

# American Economic Association

1992 Committee on the Status of Women in the Economics Profession

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## NEWSLETTER

*Spring/Summer Issue - May 1992*

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We begin a new series on Women's Contributions to different fields in economics, with a two-part article on Women's Contributions to Labor Economics. Look for Part II in the Fall issue.

## Women's Contribution to Labor Economics: Part I

by Francine D. Blau

and

Marianne A. Ferber

Labor economics is the study of how the labor market works and which outcomes it determines for workers. Today the field includes a wide variety of subtopics ranging from the division of family responsibilities and labor supply decisions to occupational distributions, earnings and benefits, and how these are influenced by the structure and organization of labor markets, as well as by government policies. Since it is clearly not possible in the space allotted to do full justice to all the research women have done in this field, our goal has been to highlight some of the areas where women have made important contributions.

We particularly focus on issues relating to gender, where much of the research of women in labor economics has been concentrated. We have cited the work of individual authors; but it goes without saying that much valuable work and many highly productive individuals are not explicitly mentioned in this brief review. To keep our task more manageable, we have excluded economic demography, a rapidly growing field in which women have been quite active, as this is a field by itself. In order to save space we present abbreviated citations which, we hope, nonetheless contain sufficient information to enable the reader to locate items of interest.

We begin this two-part article by providing brief background information about women's representation in the field of labor economics, and about some women pioneers in the early development of the field. This is followed by a look at women's contributions to work on wage determination and wage differentials. Additional topics will be addressed in the second installment.

### Representation

Labor economics has consistently been an especially attractive subfield for women. Of the AEA members who listed "Manpower; Labor, Population" as one of their areas of specialization, 16.4 percent were women in 1978, as were 21.8 percent 1989.<sup>1</sup> Women comprised only 6.1 percent of faculties in economics departments in 1978-1979, and 11.2 percent in 1988-89.<sup>2</sup> In 1978,

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<sup>1</sup> This was, until recently, the 800 field in the JEL. Names that could not be identified as male or female were omitted.

<sup>2</sup> Annual reports of CSWEP, AER (May 1981 and 1990).

20.9 percent of doctoral degrees in labor economics were awarded to women and in 1986 32.5 percent (the last year data are available), compared to only 11.3 percent of all doctorates in economics 1978-79 and 19.1 percent in 1988-89.<sup>3</sup> Finally, of the 75 women economists (50 academic, 25 nonacademic) under age 65 who were most frequently cited between 1971 and 1987 (Marshall Madoff and Lee Skov J of Econ and Bus 42 1990) no less than 39 listed labor economics as one of their fields of specialization (25 as their first field) in the AER or CSWEP directory.

Another indication of the importance of women's contributions to the field is citations to articles authored by women. Marianne Ferber (Gender and Society 2 1988) considered the articles on labor economics abstracted in the JEL between September 1982 and June 1983. Female-authored articles were significantly cited by both males and females, although more highly cited by women than by men. In the publications abstracted, 17.4% of the citations made by women were articles written by women as were 6.8% of the citations made by men. In articles dealing with "women issues," the figures were even higher, 33.2% and 10.1% respectively (which also indicates that women have been particularly active in research on gender.) The gender difference in citation patterns suggests that it may be somewhat easier for women to achieve visibility in a subfield where they are relatively well represented.

### The Pioneers

We now turn to women's early contributions to labor economics. Around the turn of the century, Beatrice Webb and Sidney Webb were among the few scholars studying labor conditions (e.g., The History of Trade Unionism, 1894), and were instrumental in founding the London School of Economics. Early in this century, the first, and for many years most widely used labor text was written by Thomas Adams and Helen Sumner (Labor Problems: A Textbook, 1905).<sup>4</sup> Edith Abbott's classic History of Women in Industry was published in 1909; its comprehensive examination of this topic remains useful today. Somewhat later, Elizabeth Brandeis wrote one of two parts of volume 3 (1935) of the distinguished History of Labor in the United States produced under the auspices of John R. Commons. At about the same time Erika Schoenberg collaborated with Paul Douglas on the pioneering "Studies in the Supply Curve of Labor" (JPE 45 1937). Also in the 1930s, Margaret Reid, following in the footsteps of her teacher and friend Hazel Kirk, anticipated elements of what much later emerged as the "new home economics" (Economics of Household Production, 1934). Finally, in the 1950s, Joan

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<sup>3</sup> Various issues of AER (December) and the Digest of Education Statistics.

