

Forum Proceedings



ZOOM

on Women and Non-Traditional Occupations

Montréal International Forum, November 11–17, 1999

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Preface



Message from the Honorary President



From November 11 to 13, 1999, some 500 participants in the Zoom on Women and Non-Traditional Occupations Forum had the opportunity to focus on the role of women in the economy and to consider concrete measures that could be used to promote their integration into employment sectors where they are under represented.

Throughout this forum, I have had the opportunity to meet committed men and women who are motivated by the same challenge: to promote the values of equity, equality and social justice for the good of society. Without a doubt, the initiatives proposed during this event will help to increase the economic autonomy of women.

Judged by the forum proceedings presented here, the participants have identified innovative solutions and realistic measures to help women establish themselves in the labour market.

Enjoy your reading!



*Andrée Gravel
Director of External Affairs
GlaxoSmithKline*



In the fall of 1999, a forum called ZOOM on Women and Non-Traditional Occupations, the first international discussion on this timely topic, was held in Montréal. Some 500 women from more than 17 countries took part in the various workshops, forums and other activities that were presented over more than three days.

Key players from Québec and abroad, people working in the field, education specialists, students, workers and pioneers—all women—came together to share ideas, do some serious thinking and work for change...

The ZOOM on Women and Non-Traditional Occupations International Forum had many repercussions. Several of the recommendations from the workshops have already been implemented in various settings.

I am referring here to the production of a series of videos about women in traditionally male-dominated occupations. These videos, intended for girls who are about to choose their career paths, present the wide range of trades and occupations accessible through vocational and technical education. To provide better educational and vocational information in secondary schools was precisely one of the recommendations that came out of the forum.

Another recommendation has also been implemented by the Ministère de l'Éducation: to promote scientific and technical occupations for girls. The Hats Off to You! competition for the promotion of non-traditional programs at the secondary and college levels was already in place. The competition is now open to university students through the Excellence in Science contest, which was launched this year. Excellence in Science is aimed at promoting science and engineering among young women by providing models of success.

In addition, ZOOM participants and speakers spotlighted the difficulties experienced by girls who choose to study in classes where they are in the minority. In an effort to counter some of these obstacles, we have adopted a support measure aimed at school boards and CEGEPs. This measure will assist innovative projects to give girls greater access to education programs that lead to non-traditional occupations.

Certain school boards have already carried out pilot projects that we have subsidized. One of these projects, which involved women's access to the construction trades, was in fact presented at the ZOOM forum, and it had an influence on other specialized schools.

Of course, much remains to be done. However, in keeping with the spirit of the ZOOM forum, which brought together people whose actions are complementary, we must work together to push forward the idea of diversification of career choices for women. This idea must gain ground both with girls, who often turn by default toward occupations for which they have models and, of course, with the people who guide and influence girls' choices: parents, friends, school staff.

While our society is open-minded and modern, there are still many prejudices and stereotypes blocking women's way to traditionally male-dominated occupations. We have a long-term task ahead of us, but a worthwhile one, as women's financial independence is at stake. Higher salaries and better working conditions, in occupations that are personally rewarding for those practising them: this is the ultimate goal.

I therefore urge you to carefully read the proceedings of the ZOOM on Women and Non-Traditional Occupations International Forum. You will find, without a doubt, that they offer inspiration and information you can use in your everyday work situation.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'F. Legault'.

*François Legault
Minister of State for Education and Youth*



As revealed by the Proceedings of the International ZOOM on Women and Non-Traditional Occupations Forum, which took place in Montréal in November 1999, government, private sector and community partners are more concerned than ever with the situation of women in the labour market.

Over the past 25 years, the proportion of Québec women in the labour market has increased significantly. During the same period, a growing number of them have also gone on to graduate studies. However, despite this progress, much remains to be done before women are given fair and equal access to high-quality, long-term employment.

As demonstrated by, among other initiatives, the creation of the Comité aviseur Femmes en développement de la main-d'œuvre, among other initiatives, the Québec government is concerned more than ever with the situation of women in the labour market. Emploi-Québec has therefore developed the Stratégie d'intervention à l'égard de la main-d'œuvre féminine in cooperation with the Comité aviseur and specialized external resources. The purpose of this shared initiative is to determine how to increase the number of working-age women in the labour force by encouraging them and giving them the means to enter the labour market and benefit from the many opportunities it has to offer.

Québec has already established a solid foundation in the area of job creation. In fact, statistics show that 50% of the people who participated in the Emploi-Québec programs in 1999-2000 were women. These statistics confirm Emploi-Québec's commitment to systemize its approach and adapt its services so that Québec women of all ages, backgrounds and origins can take full advantage of all the available resources. Those who have the most to gain from these initiatives are pregnant teenagers, teenage mothers, single-parent families headed by women, immigrant women, as well as Québec women belonging to the cultural communities.

These specific challenges call for well-targeted measures. In addition, Emploi-Québec's concern for women is reflected in both its regional and province-wide action plans, which will give concrete expression to the Stratégie d'intervention à l'égard de la main-d'œuvre féminine.

Thanks to the vigorous and concerted efforts of public and private organizations, Québec women will be able to make progress by improving their qualifications, thereby making significant gains in the labour market. By ensuring that Québec women are both eager and able to enter the labour market, we respond not only to society's need for workers, but first and foremost, to Québec women's need for dignity, pride and autonomy.

Enjoy your reading!

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'Diane Lemieux', written in a cursive style.

*Diane Lemieux
Minister of Labour and Employment
March 1, 2001*

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Opening Speeches





*Ms. Andrée Gravel
Honorary President of the ZOOM Forum
Ms. Audrey Benoit
Spokesperson for the ZOOM Forum
Mr. François Legault
Minister of Education
Dear guests and guests of honour:
Ladies and gentlemen:*

I am delighted to be here for the official opening of the ZOOM Forum. It gives me great pleasure to see such a large showing for this international event on women and non-traditional occupations. I wish you a most heartfelt welcome to Montréal.

Your participation, whether you originate from Québec, Ontario, Manitoba, Newfoundland, France, Holland, Australia, Spain or elsewhere, reflects the importance of women's contribution to the social, professional and economic development of our society.

You know as I do that success does not come all by itself. We need to set up those elements that will sustain the initiative, that will encourage action and its adhesion and that will favour innovation. All the topics that will be addressed in the next few days—diversification of career choices, employment equity programs, occupational health and safety, new forms of work and partnerships—are all challenges that need to be taken up. Only then will women's chances of success in their studies and integration into the work force be improved.

Over the past two decades, we have certainly made fair gains in terms of the access to and integration of women into the work force. These gains show a certain progress but they must not be perceived as the final result. Some changes were made, some goals were attained the hard way, but there are still major obstacles to overcome.

As I carefully read the program for this forum, I felt that this event would propel us into a period of growth and would be a source of progress. First, it will fuel reflection on a variety of pertinent, quality topics. Although gains will be acknowledged, we will also shed light on the obstacles that still need to be overcome in order to ensure the full and unfettered participation of women in the work force, notably in careers and occupations of the future that have been traditionally held by men.

One of the primary indications of the labour market's evolution is unquestionably the increased presence of women within the active population. Be it as paid employees, entrepreneurs, self-employed workers or associates, women have gradually emerged in all spheres of economic activity.

The equal, even majority presence of women at all levels of education (secondary, college, university), is now an established reality.

Despite these achievements, which by and large are recent, women are still heavily confined to a limited number of jobs that, in terms of salary, offer less interesting benefits than those in many fields where they are traditionally not part of.

Even today, women still come up against a number of obstacles when they want to practise a trade or profession that is traditionally male-dominated. These obstacles can be explained by, among other things, the lack of female role models, the lack of encouragement from the family environment, the persistence of certain stereotypes, the perception that young girls have of these occupations and professions, the misconception of the occupational entry requirements, discrimination, etc.

If women are to occupy their rightful place in the labour market, it is imperative that these barriers be removed and that these occupations and professions be rendered more attractive and interesting. It is not a question of promising them the moon and the stars. Rather, we want to offer them new horizons which are likely to meet their expectations and needs.

Furthermore, the globalization of markets and the strong infiltration of technological innovations in industries have revolutionized the labour market. Workers must constantly adapt to new rules, requirements and skills that result from these transformations.

Like many countries, Québec must place its bets on a vast pool of qualified workers, competent technicians and high-calibre scientists. We must all, both men and women, take up the competency challenge.

In view of this situation, we cannot but note that the traditionally female-dominated occupations no longer ensure a promising, profitable and stable professional future.

This is where it becomes imperative to open avenues, to offer more training choices and to support women in their efforts to integrate into the work force. The more women are informed, the more they will be motivated to attain their professional objectives, and the more female role models there will be to encourage them in their choice.

ZOOM on Women and Non-Traditional Occupations consists, in a way, of an additional milestone in the development of promising career choices for all women. It is an excellent opportunity to build new alliances, share success factors and broadcast the expertise acquired in several countries.

This international forum will therefore be a valuable venue for information and mobilization that will enrich our actions and, I hope, bring real change for women who want access to the labour market in promising non-traditional occupations and professions.

The actions taken by the Québec government to encourage the integration of women into traditionally male-dominated careers have taken various forms over the past twenty years.

In the past five years, Emploi-Québec's commitment has materialized itself in the form of partnerships with various ministries, as well as with national and international organizations. These alliances serve to favour the emergence of solutions to facilitate access, integration and job retention for women in non-traditional fields.

In the past few years, we have, enthusiastically and with conviction, associated ourselves with the "Hats Off to You!" contest sponsored by the Ministère de l'Éducation, with the 35^e Mondial des Métiers, currently being held at the Olympic Stadium, and with the forum on women entitled "Rhones-Alpes-Québec-Lyon", held in Lyon in 1997.

The "partnership" model proposed by Emploi-Québec is based on the cooperation of partners from the management, union, community and educational sectors for the design and adapting of solutions favouring the integration and job retention of women in the labour market.

This model resulted in the creation of an advisory committee whose mandate is to produce notices and recommendations on all the policies and measures concerning working women in Québec. This "partnership" model will in fact be the subject of a presentation on Friday, during the course of the roundtable discussions called Un modèle partenarial pour favoriser l'insertion socioprofessionnelle et le maintien en emploi.

This year, more particularly, Emploi-Québec supported two major projects developed as a result of the work of the Comité aviseur femmes: a guidebook geared towards women enrolled in non-traditional vocational education programs and the updating of a diagnosis of the labour market and Québec women.

For Emploi-Québec, the partnership is essential for the development of policies and for interventions aimed at female workers. It allows us to keep abreast of the sector needs and helps us determine the best spurs to action for ensuring diversification in the career choices that women make and for favouring their integration in an increasingly changing and competitive labour market.

In closing, I would like to acknowledge the valuable contribution of the sponsors and partners who made this international event possible. Their participation is vital to the progress of our work on the issue of women and non-traditional occupations.

I would like to express sincere thanks to Ms. Andrée Gravel, the Honorary President, and to the members of her team. They were able to guarantee conditions which would make this forum a highly successful one, both in terms of participation (we are more than 350 participants this evening, with several continents represented) and content: current issues and excellent presentations by top experts in the field (20 workshops offered, 4 roundtable discussions, testimonies, etc.). Yours was a colossal task, and you have fulfilled it brilliantly. My congratulations to the organizing committee.

And to all of you taking part in this event, I wish you fruitful and promising exchanges.

Thank you for your attention.



*Madam Minister,
Madam Deputy Minister of Education,
Ladies and gentlemen,*

Good evening and welcome!

It gives me great pleasure to be here with you this evening. I am very impressed with the attendance at this first North-American forum on women and non-traditional occupations. I usually start my speeches with a joke, but my colleague, Diane Lemieux, told me I should be very careful. Apparently, a man can easily be a bore, especially in front of 300 women.

In view of the 35^e Mondial des métiers that is currently being held at the Montréal Olympic Stadium, it is very relevant to be discussing the issue of the presence of women in vocational education. A visit to the site of this event is enough to show that girls are absent from competition in many of the fields. Did you know that there are no female competitors in any of the non-traditional occupations? Worse yet, on average, only 14% of the participants are women! And, despite the fact that 28% of the Québec delegation is women, for the Canadian team, that percentage drops to only 9%!

In 1997, Québec participated in a France-Québec forum on women and non-traditional occupations, which was held in France. The participants in that event realized that several of the problems they encountered were the same on both sides of the Atlantic. They wanted to pursue their discussion on women and non-traditional occupations. The idea of an international forum grew slowly but surely in their minds, and you are now seeing the result today!

The purpose of this forum, organized by the Ministère de l'Éducation and Emploi-Québec, is to build a network for sharing ideas and determining promising avenues of actions.

In Québec, there are also several projects implemented by both governmental and non-governmental organizations. We have excellent know-how, and we are proud to be able to share it with others. Indeed, the Ministère de l'Éducation is often invited by other countries to give advice on questions regarding the organization of vocational and technical training, or on the status of women. We are consulted on issues such as education to gender equality and role models offered in our textbooks, as well as on our interesting accomplishments in the fields of schooling for teenage mothers and, naturally, access to non-traditional occupations.

We have already come a long way in terms of training, but there is still a discrepancy between the salaries earned by men and those earned by women. This difference is in large part linked to the type of work that women choose. Did you know that in Québec, three quarters of the women in vocational training are in fields that are typically female-dominated, that is, secretarial work, health care, legal services and aesthetics?

As for technical training, the situation is hardly any better. There, also, three quarters of the graduates obtain their diploma in traditionally female-dominated sectors, either health or administration, that is, secretarial work and social, legal and educational services. In electrotechnology, a sector where we can note the highest salaries and numerous job openings, there are 100 times more men than women.

Fifty days from the year 2000 and its famous Y2K bug, is it normal that women only represent 16% of the student population in computer science? Yet, women are good in school and have excellent success rates. Let us not be afraid of the facts: they have better success rates than men! And when you are the father of two boys, such as myself, this is cause for concern.

By choosing traditionally female-dominated sectors, women deprive themselves of the highest salaries and best working conditions that generally characterize traditionally male-dominated occupations.

We must not only educate parents and students, but also make them aware of the fact that these training domains are profitable and placement rates are excellent. Let us not forget that in Québec, vocational graduates are sought out in 50% of the existing jobs. Yet only 30% of students choose this type of training.

I have made the promotion of vocational education one of my priorities. In fact, a major information campaign will be launched in the upcoming months, one phase of which will address women and non-traditional occupations. We should not only make students aware of the advantages of vocational education, but also encourage their parents to consider these non-traditional and well-paying fields. There is still a lot of work to be done in order to change the attitudes of the population.

For participants from other countries who are not very familiar with procedures in Québec, you will have an opportunity, in the next few days, to learn about the Québec model, a collaboration between the government, community organizations, unions, employers and non-governmental organizations. Together, these groups have joined forces to find concrete solutions. As a matter of fact, several of them are here this evening and I think they deserve congratulations on the success of this forum.

During this forum, I would like you to remember those women who persevere in their pursuit of non-traditional occupations, who complete their studies and get their diploma. It must be hard for them at times to be alone in a man's world. But they don't give up, and they open doors for women who will follow in their footsteps. I raise my hat to them. This forum was created for them.

It is high time, on the eve of the year 2000, to lay the foundations for action so that women in the 21st century can participate even more in the economic development of their country and of the world as a whole. Here, in the next few days, we can significantly further the cause of women in non-traditional occupations.

Thank you in advance for the work you will be doing in the next few days, and enjoy the forum!



For the first time in 2000 years, the 20th century has been witness to the production of a book entitled Le XX^e siècle des femmes. Women in this century have found a voice, have rebelled, have demanded the right to vote. For us today, it is almost inconceivable that women were denied the right to vote because they were considered second-class citizens, infantilized individuals under the guardianship of their father, husband or brother. Yet, this occurred not so long ago. The first time we heard about women in the police force, the comments started pouring out: “Come on, it’s way too difficult! There’s too much violence out there for a woman. Women aren’t physically, psychologically or emotionally strong enough, and anyway, except for a few ‘enlightened souls’, they aren’t interested in this type of work...” Today, there are more than 400 policewomen working for the CUM. They are increasingly respected because they perform as well as men do and because there is a greater number of women in the force. Nowadays, when I hear that occupations related to computer science, for example, are non-traditional for women, because less than 20% of positions in that sector are occupied by women, I am amazed and I wonder. “Girls aren’t interested in computers. A girl’s brain is different from a guy’s.” and other such comments simply revolt me, and I feel like I’ve travelled back in time.

We must be vigilant. As the new century approaches, we must not allow ourselves to be influenced by a generalized feeling of apathy. We must be ahead of our times and be passionate and proud of our valid aspirations. We must say, loudly and clearly, that we are feminists. Equality and justice are noble ideals. Although the means and discourses evolve and must evolve, the name that we give ourselves as women committed to social change has not yet been replaced, and deserves to be recognized and applauded, particularly when we think of women who have carried the flag of feminism so well. At the present time, this word bothers women as much as it does men. It seems that our slightest demand makes us victims, as if, to be a winner, you should never complain, as if happiness was an individual quest. This way of seeing things serves the interests of partisans of the social status quo. They need not make any effort to dissuade certain groups from taking action towards an improved social contract. These groups are sabotaging themselves from within, solidarity having become a worn-out cliché from overuse. It’s unfortunate because we all live in a society and we are all responsible for each other.

Enjoy the forum.

Ms. Andrée Gravel, Honorary President of ZOOM

Director of External Affairs, Bureau d'affaires du Québec, Glaxo Wellcome Inc.



*Mister Minister,
Madam Minister,
Dear friends of the organizing committee:
Dear colleagues, friends and participants:*

On behalf of the organizing committee and the partners of the Zoom on Women and Non-Traditional Occupations Forum, I would like to welcome the participants gathered here this evening and address an issue that is of utmost importance in modern society: the role and presence of women in the workplace. Over the next couple of days, we will have the opportunity to discuss the problems involved—and they may be numerous—and to work together to propose real solutions. I personally feel that we still have a lot of work to do in order to inform, educate and support women who choose to pursue careers in non-traditional sectors.

One word to situate myself—or should I say ourselves—as participants gathered in this room. We have among us employment, education and status-of-women specialists, individuals who represent organizations from several countries, non-governmental and community organizations, major union or business associations, and government representatives, who are all concerned with the role and presence of women in economic activity.

But foremost, I believe that the participants who are here today are individuals with strong beliefs, and that we are all motivated by the same desire to encourage and support the increased participation of women in the world's economic development. We now have the opportunity to share ideas and to discuss both the issue of women's integration in non-traditional occupations as well as the practical aspects, the resistance and difficulties encountered, here and elsewhere, to achieve this integration. We will also share winning strategies or propose practices that could better accelerate change and maintain achievements.

Before looking at the program of activities we have prepared for you, I would like to draw your attention to the "Hats Off to You!" contest. An initiative of the Ministère de l'Éducation, this contest has, for several years now, contributed to the integration of Québec girls who decide to study and pursue careers in non-traditional fields. In fact, it was this activity's success that led me to contribute to the organization of the international Zoom on Women and Non-Traditional Occupations Forum.

Allow me now to introduce the members of the organizing committee, who worked so hard over the past year to put this forum together. I would appreciate if you could wait until everyone has been named before applauding:

- *First, Ms. Claire Lemelin, of the Commission scolaire de la Capitale*
- *From Emploi-Québec, Ms. Monique Bernier, of the Direction générale de l'apprentissage and Ms. Colette Duval, of the Direction des communications*
- *From the Ministère de l'Éducation, Mr. Michel Villeneuve, of the Direction des communications*
- *With the Coordination à la condition féminine, Ms. Isabel Bernier*
- *And finally, the two coinitiators of the Zoom on Women and Non-Traditional Occupations Forum, Ms. Francine Dumont of Emploi-Québec's Direction générale de l'apprentissage et de la formation de la main-d'œuvre, and Ms. Anne Thibault of the Ministère de l'Éducation's Coordination à la condition féminine.*

I would like to extend my most sincere thanks for their support and outstanding collaboration in the organization of the Zoom on Women and Non-Traditional Occupations Forum.

A few words about the program: as you may have noticed, there are 20 workshops that, for the most part, will be translated into English or French. Two engineers from Pratt & Whitney (in Longueuil, Canada) will share their experiences on the presence of women in high technology sectors. A speaker from Holland will share with us strategies to stimulate the interest of women for engineering study programs. Another speaker from the Public Service Commission of Canada will present an assessment of the employment equity programs. We will also have an opportunity to examine the results of the integration of women in non-traditional jobs in countries such as Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Spain, France, Ireland, etc.

The leaders of the various workshops and of the four roundtable discussions that will be held throughout our program, and there are nearly sixty of them, will touch on topics of current interest and will provide opportunities for discussion. I am convinced that we will leave here with a number of concrete, realistic training tools that can prove useful in an infinite number of settings.

Tomorrow's breakfast discussion will be led by Ms. Betty De Wachter, administrator of the Europs (European Bureau for Program Support), ADAPT and EMPLOYMENT community initiatives. She will give us an overview of the measures taken in Europe to improve the training and employability of women, namely by the creation of the NOW (New Opportunities for Women) projects.

I would like to invite you to join us for a not-to-be-missed event on Saturday, the closure of the forum, when a great debate on the day-to-day reality of non-traditional occupations will be held, followed by the screening of a National Film Board of Canada documentary film on the day-to-day lives of Québec female truckers entitled 5 pieds 2 pouces, 80 livres!

