liberty's Daughters: The Revolutionary Experience of American Women 1750-1800 (New York: Little, Brown & Co., 1980) passim.

<sup>3</sup>Journals and diaries of the Shakers are found in the Shaker MSS Collection, Western Reserve Historical Society, Cleveland, Ohio (listed in Kermit Pike, A Guide to Shaker Manuscripts, Cleveland, 1974).

<sup>4</sup>D'Ann Campbell, "Women's Life in Utopia: The Shaker Experiment in Sexual Equality Reappraised, 1810 to 1860," The New England Quarterly, LI (1978), 28-30.

<sup>5</sup>Peter R. Uhlenberg, "A Study of Cohort Life Cycles: Cohorts of Native Born Massachusetts Women, 1830-1920," Population Studies (1969), 415.

<sup>6</sup>Lawrence Foster, Religion and Sexuality: Three American Communal Experiences of the Nineteenth Century (New York: Oxford University, 1981).

<sup>7</sup>John Mack Faragher, Women and Men on the Overland Trail (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1980); Julie Roy Jeffrey, Frontier Women: The Trans-Mississippi West 1840-1880 (New York: Hill & Wang, 1979); Sandra Myres, Ho for California, Women's Overland Diaries from the Huntington Library (Los Angeles: Huntington Library, 1980); Glenda Riley, Frontierswomen: Iowa as a Test Case, Eighteen Thirty to Eighteen Seventy (Ames, Iowa: Iowa State University Press, 1981).

<sup>8</sup>Joan M. Jensen and Darlis A. Miller, "The Gentle Tamers Revisited: New Approaches to the History of Women in the American West," Pacific Historical Review, XLIX (May, 1980), 173-214.

<sup>9</sup>Maurine Weiner Greenwald, Women, War and Work: The Impact of World War I on Women Workers in the United States (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1980); Winifred Wandersee, Women's Work and Family Values, 1920-1940 (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1981); Karen Anderson, Wartime

Women: Sex Roles, Family Relations and Status of Women during World War II (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1981).

<sup>10</sup>D'Ann Campbell, Wives, Workers and Womanhood: America During World War II, unpublished dissertation (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina, 1979), Chapter 1.

<sup>11</sup>Ibid., Chapters 3, 4.

<sup>12</sup>David Huehner, University of Wisconsin Center, Washington County.

<sup>13</sup>No one has written up this finding yet. The data comes from reanalyzing public opinion polls from 1940-1980 especially Gallup, Harris and Roper, and NORC.

<sup>14</sup>Elizabeth Fox-Genovese, "Writing Women into History," paper presented at the March, 1980, OAH-FIPSE Conference on Integrating Material on Women into Traditional Survey Courses.

<sup>15</sup>Gerda Lerner, "Teaching Women's History," American Historical Association Pamphlet Series (1981).

<sup>16</sup>These evaluation forms were anonymous. I know only the person's sex, type of institution, and courses taught.