<sup>4</sup> Paul J. McNulty, The Origins and Development of Labor Economics, 1980.

Robinson was one of the most prominent economists to critically examine Marx's theory of the exploitation of labor.

### Wages and Wage Differentials

A central focus of labor economics is the issue of wage determination. Women's contemporary contributions to this topic emphasize wage differentials across demographic groups, especially by gender, but also by race and ethnicity. Women have made important theoretical contributions to both major economic approaches to understanding the causes of such differentials: human capital theory and models of labor market discrimination. Women have also made important contributions to the empirical analyses of the sources of wage gaps and the role of occupation segregation.

The human capital model delineates the role of differences in human capital investments in explaining race and gender earnings differentials. With respect to the gender gap, it emphasizes women's lesser labor force attachment, which lowers their accumulated experience and their incentive to invest in on-the-job training (Jacob Mincer and Solomon Polachek, JPE 82 1974). Harriet Zellner (in Cynthia Lloyd, ed., Sex, Discrimination and the Division of Labor, 1975) and Solomon Polachek (in Cynthia Lloyd et al, eds., Women in the Labor Market, 1979) were among the first to develop the implications of this model for occupational segregation, suggesting that women would avoid jobs which require substantial investments in on-the-job training.

Women have been active in empirically testing the implications of this model. Claudia Goldin and Solomon Polacheck (AER 77 1987) and June O'Neill (JOLE 3 1985), for example, analyzed the importance of women's average experience levels for trends in the pay gap. Other findings supportive of the human capital model include those of Elizabeth Landes (Econ Inquiry 15 1977), who discovered that disparities in turnover rates help to explain male-female wage differentials; and of Joni Hersch (AER 81 1991), who found that that additional time spent in housework lowered the wages of women (but not of men) workers. Nonetheless, human capital variables and other productivity proxies have not generally been successful in completely explaining differentials by race or sex (e.g., Mary Corcoran and Greg Duncan JER 1979; Julianne Malveaux and Phyllis Wallace, in Karen Koziara et al, eds. Working Women: Past, Present, Future)<sup>5</sup> or between Hispanics and Anglos (e.g., Cordelia Reimers RESTAT 65 1983). Although there is not complete consensus about this finding the unexplained gap is conventionally taken as an estimate of labor market discrimination.

Interest in the potential role of labor market discrimination was heightened by the research of Paula England (JER 17 1982) and Mary Corcoran, Greg Duncan and Michael Ponza (JER 18 1983) who found, contrary to the predictions of the human capital model, that women in predominantly male occupations are neither rewarded more for experience, nor are they subject to higher depreciation rates during years out of the labor force, than are women in female occupations.

With respect to the human capital model, we may also note that the interpretation, and even the

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<sup>5</sup> See Biau and Ferber (AER 77 1987) for a review.

existence of rising tenure (seniority) - earnings profiles has not gone unchallenged. The empirical work of Katherine Abraham (James Medoff and Katherine Abraham QJE 95 1980; Katherine Abraham and Henry Farber AER 77 1987) is particularly influential in this regard. Lori Kletzer's (AER 79 1989) research on displaced workers has also been helpful in disentangling the sources of the observed relationship between tenure and earnings. In recent years, alternative models of wage determination, which pay particular attention to incentive issues, have been developed. For instance, Janet Yellen (AER 74 1984) has been prominent in the development of efficiency wage models, which potentially provide an alternative framework for understanding race and gender differentials. Claudia Goldin (JOLE 4 1986) has applied another of these new approaches, the implicit contract model to the question of why women manufacturing workers in the 1890s, as short-term workers, were more likely to be paid in piece rates than were men.