Before I conclude, I would like to say that I accepted to oversee the work of the Zoom on Women and Non-Traditional Occupations organizing committee and to represent Glaxo Wellcome, primary partner in this project, because I firmly believe that my company endorses the objective of providing more room for women in those sectors where, for various reasons, they are less present. For this reason, our forum is a valuable venue through which we can take this idea even further and share it with other partners from various countries and continents.

Glaxo Wellcome is also looking for ways to increase the presence of women in strategic positions. This is why, about a year ago, the Executive Committee decided to create a working committee that would take stock of all the problems and implement solutions that would allow women access to non-traditional high-level management positions.

In closing, I would like to acknowledge the work of my colleagues in the organizing committee. They have offered us a program of outstanding quality and richness, one that will allow us to take an in-depth look at the role and presence of women in the economic development of our communities.

On their behalf, I encourage you to make this first international forum a springboard for establishing a true national and international network of ideas and experiences. In this era of instant communications, I think that we could easily use up a little cyberspace to pursue our objectives!

It is my hope that, like the initiators of this forum, other women will, in turn, step up to the helm and ensure that a similar opportunity will be provided to discuss this critical issue, one that must remain top-of-mind in the international arena.

Thank you and enjoy the forum!

**Talks by
Workshop
Presenters**



Women and High Technology: Making your Presence Felt!



H el ene Pepin

From early childhood, H el ene Pepin was influenced by her family environment, where career choices tended to be made in either the medical field or technical trades. Her parents always encouraged their two daughters to strive to exceed; they valued

work and academic achievement and offered many stimulating opportunities for personal development.

After gliding through her secondary education without a hitch, H el ene specialized in metallurgical engineering technology, a subject matter which requires aptitude in science, particularly chemistry and physics. Job opportunities for technicians include laboratory and factory work in various companies throughout Qu ebec. Pratt & Whitney Canada is one company that regularly opens its doors to metallurgical technicians and engineers, and they welcomed H el ene into their fold.

During the ten years she worked in process development in manufacturing departments, H el ene steadily made her way up the ladder from trainee to group leader. Her personal interests led her to further her university studies in automated manufacturing while continuing to hold a full-time job.

In 1989, Pratt & Whitney offered H el ene the opportunity to add to her technical personnel management skills. She was invited to participate in the two-year management development program called "Les Aigles." One of the benefits of this program is the assignment of a mentor throughout the various apprenticeships. This close collaboration with one of the company's senior managers allows participants to structure their development program in such a way that they acquire in-depth knowledge of the products and services offered by the company. Furthermore, the mentor acts as the only stable link in the participant's career progression for the duration of the two-year program. A good chemistry between the mentor and the participant is essential, which was the case for H el ene. She was therefore able to benefit from an enriching personal development experience thanks to the "Les Aigles" program.

As a result of accepting a managerial position in the area of maintenance development, her career went on to focus on technical personnel management. H el ene continued to improve her managerial skills over the next six years through assignments in technical support and after-sale service. This experience led to her work in collaboration with Pratt & Whitney customers, among which were airline companies.

She then accepted a position as Technical Director of the Pratt & Whitney laboratories, and was later named Sales Manager for the procurement of raw materials and aerodynamic profiles. This position encompassed personnel management, commercial expertise and business strategies.

In spring 1999, H el ene took up a new challenge. Carrier Transicold Industries, a division of United Technologies, had been looking for someone to fill the position of Director of Engineering for its division in France for quite some time. Carrier called upon Pratt & Whitney to find a senior francophone manager with broad experience, both as a generalist and technical personnel manager. This position offered H el ene the opportunity to gain experience in market globalization, a challenge that many companies are facing in this new millennium.

Possessing 20 years of experience as a woman in a high-tech industry, Ms. Pepin has successfully taken up personal challenges and seized opportunities as they present themselves. This career sums up the progress of one Pratt & Whitney Canada engineer among many others. And H el ene is by no means the exception. Women, now representing 10% of the engineers at Pratt & Whitney Canada, are making their presence in the work force felt and are building successful careers in the field of technology.

Women and High Technology: Making your Presence Felt!



Catherine Mondor

Catherine Mondor is the second of two daughters born to a cabinet-maker/antique dealer and a nurse. Her family environment taught her, from early childhood, to have confidence in her own abilities, to value work and knowledge, and to keep

an open mind in order to seize the opportunities that presented themselves to her.

Various people and events have had a deep impact on her life. At around 14 years of age, Catherine took charge of the household duties to help her mother, who worked outside of the home. Her daily routine that summer consisted of cooking, laundry, housework, gardening and ironing. After three summers of carrying out these tasks, Catherine decided *never again*. Her parents also significantly influenced her life path; she hesitated for a long time, when choosing a career, between her father's dream of an engineering career and her mother's dream of becoming a doctor. In the end, she chose engineering...

While still a student, Catherine was active in several student committees including: the Comité étudiant de génie industriel, where she was the Director; the Association des étudiants de Polytechnique, where she was Vice-President of Education; and Poly-Italie, where she served as Treasurer. As a result of her involvement with these associations, she participated in student exchanges in Alberta and Belgium, went on industrial tours in Italy and did two European tours with a youth symphony orchestra. "There are so many programs available to young people. All you have to do is set your goals and work hard," says Catherine.

Upon graduation, Catherine was hired by Procter & Gamble to fill a Production Team Manager position. From there, she went to Kraft Canada where, over a four-year period, she successively held the positions of Project Engineer and Equipment Management Process Manager. Catherine now works for Pratt & Whitney Canada as Maintenance Supervisor. She is in charge of 32 employees in various trades. All the working environments in which Catherine has held positions have been predominantly male. Through her contact with her male coworkers, she has acquired various skills and qualifications that have proven essential in the performance of her duties: candour, increased technical expertise, a highly-developed sense of humour, a clear vision, good organizational skills, and most of all, a strong drive for success. Despite the obstacles that she has encountered, she has lived her life by following two mottos: never take yourself too seriously and find enjoyment in everything you do.

A Profile of Women in Non-Traditional Occupations



Francine Burnonville

Francine Burnonville has a Ph.D. in Sociology and has gained considerable experience as a lecturer at the Université de Montréal. She is currently coordinator of the social delegates network for the Conseil des travailleurs et travailleuses du

Montréal métropolitain (FTQ). She was an expert witness for the Commission des droits de la personne et de la jeunesse for various cases involving discrimination and harassment in the workplace.

*She has carried out a number of research projects, notably an enquiry on the living and working conditions of women in traditionally male-dominated occupations (FTQ), the effects of domestic violence in the working environment (FTQ-Chambre des notaires) and the integration of women in non-traditional occupations. Some of her most recently published works include *Détresse psychologique au travail, syndrome du survivant et usure mentale* (1999), *Des collectifs au travail, une pratique syndicale d'entraide* (1999), *Quand le masculin se conjugue au féminin* (FTQ, 1998), *La violence et ses conséquences, voyons-y!* (FTQ, 1993) and *Les femmes sont-elles allées trop loin? De la citoyenneté au pouvoir politique* (1992).*

My presentation is based on a survey conducted among 100 union members of the Fédération des travailleurs et travailleuses du Québec (FTQ) (88 women, 12 men) who either hold positions that are traditionally male or are working with women who hold this type of job.¹ For the purposes of the survey, we considered as traditionally male any sector where less than 30% of the work force consisted of women.

The field study was conducted on seven major unions affiliated with the FTQ. Our objective was both to better understand the day-to-day working conditions of targeted women and to address the issue of employment equity as well as the means to achieve it. What approach should we use to promote mixed employment and improve women's access to traditionally male-dominated occupations? We also want to help women to break out of the ghettos and to broaden the field of professional choices available to women.

The issue of gender segregation in employment cannot be addressed without taking into account socio-cultural factors, as well as the feasible and necessary intervention possibilities. The socialization and education of children and adolescents, and vocational training are not yet "unisex." Therefore, for women to gain access to all occupations, it is important that we start with the new generation by broadening their horizons and offering them a range of possible career choices, regardless of gender. Women who want to occupy positions that are traditionally male-dominated do not always make it past the interview because of lingering stereotypes and prejudice. This situation makes it hard for some to picture women in certain working environments. Candidates should be hired based on their creativity, skills and qualifications rather than on their sex. Finally, in order for women to feel comfortable in jobs and workstations that were not initially created and designed for them, both the physical and cultural environments must be adjusted accordingly.

Why do Women Choose Non-Traditional Occupations?

Women choose non-traditional occupations simply because these jobs appeal to them, because the work is less routine, or because they like working outdoors or enjoy physical work. In addition, these occupations offer better working conditions than those offered by jobs traditionally held by women. “Male” occupations offer a higher salary, better possibilities of unionization, and subsequently better working conditions. All the women we met enjoy their work and are proud of their occupation: “I love my job. It’s very practical and useful. I build motors that fly,” said a machinist.

Women in non-traditional occupations, especially those who stay in them, or shall we say stick it out, benefit from certain favourable conditions. Women were able to “picture” themselves in professions other than hairdressers or secretaries because of factors such as encouragement and less stereotypical roles in the family and at school. However, when they began their training, they found themselves to be in the minority and sometimes alone in all-male classes. They admit having needed a lot of support from their loved ones and their teachers. However, in the relatively long term, we can predict that the increased diversification of female role models will lead to a change in attitudes and that people will become accustomed to seeing women everywhere.

Three basic elements are absolutely necessary in the working environment if women are to remain in their positions and not become physically and mentally exhausted. First of all, a welcoming and adequate workplace are vital to women’s integration; employers and unions bear the responsibility of ensuring that women entering a male-dominated environment are properly welcomed and respected, and that they can count on the true solidarity of their coworkers. I specifically mention “true solidarity”, as this is the one step that is not always taken. We can see a real difference between giving women more or less tacit support and taking a clear and public stand in their favour, supporting them in their efforts to improve their working conditions or when they need support in order to be treated with respect. Indeed, it seems that although women are ready to take on traditionally male-dominated occupations, the working environment is not always ready to give them the place they deserve.

This leads me to address an issue that was mentioned by the female respondents as a major obstacle, namely the organizational culture. The term “organizational culture” refers to the set of complex variables that shape the relationships between individuals in a given working environment. For a woman, participating in this culture requires that she understand the underlying codes and rules in effect in this working environment, whether they are official or informal. Many believe that women must adapt to the male culture, and that everything will be fine if they do. Female employees, who feel that they are being too tolerant and are not always treated with respect,² want to see a change in the organizational culture and want a mutual adaptation process to occur. Although they often find men with good attitudes in their working environment, who consider them as equals and are willing to collaborate with them, they are also occasionally confronted with hardened “macho cliques” that are extremely hostile to the presence of women in their workplace. Even a few such men can poison the atmosphere to such an extent that the woman will end up quitting, bearing the full burden of guilt for her futile integration.

The organizational culture needs to be changed. Doing so, however, entails an action that must be carried out on a daily basis and, as I mentioned earlier, with the firm and unequivocal support of both the employer and the union. Many clichés still precede women when they arrive in a traditionally male-dominated working environment. The one I found that must frustrate them the most is that a woman's right to work is to this day still being questioned. They continue to hear such comments as: "She's taking a job away from a man. My neighbour has a family to support and he is unemployed. She's taking his place. She's working to make pocket money, or even worse, bingo money. She earns too much for a woman." The ability of women to perform the work is also questioned, often even before they arrive and have had a chance to show what they can do. Some men still think that if they have a woman on their team, they will have to do the work for her and that female workers constantly need help. It is up to all of those who cherish employment equity and equality between men and women to speak out and act in order to eliminate these prejudices. This involves on-going consciousness-raising and education.

The workplace must also take steps to eliminate unacceptable behaviour, such as sexist or offensive language, displays that are offensive to women and exclusion practices. Neglecting to greet female workers, getting up and going to eat at another table when they come into the cafeteria, ignoring them during the course of a conversation—these are only some of the ways of sending women the message that they are neither wanted nor needed. When individuals are in the minority, it is always more difficult and risky to complain about things that they feel are unacceptable. Others, though, seem to find such behaviour perfectly normal. While women are very much afraid of sounding like "whiners" if they denounce hostile behaviour, their male coworkers, on the other hand, are concerned with losing the support of their peers. However, to put an end to such sexist behaviour, it is imperative that women have the support of their employer, union and of those men who share their point of view.

Although the presence of women in traditionally male-dominated environments requires physical and cultural adjustment of the workplace, it also brings many advantages. Mixed work teams are better balanced and reflect an environment that is closer to "real life." It has been noted that equipment is more suitable and that demands, in terms of physical effort, are more realistic. Workers seem to respect each other more and find it easier to talk about family responsibilities. These concerns can then be taken into account when organizing work. We are not exaggerating when we say that the presence of women humanizes the workplace and benefits all parties.

¹ Service de la condition féminine FTQ, Francine Burnonville and Marie-Claude Fournier, "Quand le masculin se conjugue au féminin", Study conducted by the FTQ on women in non-traditional occupations, March 3, 1998.

² Ninety per cent of the women who responded to my questionnaire felt that women in non-traditional occupations are too tolerant, while 74% said they did not feel respected.

A Profile of Women in Non-Traditional Occupations



Johanne Vaillancourt

Johanne Vaillancourt has held the position of Vice-President of the Fédération des travailleurs et travailleuses du Québec (FTQ) since 1995 and is responsible for political affairs for the FTQ's committee on the status of women. The first female union

representative with Teamsters Québec, she has acquired nearly 25 years of experience in various functions: organizing campaigns, negotiations, member services, etc. She is the founder and president of the Teamsters Québec's Committee on the Status of Women.

She and her union have participated in many field studies on women's working conditions, conducted by university researchers in partnership with the FTQ. She has been involved in several projects concerning the status of women: women and non-traditional occupations, job security, retirement, violence and harassment, women's access to unionization, pay equity and many others.

It gives me great pleasure to share with you the results of a field study conducted by the Fédération des travailleurs et des travailleuses du Québec (FTQ) on the issue of women in non-traditional occupations. This study is entitled *Quand le masculin se conjugue au féminin* (A Profile of Women in Non-Traditional Occupations).

But first, to set the background, allow me to tell you a little about the FTQ. It is the largest union federation in Québec, with nearly half a million members, one third of whom are women. We also represent the largest number of unionized women workers in Québec. Our organization consists of over forty affiliated unions representing all areas of activity in the public, parapublic and private sectors. Some of these areas include financial institutions, the food service industry, public service, textiles, the hotel industry, as well as transportation, trucking, metallurgy, aerospace, pulp and paper, and many others where there is an increasing number of women workers.

Context

The FTQ initiated the study *Quand le masculin se conjugue au féminin* to better meet the needs of working women.

You should note that this was not our first initiative. The issue of equal opportunity for women has been, for many years now, one of our major concerns. We have collaborated with our affiliated unions in the battle against all forms of harassment and against violence in the workplace, and have adopted policy statements along these lines. We have negotiated various measures concerning equal opportunity and occupational health and safety. To ensure that women can better integrate in their working environment and remain in their positions, we have promoted awareness and educated all of our members on the situation of women in non-traditional occupations...and we continue to do so relentlessly. We have also raised this issue in various training sessions. The implementation of several committees on the status of women within the unions has undoubtedly been a determining factor in the advancement of this concern across organizational levels.

But we needed to go further...

Research Objectives

We wanted to acquire a better understanding of the day-to-day situation of these women so that we could not only better support them and further improve their access to good jobs, but also assist them in their integration into the labour force and in their job retention. With a clearer picture of the situation in mind, we aimed to develop union solidarity and to increasingly encourage our affiliated unions to include women’s issues in their union activities and interventions.

True Partnership

I will spare you the details of the methodology we used—it is explained in the study report. Suffice it to say that, as is the case for each study that we undertake, the FTQ favours partnership.

The FTQ’s Service de la condition féminine, which conducted the study, first joined forces with university researchers so as to define the objectives and determine the “fields.” We aimed to secure the participation of various affiliated unions¹ that, in turn, would invite women workers from various working environments to participate in the study and would act as liaison with the employers. The survey and the study itself were carried out by the researchers, under the supervision of the Service de la condition féminine. The latter was also responsible for finding solutions to problems encountered during the study.

Without encroaching on the presentation of our next speaker, Ms. Francine Burnonville, the main researcher in *Quand le masculin se conjugue au féminin*, who will present the main findings of the FTQ study, I would nevertheless like to point out that working in a non-traditional field is extremely gratifying. And, I speak from experience. As a union representative for the past 25 years, I have held a non-traditional position—which I love—in a non-traditional sector (Teamsters Québec union), where for 20 years, I was the only woman employed in this type of job.

Instead, I will limit myself to talking about the role that unions can and must play for women who work in traditionally male-dominated environments.

The Role of Unions

First and foremost, it is important to note that in all working environments, the employer has an obligation to ensure that the work force, male and female, works in a healthy and safe environment.

In a unionized working environment, the union thus acts as a “watchdog.” It also has a duty to adequately represent all its members, including women workers, and promote equity and respect for all.

Our study revealed how important it is that unions be proactive with regards to the situation of women in non-traditional occupations. Indeed, if working women are not well acquainted with their unions, they will not be inclined to turn to them for help when they encounter obstacles. Consequently, before grievances filed, it is in the union’s interest to properly welcome these working women and to inform them of not only their rights and recourses, but also the structure and operation of the union, its areas of intervention, etc. For example, union representatives can set up a tour of the premises to facilitate introductions of new colleagues and to enhance integration into the workplace.

It is also important for women to know that aside from their roles as “watchdog” overseeing the employer’s policies and practices, as negotiator and as defender of the substantive rights of its members, unions can also prove to be agents of change in the workplace.

The day-to-day situation of women in non-traditional sectors is not always a bed of roses. One of the most challenging and time-consuming changes to bring about is undoubtedly the one involving attitudes, the age-old “organizational culture.” Unions are therefore well-advised to prepare the field prior to the arrival of women workers.

Alone or in concert with the employer, unions raise awareness and inform the workers of the arrival of women on the team. They also talk to employees about their commitment towards these women, about what is acceptable or not, and about behaviours that need to be modified, if required. They shed light on the advantages of a mixed labour force in the workplace (atmosphere, team spirit, improvement of health and safety conditions, reconciling work and family, etc.). Unions work to break down prejudice and eliminate sexist practices so as to foster increased mutual respect, whether through communication, training, assembly discussions, policy statements or others.

Unions are there to serve all of their members, and it is important that women know that they can depend on them at all times. Thus, unions should always ensure that the interests and needs of women are taken into account as much as those of men, and this at all levels: employment and working conditions, training opportunities, skill upgrading and promotions, prevention, support, compensation, etc. Unions should also guarantee that concerns raised by women become an integral part of all union issues and activities, and that they be addressed by all the union committees, not only those concerned with the status of women.

In short, unions must work to ensure that working women no longer need to wage a daily battle for the simple right to do their work like everyone else. They should never again have to say:

“I love my work, but...” Furthermore, women should become actively involved in union activities. Is this not the best way to see to it that our concerns will not merely be recorded on the union agenda, but will also be taken into account?

Concerted Efforts

Evidently, unions can and must play a front-line role in order to encourage access, integration and job retention for women in non-traditional occupations. While it is essential to act at all levels within the union ranks, the action must not stop there. This responsibility should be shared by all of the players involved: unions, employers, governments, educational institutions, family, etc. The efforts should be untiring.

Thus, employers and unions can join forces to review the policies and practices regarding recruitment, integration within the organization, skill upgrading, promotion, training, etc.

The governments must continue their efforts to promote equal opportunities, be it through broadcast information or a careful watch over the contents of media messages, school manuals, etc. They must ensure that the legislation, policies and existing measures are free of any sexist bias, while at the same time taking into account the consequences of these interventions on both sexes. They must facilitate and support the initiatives taken by partners in the workplace for women in non-traditional occupations.

The learning environment, being a major agent of socialization for our youth, bears the heavy responsibility of raising their awareness of gender equality, informing them, eliminating prejudice, encouraging diversification of career choices, etc. Obviously, educational counsellors should themselves have a heightened awareness of this reality and must be adequately equipped to act upon it.

Finally, since the family and family environment are our “home base”, the values they convey and the support and encouragement they provide are determining factors for our choices for the future, as well as our future standard of living!

The importance of orchestrating all of our interventions is undeniable—a message delivered by the FTQ upon publication of its field study findings. The *Quand le masculin se conjugue au féminin* research study earned us a partnership proposal from the Ministère de l'Éducation for the *Hats Off to You!* contest and for the *Zoom on Women and Non-Traditional Occupations* symposium.

¹ There were five: Teamsters (school bus transportation), Public Service Alliance of Canada (penitentiaries), Canadian Union of Postal Workers (postal service), Union des employées et employés de service, Local 800 (heavy and “light” household maintenance) and the National Automobile, Aerospace, Transportation and General Workers Union of Canada (aerospace).

Violence in the Workplace: Do Male and Female Workers Face the Same Reality?



Katherine Lippel¹
with the collaboration
of Margaret Murray and
Solange Pronovost

Katherine Lippel is a lawyer, a professor at the Département des sciences juridiques and a member of the CINBIOSE Research Centre of

Université du Québec à Montréal. Her teaching areas include occupational health and safety, work compensation, and prevention of employment injuries.

Funded by the Fonds pour la formation de chercheurs et l'aide à la recherche (FCAR), Ms. Lippel heads a research team whose work focuses on the symbiosis of science, medicine and law for the study of occupational health and safety. With her colleague Professor Karen Messing, Ms. Lippel supervises a second team, which conducts research on the occupational health of women workers. The latter project is funded by the Conseil québécois de la recherche sociale (CQRS) and is carried out in partnership with three major union federations: the Fédération des travailleurs et travailleuses du Québec (FTQ), the Confédération des syndicats nationaux (CSN) and the Centrale de l'enseignement du Québec (CEQ).

Report submitted within the framework of *L'invisible qui fait mal*, a research project conducted in partnership with the CEQ, the CSN and the FTQ. (Funded by the Conseil québécois de recherche sociale)

According to a recent study by the International Labour Office, France, Argentina, Canada and England are the countries with the highest rates of abuse and sexual harassment in the workplace.² The same report concludes: "Women are particularly threatened, given that there are many of them in high-risk occupations. This is the case, namely, of teachers, social workers, nurses, as well as bank and store employees."

These results can be attributed in part to the Canadian and Québec populations' higher level of awareness with respect to violence in the workplace. In countries where this type of violence is commonplace, acts of violence will not be reported officially and it is highly unlikely that reliable statistics on this issue will be available. The overrepresentation of Canadian cases may reflect greater concern and awareness of the issue of violence in the workplace, without necessarily indicating a higher rate of such abuse. The problem of violence in the workplace is nevertheless considerable in Québec, and is currently a priority for several union federations that see it as a significant source of occupational health problems. Prevention of abusive acts presupposes an acknowledgment of the problem's existence, as well as a good understanding of its causes. Furthermore, there may be several facets to the phenomenon of abuse in the workplace, and the nature of violence may vary according to a multitude of factors, among them the type of work performed and the sex of the victim.

Within the scope of the study, jointly conducted by the CINBIOSE, the CEQ, the CSN and the FTQ, we were called upon to examine some of these questions in a study on victims' access to compensation for injuries attributable to violence in the workplace. We wanted to know if the claims from women workers in Québec subsequent to abuse in the workplace involved the same type of incidents as those filed by male workers. Were women workers and male workers abused by the same category of offender? Was it physical or verbal abuse?

Under what circumstances was the act of violence committed? We also wanted to know the nature of the consequences of these violent acts and the outcome of claims filed with the Commission de la santé et de la sécurité du travail (CSST).

For the purposes of the study, we have defined the notion of violence as physical or verbal abuse. We have also included psychological abuse³ in our definition, provided it manifests itself through actions or words. The motives behind these various violent acts may or may not be discrimination based on gender, cultural background or sexual orientation. These aggravating circumstances may have repercussions on the nature of the recourse available to the victim, for only discriminatory violence towards a group protected by the Charter of Human Rights and Freedoms can warrant the intervention of the Commission des droits et libertés de la personne et de la jeunesse. Other forms of harassment or abuse are not provided for by any specific legislation, and the CSST is the only recourse available to victims in the event of an injury or illness resulting from abuse. Our study did not include an examination of the claims based on the Charter of Human Rights and Freedoms, and therefore only partially reflects the situation because victims of sexual harassment most often seek remedy by virtue of the Charter.

Our study is based on the analysis of 152 rulings, rendered between 1985 and 1997 by the CSST's review board and the Commission d'appel en matière de lésions professionnelles (CALP). All these cases involved claims for compensation related to abuse in the workplace filed under the Loi sur les accidents du travail et les maladies professionnelles (Act respecting industrial accidents and occupational diseases). The abuse may be physical or verbal, and can result in physical or psychological consequences. By means of this study, we wanted to obtain a profile of abusive situations described by male and women workers. We also wanted to detect differences between the situations described by men and women. Areas of concern included the nature of the abuse, the offenders, the consequences and how they were addressed by the jurisdictions responsible for deciding, and whether or not, in the course of a review or an appeal, compensation was granted.

Our study has allowed us to detect several differences between male and women workers in terms of the situations experienced and the outcome of these situations.

- Women workers obtain compensation in the course of a review or an appeal more easily than their counterparts.
- More women workers than male workers claim to suffer from psychological problems following the abuse. In 91% of the claims filed by women, a psychological effect is reported, while only 54% of claims filed by men include such a consequence.
- More male workers than women workers claim to suffer from physical problems following the abuse. In 66% of the claims filed by men, a physical consequence is reported, while only 35% of claims filed by women include such a consequence.
- Disability lasts longer for women than it does for men.
- Women are more often abused by the clientele, whereas men are most often abused by other employees.
- Women abused by other employees are more often abused by superiors, whereas men are more often abused by colleagues.
- Ninety-two per cent of the offenders were men.
- The legal issues raised in the claims of the women workers differ from those raised in the claims of their male counterparts. The link between the disability and the abuse is the most common legal issue in the claims (85% of women workers' claims, 59% of male workers' claims). For men, the second most important issue is the link between the abuse and the occupation (58% of male workers' claims, 38% of women workers' claims). For women, on the other hand, a question equally raised is that of determining if the abuse is a normal working condition (38% of women workers' claims, 30% of men workers' claims).

These results raise several questions such as:

- Do male workers find themselves in abusive situations that are really different from those women workers experience, or is the difference to be found in the groups' claims' practices?

- How do we explain that women holding non-traditional positions are virtually not represented in the data, especially with regards to violence committed by colleagues? Can we conclude from this that they are not victims of violence in the workplace? Or should we look for other reasons that might explain these figures? Do they really have access to compensation when they are abused? When the offender is a colleague, are women workers reluctant to file a claim? How can union strategies be improved to promote better access to compensation for all of its members?

In light of these differences, we stress that you take into account the sex of the victim when considering prevention strategies. In the majority of cases, violence in the workplace does not seem to be perpetrated by persons outside the organization (a criminal), but rather by the clientele or by employees. Our study undoubtedly underestimates the portion of claims where a criminal commits a violent act, for these incidents are the least contentious and the victims are most often compensated without having to exercise their right to an appeal. Traditional prevention strategies, such as regulations governing individual work, would be ineffective ways to eliminate the abuse problems exposed by our study. The employer's accountability for acts of violence committed by the clientele, as well as the awareness of supervisors and workers of the health risk that psychological abuse represents, will help to reduce the number of cases of violence. The downplaying of aggressive behaviour disguised as jokes, playful cavorting, horseplay or "jostling", and the refusal to compensate victims for injuries resulting from such events helps to conceal, if not cover up, this behaviour and ultimately causes injuries or even death in the workplace. A prevention program should take this into account. The consequences of these acts are very frequently the object of claims filed by men.

We stress that our results take into account only contentious claims, and we recommend that another study be conducted in order to confirm certain hypotheses advanced by this study, and this by analyzing the claims submitted to the CSST agent resulting from cases of abuse in the workplace. We also suggest that a separate study examine the actual situation in which women in non-traditional environments encounter abuse.

Selected Reading

N. BOYD, "Violence in the workplace in British Columbia: A preliminary investigation," *Canadian Journal of Criminology*, Vol. 31, 491-519 (October 1995).

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Katherine Lippel, with the collaboration of Margaret Murray and Solange Pronovost, *Les agressions au travail: Est-ce que les travailleurs et travailleuses sont confrontés à la même réalité?*, research report submitted within the scope of the *L'invisible qui fait mal* project, August 1999.

K. Lippel, "Workers' Compensation and Stress: Gender and Access to Compensation," (1999) *International Journal of Law and Psychiatry*, Vol. 22:1, 79-89.

Katherine Lippel and Diane Demers, *L'accès à la justice des victimes de harcèlement sexuel: l'impact de la décision Béliveau-St-Jacques sur les droits des travailleuses à l'indemnisation pour les dommages*, research report submitted to Status of Women Canada, March 1997 (44 pages). This report was published in French and in English in 1998.

¹ A copy of the research report can be obtained by writing to Katherine Lippel, Département des sciences juridiques, Université du Québec à Montréal. P. O. Box 8888, Downtown Station, Montréal, H3C 3P8, E-mail: lippel.katherine@uqam.ca

² D. Chappell and V. Di Martino, *Violence at Work*, ILO Publications, Genève, 1998.

³ According to the OIT study, this term includes, in particular, abusive behaviour or bullying against a subordinate or peer, as well as psychological harassment on an individual.

Making Workstations Suitable for Women



Karen Messing

Karen Messing is a Professor of Biology at the Université du Québec à Montréal and Graduate Director of the Ergonomics program. She is a member of the CINBIOSE Research Centre, which works in collaboration with the World Health Organization.

She leads, along with her colleague Katherine Lippel, the L'invisible qui fait mal research team. Composed of university researchers and committees for the status of women and for occupational health and safety from the three major union federations in Québec (FTQ, CSN, CEQ), the group focuses on the health of women workers.

Ms. Messing is the author of over 70 scholarly articles and has written or contributed to the publication of several books, the most recent being One-Eyed Science: Occupational Health and Women Workers/La Santé des travailleuses: la science est-elle aveugle? (1998), Women's Health at Work/Yrkesarbetande kvinnors hälsa (with Kilbom and Thorbjornsson) (1998), and Comprendre le travail des femmes pour le transformer/Ergonomic Analysis of Women's Work (1999).

The Supreme Court of Canada recently declared that tests based on male physiology must not be used to assess the ability of women to perform a task.¹ The ruling quotes the work of our team, a partnership between researchers and three union federations in Québec, the Fédération des travailleurs et des travailleuses du Québec (FTQ), the Confédération des syndicats nationaux (CSN) and the Centrale de l'enseignement du Québec (CEQ). Our work has shown that tests and workstations should be adapted for the new population of women in the workforce. Failing to do so, women workers run the risk of finding themselves at a disadvantage or of being injured.²

We think that the aptitude for doing a given job must be seen as an interaction between an individual (including all possibilities of personal change) and a flexible, adaptable working environment. However, when a woman wishes to accept a job in a traditionally male-dominated field, she alone is expected to adapt. We wonder if she is strong enough, stable enough, etc., when really we should be asking ourselves what modifications can be made to the workstation.

- Is the steering wheel of the forklift too far? Are the protective gloves too big? We have noted this kind of problem in a study of female municipal employees.³
- Could the 20-kg bags be replaced with 10-kg bags? We noted this problem in a study carried out in an industrial bakery.⁴
- Should work schedules that are incompatible with family life be modified? This rather widespread problem affects a great number of women workers.⁵
- Should teamwork be introduced, examined, monitored? We detected collaboration problems between women and men when both sexes began to hold the same position in a hospital environment.⁶
- Employers who are truly committed to welcoming women workers should adapt their working environments to accommodate them. Equipment, installations and work clothes should be adjusted to take into account the size of women workers. Schedules should be assessed to determine whether they are compatible with family life and special attention should be paid to the attitude colleagues may assume when collaborating with new employees.

¹ British Columbia (Public Service Employee Relations Commission) versus The British Columbia Government and Service Employees' Union 1999. Supreme Court of Canada, Case No. 26274.

² Messing, Karen. 2000. *One-eyed Science: Occupational Health and Female Workers* Éditions du remue-ménage, Montréal and Octarès, Toulouse. Chapter 3.

³ Legault-Faucher, Monique. 1995. *Bêcher sans creuser sa tombe. Prévention au travail*. June 1995.

⁴ Dumais, L., K. Messing, A.M. Seifert, J. Courville and N. Vézina. (1993) "Make me a cake as fast as you can: Determinants of inertia and change in the sexual division of labour of an industrial bakery", *Work, Employment and Society*, 7(3): 363-382.

⁵ Tissot, France, Karen Messing, Louise Vandelac, Suzanne Garon, Johane Prévost, Andrée-Lise Méthot, Rolande Pinard. 1997. *Concilier les responsabilités professionnelles, familiales, personnelles et sociales, ce n'est pas toujours la santé*. CINBIOSE, Montréal. Report submitted to the Fédération des travailleurs et travailleuses du Québec.

⁶ Messing, K. and D. Elabidi. (1998) "Collaboration entre les travailleurs et les travailleuses lors d'efforts physiques," *Objectif Prévention*, 21(5) 24-26.

Policy Against Sexual Harassment: A Collective Solution to Eliminate a Collective Problem



Denise Trudeau

Denise Trudeau was a political science teacher at Collège Jean-de-Brébeuf, Montréal from 1985 to 1995.

Since 1995, she has been Vice-President of the Fédération nationale des enseignantes et des enseignants du Québec and chairs the committee on

women and issues related to sexual harassment, parental rights, pay equity, reconciliation with work and family, job security for female teachers, etc.

Since 1998, she has presided over the CSN's Comité national de la condition féminine. Under the responsibility of the CSN's first female vice-president, this committee's primary mandate is to orient and educate the unions to the particular conditions and needs of women workers. Furthermore, the committee participates in projects such as the World March of Women 2000, focuses on issues such as pay equity, and collaborates on several debates and discussion forums on the status of women in our society.

In 1989, the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of Canada¹ wrote as follows:

Sexual harassment is a form of sex discrimination. Sexual harassment in the workplace is unwelcome conduct of a sexual nature that detrimentally affects the work environment or leads to adverse job-related consequences for the victims of the harassment. By requiring an employee, male or female, to contend with unwelcome sexual actions or explicit sexual demands, sexual harassment in the workplace attacks the dignity and self-respect of the victim both as an employee and as a human being.

Along the same lines, the Québec Charter of Human Rights and Freedoms stipulates that every person has a right to the safeguard of his or her dignity, honour and reputation. Any form of harassment therefore constitutes a violation of human rights.

Having said this, we understand that a policy against sexual harassment in the workplace is in keeping with the spirit and acknowledgment of human rights and freedoms and of women's rights and freedoms. Women who are subjected to sexual harassment suffer a grave injustice. To redress it, women need to be given the means to break the wall of silence that surrounds this age-old problem. Women must also be given the means to put an end to the abuse of power, which all too often makes them victims. A policy against sexual harassment is therefore an essential and proactive tool in the prevention, dissuasion and objective management of abuse of a sexual nature, abuse that is a physical and psychological affront to the integrity of women's well-being.

What is Sexual Harassment?

Sexual harassment has been defined in many ways. While they all have the merit of attempting to define a reality still rarely denounced, I propose the definition formulated by a Québec expert in the matter, Mr. Maurice Drapeau.² Note that this definition has an extended meaning that covers the broadest possible range of potential situations. The definition reads as follows:

Sexual harassment is defined as any unwanted physical or verbal act with a sexual connotation, generally repeated, and of such nature that it has an unfavourable impact on the workplace or learning environment of the victim, and thus leads to discrimination in matters of employment or studies, or adversely affects the physical or psychological integrity or dignity of the victim. (unofficial translation)

Sexual harassment is therefore not a normal social behaviour involving harmless camaraderie or horseplay, nor a flirtatious or sexual relationship between two consenting individuals. The difference between sexual harassment and seduction, flirting or expressions of affection lies foremost in the fact that the act is either unwanted or imposed. It takes two to play the flirting game; it involves consent and reciprocity. An expression of affection serves to tell people that we are happy to see them, that we like them, that we have warm and friendly feelings toward them. Conversely, sexual harassment is a strictly sexual manifestation imposed on a person who does not welcome it. It implies a kind of aggression against, if not domination over, the other. Sexual harassment lies outside the realm of mutual and consensual relationships.

More explicitly, sexual harassment is a form of direct discrimination, even when it is not intended as such. The result is what counts.³ It is also a form of abuse of power; it occurs when individuals in positions of authority use their power or authority, in other words, their status, role or responsibility, to fulfill their own personal needs to the detriment of subordinates.⁴ It is also a form of sexual violence. “As a general rule, the term ‘sexual violence’ refers to all violent behaviour expressed through sexuality. Using force, restraining, dominating, manipulating and exploiting—these are all actions that go beyond the ardour and passion that are natural expressions of intense desire and emotions in a relationship between equal and consenting partners. This violence is physical, as in the case of unwanted touching, or psychological, as in the case of threats or verbal or non-verbal intimidation.”⁵

Why a Policy Against Sexual Harassment?

The ultimate objective of a policy against sexual harassment is to create and maintain a climate at work that is free of sexual harassment. More specifically, this policy aims to ensure a working environment that favours physical and psychological integrity of its workers and safeguards individual dignity. Furthermore, it must contribute to awareness, education and training of its workers so as to prevent sexual harassment behaviour. Finally, it must provide intervention mechanisms to prevent and stop sexual harassment behaviour.

It is very important to note that a policy against sexual harassment concerns all persons who work for, study at or use the services managed by the business or educational institution, regardless of whether the acts are perpetrated on the premises or outside of the working or learning environment.

A policy against sexual harassment is a recourse that can help victims to better assess the situation, break the isolation in which they often retreat and make the right choice when attempting to settle the problem. Victims can thus resort to an informal means to stop sexual harassment or have recourse in a more formal context, namely, an investigation that can lead to the application of sanctions against the offender. This is where the union, if applicable, can come into play.

The Role of the Union

The union’s role in the defence of an alleged harasser varies, depending on whether or not an investigative committee has been formed for the application of the policy against sexual harassment. The union intervenes in the case if, further to the investigative report, the company or institution has imposed disciplinary measures against the alleged harasser. In order to safeguard the rights of the person targeted by a disciplinary measure, the union generally files a grievance and, after its investigation, decides whether or not it will undertake judicial procedures and whether or not it will represent the alleged harasser.

The union must not repeat the investigation conducted by the committee. However, it must conduct a thorough investigation so it may determine whether the rules of natural justice (the right to be heard, the right to impartiality) have been respected and whether the process was conducted in a fair and equitable manner. The union must also verify the facts by comparing them with the alleged harasser's declarations. It must then decide whether or not it will represent the alleged harasser.

When a company or educational institution has no sexual harassment policy, the union must conduct a full investigation that includes the testimony of the victim and of other witnesses.

In any case, the union has a duty, when faced with a situation involving sexual harassment, to act or to otherwise take the necessary measures that will put a stop to the situation and eliminate sexual harassment in the workplace.

Conclusion

Women are the primary victims of sexual harassment, regardless of their age, marital status, physical appearance, education or professional status. However, some groups of women are more at risk. They include women belonging to visible minorities, immigrants, students, workers in non-traditional occupations and the economically underprivileged. As for the harassers, they are almost exclusively male. Age, marital status, occupation or hierarchical status is of no consequence. The harasser can just as well be an immediate supervisor, a colleague, a customer, a patient, etc.⁶

Success in the battle against sexual harassment is directly correlated with the means of education and prevention that will be implemented in the working environment. These means must define the behaviour that is inappropriate or suggest ways of dealing with such behaviour. To this effect, the implementation of a sexual harassment policy is highly recommended. However, it can only be an effective deterrent and prevention tool if all employees and managers in the working environment become familiar with it.

In Québec, sexual harassment policies are relatively present in the public service sector. Unfortunately, this is not the case in the private sector. How many women have heard that the implementation of such a policy would be detrimental to the company's image because it would be sending a message that sexual harassment is in fact occurring. How many women have been told that they had no sense of humour or that they shouldn't get upset over a friendly gesture, a term of endearment or a harmless joke? How many women have been embarrassed, humiliated or offended? How many women have felt helpless, ashamed, afraid, guilty and angry? Too many women, far too many women.

Women who work in a non-traditional field or, to use a "man's jargon", who do "a man's job", are exposed to sexual harassment. They must understand though that sexual harassment is not just their problem, it's everyone's problem. Sexual harassment is a social problem that calls for a collective solution. A policy against sexual harassment is an effective deterrent and an excellent form of protest.

¹ Chief Justice Dickson, *Janzen vs. Platy Enterprises Ltd.*, (1989) 1 R.C.S. 1252, 1284.

² DRAPEAU, M., (1991) *Le Harcèlement sexuel au travail*, Cowansville: Les Éditions Yvon Blais inc.

³ LEDUC, C. and P.R. DEMASSY. (1988). *Pour mieux vivre ensemble: guide de réflexion sur la Charte des droits et libertés de la personne du Québec à l'intention des jeunes en milieu scolaire*, Commission des droits de la personne du Québec, Modulo Éditeur.

⁴ VALIQUETTE, M., in collaboration with M. Ross (1997). *Le Pouvoir sans abus*. Montréal: Les Éditions Logiques inc.

⁵ GERMAIN, B. and P. LANGIS (1990). *La Sexualité. Regards actuels*. Montréal: Éditions Études vivantes.

⁶ CAREAU, L. (1997). *Le Harcèlement sexuel: les conséquences et le profil des personnes mises en cause*. Actes du colloque sur le harcèlement sexuel dans les établissements d'enseignement: la personne est-elle au coeur de nos interventions?, Université Laval, Québec.

Case Study: Université de Moncton



Marie Brunelle

Marie Brunelle is currently a consultant on matters of sexual and sexist harassment and holds the position of employment equity coordinator at the Université de Moncton in New Brunswick.

Ms. Brunelle holds a bachelor's degree in Sociology from the Université de Montréal and a master's degree in Sociology from the Université d'Aix-en-Provence, France. She has also obtained a graduate certificate in occupational health from the Université Laval, and is currently doing a Certificate in Law and Citizens' Rights at the Université du Québec en Abitibi-Témiscamingue.

Between 1981 and 1985, she worked in the occupational health field as a socioeconomic research and planning consultant at the Centre hospitalier Rouyn-Noranda.

From 1985 to 1991, and again from 1993 to 1996, she was the Commission des droits de la personne's regional representative in Abitibi-Témiscamingue, Québec. Her mandate included receiving complaints and conducting investigations in matters of discrimination and exploitation, informing the general population and collaborating with organizations dedicated to the defence of human rights. She processed grievances filed by victims of sexual harassment and acted as a mediator between the alleged offender and the victim. Furthermore, she gave training courses and conferences on the harassment issue.

From January 1992 to July 1993, and now since February 1997, she has held the position of consultant in matters of sexual and sexist harassment at the Université de Moncton. Some of her functions include activities with regards to education, awareness and prevention. She acts as a consultant for individuals who believe they may be victims of harassment.