Building on the work of Gary Becker (The Economics of Discrimination 1957), women have also made important contributions to the development of discrimination models. One puzzle raised by the Becker analysis is why discrimination persists in the long run in the face of competitive forces. An early paper by Anne Krueger (JPE 71 1963) points to possible gains to the majority group from discrimination against a minority. Janice Madden (The Economics of Discrimination 1973) identifies the role of monopsony power by employers, while Sharon Oster (QJE 89 1975) focuses on the role of worker preferences. More recently, Shelly Lundberg and Richard Startz (AER 73 1983) show how statistical discrimination, which results in low returns to, for example, education for women/blacks, can reduce the incentives of members of these group to invest, thus depressing their wages in a "vicious circle" of lower returns and less investment.

Female economists have been particularly instrumental in emphasizing the importance of employment segregation for race and particularly for gender pay differentials. Barbara Bergmann's highly influential overcrowding model (Eastern Econ J 1 1974) delineates a link between occupational segregation and lower pay in jobs primarily filled by minorities or women, arguing that the supply of labor to such jobs is increased and their pay is depressed by the exclusion of these groups from the white/male sector. Myra Strober (in Barbara Reskin, ed., Sex Segregations in the Workplace 1984) also identifies discrimination as the source of occupational segregation by gender, arguing that employers offer male workers first choice of the more desirable jobs.

In empirical work, women have been active in charting the dimensions of employment segregation, and investigating its causes and consequences. The work of Francine Blau and Wallace Hendricks (JHR 14 1979) and Andrea Beller (JHR 20 1985) indicates that the magnitude of such segregation was high and relatively constant until the 1970s when it began to decrease

notably. Segregation nonetheless remains substantial and considerable research, much of it by women, suggests that employment in "female" occupations tends to be associated with lower pay.<sup>6</sup> A similar pattern of employment segregation by firm and industry that is also inversely

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<sup>6</sup> Women who have made contributions in this area include, Andrea Beller, Francine Blau, Marianne Ferber, Heidi Hartmann, Alice Nakamura, and June O'Neill. A recent paper by Elaine Sorensen (JHR 25 1990) summarizes this previous work and provides interesting new findings.

associated with pay has been documented by Francine Blau (Equal pay in the Office 1977) and Erica Groshen (JHR 26 1991).

The persistence of race and gender differentials in the labor market has resulted in considerable research on the impact of government policies in narrowing these gaps. Andrea Beller's research (e.g., AER 72 1982) suggests that government efforts did modestly reduce race and gender differentials in the 1970s. In recent years, the most discussed and most controversial policy is comparable worth. The proposal is to equalize pay across male and female occupations which are deemed to be equally valuable to the firm. Women have been active both as supporters and as opponents of this initiative and in estimating its potential effects on female wages and employment.<sup>7</sup>

### **Responding to Calls for Abstracts**

by Jo Anna Gray

Leigh Tesfatsion and I have been organizing three sessions for the upcoming 1993 AEA Meetings on behalf of CSWEP. In the process of soliciting and selecting papers, and of later informing individual authors of the outcome of the selection process, we learned that not everyone is equally well-informed about the normal procedures for soliciting papers. Nor is everyone equally skilled in writing abstracts. I thought that passing on a few observations might level the playing field a bit.

First, a call for papers (or paper abstracts) is not a commitment to include all submitted papers on the program. Often many more abstracts are submitted than there are "slots" available. In our case, thirty abstracts were submitted, from which we could choose only nine, implying a rejection rate of almost seventy percent. Occasionally, the call for papers will be accompanied by written groundrules that are starkly thorough. One NBER program solicitation, for example, routinely includes the following warning: "You will not hear from the organizers unless they decide to use your paper. They are not journal editors.... They act with absolute final authority; there is no appeal to Martin Feldstein, to me, or to federal district court." More common is the relatively genteel approach taken in our own call for papers, which simply solicited abstracts of papers "to be considered for inclusion" in the sessions we were organizing.

The fact that paper selection is a competitive process means that a well-written abstract is essential. Several of the abstracts we received read like proposals rather than summaries of completed work or work that was well underway. In more than one of these cases, we later found out that a paper already existed. While you need not have a polished final draft in hand in order to submit an abstract, you should recognize that the organizers of a session are unlikely to wish to game on work that is still in planning stages. Accordingly, if your work is well underway, or even complete, do not choose tentative wording that suggests otherwise. For

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<sup>7</sup> See, for example, the papers in Robert Michael, Heidi Hartmann and Brigid O'Farrell, eds., Pay Equity (1989); Barbara Bergmann (J. of Econ Perspectives 3 1989); Elaine Sorensen (JHR 25 1990) and the research summarized therein; and June O'Neill et al (AER 79 1989).

example, state that "we find" rather than "the model will be used to show". It doesn't hurt to include a cover letter indicating that a draft will be available.

In addition to accurately summarizing your work, an abstract must sell your work. It should clearly describe the problem you are concerned with, why the problem is important, and what you have contributed to solving the problem. In some cases, the cover letters we received did a better job of telling us why the paper was interesting than the abstracts did.

Finally, you may present the same paper at more than one set of meetings, and you typically may present more than one paper at a single meeting (though normally in different sessions). For example, presenting a paper at the Southern Economic Association Meeting does not preclude presenting the paper at the ASSA Meeting in January. It follows that it is perfectly acceptable to submit the same abstract to more than one meeting. (In fact, it is often advisable to do so to get more feedback.) And, if your research agenda is broad enough to produce multiple papers, it is usually acceptable to submit two or more different abstracts to a single meeting in order to increase the probability that you will appear on the program. It is not, however, good form to submit a single abstract and paper to more than one session within a single set of meetings. You would not, for example, submit the same abstract for inclusion in two separate sessions of the American Economic Association Annual Meetings.

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### *CSWEP 20TH ANNIVERSARY PARTY*

CSWEP is planning a 20th Anniversary Party for the January 1993 AEA Meetings. The first formal meeting was in December, 1972. A roundtable discussion has been planned. Guest speakers will discuss the subject of "Framework for Helping Understand Women's Growth Over 20 Years." Look for more details in the Fall Newsletter.

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### *C H I L D C A R E U P D A T E*

CSWEP understands the concerns of economists who must obtain childcare at the Annual ASSA Meetings. CSWEP is currently working on finding a solution for obtaining childcare services at the meetings. CSWEP will provide childcare information for the upcoming 1993 AEA Meetings in Anaheim, CA. *Look for an update in the Fall Newsletter and in your registration packet!!!*

## Gender, Coauthorship and Academic Promotion

by Janet Kiholm Smith

In a recent article (Economic Inquiry, January 1992), John McDowell and I examine gender differences in propensity to coauthor research and the implications of these differences for research productivity and academic promotion. Using a cohort sample,<sup>1</sup> we find that academic economists tend to coauthor with others of the same gender significantly more often than suggested by chance. Given the proportions of males and females in the profession this implies that women have fewer opportunities to collaborate, especially if employed in smaller departments. While the reasons underlying gender-sorting in publishing are not known, our evidence indicates that coauthoring does not lead to statistically significant increases in productivity if coauthored articles are discounted by the number of authors,  $n$ . In spite of this, the effect of gender-sorting on academic rank is not neutral since there appears to be a distortion in promotion decisions introduced by the universities' lack of weighing of coauthored work.