She has also been working with the Université de Moncton's human resources team as an employment equity coordinator since October 1998.

It may seem strange to you that a university could be considered a non-traditional environment. Yet, a university is both a working and a learning environment. I will give a quick overview of the Université de Moncton and describe for you the female representation in both its student clientele and teaching staff.

The Université de Moncton is a French-language university with twelve faculties and schools and three campuses in Shippagan, Edmundston and Moncton. In September 1997, 365 members of the teaching staff were women; taking only regular positions into account, women represented 31% of the teaching staff, which is comparable to the percentage figures noted in New Brunswick (29%), Québec (32%) and Canada (30%). However, if we take a closer look, we can see that in certain fields, women are underrepresented, or even totally excluded.

Are there teaching environments that are still, to this day, male-dominated?

The following faculties and schools are male-dominated:

- School of Engineering: 3 women out of 30 teaching positions (10%)
- Faculty of Science: 6 women out of 44 teaching positions (of which only 3 are regular) (13.6%)
- School of Forestry Science: 1 woman out of 9 positions
- Faculty of Management: 9 women out of 26 positions (of which only 3 are regular); that is, 34.6%

Note that there are still several departments where there are no female professors:

- Economics
- Physics
- Mathematics
- Leisure Studies
- Civil Engineering
- Electrical Engineering

There are also some employment categories in the nonacademic sector where there are no women: skilled workers, other manual workers.

It is therefore possible to consider a university as a non-traditional environment when there are very few or no women employed in certain faculties or departments.

However, in the faculties, schools and departments that we have listed, the number of female students is much higher:

- Student population as a whole 61%
- School of Engineering 15%
- Faculty of Science 48%
- Faculty of Management 45%
- Economics Department 19%
- Physics Department 17%
- Mathematics Department 64%
- Leisure Studies Department 68%

The proportion of women teaching in a field of studies should reflect the proportion of female vs. male students in this field. If, for example, half of the students in the Faculty of Management are women, it stands to reason that half of the teaching staff in this faculty should be women.

However, the current objectives of our equity policy are based on the availability of qualified women in these fields.

The Université de Moncton's Equity Program in Matters of Employment

Implemented in the fall of 1998, the equity program is voluntary and has been approved by the New Brunswick Human Rights Commission. By means of this program, the university aims to have the makeup of its work force reflect the makeup of the society in which it evolves. We have therefore set quantitative objectives for representation for each of the following groups:

- Women
- Disabled
- Visible minorities
- First Nations

When we observe that a group is underrepresented (in relation to the real availability of the work force within our recruitment pool), we target positions for one or several of the groups listed. When a position is designated for women, for example, it means that in the event of equal or equivalent qualifications, the position must be given to the qualified female candidate selected. It will only be possible to recommend hiring a person who does not fall under the targeted groups if it can be proven that the candidate in question is clearly more qualified than the others.

Does this work? What have been our findings thus far, after the program's first year?

It is still too soon for the experiment to be truly conclusive, but the results we have obtained so far are positive. For example, in the academic sector, out of twelve positions targeted for women, we have recruited six women, a 50% success rate. In the nonacademic sector, out of five positions targeted for women, we have recruited three women, a 60% success rate.

We are particularly proud that the Associate-Director of Administration and Human Resources is a woman, as are the Registrar and the Director of Physical Resources. These are evidently key positions in a university environment.

It took more than ten years for the university community to accept this program, the main fear being that it would be detrimental to the quality of education. There are still some disciplines where, for example, there are very few women who hold a Ph.D. The faculties and departments must therefore be proactive in their recruitment so as to encourage female applicants.

Policy Against Sexual and Sexist Harassment

The policy against harassment was adopted in December 1991 and applies to all members of the university community: students, personnel and subcontractors permanently on campus.

This policy was and still is controversial. Opinions differed both at the time it was implemented and, more recently, when those sanctioned have contested their sanctions before the court or in arbitration.

The university community has been critical and has often considered the sexual harassment policy an infringement of freedom of expression and of academic freedom, interference of the employer in the private domain, excessive judicial control of relations between men and women, and nonrespect of the principles of natural justice. The policy has also been rejected for fear

of false accusations and of trivial or persecutory complaints. Yet, the policy works relatively well: approximately 70 complaints were filed in the last seven years, the majority of which were settled discreetly through informal channels, whereas about seven of these cases were the object of a formal investigation. Information and extensive raising of awareness among the student population—these are effective solutions. We want to intensify management training; higher-level personnel can then be better prepared to assume their responsibilities in matters of harassment and can be proactive and take action at the source of the problem at hand. With regards to the investigation process, the challenge here is to make it effective, quick, user-friendly, not too intimidating for the victims and at the same time equitable and respectful of the rights of both parties.

Our challenge as a university is to increase the level of approval and consensus for a sexual harassment policy. We must also try to raise the discourse above the emotional plane, and bring it to a more rational level.

This having been said, unions play a vital role in the education of their members. These two institutional policies seem essential if we are to encourage the access, integration and well-being of women at the Université de Moncton.

Parameters of an Effective Policy in the Fight Against Sexual Harassment

Suzanne Amiot

Suzanne Amiot has been the President of the Committee on the Status of Women of the Canadian Union of Public Employees (CUPE-Québec) since 1995. She was Vice-President of the Fédération des travailleurs et des travailleuses du Québec (1998) and an active union member of Local 1294 of the CUPE (Université du Québec à Montréal), of which she was the President from 1992 to 1998.

She holds a certificate in Intercultural Education from the Université du Québec à Montréal and is currently pursuing studies in Psychosocial Intervention.

Ms. Amiot is primarily involved in matters concerning the status of women, particularly pay equity, equal opportunity, professional training for women, harassment and reconciliation of work and home life.

For the Canadian Union of Public Employees (CUPE) in Québec, the policy against sexual harassment in the workplace is an extension of clauses in collective agreements aimed at ensuring the respect of human rights and freedoms and the defence of victims of sexual harassment in the workplace.

After a long battle against sexual harassment in the workplace, CUPE-Québec is now able to define the elements that constitute an effective policy against sexual harassment.

First and foremost, this policy must stem from a common desire on the part of both the employer and the union to ensure that no sexual harassment will be tolerated in the workplace. This shared commitment must then be materialized in the joint development of a policy consisting of an employer/union agreement on the ways of preventing and handling harassment situations.

As for the content of such a policy, the elements that it must contain can be broken down into five main themes.

- Firstly, the purpose of the policy and its underlying objectives. For example, does the policy strictly address sexual harassment or does it encompass other types of harassment? Is it designed to prevent harassment or only to settle potential cases? Does it cover several types of human rights violations? If several approaches are possible, the purpose and objectives must be expressed in a precise manner in all cases so as to avoid any future ambiguity.
- Secondly, the policy must state those principles that will guide the parties at the time of its application. Thus, these guiding principles are the employer and

union's proof of their commitment to zero tolerance of harassment, sexual or otherwise. They stipulate the right of all victims to protection through confidential recourse processes that are appropriate, quick and effective, and that respect the victims' rights. They also stipulate the right to compensation for the discrimination subjected to and the right not to be subjected to professional discrimination or other reprisals. Finally, the responsibility of the employer to provide a safe working environment that is free of harassment, and the employer's commitment to the protection of its personnel against any violation of this right, must also be clearly established.

- Once the objectives and guiding principles are established, a recourse mechanism must be developed. This mechanism must determine where the complaints are to be filed, who is responsible for receiving them, who is responsible for conducting investigations and for making the decisions needed to correct or remedy the situation, and within what deadlines the decisions must be made. Finally, if the decisions rendered are unsatisfactory, the mechanism must stipulate an appeal process. At CUPE, we always encourage our members who are victims of harassment to file a complaint with their union, which will conduct an investigation and will ensure, through the recourse procedure, that the appropriate corrective measures or compensation are obtained. We view this process as an expression of our responsibility, our duty of representation. Furthermore, we hold the firm belief that adequate recourse mechanisms enable the union to assume its responsibilities.
- Once the purpose of the policy and the underlying objectives have been determined, the guiding principles stated and the recourse procedure developed, the question of accountability remains. Each employee in a company must agree to ensure that the atmosphere at his or her own level is free of harassment; employees and management alike must assume the specific

duties for which they are responsible. For example, the CEO will require that managers be committed to ensuring that the working environment is free of harassment and that the necessary corrective measures be implemented within the timeframes set forth. The employees, on the other hand, must ensure, through their behaviour, that the working environment is free of harassment.

- Finally, for a policy against harassment to be effective, it must be supported by a solid implementation and information strategy. This strategy must imperatively include the necessary awareness-raising and education program for all counsellors, managers and personnel. When people are informed and their awareness is raised, they can better understand the right of all individuals to a safe working environment free of sexual harassment. Once the consequences of harassment for the victim, the working environment and the offender alike are clearly identified, it is easier to modify one's own behaviour or to exert a positive influence on one's working environment.

We are not so bold as to say that there is such a thing as the perfect policy when it comes to fighting against sexual harassment. However, a policy jointly developed by the employer and the union and that includes each of the above-mentioned elements has the advantage of binding all counsellors in their respective responsibilities and duties. Such a policy will serve as a guide in the resolution of complex or difficult cases, or for any action to be taken in matters of harassment. Through this process, we can thereby ensure the respect of the fundamental rights of individuals to work in a safe harassment-free environment.

Undergraduate Research as a Vehicle for Success for Women in Non-Traditional Fields



Janet Stocks

Janet Stocks and Barbara Lazarus

Barbara Lazarus is Associate Provost and Adjunct Professor at Carnegie Mellon University in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, USA. An educational anthropologist, Dr. Lazarus does research on the changing work roles of women throughout Asia and the United States, with particular emphasis on women in the sciences and technical fields. Her most recent books include: Journeys of Women in Science and Engineering: No Universal Constants (with Ambrose, Dunkle, Nair and Harkus, Temple University Press, 1998), The Equation Equation: Fostering the

Barbara B. Lazarus

Advancement of Women in Science, Mathematics and Engineering (with Davis, Ginorio, Hollenshead and Rayman, Jossey Bass, 1996), and Changing Lives: Life Stories of Asian Pioneers in Women's Studies (with M. Karlekar and the Committee for Women's Studies in Asia, The Feminist Press, New York, 1995) also published as Women's Studies: Women's Lives (Kali for Women, New Delhi and Spinifex, Melbourne, 1994).

The Undergraduate Research initiative (URI) at Carnegie Mellon University began in the spring of 1990 with the award of eight small grants to undergraduates pursuing independent research projects. The program has grown substantially and last year (1998-1999) awarded grants to 191 students. The URI has a variety of programs but we will focus in the presentation on two: the Small Undergraduate Research Grant (SURG) program and the Summer Fellowship program.

- The SURG program awards small grants, up to \$5000, to undergraduates in good academic standing (they cannot be on academic or disciplinary probation) to cover research-related expenses. Typically, students apply for funds to pay for the materials and supplies necessary to carry out their research. We also occasionally receive requests for funds to cover travel, and sometimes for a stipend so that students can "buy out" student job time. To receive these funds, students must write a research proposal in which they explain their research question, their proposed methodology, their qualifications for carrying out this research, and how they intend to disseminate their research findings. In addition, students must secure a letter of recommendation for their proposed research from a faculty advisor who is willing to oversee their research. These proposals are then reviewed by a committee made up of faculty representing a wide variety of disciplines on campus. In the past several years, we have been able to fund approximately 70 to 75% of the proposals submitted to us.
- The Summer Fellowship program awards consist of stipends of \$3,000 to students to support 10 weeks of full-time research during the summer months in close collaboration with a faculty advisor. The process for awarding these fellowships follows the SURG granting process of proposals submitted by students and reviewed by a cross-disciplinary committee of faculty. We have awarded summer fellowships for the past three summers, eight in the first year, 11 in the second, and 43 in the third. This program is more competitive

than the SURG program because we have sufficient funds only to cover the most highly-rated proposals. Last summer we were able to fund approximately 50% of the proposals that were submitted.

Funding for these programs comes from a variety of sources. The University provides the funds to cover our administrative expenses (a full-time director, a full-time assistant and our annual budget) and approximately half of the SURG grants we award. We also receive funds from a variety of foundations, corporations, and individual donors. Many of our fundraising efforts have been targeted to increasing the fund pools to support research by women students. For example, last year we received a grant from the Intel Foundation to fund summer fellowships for 10 women and minority students in engineering and computer science. Many of our other funds are likewise targeted to women. We have a greater proportion of women participating in our programs than are in the campus population overall. For example, last year 43% of the SURG grant recipients and 73% of the Summer Fellowship recipients were women while the campus population was 34% women.

There are a number of aspects of these programs which make them unique among similar programs at other colleges and universities:

- 1) Students are encouraged to propose independent research projects as well as join existing research labs on campus.
- 2) This is not intended to be a capstone experience.
- 3) Students throughout their college years (not just seniors) are encouraged to participate.
- 4) Students who are struggling academically, as well as those who are excelling, are encouraged to participate.
- 5) These programs are intended for students in all disciplines. "Research" is broadly defined to mean: "Research, scholarly, or artistic activities that lead to the production of new knowledge, to increased problem-solving capabilities, including design and analysis, to original critical or historical theory and interpretation, or to the production of art or artistic performance."

Although these programs are open to all students on campus, they are particularly beneficial for women and other underrepresented students. Our exit surveys for the undergraduate research experience show that students develop mentoring relationships with faculty members, increase their self-confidence, learn about the process of conducting research and solving unstructured problems, and gain a more focused sense of their future. Recent studies, both at Carnegie Mellon and at other undergraduate research programs in the U.S., indicate that undergraduates who engage in a substantial research project with a faculty advisor are more "attached" to their institutions and more likely to "persist" to graduation. This type of experience proves to be particularly important for students who are underrepresented in their academic fields and who, without this support, often feel alone and disenfranchised from the mainstream of their disciplines.

Evaluation of Our Programs

During the summer of 1999, we conducted an evaluation of our Summer fellowship program. Funded by a grant from the Intel Foundation, we used both quantitative and qualitative measures to evaluate the impact of a summer research experience on the students. We conducted a pre- and post-survey of four groups of students: 1) women and minority students in engineering; 2) majority students in the sciences; 3) students who had internships in industry; and 4) students who had non-academic summer jobs. The survey was designed to test self-efficacy—students' beliefs about how well they can perform in a specific setting. We also conducted interviews with all students who received Summer fellowships at the end of the summer and surveyed their faculty advisors.

PRE- AND POST-SURVEY

Surveys were administered to four groups of students at the end of the spring semester (before leaving for summer jobs) and at the beginning of the fall semester.

The four groups of students were:

- 1) women and minority students in engineering
- 2) majority students in the sciences
- 3) students who had internships in industry and
- 4) students who had non-academic summer jobs

After initial questions asking for background information about the type of summer job the student had, the survey asks a variety of questions intended to measure student self-efficacy (beliefs about how well they can perform in a specific setting) such as:

–How well can you use the techniques, skills and modern tools necessary for professional practice in your intended career?

–How well can you successfully interview for a job or internship in your field?

–How well can you participate in discussions on contemporary issues?

Students answered these questions on a seven-point scale from “very well” to “not very well at all.”

The results of this pre- and post-survey were that students who participated in research (groups 1 and 20) showed greater increases in self-efficacy scores after their summer research than students who participated in a job in industry, who in turn increased more than students with non-academic summer jobs. Because of the small number of students in each group, these results are not statistically significant.

INTERVIEWS

All students who participated in the summer research fellowship program were interviewed at the end of the summer about their experiences. We have just begun to do the data analysis of these interviews. For this presentation we will focus on the group of 10 students who were funded by our Intel grant for women and minority students in engineering and computer science. In this group were seven women and three men. Four of the women are Caucasian, two Asian and one African American. All three men are Hispanic. We report here on just a few of the interesting findings that are emerging from our qualitative data.

- 1) Women respondents commented about the contextual nature of the learning experience. Research on women and learning styles (e.g. Gilligan 1982; Margolis and Fisher in press) has shown that many women prefer to learn in a setting where they can clearly see the application of the knowledge to something in the world that they see as worthwhile. In our interviews, we heard this over and over again from our respondents. For example, Heather, a Chemical Engineering major said about her research, “It’s made me realize how my major applies in the real world...it made me see how what I’m doing in the classroom really applies. I think it will help me in my course work and deciding what I want to do. This applies to a class I was frustrated with last semester. Now I feel like I was learning it for a reason and I put in all that work for a reason.” And Alice, a Computer Science major said, “It helped re-spark some of the intellectual curiosity that I had lost in my class work, worrying about my GPA and so forth.”
- 2) The research experience led many of the students to decide they wanted to further their education. Of the 10 Intel fellows, seven have decided they want to go on to graduate school, two have decided, based on their experience, that they do not want to go directly to graduate school, and one is still undecided. Kate, a Materials Science major, decided about three weeks into her summer research project that she wanted to go to graduate school. “It’s driving me towards grad school because I want to

know more and I want to get more specific education in particle research before I just go out and try to peddle my wares to the market.” Melanie, a Chemical Engineering major and Engineering and Public Policy minor, attended a seminar sponsored by our office over the summer about career choices after the BS degree. In her interview she referred to this talk: “she (the seminar speaker) mentioned grad school and I hadn’t even considered it. But the more I thought about it, I couldn’t get the chance to do straight out policy and engineering research like this unless I go to grad school...So that’s something to think about.”

Even for the two students whose summer research experience led them to believe that graduate school was not the best option, this appears to us to be a positive outcome because the experience led to an informed decision. For example, Heather, the Chemical Engineering major quoted above, said, “It’s made me see what it’s like to do research job in university. I work in a lab with graduate students. I see how their research is. We also have group meetings where the graduate students present their research. It’s made me see what a commitment graduate school is and I don’t think it is something I want to do right after school. But I know what it would mean to do it if I would decide to go back and do it later.”

- 3) Experiences that students articulated as their “most negative” during their summer research were, to us, good lessons learned. We asked all students what the most positive and negative things about their summer research experience were. Of the 10 interviews we have analyzed to date, only one experience reported was really a negative experience, and this had to do with some scheduling difficulties the student experienced with his advisor. The rest of the students articulated things that had to do with becoming more familiar with the research process. For example, Jan, a Chemical Engineering major, said that what was negative was “maybe just the repetition. I hadn’t really realized how repetitive some of the work was. Overall through, it has been a very positive experience.” Kate (the Computer Science student quoted above) said, “In the beginning [of the summer] it was kind of confusing for me to figure out how to impose a structure upon myself

when there was no class structure or deadlines outside of my own. That was a stumbling block in the beginning, but then I figured out what I needed to overcome those things.” And finally, Mary, a Psychology major, said, “I think I am a little disappointed that I don’t have more time to work this summer because I’ve gotten so into it. Fortunately, I will get to keep doing it during the school year.”

FACULTY SURVEYS

We sent a short E-mail survey to the faculty advisors of all of our summer fellowship students at the end of the summer. We received completed surveys from 32 advisors of the 41 students who completed their fellowships (a 78% response rate). On the whole, advisors were very pleased with the work done by the undergraduates and 100% of the faculty respondents said that they would be willing to advise a summer fellowship student in the future. Only two faculty advisors reported that the quality was better than they had expected, and 15 reported it was about what they had expected. Nineteen faculty advisors reported that the work done was what they would expect from a graduate student. Twenty-eight of the 32 faculty respondents felt that the students had grown from their summer research experience. For example, one advisor said, “Chris has learned to stand up for his own ideas, even if they don’t concur with mine (he is usually right).” Another advisor said, “Going to the conference and presenting her work has given Alice a very palpable excitement about the field of robotics and academia.” And finally, another faculty advisor said, “During the summer, Heather became more independent and confident about her research. As a sophomore, she has had limited laboratory experience and little practice at independent work. I sensed her gaining confidence in her laboratory skills during the summer.”

Conclusions

Undergraduate research provides opportunities for women in underrepresented fields to engage in the important and exciting work of creating new knowledge. In doing so they find mentors, imagine themselves in research and academic careers, and refine career goals. We believe that these kinds of experiences can be beneficial for all students, but they are particularly beneficial for women and other students who are underrepresented in their fields. This is because it helps these students find practical, hands-on applications of the sometimes abstract knowledge they are learning in the classroom, and helps them imagine themselves as contributing members of a research community.

We were particularly intrigued by the results of our faculty survey. Specifically, all faculty responding to the survey when asked if they would participate in this program again, said they would. These results are exciting in an environment where service to undergraduates is often perceived as a drain on time and “real work.” Although we recognize that the faculty who participate in the program are self-selected, we nevertheless tentatively hypothesize that faculty involved in this kind of program may change their view of undergraduates as researchers/potential colleagues and that those who work with women and students belonging to a visible minority may similarly change their perspectives. We plan to add these questions to our research agenda in the future.

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New Initiatives for Promoting Engineering Among Women

Diane Riopel

Diane Riopel is Associate Professor in the Département de mathématiques et de génie industriel at the École polytechnique de Montréal. She holds a bachelor's degree in Industrial Engineering and a Master of Applied Sciences degree in Industrial Engineering from the École polytechnique de Montréal. She also obtained a Diplôme d'Études Approfondies in Automated Production from the École normale supérieure de Cachan, France. She obtained a Ph.D. in computer-integrated manufacturing and industrial engineering from the École centrale de Paris. Her research has focused on fields such as implementation, material handling and warehousing. As holder of the Marianne-Mareschal chair, she is actively involved in encouraging young women to pursue engineering studies.

Even today, few young women choose the path toward engineering when they make their career choices. In 1996, they represented only 19% of undergraduate students enrolled in engineering in Canada.¹ Only 9% of practising engineers in Québec are women.² Although the situation has slightly improved in the past 10 years, we must continue to launch initiatives to recruit girls in this sector. Through these measures, we can prevent these rates from levelling off, or worse, from decreasing. We, the members of the Marianne-Mareschal Chair, are concerned about this situation, and feel it warrants our involvement in the promotion of engineering among women.

In light of this situation, in October 1998, a group of École polytechnique female professors established a chair for the promotion of engineering among women. Nine researchers—three coholders actively involved in research and teaching, five reputable professional engineers and an engineering intern acting as coordinator—have joined forces with the various stakeholders in the scientific and technological community in Québec. They want to promote engineering as an accessible, stimulating, dynamic and socially valuable career choice for young women. We are all very happy with our career choice, and we want to transmit our passion for engineering to the next generation. Four phases of activities have been proposed: introduction to engineering; sponsorship; conferences and debates; and assistance and excel programs. The chair addresses young women at all academic levels—elementary school (Cycle Two), secondary, CEGEP and university—as well as advisors in their environment—parents, teachers, guidance and vocational counsellors.

The chair has adopted the following objectives:

- to inform, raise awareness of and encourage young girls to consider engineering careers
- to encourage female engineering students to complete their studies and female engineers to persevere and succeed in their employment
- to raise awareness of and help to eliminate the prejudices and obstacles that hamper the recruitment of women in engineering fields and their advancement in the industry and the business world

To attain the first two objectives, our strategy is to use the existing introductory engineering methods programs geared toward students at the elementary, secondary and CEGEP level. The chair also wants to demystify the engineering profession, not only with young girls but also with the population in general. We therefore join our efforts to those of our partners in order to enhance their field of expertise or develop new projects. Here are a few examples of last year's collaboration:

- *One-week science camp for girls only* with Folie technique, the École Polytechnique's summer science camp. We invited young girls, ages 10 to 15, to enter a contest by placing an ad in *Adorable* magazine. The eight winners came from various cities outside of Montréal (from Mont-Joli to Longueuil). The chair covered their accommodation and travelling expenses, as well as the cost of the camp.
- *Approval of a science game*, "Un choix scientifique", created by the Scientifines, a science club for young girls from underprivileged environments. Those responsible for Scientifines created a game that introduces the players to scientific culture. The chair will help them to put the finishing touches to the game and to produce it.

- *Development and revision of an activity guide*, "Éclairs de génie" by ISPAJES (Ingénierie simultanée présentée aux jeunes du secondaire) geared to students in Secondary I, II and III. An engineering student worked on this project for six weeks and proposed two new activities that could better meet the expectations of young girls participating.
- *Distribution and source of information for the "Folles du génie!" book* published by Éditions Septembre in March 1999. We were consulted for information on the industry, namely the resources available to young women in the secondary school science and technology programs. We offer free copies of the book to those participating in our activities.

As a second strategy, the chair not only provides information on engineering programs and on the engineering profession, but also provides role models for young women who are considering this career. Here are a few examples:

- The *information* phase is covered by our documentation centre (collection of books, scholarly articles and research study reports about women, science and technology) and our Web page. The Web site was designed for four categories of users (students, parents, teachers and engineers) who might be interested in the chair's projects. Users can refer to designated sections containing a description of activities, information on the profession and examples of real-life experiences relevant to their own interests. Direct communication is also possible via the mentor program and the electronic bulletin board.

- The *role model* phase offers profiles of students in undergraduate and graduate programs, junior engineers and professional engineers on its Web site. The “role models” hold various positions and come from all engineering disciplines. Because it is understood that role models automatically act as mentors, each activity launched this fall was based on this principle:
 - *Engineer for a day*: a CEGEP student becomes the right-hand woman of a female engineer in the workplace
 - *Ingenuity day*: a secondary school student is teamed up with a female student at the École polytechnique
 - *Sponsorship*: e-mail advice swap between engineering students and practising engineers

Finally, in view of eliminating prejudices, the chair contributes to the development of a network between businesses, educational institutions, the ministries and government councils, as well as organizations that promote science and technology. Some of our accomplishments include:

- participation in national and international forums such as ACFAS, WEPAN and ZOOM
- participation in “Repères,” an international training program of the Université de Montréal’s Conseil permanent du statut de la femme (committee on the status of women)
- joint action with the OIQ (Ordre des Ingénieurs du Québec) Femmes en génie (Women in Engineering) committee, as well as with the five NSERC chairs
- participation in bursary selection committees for the École polytechnique

- presence of a coholder as substitute for the Seven Wardens Inc., Camp 2 (The Ritual of the Calling of an Engineer—taking of the Iron Ring)
- organization of lunch conferences addressed to the polytechnic community as a whole
- revival of the Comité pour la Promotion de l’ingénierie au féminin (PIF) via the participation of female engineering students at the École polytechnique

The chair has just closed its first year of activities. With these activities, it has directly reached more than 500 people. During its mandate, the chair would like to have a deep impact on:

- the awareness of a considerable number of women and young girls to potential careers in engineering through extensive local, provincial and national networking
- an increase in the number of women active in engineering fields
- increased visibility of women in engineering through various promotional and communications tools
- financial assistance for female students at all academic levels through internships or bursaries

¹ *Canadian Engineers for Tomorrow*, Canadian Council of Professional Engineers, 1997.

² *Conditions de travail des ingénieures et des ingénieurs du Québec*, Ordre des ingénieurs du Québec, Survey Report, 1997.

Supporting Québec Women's Progression in the Fields of Science and Technological Innovation



Monique Tremblay **Secrétariat for the Status of Women**

Since spring 1994, Monique Tremblay has been an economist with the Secrétariat of a developmental project called Le soutien à la progression des Québécoises dans les sciences et l'innovation technologique. As a

consultant analyst, she deals mainly with problem areas related to the economic status of women, primarily those of the labour market, entrepreneurial ventures for women, poverty and income security. In the summer of 1995, she was the secretary for the Groupe de travail sur l'économie sociale, as well as Coordinator of interministerial projects on the social economics.

From February to November 1997, she held the position of labour market analyst for the Société québécoise de développement de la main-d'œuvre.

Between November 1991 and February 1993, she was a labour market analyst for the Ministère de la Main-d'œuvre, de la Sécurité du revenu et de la Formation professionnelle.

Over the past several decades, economic recession and the major changes that affected Québec's industrial structure have thoroughly modified the province's economic and social landscapes. We are witnessing a true economic, social and cultural revolution. Influential factors include the advent of free trade and the globalization of markets, the increased role being played by new technology in the structural transformation of industries, the growing use of intelligence as a factor in production and the arrival of information as a new raw material.

This movement is worldwide. In the main OECD countries, an increase in employment has been observed in high-tech research-intensive industries offering high salaries and qualification levels that are turned to external markets. According to the Conseil de la science et de la technologie du Québec, microelectronics, new materials, biotechnology, telecommunications and aerospace are the strategic sectors of the future. To stay ahead of the competition, industries will need highly qualified labour with advanced scientific and technological know-how. It therefore comes as no surprise that science and technology are at the heart of Québec's economic and social development.

These changes are not a concern for the industrial world. Although not so long ago science and technology were reserved for a certain professional elite and were only remotely connected to our daily lives, both at work and at home, they have now become omnipresent and dominate both the private and public domain.

This situation, however, worries women. Despite major progress made over the past few years in matters of education and entry into the work force, there are still few women in scientific and technological occupations, and women are still underrepresented in fields of study leading to such occupations.

Furthermore, it can be noted that women do not always have access to the qualifying training that would allow them to face the constant changes in the labour market. It is thus more difficult for them to retain jobs or advance in their careers.

This is also the case of women entrepreneurs. While we have observed a trend towards the diversification of sectors of activity, there still seems to be few women running businesses in sectors related to the new economy of knowledge and technological innovation. As for business opportunities offered by the expansion of leading-edge technology sectors, the place occupied by women appears to be a minute one.

New technology has revolutionized the working world. Its omnipresence has completely changed the nature of work as well as its organization. It warrants constant adaptation to the working environment and calls upon other types of qualifications and skills that require know-how in the management of environments and of technological and computer tools.

These new dynamics entail a constant need for training and a broadening and updating of the technical knowledge required to maintain a competitive edge. This situation warrants the development of mechanisms to ensure on-going quality training and we must therefore ensure that women have equal access to these training opportunities.

Furthermore, studies looking into the issue have deplored the weak scientific and technical culture of women and the latter's lack of interest in scientific and technological careers. Several reasons are proposed, namely, the absence of role models and the lack of encouragement from the family environment, the image that young girls have of scientific activity and the gender stereotypes at the primary and secondary education levels. Consequently, we must look for factors that are likely to reinforce female students' interest in science.

Québec must increase its labour pool of qualified trade workers, top scientists and competent technicians, both male and female, in order to maintain its competitive position in a fast-growing market. And even though future labour needs cannot be precisely predicted, science and technology will remain the way of the future.

The stakes are high for women. The economic potential of these expanding sectors, from the standpoints of both job creation and business opportunities, has become an interesting means of obtaining financial independence and even prosperity.

When women bypass the scientific and technological route, primarily because their cultural and social environment does not encourage them to develop interests

in these fields, they run the risk of being left on the sidelines, both in terms of the job market and in society in general. It is important to stress the consequence of this marginalization, which brings about economic and social inequalities.

Finally, aside from the economic considerations lies the question of collective enrichment being linked to the participation of each member of a society to its economic and social development. Each individual, male or female, brings his or her perspective and ways of doing things and thus contributes to the vitality of the system as a whole.

Concerned with this situation, the government implemented the *Programme d'action 1997-2000 pour toutes les Québécoises*, a mobilization project seeking to provide support for the progress of Québec women in sciences and technological innovation. An interministerial committee was set up in spring 1997 to perform this task. The committee consists of ministries and organizations that, due to their mission and fields of intervention, are more directly affected by the problem areas raised and by the possible interventions. The committee includes representatives from the Ministère de l'Industrie et du Commerce, Ministère de la Recherche, de la Science et de la Technologie, Emploi-Québec, Ministère de l'Éducation, Ministère de la Culture et des Communications, Ministère de l'Environnement and the Sous-Secrétariat aux inforoutes et aux ressources informationnelles of the Secrétariat du Conseil du trésor. The work is coordinated by the Secrétariat à la condition féminine.

The interministerial committee's mandate is to identify problem areas pertaining to the situation of Québec women in the fields of science and technological innovation and to determine governmental actions likely to improve this situation. In addition, it also seeks to set objectives in terms of desired results and to develop monitoring mechanisms and adjustment procedures for the implementation period, as applicable.

Since the work started in June 1997, efforts have primarily been focused on identifying multifaceted and relatively complex problem areas such as the labour market, entrepreneurship, education, the scientific and technical culture, and the adjustment of the work force to the new market.

Presentation of the “Femmes, de l'école au chantier” Project



Denis Lemieux

Denis Lemieux, Director of the École des métiers et occupations de l'industrie de la construction de Québec (EMOICQ).

Mr. Lemieux earned a degree in Social Sciences and Administration and has been the Director of EMOICQ

since 1998. Over the past twenty years, he has held several positions in the fields of labour development and professional training, particularly in various school boards and with the Ministère de l'Éducation du Québec (MEQ).

While employed at the MEQ, Mr. Lemieux became greatly interested in school-industry partnerships with the construction sector. One activity in which he was actively involved was the development of an equal opportunity program for women in this trade.

Valérie Nadeau

Valérie Nadeau has a master's degree in vocational counselling. Her master's thesis is on the repercussions of sexual harassment on the personal and professional lives of women. For the past two years, she has been working for Centre Étape inc., an organization whose mission is to integrate women into the labour market. As a vocational counsellor, Ms. Nadeau has given career counselling workshops focusing on promising occupations and has monitored job search groups for women wishing to reenter the labour market, whether in traditional or non-traditional sectors. Since fall 1999, she has been responsible for an École des métiers et des occupations de l'industrie de la construction de Québec (EMOICQ) project called Femmes, de l'école au chantier. Its primary goal is to increase the number of women in Québec's construction industry.

1- Introduction

In Québec, occupations that are considered non-traditional for women are those where women hold less than one third of the available jobs. There is a long list of such occupations and, in fact, it would be simpler to describe the situation of female workers in Québec by covering the few sectors where women are in the majority. This situation is not exclusive to Québec. In most industrialized countries, the active female work force is certainly not to be found in spheres of activity, industries or occupations that are traditionally male-dominated or that involve physical abilities. The truth is that, in our labour market, women are still following career paths that have not been taken by previous generations of female workers.

Although some improvement in certain fields is noticeable, the rate of change and the number of sectors where change is emerging remain all too limited to conclude that there is a satisfactory evolution of the situation. The permeability of traditionally male- and female-dominated sectors of employment can be demonstrated, but, in many cases, women in non-traditional occupations are exceptions that confirm the rule.

The choices that young girls and women make in vocational education programs also confirm this fact. Still, these choices are as predictable as they are limited. Administration and business, health and aesthetic services are no doubt the sectors that the majority of girls are turning to. Conversely, other fields offering better employment opportunities are overlooked. The construction industry is a prime example. Job opportunities in this sector are on the rise, the placement rate of graduates is good (over 70%), wage conditions are quite interesting and a program for equal opportunity for women now favours female graduates. Yet, women are showing very little “natural” interest in this sector. Despite considerable efforts made by several ministries and organizations to show their concern for the status of women in the labour market, this lack of interest persists. We cannot but note that the situation of women is unfortunately evolving much too slowly in most of the traditionally male-dominated vocational education programs and occupations. Many reasons are proposed to

explain this slow progress rate: protected territory, prejudices, cultural values, lack of role models, closed doors.

The “Femmes, de l’école au chantier” project of the École des métiers et occupations de l’industrie de la construction du Québec (EMOICQ) is an initiative which addresses the difficulties faced by women in non-traditional jobs. It takes into account both the regulations in force in the Québec construction industry and the above-mentioned equal opportunity program.

2- The Promoter

Created in the early fifties, EMOICQ is a provincewide public vocational training centre under the responsibility of the Commission scolaire de la Capitale (Québec).

In the last decade, EMOICQ has experienced appreciable growth with the support of a dynamic team. The renewal of its teaching staff, expansion and renovation phases, modernization of its workshops and equipment, as well as the addition of new training programs are factors that have considerably modified its image and its intervention capabilities.

EMOICQ offers fourteen training programs and welcomes over 425 new students and approximately 500 workers in ongoing training each year.

EMOICQ partners from the construction industry have been actively involved in the development and administration of this school since 1991.

2.1- AN EDUCATIONAL MISSION

Thanks to its educational mission, EMOICQ can closely monitor the level of competency and productivity of the construction industry’s work force. Our partners acknowledge the quality of our training and report that they are very satisfied with our new graduates. Our mission also empowers us to influence the values and attitudes of the clientele served by EMOICQ. The “Femmes, de l’école au chantier” project is definitely in keeping with this perspective and, by choosing the appropriate means, we can help improve the situation of women in the construction industry.

However, in launching this project, EMOICQ’s objective is not solely to train more women for future work in the construction industry. It also aims to use the dynamics created by this project to promote and instill the notions of equity, teamwork and respect of others in its students by virtue of which the presence of female colleagues will be valued. Thus, if women are increasingly present at EMOICQ, if they learn to find a place among

groups of men, they will have the necessary tools, skills and attitudes to integrate into construction job sites and retain their employment. Furthermore, men who will have worked alongside these women during their academic career will learn to respect who they are—competent women who can work in a team, regardless of its makeup.

But this will not happen all by itself because EMOICQ, until now, has been a man’s world. Over the years, EMOICQ has trained tens of thousands of men for work in the construction industry. However, all in all, very few women have benefited from it.

On most construction sites, the mere presence of a female worker still troubles the waters of this male-dominated environment. At EMOICQ, the female minority also provokes a few reactions, but in an educational setting, we can more easily and quickly intervene to counter any form of discrimination. On this basis stems our decision to take action in this field.

3- Québec’s Construction Industry

The Québec construction industry is based on a long succession of major construction phases which have built Québec as we know it today. The milestones were marked by urbanization, the completion of major civil engineering projects and accelerated access to homeownership. The history of Québec’s construction industry was also characterized by severe labour disputes, whose settlements required legislative intervention on more than one occasion. The government has only recently relinquished legislation of working conditions in this industry to the employers and unions, who now work together to set them.

The construction industry is heavily regulated and unionization is mandatory. An organization with equal representation, the Commission de la construction du Québec (CCQ) is mandated to enforce a series of laws and regulations that define the nature of the construction work, the field of competence of the various trades and the conditions for access to the industry. On this latter point, female construction workers in Québec must, in order to have access to a construction site and perform work subject to law, hold an apprenticeship competency certificate. At the industry’s entry level, apprentices must first have graduated from a recognized vocational education program. They must then undergo

a period of apprenticeship that, after evaluation, will lead to qualification as a journeyman. Developing competencies for newcomers in any trade therefore involves school training since it requires diplomas issued by the Minister of Education and an on-site training as a journeyman.

Essentially and statistically speaking, the Québec construction industry consists of:

- 26 governed trades and approximately thirty occupations
- 100 000 workers holding a certificate of competency
- 18 000 businesses (80% of which have 5 employees or less)
- between 65 and 75 million hours worked per year
- an average of 700 hours worked per year, per worker
- an average age of over 45 in most of the trades
- a low representation of women (296) on construction sites

4- The Equal Opportunity Program for Women in the Construction Industry

The construction industry partners created an equal opportunity program for women in 1996. By implementing measures to integrate and retain women in construction occupations, this program aimed to correct the underrepresentation of women in an industry sector that has been almost exclusively reserved for men. A dual objective was also targeted: to increase the number of women workers, in the governed trades, from 200 to 2000 in six years, and to offer services designed to help retain women workers in their jobs.

To reach these target goals, the program has planned a series of measures, referred to as rectification measures, which must correct the existing discrimination against women in the construction industry. In addition to requiring that places in training programs be reserved for women, the following measures are planned:

Female graduates are not under the obligation to present a minimum guarantee of 150 hours over months in order to receive their apprentice competency certificate.

When an employer confirms his or her intention of hiring a female candidate, the employer can simply contact the Commission de la construction du Québec (CCQ), which will issue the certificate in question.

The certificate will be valid for two years and will be renewed if the holder has worked a minimum of 150 hours during this period.

When the Commission de la construction du Québec (CCQ) recommends workers to employers, it prioritizes the women workers available in the trade or occupation in question.

The “Femmes, de l’école au chantier” project is obviously ahead of the placement and job retention measures provided for in the equal opportunity program for women. However, these measures can meet expectations only if the number of female graduates increases considerably. To do so, it therefore becomes crucial that vocational training centres all over Québec adhere, as EMOICQ does, to the collective effort since they are directly involved in the initial preparation stage of the industry work force. An impressive amount of work is called for in order to build a solid foundation, and the results will not be significant for quite some time.

5- The Project

We have seen that there are very few women working in construction trades. This situation has thus justified the development of an equal opportunity program for women.

Why then are young girls and women not naturally choosing to orient their careers toward non-traditional occupations such as those in the construction industry? It is surely not a question of physical strength, at least not nowadays. The tools and working methods have evolved and very few tasks, in the construction sector as in other sectors, still require greater physical effort than what a woman could handle.

We therefore need to look elsewhere for the reasons why girls and women do not choose fields that offer more and why, in large part, they continue to opt for careers in only a few traditionally female-dominated fields. We now start delving into the arena where perceptions, prejudices, sexism, family expectations, cultural influences and lack of accurate and relevant information coexist, and where career choices for our young girls are as clearly marked out as they are traditional. It is at this level that the core of the “Femmes, de l’école au chantier” project is situated. The project’s first goal is to awaken young girls and women to the new realities of the labour market and in so doing, to “positively” influence their career choices.

The "Femmes, de l'école au chantier" project's plan of action was developed on the basis of these concerns and by establishing certain priorities. The first aims to encourage young girls in Secondary III, IV and V, as well as women who are in the process of choosing a career, to explore the trades governed by the construction industry. To this effect, we will be giving a workshop during visits to secondary schools, as well as in various work-related organizations in the Québec City area and neighbouring areas. The purpose of the workshop is basically to inform young girls and women of the construction sector possibilities, to encourage them to broaden their horizons, and to discover and demystify the occupations with which they do not normally identify themselves. These measures are taken to awaken an interest in one or more construction trades.

During secondary school visits, this awareness workshop will be given primarily in the Career Program in order to reach as many girls as possible. A quiz on the trades in the construction industry, a video on non-traditional occupations as well as a game of association between tools and occupations are some of the activities included in this awareness workshop. Finally, the information visits that will be set up will make it possible for the young girls to compare their perception with the reality.

Another priority of this plan of action is to offer specific support to women who are already in a EMOICQ training program. Workshops centred on various themes, lunch conferences and other activities will be set up to this end. Through these workshops, women can come together to talk about various subjects and meet women who work in the construction industry.

Furthermore, this project will also aim to raise the awareness of educational advisors (teachers, career counsellors, guidance counsellors, etc.) so that they may encourage young girls and women to explore non-traditional options, particularly trades in the construction industry. Educational advisors play an important role in the career paths of girls; the manner in which they intervene can create either openness or a resistance to career choices that are out of the ordinary. By encouraging young girls and women to explore non-traditional occupations, they can help them discover new avenues for the development of their interests and aptitudes.