Gender-sorting in coauthorship appears to be a partial explanation for the longer waiting times and lower promotion rates for women. Our results indicate that administrative decisions of how to weigh coauthored articles affect rank and promotion decisions and may work to the detriment of females, especially in disciplines like economics where the proportion of males to females is high. In our empirical tests of the relationship of academic rank to (quality adjusted) research output we are unable to reject the hypothesis that departments weigh single and coauthored publications equally. Conversely, we do reject the hypothesis that the assigned weight is  $1/n$ , which is the expected weight for coauthored work if departments seek to maximize total research output.

### The Impact of Gender on the Decision to Coauthor

Using our sample, we test for the effect of gender on team formation and find that researchers tend to coauthor with others of the same gender. In an earlier article exploring causes of lower research productivity for females, Marianne Ferber and Michelle Teiman (1980) reason that even if males constitute a larger fraction of all economists, females are not disadvantaged in collaborating if the formation of teams is independent of gender. They find as we do, however, that team formation is not random with respect to sex.

We also consider whether gender reduces the propensity to coauthor by empirically modelling the decision to coauthor as a function of gender and other variables expected to be important determinants of the decision. The results show gender and department size are important factors in explaining coauthorship. Being female reduces the probability of coauthorship, and the size of the individual's department increases the probability of coauthorship. As expected, the

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<sup>1</sup> The dataset is a sample of 89 men and 89 women receiving Ph.D.s in economics from top-twenty institutions between 1968 and 1975. Publishing records and career changes were tracked for 10 years following the Ph.D. Data were collected on: experience, field of specialty, dates of promotion, academic affiliation, and articles published. For each article, data were compiled on journal name, and number and gender(s) of coauthor(s).



distribution of female economists is skewed toward larger departments. Females appear to self-select into larger departments partly as a way to mitigate the effects of gender-sorting.

### Research Productivity

Whether female academics are disadvantaged by gender-sorting behavior depends on whether research productivity is adversely affected by lack of opportunities to coauthor and on how salary and promotion determinations measure individual contributions of coauthors. Women may be disadvantaged in several respects by barriers to coauthorship. First, less opportunity to coauthor may result in less human capital formation which, in turn, leads to lower research output. Second, even if coauthorship does not enhance productivity, less coauthorship may lead to a lower likelihood of promotion if departments "count lines" rather than measure individual contributions of coauthors.

In terms of research productivity, on average females in our sample produce fewer publications than males even if adjustments are made for the number of coauthors when measuring research output. The negative effect has several possible interpretations. The productivity differences may be the result of reduced incentives to publish given a lower probability of promotion. They may result from females substituting away from publishing, possibly into administration or teaching, because of difficulties encountered locating coauthors. As suggested by Ferber and Teiman lower output may also reflect difficulties women encounter dealing with editors and referees. Finally, lower output may be a result of longer or more frequent career interruptions for women.

One might expect that when faced with barriers to coauthorship females would substitute into single-authored research. However, the mean percent of coauthored articles is not significantly different for women than men. It is misleading, however, to interpret this as evidence that women are not disadvantaged by gender-sorting. Since, as we have documented, women self-select into larger departments, we cannot observe the employment decisions or research output levels that would have resulted from equal opportunities to coauthor.

### Research Productivity and Promotion

The evidence indicates that, given existing incentives and holding gender constant, coauthoring does not detract from, or enhance overall productivity when articles are discounted by the number of coauthors. We evaluate whether promotion decisions reflect this evidence when establishing weights for single and coauthored articles. To do so we examine the relative impact of coauthored versus single authored work as variables explaining an individual's academic rank for each of ten years of post-doctorate experience (i.e., for Associate or Full Professor). We expect that departments attempting to maximize research productivity will apply 1/n discounting for coauthored work (quality constant) when designing promotion criteria. Also, if women or other individuals do not have equal opportunities for coauthoring then 1/n weighing tends to mitigate the effects of reduced opportunities.