Another of the project's priorities is raising the awareness of EMOICQ's teachers to the introduction of women in training programs related to the construction

industry. Educating them on the difficulties that these women may encounter, first when they enter a non-traditional study program, and subsequently, when they go into the work force is another. The difficulties are many: taunting, sexist jokes, sexist and sexual harassment and isolation from other colleagues. Furthermore, doubts about their capabilities and skills as well as the distrust of employers are other obstacles that women may encounter when they are in a non-traditional study program or in the labour market. These can ultimately lead women to feel that they must constantly prove they deserve to be there.

Although it follows these main lines of intervention, this year's "Femmes, de l'école au chantier" project will essentially consist of achieving the first two objectives. The project aims to make young girls in Secondary III, IV and V, and women in general, aware of occupations governed by the construction industry, and to provide female EMOICQ students with specific support.

6- Expected Results

This year, EMOICQ counts 22 women out of 400 students. As long as their career objective is validated during the course of the admission process, women who apply are accepted. We expect to double this number in the 2000-2001 school year, and thus hope to welcome forty new female students. This is not much when compared to the expected results and to industry objectives. As humble as this contribution may seem at first glance, it is a step in the right direction.

7- The Partners

The project's objectives regarding the training and integration of women in non-traditional occupations are akin to those shared by several ministries and organizations. Given these objectives, several partners have accepted to either offer financial support for the project, or to join its monitoring committee. The Ministère de l'Éducation is primarily responsible for funding the project. The CCQ has also accepted to act as liaison with the construction industry. Finally, the Centre Étape inc. de Québec has been collaborating with EMOICQ in the completion of the project.

Women in Trades and Technology National Network (WITT NN) Building for Life: A National Innovative Construction Technology Program for Young Women



Eleanor Ross

Eleanor C. Ross is an experienced, employment equity, training and development consultant with over sixteen years of practice. Eleanor has particular expertise in the design and development of strategies to increase the representation of equity group

members in the workplace, specifically, educational and employment-related programs for women into trades, technology, operations and blue-collar work.

Among her assignments, Eleanor recently managed the successful three-year national Construction Technology for Women project initiated by the educational and advocacy organization, WITT National Network. Eleanor is currently acting as consultant for a pre-apprenticeship pilot program in southern Ontario which introduces young adult women to manufacturing technology.

Eleanor has published articles, collaborated on video productions and spoken at national and international conferences on access and equity topics.

Good Morning! My name is Eleanor Ross. We are delighted to be here today at the ZOOM International Forum on Women and Non-Traditional Occupations. It is a most inspiring and important occasion for us all to join together in addressing issues and sharing information relevant to women who are working in, training for, or interested in entering trades, technology, operations or blue-collar work. Thank you to the Forum organizers for making this exciting event happen!

Rae Braden and Marian Cox, students from Yellowknife, Northwest Territory, will join me in telling you about an exciting, innovative Canadian program, Construction Technology for Women, which I will call CTW! This is a program offering young women the opportunity to gain knowledge and skills while they explore the possibilities of further education and work in the many jobs available in the construction technology sector. Jobs such as: carpenters, roofers and shinglers, welders, civil engineering technologists and technicians, architects, network cabling specialists, to name only a few.

CTW was developed to promote construction technology as a viable career for young women, with a particular focus on the development of technical skills and critical thinking. Two secondary school credits and a paid work internship are key components of the program.

Construction Technology for Women was offered as a pilot program to nearly 300 young Canadian women at eight Canadian sites coast-to-coast between 1996 and 1999. It was delivered in nine high schools in the provinces of Newfoundland, Ontario, Manitoba, Saskatchewan, British Columbia and in the far northwest of our country, Yellowknife, Northwest Territories. Funding to undertake this pilot program was provided by Human Resources Development Canada, a Ministry of the federal government that focuses on youth and employment development.

The CTW curriculum, *Building Our Future: An Exploration of the Design and Technology of the Built Environment* was developed specifically for young women aged 16 to 19 years attending grades 10, 11 and 12 in high schools across Canada. There are 68 Activity Packages in two volumes accompanying the curriculum, many designed by course teachers. The program provides hands-on learning opportunities such as reading a blueprint and designing a community on computer.

CTW consists of two credit courses of 110 hours each, (Levels 1 and 2), offered either in a semester system, or throughout the school year. There was collaborative input to the curriculum over the three-year period of the pilot project by course teachers, guidance counsellors, a committee of women in trades and technology, industry and labour representatives. *Building Our Future* was designed by women for young women using a gender-sensitive approach and includes the effective use of female role models as a critical component of the course.

The three curriculum documents are published in both French and English, and are available (for a fee) from the WITT National Network office in London, Ontario.

An employer-paid internship (usually in the summer for 4 to 6 weeks) integrates work experience with formal education. The summer internship:

- Bridges the gap between education and industry.
- Opens doors to technical occupations for women.
- Builds a supportive environment for the students.
- Gives young women the knowledge, skills and confidence in a real work situation.
- Increases public awareness (for example, in the past two years, telecommunications companies from across Canada collaborated in sponsoring CTW students in Skills Canada competitions. Rae and Marian will be telling you about their participation in these events).
- Increases the knowledge of educators, particularly technology teachers, about up-to-date requirements of the technological workplace.

A full project evaluation undertaken by an external company found CTW to be highly successful by both the young women and their employers. Fifty per cent of CTW program graduates have enrolled in engineering or technology programs at postsecondary institutions. Ninety-five per cent of project employers surveyed indicated that CTW should be used as a model for other

industry-focused initiatives aimed at encouraging young women to consider careers in their industry. A summary of the project's evaluation report is available in both English and French.

A vital aspect of any woman-centred program is the commitment to eliminate gender bias in education and training. Project partners realized this importance, and to this end, CTW developed a *Gender & Cultural Awareness Workshop Manual*. The Manual assists experienced workshop facilitators in discussing the issues affecting women who enter and train for jobs in trades, technology, operations and blue-collar work. Gender & Cultural Awareness Workshops are offered in two half-day sessions to all project stakeholders, and are a critical component of the program.

How does CTW benefit industry and labour?

They benefit by having access to a semiskilled work force, the opportunity to influence the education of future workers and the advantage of tapping into the potential of women as a key to the technological work force of the future.

How does CTW benefit education?

Education benefits by the promotion of broader career choices for young women; ensures gender-sensitive education in technological literacy, while educators gain insight into developing effective partnerships and work internships.

How does CTW benefit young women?

Well, Rae and Marian will tell you their stories in a few minutes. We know that CTW opens young women's eyes to a wealth of new career possibilities, which they had not previously considered. New technologies provide young women with key skill sets that are emerging in industry. Paid internships help young women gain valuable work experience. Program tools offer CTW students the opportunity to build their life-skills, their self-esteem and self-confidence while they learn new and marketable skills in a supportive, gender-specific environment.

CTW is the foundation project of WITT Works!, which brings together industry, labour education, government and communities in a collaborative effort to help develop a diverse, skilled work force. WITT Works! expands the best practices of CTW and can include other industries:

- National in scope, but regional in program execution
- Adaptable for varied demographic needs in different geographical locations
- Creates bridges among stakeholders
- Promotes a broader vision of women's role in the work force and the need to embrace technology
- Fosters systemic change
- Establishes sustainable partnerships

One example of a sustainable partnership with CTW is Saskatchewan's telecommunications company, SaskTel. In our agreement, the company not only provides short-term internships for young women students, it contributes to the cost of their work boots, work gloves and other safety-related equipment.

Another partnership example is the newly launched, pilot project, Manufacturing Technology for Women, a pre-apprenticeship program for women up to 29 years. Among the five partners are WITT Works!, the Ontario Women's Directorate and the Automotive Parts Manufacturers' Association. This program is being

offered in southern Ontario where there is an acute shortage of skilled tradespeople in manufacturing industries, particularly of machinists and tool and die makers. If successful, Manufacturing Technology for Women will be adapted for use in other communities with similar skilled trades needs.

Construction Technology for Women as part of WITT Works! is an initiative of the Women in Trades and Technology National Network (WITT NN). This network is a national education and advocacy organization dedicated to promoting and assisting in the recruitment, training and retention of women in trades, technology, operations and blue collar work. A major goal of WITT NN is to influence systemic change in sectors where women are highly underrepresented.

Although women make up 44% of the Canadian labour force, less than 10% of the technicians and technologists in Canada are women. In 1995, women comprised only 8.9% of all workers in construction-related industries, of which only 0.4% were under the age of 25. With such programs as Construction Technology for Women, Telecommunications for Women and Manufacturing Technology for Women, WITT NN, along with its project partners, is beginning to close this gap.

We invite you to learn more about CTW, WITT Works!, WITT NN and all of its other programs, products and services by visiting our Web site at www.wittnn.com. We encourage you to leave your comments and suggestions in our message book.

We also invite you to join us this evening between 7 and 10 p.m. for some WITT National Network hospitality in the Salon des Pins of the Renaissance Hôtel du Parc. We look forward to meeting you there!

Thank you.

My name is **Rae Braden** and I'm a student at Sir John Franklin High School in Yellowknife, Northwest Territories. I first heard about Construction Technology for Women from a presentation given at school. I was interested because it offered me something different, not something normally associated with school. I found the classes led by my technology teacher, who is a woman, to be quite non-threatening for a first-time experience. The group setting makes for a relaxed environment.

CTW offers me new experiences with trades and technologies. It gives me options to enter fast-growing industries. I enjoy working with machines and tools, and I like receiving credits for the courses. I gain on-the-job work experience in summer internships.

I find the class setting better when the group is smaller. I like working with people who have the same interests as me. It's easy to tell how serious some young women are about working. That is, the physical work is demanding, but rewarding.

My summer internship was in the alternative energy business. The company owner was a woman and an excellent employer. I felt very welcome and respected by other employees. I now feel more confident with the option of choosing a trade as an employment opportunity.

I took part in the Kitchener, Ontario Skills competition this past spring. A group of CTW women students from across the country built a demonstration radio tower, sponsored by different telecommunications companies. We learned welding in less than a week which meant working hard and learning under pressure. We were in working teams of people who had never worked together before. It was very satisfying when everything was finished and looked great!

Thank you.

My name is **Marian Cox** and I'm also a student at Sir John Franklin High School in Yellowknife. This past summer concluded my second year in the program, Construction Technology for Women. During my first year, I was introduced to basic carpentry, basic CADD, beginners WHMIS and First Aid. The second year involved the use of various scales to create a city to scale. Also, new to me was the module on electricity. Together as a group that year we worked on building a skid shack right from beginning to end. Both years we all kept journals of what we achieved and how we felt about the course in general.

My summer internships were great! There were no problems with sexual harassment. My employers not only praised me, they also corrected me; that is they made sure that I understood how and what it was if something was wrong. During that first summer, I spent a week working on the construction of an apartment building and then did odd jobs. In the second summer, I worked eight weeks for Nahanni Construction doing various jobs such as painting, clean-up work, flood and fire prevention and installing of insulation.

In the spring of 1998, I took part in Skills Canada in Vancouver where CTW women students from across Canada helped build a log cabin in the heart of the city! It was a great opportunity to meet other students and find out what they thought of the CTW program. Ours was an exhibition, not a competition, sponsored by various telecommunications companies. When the cabin was finished, we helped install modern telecommunications equipment such as a mobile satellite telephone, which is used by workers in the bush camps of the north.

Thank you.

Options non traditionnelles



Diane Guay

Ms. Diane Guay is Coordinator of Options non traditionnelles. She has been working as a career counsellor for nearly 10 years and has advised women considering professional reorientation. Her specialization lies in problem areas of women wanting to

integrate into economic sectors of the work force where they are underrepresented. Community groups who offer employment assistance to this segment of Québec's women workers have based their approaches on orientation tools she has created. Ms. Guay sits on various committees that strive to continually improve the status of women.



Lucie Bourgault

Lucie Bourgault is General Director of P.L.A.C.E. Rive-Sud, a non-profit organization dedicated to employment. P.L.A.C.E. Rive-Sud manages and develops services geared to women who want to improve their standard of living. Before accepting this position,

Ms. Bourgault was a development officer for Options non traditionnelles, one of the divisions of P.L.A.C.E. Rive-Sud. During the four years that she held this position, she contributed to the professional integration of more than fifty women by promoting women workers in the outlying region's businesses.

She is responsible for the implementation of the customized training service that, since its inception, has created two non-traditional training programs, one in welding and the other in the automotive sector.

Ms. Bourgault sits on several committees whose primary focus is improving the status of women.

For more than 12 years, *Options non traditionnelles* has been helping women plan their reentry into the work force in non-traditional employment sectors. The participants learn about the various types of occupations through career orientation activities, fitness workshops, hands-on workshops and practicums. They discover that it is both possible and gratifying to practice a trade where there are so few women.

Our clientele consists of women who are disadvantaged on an employment level. They have little schooling, have been away from the labour market for an extended period of time and are mainly single parents. Our activities are offered solely to women who show a marked interest in non-traditional occupations.

Our program, which lasts for a maximum of 12 weeks, is characterized by the following activities:

Hands-On Workshops

These workshops consist of educational games that make it possible to assess various aptitudes necessary for practising a non-traditional occupation. They are designed to evaluate fine motor skills, spatial perception, understanding of mechanics, manual dexterity and problem-solving skills. Workstations also enable the participants to simulate the various tasks they will be required to perform in the working environment. They also give the participants the opportunity to validate their career choices.

Fitness Program

The fitness program is designed to assess the physical fitness level of each participant and to propose a exercise program suitable for their career choice. The participants learn safe load-lifting techniques, proper work posture and strategies for preventing occupational diseases. The program also takes into account the importance of a healthy diet, relaxation and stress management.

Testimony of Women Holding Non-Traditional Positions

During the program, several women workers come to meet the participants undergoing the orientation process. They talk about the advantages of their occupations, as

well as the challenges they must meet. They can thus answer questions and address any fears future workers may have. These testimonies increase the enthusiasm level of participants and encourage them to persevere in their endeavours.

Practicums

At the end of the orientation process, the participants are given the possibility of doing a practicum. Those who have chosen to go back to school are directed to a company that will welcome them in a job shadowing program. Future students can thus validate their choice of study programs. For women who wish to quickly enter the labour market, a practicum provides an opportunity to demonstrate their skills and acquire relevant experience in their new employment sector. Thanks to the excellent relationship *Options non traditionnelles* has developed with the business world, the skills of women workers in non-traditional occupations have been acknowledged and, in many cases, the integration of women into these sectors has been accelerated.

Since 1986, the *Options non traditionnelles* team has welcomed more than 1 000 women. To date, 75% of them have been hired in non-traditional sectors or are enrolled in traditionally male-dominated programs.

Stainless Steel and Aluminum Welding Project

In September 1998, a group of fifteen women, all recipients of income security and mainly single parents, received specialized training in stainless steel and aluminum welding.

This training is the fruit of an entire year's work, a year during which *Options non traditionnelles*, the Commission scolaire des Grandes Seigneuries and approximately twenty companies in the South Shore and Montréal joined forces to create a training program in a sector with a shortage of available labour. Through the *Fonds de lutte contre la pauvreté*, the provincial government contributed to the training's implementation by accepting the request for financial assistance *Options non traditionnelles* submitted as project promoter.

Initially, the school board and *Options non traditionnelles* contacted companies in the industrial steel and aluminum sectors in order to assess the labour needs, and to draw up a training plan that would meet the companies' requirements. *Options non traditionnelles* seized this opportunity to promote female labour and attempt to convince employers to become associated

with a project that aimed to help future women workers receive certification.

These twenty companies validated and improved the course contents developed by the school board, thereby contributing to the certification of future women workers. The collaboration of the employers in the selection process also facilitated the recruitment process of students most likely to successfully complete their courses. The practical experience they provided the student apprentices greatly complemented their training.

The school board, in turn, agreed to welcome a counsellor from *Options non traditionnelles* to its training centre. He or she could provide support on a daily basis to students who were experiencing difficulties and was thus able to stimulate the participation of the students, find solutions to their personal problems and ultimately, prevent some from dropping out.

To improve the quality of the process, the school board agreed to set up a training monitoring committee that would evaluate the proper development of the training and the students' progress on a weekly basis. The committee members are the Director of the training centre, the custom training consultant, the instructor and the *Options non traditionnelles* counsellor.

Options non traditionnelles convinced its partners to include workshops designed to prepare future women workers for the male-dominated aspect of the occupation. Workshops to prepare the women for integration into non-traditional sectors, as well as fitness workshops, tested by *Options non traditionnelles*, were thus included in the program.

At the end of this experiment, in September 1999, eight of the 11 graduates were offered jobs in companies where they had done a practicum. The other three continued their job search with the support of *Options non traditionnelles*.

Proud of this success, *Options non traditionnelles* and the school board are currently exploring new collaboration venues. Whether through the development of new training projects or because of the presence of an *Options non traditionnelles* counsellor at the training centre, the school board acknowledges that the innovative approach taken by *Options non traditionnelles* has contributed to the fact that the students pursue their studies.

Working Women: Achievements and Innovative Local and Regional Projects

The Fonds d'investissement pour l'entrepreneurship au féminin de la Côte-Nord



Marie-Claire Larose

Marie-Claire Larose is a sociologist. A 1986 graduate from the Université Laval, she is currently writing a master's thesis on female entrepreneurs in remote regions of Québec and plans to present her findings in December 2000. Since 1998, she has held the

position of General Director of the Fonds d'investissement pour l'entrepreneurship au féminin (FIEF), whose head office is in Baie-Comeau. Prior to this function, she was a sociology teacher at the Collège de Baie-Comeau (1992-1996) and a planning and program consultant for both the Conseil régional des centres d'hébergement et de réadaptation de la Côte-Nord (1993-1994) and the Centre d'accueil N.-A.-Labrie (1991-1994). Working in collaboration with female entrepreneurs, she was the provincial coordinator for the Fédération des agricultrices du Québec, an organization affiliated with the Union des producteurs agricoles (1988-1989).

Some may be surprised by the participation of the Fonds d'investissement pour l'entrepreneurship au féminin (FIEF) at the Zoom on Women and Non-traditional Occupations Forum. Indeed, how can the business world be considered non-traditional for women? Has the number of businesswomen not increased considerably in the last 10 years? Are women not the main "treasurers" of their households and, consequently, naturally apt to assume responsibilities involving the management of goods and money?

The reality is not quite so simple. Although there are more women than ever in this traditionally male-dominated sector, they still have not reached a level of representation that reflects their demographic weight in the population. Statistics reveal that women are still a minority in the wonderful world of business. They barely represent a third of the population of entrepreneurs and are rarely found in positions of decision-making power.

In a key region such as the Côte-Nord, where major industries offer well-paid jobs to specialized workers and day labourers, women are at a disadvantage. In 1996, a mere 53% of women in the Côte-Nord region were part of the active population, compared to 72% for men. Among the women workers, only 69% held full-time jobs.

The gap between men and women is clearly reflected in their respective incomes. The average salary of women in the Côte-Nord is already lower than that of the majority of women in Québec. What then of the gap that separates them from the average income of men in the Côte-Nord? Indeed, these women earn only 52% of the average salary of their male counterparts.

This having been said, how can we not talk of poverty and underemployment. More than half the people receiving social assistance (53.9%) are women. Not to mention that the Côte-Nord holds the unenviable rank of being the region with the second highest number of young women on welfare, where two out of three mothers are single parents.

Limited access to postsecondary education is an additional obstacle for women who would like to study without having to move from their region. Because the region has only two colleges and no university (except for a few courses given by the services of other regions), the choice of study programs is limited, thereby discouraging many women from furthering their education. In fact, nearly one quarter of women in this region have less than nine years of schooling and a mere 6.5% hold a university degree. Needless to say, without decent incomes and without certification, women's integration into the community and work force is little more than a pipe dream.

Still, women's economic contribution to the region is considerable, but do they really reap benefits that are proportional to their contribution? It is highly unlikely. In short, this reflection on the poverty of women has lead our pioneers to promote the development of the entrepreneurial culture of women as a means of achieving financial independence.

Background of the FIEF: From Idea to Action

The idea of creating an investment fund came about during the Regional Socioeconomic Conferences in October 1988.¹ Gathered around a "sectorial table", women of all ages and from various backgrounds joined forces to present their project. Their strategy was simple: use the regional platform to have their voices heard and to express their frustration regarding poverty. From there, the initiators became skilled in the art of lobbying and in developing strategic alliances. So-called male skills became their primary tools for the promotion of business ventures by and for women.

In the strategic planning stage² of March 1994, the implementation of a fund for women was finally acknowledged as priority development. Bolstered by their success and eager to take action, nine volunteer professionals formed a labour council headed by the Regroupement des femmes de la Côte-Nord. Together, they designed the structure of the FIEF and, in July 1995, the new organization obtained its letters patent. By 1996, the FIEF had funded its first projects. From then on, local and regional economic development organizations had to consider this new partner.

A bold regional fundraising campaign was conducted to provide the liquid assets necessary for the fund. During the first year, the organization managed to raise nearly \$150 000 from private and public sources, through nothing more than the art of persuasion and the promotion of a legitimate cause.

The creation of FIEF was not unanimously applauded by the population. Some felt that it was discriminatory to exclusively favour women. Others objected to the overlap with existing services. These arguments are still occasionally raised, but fall apart when we remind detractors that women have historically been excluded from the worlds of finance, employment and business. Their recent emergence on the labour market and their mediocre living conditions amply justify our claim. The limited means put at their disposal do not expedite their social and economic integration.

The FIEF: Its Organization and Mission

MISSION

The Fonds d'investissement pour l'entrepreneurship au féminin (FIEF) is a nonprofit organization whose mission is to develop the entrepreneurial potential of women in the Côte-Nord. It also helps them with the start-up, consolidation and expansion of businesses that encourage permanent job creation and retention.

The FIEF serves as an alternative to traditional financial institutions. It gives access to credit in the form of loans or loan guarantees to women entrepreneurs in the Côte-Nord. This service is unique in its flexibility and accessibility. In addition to offering a practical solution to economic problems, it favours both individual and collective empowerment of women and their environment.

Moreover, the FIEF clientele benefits from a network of mutual cooperation and support which counters the isolation and flagrant lack of available information and training. The organization also launches innovative regional projects aimed to encourage women to break out of the low-paying sectors to which they are in large part confined.

TERRITORY SERVED

The territory served by the FIEF represents the second largest region in Québec. It covers over 298 388 km² and 1 300 km of shoreline. The Côte-Nord is known for its majestic landscapes, the diversity of its marine park and the abundance of its natural and hydroelectric resources.

The road network is primarily based on two roads: Highway 138 that stretches along the Saint Lawrence River between Tadoussac and Natashquan, and Highway 389 towards Fermont and Manic V. The 500-kilometre coastline to the east can only be reached by plane or boat.

The Côte-Nord is described as a low population density area, even decreased population growth, whose inhabitants are scattered over a vast territory. This situation affects their personal, family, professional and community lives, particularly those of women.

The exodus of young people in search of employment and the departure of the retired towards areas closer to social and health services are two phenomena that seriously disrupt the region's economy. Economic diversification therefore appears to be a formidable challenge for local entrepreneurs.



OPERATIONS

The FIEF is run by a board of directors consisting of businesswomen who are actively involved in various socioeconomic and community activities. Four employees are currently responsible for customer service.

Entrepreneurs who apply for financing must first produce a business plan describing their project. At this stage, they can obtain the help of two government organizations³ that offer assistance in drawing up business plans. The initial applications for financing are submitted to financial institutions and regional fund agencies. As a last resort, entrepreneurs can finalize the financing process of their project with the FIEF. The organization's consultants thus guide and support them through the entire process, that is, through pre-start-up, consolidation and post-start-up operations.

Through our partnership with socioeconomic consultants, we mutually recommend projects to one another, we discuss projects among ourselves and sometimes handle projects jointly so as to prevent any unnecessary procedures for the entrepreneurs.

Figure 1:



SOURCES OF FUNDING

Money is the name of the game. To constitute a foundation for the fund, each founding member made a financial commitment in order to encourage people from the constituency to participate in the fund's creation.

A valuable and early ally, the Regroupement des femmes de la Côte-Nord, took out a mortgage on its property and lent the FIEF \$25 000. An equivalent sum came from another women's organization, the Centre Émersion. Furthermore, the fundraising campaign brought in around 20% of the fund. This contribution from the constituency was in the form of donations and interest-free loans.

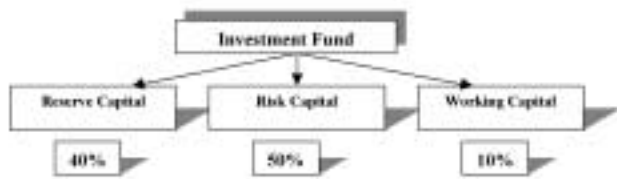
As for public funding, the Secrétariat⁴ pour le développement des régions contributed \$50 000. Other ministries also offer non-statutory grants. Finally, the Société québécoise de la main-d'œuvre (SQDM) and the Conseil régional de développement de la Côte-Nord (CRD) participated with salary subsidies or training support.

Although not comprehensive, this quick look at the funding gives a good overview of the scope of the FIEF founder activities geared to building the foundations of the investment fund.

ADMINISTRATION OF FUND

To provide the lenders and funding organizations with a guarantee, the FIEF has created three types of funds: risk capital, used to finance projects; reserve capital, used as a guarantee for the investors and to ensure the FIEF's viability; and working capital, consisting of 10% of the amounts received and reserved for the administration of the fund.

Figure 2:



All women residing in the territory are eligible for a loan if they meet the following criteria:

The promoter must:

- 1) be 18 years of age or more
- 2) fall under one of the following three target clientele categories:
 - a) women 18 and over who are socioeconomically underprivileged and who wish to undertake a business project
 - b) women who have taken several steps to explore the existing services and who have not been successful in finding help to start or develop their business
 - c) women's groups that want to develop structural projects for their community
- 3) have a feasible and viable project for the creation, consolidation or expansion of a business
- 4) not be in active competition with existing businesses
- 5) reside and run a business in the FIEF territory
- 6) become a member of the FIEF

Concrete Results

SUPPORT FOR WOMEN ENTREPRENEURS

Since its creation in 1995, the FIEF has granted 11 loans for a total investment of \$55 000. As a result, we have seen the start-up of 10 businesses and the creation of approximately 30 jobs. Together, these new businesses have generated nearly \$500 000 worth of investments in the regional economy. Each year, the FIEF welcomes more than 100 women who are interested in entrepreneurship.

PROMOTING ENTREPRENEURSHIP

"Gagnez votre entreprise" Contest

This year, the FIEF has launched its first contest, called "Gagnez votre entreprise" (win your own business). A total of 80 women have requested and received entry forms. No less than 38 projects have been submitted, 13 of which have been retained for the second phase of the selection process. These involve at least 34 entrepreneurs. The value of the projects submitted is between \$10 000 and \$250 000, and several of the projects are innovative in nature. Finally, three winners will be awarded cash bursaries as well as a selection of goods and services offered by local businesses. For the region, this means three new businesses and potential employers.

The contest is a great success in terms of regional partnership, for it brings together several consultants from the private and public sectors. The contest highlights the importance of networking to succeed in business, which will provide an excellent tool for promoting entrepreneurship.

Information and Education Campaign on the "Entrepreneurial" Profession

The purpose of the two-day information and education campaign is to demystify the "entrepreneurial" profession, but mostly to raise women's awareness with regards to the myths and beliefs that impede them in the pursuit of their objectives. Some examples of these myths and beliefs include the relationship with money, power and the economy, and their difficulty in promoting themselves. This activity offers them the opportunity to evaluate their interests and their aptitudes for entrepreneurship. Women learn the steps they need to follow to start-up a business and discover the resources available and the business opportunities in the region.

FIEF Benefit Show

Given last year's success, a second edition of the benefit show was organized. The goal of this evening is to increase the risk capital and put a specific economic sector into the limelight. In 1998, regional food products were honoured thanks to the collaboration of the

region's top chefs. This year, the cultural sector will be featured in the world premiere presentation of "Femmes orchestres pour une région", starring self-employed female musicians from the region.

Research and Development

STUDY ON THE SUCCESS FACTORS AND REASONS FOR FAILURE OF WOMEN ENTREPRENEURS IN THE CÔTE-NORD

A study on the factors and reasons behind the successes and failures of women entrepreneurs in the Côte-Nord is currently underway, the findings of which should be published in February 2000. The goal of this research is to identify the obstacles and difficulties that affect the survival of businesses run by women. The results will allow us, among other things, to assess how much women know about the services offering assistance to businesses and in what manner and to what extent they make use of them.

This study enhances the FIEF's expertise in the field of female entrepreneurship and also offers us the opportunity to closely collaborate with major Québec female researchers on this topic.

Upcoming Projects

Leaders of an organization as young and dynamic as the FIEF must demonstrate excellent entrepreneurial skills. As such, one or more projects, related to matters and activities that will allow us to better meet the needs of our clientele, are always in the works. The following projects are currently being developed:

TRAINING FOR STARTING UP A BUSINESS IN THE FOOD BIOPROCESSING SECTOR

The food bioprocessing sector is emerging in the Côte-Nord with the processing of berries and seafood. However, few resources specialize in managing these types of businesses. The FIEF intends to implement a pilot training program in this field in April 2000.

FORUM ON BUSINESSWOMEN

This forum will allow us to broadcast and share the results of our study on the success factors and the reasons for failure of women entrepreneurs. It will serve as a venue for exploring various possible solutions for increasing the survival rate of businesses. This project is scheduled for the year 2000 and will be held on a provincewide level. The FIEF will organize the event and plans to hold the forum in the Côte-Nord.

DEVELOPMENT OF A "VIRTUAL INCUBATOR"

MUTUAL AID NETWORK

Further to the conclusions of a study conducted by a project management consulting firm, the FIEF plans to develop a regional mutual aid network for women entrepreneurs based on the "virtual incubator" model.

The goal of this project is to provide women entrepreneurs with monitoring and support tools that are suited to their situation and to the extent of the territory. The development of a mentor program and the use of new communications technology (Internet, Web site, distance learning) are some of the resources offered by the network. The FIEF also plans on hiring a financial analyst and maintaining development officers in the area. This project is primarily geared towards self-employed women and microbusinesses.

Conclusion

Serving a territory that is as vast as a country forces us to innovate and especially create alliances.

In almost 5 years, the FIEF has earned its reputation. Its credibility is the result, among other things, of the determination and professionalism of its team. In the end, however, it is the leadership of its managers—many of whom have been there since the beginning—that has given the organization's destiny a favourable direction.

The FIEF has become an increasingly important, if not vital, economic and social partner. Its actions contribute to increasing the entrepreneurial competencies of women and promoting this option as a means of creating one's own employment. Furthermore, the increase in the number of businesses and jobs in the region proves economic benefits exist.

From Tadoussac to Blanc-Sablon, future women entrepreneurs know about the services and can dream of developing a project in their community. Despite the hardships, they love this part of their country and want to make a decent living there.

STRATEGIC ALLIANCES FOR SUCCESS

The first alliance to prioritize is the one that is developed with the women in the field, those women for whom and with whom we work. First and foremost, they do not want to have ready-made solutions imposed on them and they insist that their point of view be heard.

Regardless of the scope of their project, these women promoters want to be respected. Many are suspicious and need to be reassured. They have little or no money

to invest, and this is why confidence in their potential is a determining factor in the initiation of a project. Note that bankers rarely invest in this type of venture.

Secondly, we must establish strategic alliances with the socioeconomic consultants. To do this, we must participate in events where various regional projects are discussed. When developing and implementing solutions that are beneficial to both parties, establishing a win-win relationship is more effective than speeches and reports. This exercise requires a major investment in terms of time, but can, in the long run, be worth the effort when, for example, it is possible to settle an issue by means of a single phone call.

The FIEF partners consist of various ministries, local, regional and provincial political offices, organizations dedicated to employment and economic development and, finally, women's groups, both in the region and elsewhere.

Despite its success, the future of the FIEF remains uncertain. First of all, our governments grant the funding but sparingly. Secondly, the population is already highly solicited for all kinds of causes, each one more commendable than the next. We estimate that 50% of our time is devoted to collecting the funding necessary for running the organization and for financing the projects. Despite this somewhat dismal reality, we remain optimistic. The FIEF is determined to survive. The more forums we participate in to get exposure, the more support we will garner and the more our message will be heard by those who hold the purse strings.

¹ A socioeconomic conference is an event bringing together regional partners and the Government of Québec to jointly establish priorities in the development orientations. The conference represents the conclusion of the consultation process where projects and the conditions under which they are to be carried out are negotiated. The ultimate outcome is a five-year blanket agreement ratified between the region and the Québec government.

² Strategic planning has replaced the socioeconomic conferences, but the principle of negotiating priorities between the regional partners and the Québec government remains the same.

³ The CLD: Centre local de développement (CLD) and the Société d'aide au développement des collectivités (SADC).

⁴ The Secrétariat des régions is now called the Ministère des Régions.

Femmes et production industrielle



Danièle Caron
Director of *Femmes*
et production industrielle

Introduction

The *Femmes et production industrielle* project was founded by a coalition of women's groups in the Mauricie

and Centre-du-Québec regions in an effort to battle female poverty. Vocational diversification was one of the preferred ways for women to achieve financial independence. In view of the good opportunities for lasting, quality jobs in the manufacturing sector in these two regions, the groups focused on getting women hired by manufacturers. This led to the creation of the *Femmes et production industrielle* project in 1995.

Supervised by coordinating groups from the women's movement in the Mauricie and Centre-du-Québec, the *Femmes et production industrielle* project was implemented by a steering committee of women from various milieus: job-entry centres for women, the *commission scolaire Chemin du Roy*, the *Conseil du statut de la femme*, and *Emploi-Québec*.

Almost from the outset, the project directly involved women as well as employers and partners in employment and training. The efforts of *Femmes et production industrielle* were therefore centred around these goals, and initiatives were created for each of them.

TOPICS COVERED IN THE WORKSHOP

Our presentation will begin by reviewing the findings of a 1995 survey. We will then discuss three forms of job training specific to women: operation of woodworking machines, furniture finishing, and launching and starting up a food bioprocessing business. We will conclude with a look at training in preparation for factory work.

Part 1—Employer Survey

Before deciding what action to take to facilitate access by women to skilled jobs in manufacturing, a survey was conducted to assess the women's employment situation in this sector in order to better understand the issues involved in their integration into the workplace. Note that the garment industry was excluded from the survey because it already has a high concentration of women (85.9%).

Based on an analysis of some 200 factory jobs, the survey was supposed to show that women were capable of holding 81% of production jobs, while in fact they only held 16%. This led us to believe women could occupy more jobs in the manufacturing sector. Moreover, since half of the positions open to women fell into the unskilled-labour category, integrating women into the manufacturing workplace became a real short-term possibility.

The survey also found that employers were more open to hiring women for positions of responsibility than as skilled labour, yet had a tendency to hire more women for skilled than for unskilled work. However, the highest concentration of women working in manufacturing is found in unskilled jobs. This paradox may be due to the fact that employers need better-trained workers with good technical and managerial skills. Steering women into non-traditional vocational training also became an interesting approach.

Other facts became apparent as a result of the survey. For one, we were able to determine the main reasons why employers are reluctant to hire women workers. The first drawback associated with the presence of women is their integration into work crews. Difficulty in controlling negative reactions of coworkers is the main fear managers have in hiring women.

Secondly, physical strength remains a major concern for employers when hiring, even though they estimate that only about a quarter of the positions require great physical strength. Lastly, family responsibilities such as parental reasons or maternity leave seem to put a damper on the integration of women.

Among the motives and interest of employers in hiring women, the survey found that attention to detail is the female worker's greatest advantage. The fact that women are motivated to get things done also appears to be a decisive factor in the hiring of women, because we find that they motivate work crews. Their mere presence triggers healthy competition between the men and the women. Moreover, many employers find that the workplace atmosphere improves after women are hired for production jobs.

Based on various findings in the survey, *the Femmes et production industrielle* project quickly focused on properly preparing women. We emphasized, among other things, non-traditional job training specific to women as well as training in preparation for factory work. Because the usual content of standard courses was not very suited to women, we encouraged them to teach each other in order to increase their chances of success.

Part 2 – Non-Traditional Job Training

It should be pointed out here that the job-entry centres for women organize the courses because they supervised employment training ranging from recruitment to job-seeking and from the start of training to entering the labour market. In each case, whether it involved operating woodworking machines, furniture finishing, or launching and starting up a food bioprocessing business, job-training centres supplied the technical content.

It should also be mentioned that in order to increase trainees' chances of finding a job following the training, the courses were chosen based on employment opportunities in the local community. To achieve this, the project sought the assistance of businesses and other employment partners such as local employment centres in identifying labour needs.

Job training specific to women enables them to study with each other and enjoy the ongoing support of a job-entry centre throughout the courses. Yet while there are numerous advantages to creating women-only groups, such as sustaining interest and motivation through the mutual support between women, it is not the intent of the *Femmes et production industrielle* project to use this

formula year after year. The project will rely more on the power of numbers to establish models and give high visibility to women in non-traditional fields.

Based on our experience to date, three non-traditional job-training initiatives organized for women are described below:

ATTESTATION D'ÉTUDES PROFESSIONNELLES (AEP)

(CERTIFICATE OF VOCATIONAL STUDIES IN WOODWORKING MACHINERY OPERATION)

This training program was supported and supervised by the *Le Pont de Trois-Rivières* centre. Fourteen women from various MRCs (regional county municipalities) took the 900-hour course, which had been approved by 45 employers in the Mauricie. Technical content was supplied by the *Qualitech* centre in Cap-de-la-Madeleine.

At the end of the training or in the weeks following, all the women found jobs: nine (64%) in the wood or furniture industry, and five elsewhere. In all, 13 of the women (93%) were working in the manufacturing sector and 14 (100%) had jobs, all sectors combined.

DIPLÔME D'ÉTUDES PROFESSIONNELLES (DEP)

(DIPLOMA OF VOCATIONAL STUDIES IN FURNITURE FINISHING)

Services intégrés pour l'emploi in Victoriaville organized the 1,290-hour course taken by 13 women from various MRCs. The *École québécoise du meuble de bois ouvré* supplied the technical instruction. After completing the course, nine women (64%) found jobs in furniture finishing while the remainder were looking for a job in that field.

ATTESTATION D'ÉTUDES COLLÉGIALES (AEC)

(CERTIFICATE OF COLLEGIAL STUDIES IN LAUNCHING AND STARTING UP A FOOD BIOPROCESSING BUSINESS)

Designed for women from the Mauricie and Centre-du-Québec regions, this course was organized by the *Partance de Drummondville*. The *commission scolaire La Riveraine* in Nicolet was closely involved in the project, in which 15 women learned entrepreneurial skills. By the end of the course nine women had launched seven food bioprocessing businesses.

It is worth noting that one of the businesses, *Saveurs de renom*, specializing in rabbit meat, won first prize in the *Gagner votre entreprise* contest organized by the *Entrepreneuriat féminin régional de la Mauricie et du Centre-du-Québec*.

Part 3—Training In Preparation for Factory Work

Although job training specific to women enables them to achieve a greater presence in non-traditional occupations, the *Femmes et production industrielle* steering committee had to organize shorter courses to help women find manufacturing sector jobs. For family, economic or other reasons, some women are reluctant to make a commitment to long-term training. Sometimes they are unsure of their career choice and look for ways to confirm their decision.

To date, four training programs designed to give women supervised factory work experience have been organized by job-entry centres in the following communities:

- *Centre Le Pont de Trois-Rivières* in Shawinigan
- *Centre Le Pont de Trois-Rivières* in Grand-Mère
- *Partance de Drummondville* in Drummondville
- *Services intégrés pour l'emploi* in Victoriaville

A number of partners were involved in organizing this training. Although the job-entry centres for women are at the forefront, job-training centres, school boards, local employment centres and businesses also play important roles.

The courses are either preparatory (a single sector) or exploratory (multi-sectoral). In either case, the training must enable trainees to widen the scope of their job seeking to include non-traditional sectors. The courses can also lead toward vocational training, or even to a return to regular school.

Over a period of some eight weeks, the FPTV program (training in preparation for factory work) provides women with a basic refresher in mathematics, geometry and measurement systems. It also includes technical courses in subjects such as woodworking, metalworking, mechanical

maintenance, electricity and electronics. In addition, the classroom work is supplemented by periods of physical fitness training.

While these courses emphasize on-the-job technical training, they also enable women to develop manual skills in handling tools and operating various machines and transport equipment. In addition to real work experience in a factory, the program includes plant tours and talks by women working in non-traditional jobs. Finally, practicums allow the women to make use of their new skills and experience factory work.

These courses spare no effort to fully prepare the women for factory work. Throughout the program, the job-entry centres provide support, whether it be course registration, follow-up and supervision, overseeing of practicums, or finding work. Afterward, follow-up is also provided with respect to integration into the workplace.

RESULTS OF TRAINING IN PREPARATION FOR FACTORY WORK

Of a total of 55 women

(distributed among the four training programs):

- 28 women (51%) had jobs at the end of the training including
 - > 27 women (49%) in non-traditional occupations
- 13 women (24%) vocational training including
 - > 8 women (15%) in non-traditional vocational training
- 8 women (15%) looking for non-traditional jobs
- 35 women (64%) in non-traditional jobs or training
- 49 women (89%) in an active undertaking (all sectors combined)

Conclusion

Two facts now emerge from the experience of the *Femmes et production industrielle* project. First, women need to be properly prepared to hold skilled jobs in the manufacturing sector. This is essential not only to obtain a job, but also to keep it. In this regard, vocational training specific to women enables them to learn technical skills suited to their circumstances while making them more self-confident about their ability to do a skilled job.

Secondly, these achievements also owe their success to concerted action by various partners including the job-entry centres, vocational training centres, local employment centres and businesses. A joint effort is required in those fields with the most job opportunities.

Difficulties in Entering Production Jobs



Marie-Josée Legault

Marie-Josée Legault holds a Ph.D. in sociology and is a professor of industrial relations at Télé-université where she teaches and does research on such subjects as employment and pay equity. She has also taught these subjects at Université Laval. Since serving on

the Advisory Committee on Equal Opportunity Programs for Women in the Private Sector in 1988 and 1989, she has pursued her interests in this field in various ways. She heads a research team subsidized by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada (SSHRC), working in partnership with community organizations and businesses committed to the integration of women into industries not traditionally female. In addition to serving on the scientific committee for the Claire-Bonenfant professorial chair on the status of women at Université Laval, she has published numerous articles, research reports and manuals and has spoken and led seminars at various conferences.

Introduction

My objective in this presentation is to disclose the initial results of an empirical study conducted at four firms in various sectors that created women-hiring initiatives for non-traditional sectors.

Sixty interviews were conducted at the four firms concerned, which operate in the urban transit (A), food (B), finance (C) and funeral services (D) sectors. A second round of recruitment has since begun (in 1999-2000) with the aim of lining up two or three new organizations in the financial sector.

The originality of this study rests, among other things, on women as well as men, and on management and union leaders alike, to study relations between the groups that form through these experiences. The collected data were then compared with the findings from an earlier study of some 20 companies that adopted an equal opportunities program (EOP) ten years ago.