It does not appear that gender has a direct effect on the promotion decision, but it does appear that female years of experience has less of a positive impact on rank than male experience even

after controlling for research output. It is possible that career interruptions may explain this differential effect, but the data do not allow us to identify such interruptions.

While the effect of gender-sorting on female economists is somewhat mitigated by their tendency to self-select into larger departments, the implications of gender-sorting are not neutral with respect to promotion. We reject the hypothesis that 1/n weighing is used and, in fact, are unable to reject the hypothesis that single and coauthored articles carry the same weight in rank determination. In contrast, Sauer (1988) finds evidence of 1/n weighing in his study of salaries at top universities. This is not the case for promotion decisions in our broader sample of universities.

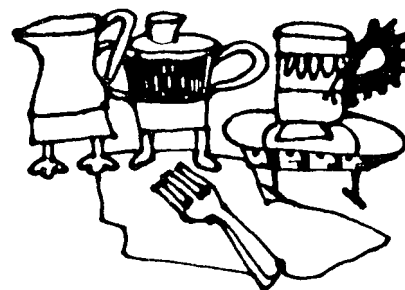
While the data place limitations on interpretation, gender-sorting in publishing, coupled with evidence of a "premium" being placed on coauthorship in promotion, explains in part why women economists are not as likely to be promoted as men and waiting times for promotion are longer. Our results raise a number of questions that await future investigation. Among these are questions regarding the impact of gender-sorting on research productivity. While the evidence suggests coauthorship neither enhances (nor reduces) research productivity, this result is based on a sample of individuals who have made publication decisions given existing promotion incentives. The implication is that female research productivity may be measured with a bias, and that if faced with the same opportunities for coauthorship as males, female productivity may be enhanced.

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## BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCHES OF CSWEP BOARD MEMBERS

We continue a series of biographical sketches of CSWEP Board members.

### **Barbara L. Wolfe**

Before graduate school in economics at the University of Pennsylvania, where I earned a Ph.D. in 1973, I majored in economics at Cornell University, spent almost two years working at the Economic Growth Center at Yale, and took a year off to have a child. After receiving my doctorate I spent three years as an assistant professor at Bryn Mawr College, served as a consultant at the Federal Reserve Bank, and joined the faculty of the University of Wisconsin-Madison, where I am now.

As I look back over my career I realize that, beginning with my first course, economics was a discipline that captured the way I viewed life. Perhaps this is not surprising for the only child of a self-employed businessman.

My first job after college, at Yale's Economic Growth Center, was an important stop: its faculty were informal, providing feedback and encouragement. I was fortunate to have a woman, Mariam Chamberlain, as my mentor. These experiences led to my decision to attend graduate school. Later, at the Federal Reserve Bank of Philadelphia, I worked with another mentor, Anita Summers, on a large-scale, multi-year project that involved original data collection. This was the first of many projects that were large in scale and on which I served as co-investigator. This was a style of research that I found rewarding.

An opportunity to spend a year at the Institute for Research on Poverty at the University of Wisconsin opened another set of opportunities in a productive environment marked by a great deal of intellectual stimulation. Obtaining a faculty appointment meant that I continued in a setting conducive to the sort of work I find rewarding--multi-investigator, complex empirical research, focused on policy-relevant issues. Being part of a team that organized a major project investigating the contribution of human resources to development in Nicaragua also proved to be work that I found interesting. Collecting primary data of one's own provided special opportunities.

Becoming involved in research on health economics also proved fortuitous, as this topic has gained importance over time. It is a subject easy to teach, since students can read the newspaper almost daily and bring the classroom and outside events together. A joint appointment in the medical school has provided a low teaching load, and helpful and supportive colleagues.

Two separate years of leave, one at the Netherlands Institute of Advanced Study, the other at the Russell Sage Foundation, have provided extended periods in which to conduct research. These years have also offered the opportunity to interact with scholars in other disciplines - a broadening experience.





