The purpose of the study is to identify the factors resulting in the success or failure of the cases under review and to propose courses of action.

Background

According to the published reviews of the Québec¹ and federal² equal opportunities programs, the results of the implementation of the programs are far from encouraging. In general, progress is both slow and marginal. The programs are failing to achieve their objectives, which include increasing the representation of members of the target groups (especially with women) and reducing job segregation (including sexual).

The small increase in representation of women

Despite general disaffection with employment equity, some organizations are taking important initiatives to battle sexual and ethnic job segregation, but for the most part are having difficulty achieving their objectives. First of all, the firms are experiencing difficulty attaining their hiring goals and, in particular, both the official reports and our study indicate that the construction trades and manufacturing jobs are tightly closed to women and members of cultural minorities.

One of the first explanations often put forward is a hiring freeze and cutback of staff in the organization concerned. All the government reports—those covering organizations under Québec jurisdiction as well as those under federal law—suggest that this is a major factor in the failure of these programs.

But this is not enough to account for the results because the preferential hiring of target-group members is not the only instrument at the disposal of the management of these organizations; among others, internal mobility is also one of the human resources management practices that calls for review. By reducing the obstacles blocking access by women to certain career paths, management can reduce occupational segregation while at the same time improving employment equity (CDP, 1988).

Among other factors, numerous hurdles standing in the way of women's access to training restrict their mobility (Carnevale, Gainer and Villet, 1990; Chicha, 1995; Granier, Barthélémy and Lapied, 1992; Holtmann and Idson, 1991; Larocque, 1997; Legault, 1997; Tremblay, 1992; Veum, 1993).

Also, so-called departmental seniority systems restrict access to job openings to persons already on the appropriate career track from which members of the target groups are often missing (Black, 1990; Dulude, 1995).

The persistence of job segregation

But hiring is only one phase of the cultural change essential for improving equity; after this stage, the organization must still concern itself with the long-term integration of these new recruits. As the problems of integration proliferate, annual attrition wipes out the effects of the new hirings (Front, 1997; Itzin, 1995; Thobani, 1995).

This is one of the avenues my research induces me to explore (Legault, 1999, 2000). The four case studies led me to identify resistance practices and exclusion mechanisms operating in the workplace and, common to all firms, may help explain why the long-term integration of new recruits fails. As a result, I observed that some of the prerequisites for success have now been fulfilled.

I will discuss these aspects and conclude with a creative solution found by a local union to halt many of these practices.

Success Factors at the Firms Under Study

Consistently throughout the study, one of the main factors for success was the attitude of the women themselves. They are generally reluctant to accept any favoritism in the strict sense of the word, such as exemption from certain duties or shifts. They want to be governed by the same conditions as their male colleagues and not be spared any discomfort or harsh working conditions. When women in non-traditional sectors demand special treatment because they are women, this actually compromises the success of their integration.

Women are also using highly ingenious strategies to thwart male insecurity or hostility toward them. They do so often at their own immediate expense, but with their sights set on a longer-term objective, namely their integration into the workplace: responding to an unfriendly comment or gesture in private rather than in public out of respect for a colleague's pride, exercising self-restraint in the face of behaviour they consider sheer provocation, teaming up with colleagues for battles on issues important to them, etc.

Moreover, the human resource departments (HRD) at the firms under study are very familiar with how equal opportunity programs (EOP) work according to the Québec approach and are knowledgeable in this respect, particularly because they are a voluntary undertaking. The voluntary approach has its disadvantages, especially that of limiting the number of organizations affected by EOPs, but for local communities, it at least has the advantage of only affecting departments motivated to introduce an EOP.

The departments we studied sought a firm commitment from senior management, which is very important for real action to be taken and the measures to remain in effect; consult with employee representatives and team up with them for some aspects of the process; have desegregated employment data and keep it up to date; and introduced follow-up and control measures. Most have an intrinsic motive to pursue equity beyond their legal obligations; for example, they do it to satisfy an increasingly diversified clientele, customers who want to deal with someone to whom they can relate.

In some cases, the HRDs collaborate with organizations that represent women in non-traditional sectors and this goes a long way toward helping them attain their quantitative recruitment objectives, among other things, and make them aware of the key qualitative dimensions that must be addressed.

In particular, some departments make managers accountable for their results in terms of seniority. This constitutes irrefutable proof of commitment and in this regard represents a key factor for success.

With respect to harassment and balancing work and family, most are at the forefront of their industry in this regard, although they still have a way to go.

In some cases, bridges have been built to facilitate internal mobility and have even been enshrined in the collective agreement, for example to make it easier to move from one internal career track to another previously separated by a tight barrier. This opens up the possibility of a woman hired for a predominantly female position applying for a job in the trades for instance, providing she successfully completes the required training. Moreover, some collective agreements now treat seniority as temporary when it comes to filling a position; this can be an advantage to the most recently hired personnel who often include women.

Selection criteria and practices have been rendered non-sexist at the firms under study. Some of these firms, for example, were able to salvage many of their former procedures; since management can establish its own selection tests and classification categories, it can, for instance, hire interns who have not yet graduated but meet the company's hiring standards.

Medical examinations were also studied, and usually comply with the charter of human rights. Lastly, work health and safety facilities have in most cases been adapted to accommodate women to everyone's satisfaction—men's and women's alike. In fact, the new equipment often enables all the men, especially the older ones, to work under safer conditions and avoid accidents and injuries.

Failure Factors: The Exclusion Mechanisms and Resistance Practices of Fellow Workers

These male exclusion mechanisms and resistance practices share a common bond, namely various forms of harassment, sometimes sexual as such, sometimes sexist, and often psychological.

WOMEN UNDER CLOSE SCRUTINY

The arrival of a woman sparks curiosity among the men and, for a while, the new recruit is a major focus of attention. The women we interviewed often described a parade past their workstation with each male colleague uttering a more or less inappropriate or more or less provocative remark. The women described the very unpleasant feeling of being watched and also of having quips made to another worker right in front of them.

Where the work force is stable, such as in a factory, situations felt to be humiliating are experienced less often, but they nonetheless occur. On construction sites, however, crews change every day and the experience recurs endlessly.

This can make things very difficult for some and cause them to quit. Although they can make excuses and even though in some cases this situation may last no more than two weeks, they may not have any sisterly support if the number of women is small.

WALKING A THIN LINE

Coming up with a "good" reaction to inappropriate gestures that are clearly of a harassing or borderline nature is like walking a thin line. To be appropriate and assist a woman's integration rather than create problems, the response must convey a careful dose of self-affirmation and tact, while protecting the male pride; this means having to separate what the woman should do in public (in front of fellow workers) and what should be done privately with the offender, if applicable.

This rule of respect for an individual's public image is, among other things, of the utmost importance and applies in different contexts, even to pornographic posters. As long as this rule is obeyed and the confrontations are limited to personal interaction, it may still seem possible to work things out. But for women to respond with the same spontaneity as men who feel at home within the factory walls is out of the question. These men have no such scruples in expressing their feelings about a fellow worker's behaviour; whether in public or in private, the comments fly and injure. There is a double standard, and the difference underscores the fact that one group feels at home and the other under close scrutiny.

There is a thin line between respect and affirmation of one's position, and striving for peaceful coexistence... and it often means suppressing one's feelings. Yet these women are not entitled to make mistakes; one bad reaction, one false step, can haunt them for a long time.

TELLTALE SIGNS OF EXCLUSION AND OSTRACISM

Sometimes the men join forces—occasionally with the supervisor—to keep a woman out of the group; their goal may be to get her fired. What causes this hostile reaction? Obviously, not all women are subjected to this treatment. The reasons cited (physical inability to do the job, unsociable behaviour) are not necessarily the real grounds for the ostracism.

Without a doubt, exclusion from the entire group of fellow workers in the same department represents the biggest hurdle that women have to overcome.

Pressure on men from a common front formed by the peer group and supervisor

One form that this ostracism or exclusion takes is a refusal to team up with a female colleague when the work is organized by pairing off workers. Supervisors can play an active role in this exclusion, for example by forbidding the men in the department from talking to the woman concerned, and by establishing a reign of terror and using informers within the department.

A male worker's refusal may stem from his own reluctance as well as from fear of exclusion from his peer group. Naturally, it may also reflect the fact that he doesn't like the person just as he may not like any other colleague, but if the reaction becomes a generalized one, little credence can be given to antipathy that is so widespread. Can the female employee be considered incompetent by the entire group? In that case, how could she possibly have held her job for so many years?

Peer-group pressure on men

A female worker learned the hard way that pornographic posters are sacred territory (we will return to this shortly) by daring to move one of the hard-core posters facing her while she was eating in a construction-site hut. First, she asked for permission to do it and no one

said anything. She then moved the poster so that it was behind her. The next day her peer group teamed up and literally wallpapered the hut with posters that were even more hard-core.

When the woman saw the counteraction, she had to decide on the spot what attitude to adopt because the men were there waiting to see what she would do. Alone, she felt there was no way she could win because men automatically close ranks in the construction industry, be it out of conviction or simply as a result of intimidation or the threat of losing their network of contacts.

This incident also underscores the importance of numbers, of a critical mass of women when events pit "the guys against the gals." But for the women, what hurts the most in this conflict is the discovery that any friendship established with male colleagues fades in the shadow of this all too important issue. Male solidarity prevails.

A man who showed support for the victim would not necessarily thereby compromise his own employment opportunities; exclusion from the social group is the only thing at stake and this is enough to bond with the peers.

PORNOGRAPHIC POSTERS

Unfortunately, a sense of humour is not the answer to everything and some women, based on their own experiences, do not think that the solution is a quip or "ignoring it because they'll get angry." Thus the practice of putting up pornographic pictures is a very sensitive issue for women to deal with because they are well aware that, for their colleagues, these posters are what anthropologists might call totems, taboos, the last bastion, the fortress. Apart from their symbolic importance for the men, pornographic posters also raise the issue of the delicate position of union leaders who want to take all their members into consideration.

This can reach the point of a merging of male culture and union culture with the women finding themselves either alone or with the human resources department now turning a deaf ear to them.

For the time being, and this is undoubtedly related to the small number of women, the predominant response of women is to turn a blind eye to it, as though it were not a top priority or might even jeopardize a fragile balance in the integration process.

Here again, abandoning important beliefs is all that can be considered in the short term according to the women we interviewed, at least as long as their numbers are small.

MANDATORY SUPERVISED CONFORMITY

Standing apart from the group by asking for different conditions such as another schedule can trigger hostility even though that schedule is the one specified in the collective agreement. For instance, one of the women we interviewed wanted to work the hours spelled out in the labour agreement, namely from 7 a.m. to 3 p.m., to accommodate her babysitter; yet her colleagues had agreed to work from 6 a.m. to 2 p.m. For things to work out, only one of her 20 colleagues needed to volunteer to team up with her on that schedule.

In this case, the exclusion reached the extent of an initial mass refusal to be interviewed by the woman's male colleagues. When they finally agreed, our interviewers encountered a great deal of hostility towards the woman, among other reasons because she had also already being granted a precautionary cessation of work during which she was not reassigned but rather went on leave, whereas work injury victims are often reassigned—and feel that their employer is only reassigning them as a form of “lip-service” to prevent them from going on leave.

This conflict over schedules reveals a number of sources of tension: the fact that women are more responsible for children than men, even though sometimes the men are responsible for them; yet this is denied or treated as normal.

Another tension factor is the fact that on average the women are younger than the men and therefore likely to have a young mother's worries; the fact that the women are under heavy pressure not to stand out, undoubtedly because they are already doing so by their mere presence in non-traditional sectors...

SEXIST PSYCHOLOGICAL HARASSMENT

Harassment is not always strictly sexual, but sometimes sexist. In other words, the women describe a type of joke made by men that deals with the presence of women at work, but not necessarily with sexual connotations.

Among other things, workers are often highly skeptical about the competence of women hired under an EOP, even though equal or equivalent competency is an important condition for hiring. This skepticism is most often expressed through derision.

The way things stand, many women felt it was stupid to try to fight to gain respect from those who are firmly convinced that females have no place in their ranks. Facing what they see as a solid wall, many women with considerable experience, after trying other courses of action, have opted for an energy saving strategy, even though it means allowing an image to get around that is not flattering to their competence on the job, once again abandoning an important value.

GRATUITOUS VIOLENCE

Violence can often erupt between members of ethnic minorities and other workers over trivialities such as two Italians speaking their native tongue in the washroom. Violence between men and women often—although not exclusively—revolves around posters of naked women and sexual or psychological harassment. This can range from a gentle quip to a toilet soiled with excrement. It can also reach a worrisome degree of violence, such as the case of the woman working in manholes amid high-voltage wires and very real danger. She was shut into a manhole for five hours; the crew deliberately went off, leaving her there. Had she not kept a cool head, she could have died.

CONCLUSION

The bleak portrait that is emerging can be discouraging. Nonetheless, there is no reason to conclude that the battle is lost.

What to Do?

MINIMUM THRESHOLD OF EMPLOYEES

The most urgent finding is the importance, both to comply with the true purpose of an EOP and to prevent violence, to adhere to a minimum level of employees integrated into a sector that is non-traditional for them, whether by virtue of race or sex.

The concept of critical mass was introduced by Kanter (1977) and holds that an increase in the number of women to a level of 35% is necessary to change people's attitudes. According to the same author, less than 15% is the minimum threshold for women in a minority to feel a degree of comfort and not be “under constant observation.” Judy B. Rosener explains this imperative by the

phenomena associated with minority status that is not yet legitimate (*tokenism*): under scrutiny, a women minority are afraid to jeopardize their integration and undermine their credibility.

A new group must grow quickly enough in numbers to prevent the effects of discouragement commonly characteristic of the first hirings when a few solitary women are parachuted into a non-traditional sector. Apart from the reviews of efforts to introduce equity programs, no less than the Supreme Court of Canada has handed down a ruling along these lines in the case of ATF versus CN, which had extensive repercussions.

The size of the minimum threshold for women hired is one of the major shortcomings in local application of EOPs; management, for a variety of reasons ranging from a small number of hirings to the dictate of not “upsetting” the men, often hires a very small number of women who are too isolated to feel at ease. If management hires a reasonable number of women, they still must not be the only ones on their shift, in their trade, in their category or in the building, which is often the case.

MANAGEMENT ACTION

We can roughly sum up by saying that, locally, management has two basic options for dealing with this type of crisis situation: target the women themselves (equip them with exemplary “survival strategies”) or their male colleagues (education, strict enforcement, adoption of disciplinary measures). The latter strategy must undoubtedly be considered the outcome of inadequate results produced by the former, which focuses primarily on the victims by letting the men who are displaying the intolerance go unpunished. The resistance surrounding the women is too strong for this strategy to prove effective.

Naturally, these two goals are not incompatible and can be pursued simultaneously. Yet in the organizations whose experiences have been described above, that is how the approaches can be classified.

If the employer adopts a fairly clear, radical policy against harassment, with punishment for the guilty, the union’s position on the other hand is rather paradoxical because the victim and the perpetrator are both union members. In fact, the victim identifies a member of her union as the guilty party and risks being ostracized by her colleagues and her union. It is very difficult—if not unrealistic—for the union to claim it upholds both standpoints.

THE CASE OF UNIONIZED ORGANIZATIONS

Given the issues at stake, which include disciplinary action for harassment, the unions feel they are in a very tough spot. Both victim and perpetrator, as well as the union’s executive committee, may for different reasons not want to invoke the employer’s policy against harassment (or be summoned before the bodies that enforce it). Nonetheless, we deplore the fact that this generally results in the union executive committee doing nothing, avoiding the issue, or else blindly supporting the accused.

Furthermore, in a setting where women and members of minority groups are newcomers amid a vast majority of men, corporate policy against harassment is inevitably associated with the arrival of the women and predictably makes the unionized workers consider the women an irritant.

But there are some very interesting initiatives in this area, in which the union’s executive committee is taking a proactive rather than reactive approach to this type of conduct.

UNION POLICIES AGAINST HARASSMENT

A clear position

In one of the unionized organizations we studied, the union openly adopted a stance against violence and harassment; it adopted a policy on the matter and, often, corresponding practices. The union’s executive committee did this partly in response to the introduction of a very radical management policy that represents what is often cited as the ideal policy against harassment. Like many others, the union was forced to deal with the effects of this policy, which involves the threat of penalties culminating in dismissal. In this case, the difficult position in which the union’s executive committee found itself stimulated its creativity instead of overwhelming it.

A delicate balance

The union's executive committee had to clearly condemn behaviour that was unquestionably harassment, and it did so; it also had to avoid compromising its role as protector of all its members. It therefore created an instrument to give unionized workers (both victims and perpetrators) a step prior to filing a complaint with corporate management.

A winning strategy

This union executive committee ingeniously attacked the problem of harassment in the workplace as a whole. In fact, there was harassment in the workplace even before the women arrived. The program therefore targets not only sexual harassment and the women, but also cases, which had long been common at the firm, involving men psychologically harassing one another.

The procedure

When a case of harassment is reported to the union, a union representative meets with the violent individual. After questioning the person, the representative attempts, if applicable, to make the individual understand that this type of behaviour is unacceptable, that the union is against violence yet willing to help anyone who shoulders his or her share of the responsibility. Among other things, the union may refer the violent individual to previously identified resources, if possible an employee assistance program, the union's social managers, etc. The other women in the same building are asked to help ensure the safety of the one who feels threatened. A union representative may ask another female worker on the same shift as the woman, for example, to keep an eye on her safety.

The source of effectiveness

This type of policy works in at least two ways. First of all, without even mentioning it, women can go see a fellow worker whose behaviour is unacceptable and say, "This won't stop here." They don't have to say anything else: the very existence of the policy has a dissuasive effect, especially since neither management nor the union have shown any sympathy for such behaviour and the message is unequivocal.

Secondly, the policies can actually be applied when a warning is not enough. And in that case, if the employees turn to the union, the two policies can be employed in a continuous process: first the union becomes involved and, if there is no improvement, the victim can resort to the management's policy with possibly more drastic effects.

The results speak for themselves...

In this organization, the union policy is far better known than the corporate one which is almost never used. Is it because union activities are closer to the workers? Because the union publicized its policy more? Because it had a surprise effect? Most important of all is the result: the union policy is known, talked about, feared by some and reassuring to others and, so far, effective.

¹ Commission des droits de la personne et des droits de la jeunesse du Québec (1998) *Les programmes d'accès à l'égalité au Québec. Bilan et perspectives. Maintenir les acquis, élargir le champ d'action*, summary, Montréal, Gouvernement du Québec

² Human Resources Development Canada publishes an *Annual Report on the Employment Equity Act* which compiles the data from the annual reports of organizations subject to that law, namely those with 100 or more employees and under federal jurisdiction according to the Canadian Constitution.

Occupational Health and Safety and Women

Juliette P. Bailly

Vice-president for client and partner relations at the *Commission de la santé et de la sécurité du travail (CSST)*

I am pleased to participate in this workshop on occupational health and safety, not only as vice-president for client and partner relations at the *Commission de la santé et de la sécurité du travail (CSST)*, but also as a woman.

Although I have never worked in an occupation considered to be non-traditional, I have to some extent been confronted with the difficulty of integrating into a predominantly male environment. I held management positions at a time when women managers were somewhat rare. As you can see, the experience left me with a few grey hairs!

I worked in the hospital environment for several years, mainly as executive director of Centre hospitalier Rosemont. I directed the merger of this hospital and two long-term care centres. I also acted as Québec Public Curator for two years.

When I joined the CSST, I indicated that my team and I would devote ourselves to two targets, two priorities. These are:

- youth, youth work, and promoting prevention for youth;
- and women, the status of women, and women's health and safety in the labour force.

Since then, we have completed a number of projects with our partners. In particular, we supported the actions of Ms. Lisette Lapointe and the Auto Prévention association to facilitate access of young women to trades in the automotive industry by promoting occupational health and safety in this sector. I am sure that Ms. Lapointe and Ms. Daly will be talking to you later in greater detail about the nature of this environment and the actions taken to achieve our objectives.

We also deal with other economic sectors with a large female work force, such as medical and social services. With the cooperation of the parity association for the health and social services sector, we conducted a review of health and safety information related to the daycare environment.

We have also instituted a program of intervention to counter repetitive work-related injuries. These industrial illnesses are a plague for many working women, for example seamstresses, cashiers or workers in poultry processing plants.

As in many fields these days, of course, we need to innovate if we are to be successful in achieving our prevention objectives.

Women's arrival in non-traditional occupations has been a source of innovation and progress on many fronts. Through their actions, for example, they have proved that the time of emphasizing physical strength to the detriment of health and safety has passed. They are the instigators of many needed changes: we had obsolete work methods often maintained by force of habit.

In fact, I may say, as our speakers will surely confirm, that the contribution of women has helped improve working conditions for everyone including, of course, their male colleagues.

I can only share the goals of all who seek to facilitate access by women to non-traditional careers. As a representative of the CSST, I can guarantee we will ensure that the matter of their health and safety are addressed. I am counting on your collaboration so that this issue is never neglected.

Occupational Health and Safety: Myths and Realities



Lisette Lapointe

Lisette Lapointe has served as director general of the Association sectorielle Services automobiles (Auto Prévention) since 1982.

She began her professional career as a secondary school teacher in Montréal before turning to political action. A militant in the Parti Québécois, she became press secretary to the Ministre d'État au Développement social du Québec in 1976, occupying this position until 1981.

Her interest in work-related accident and illness prevention dates from that period, when she was closely involved in drafting the Québec reform of occupational health and safety. This reform was based on a parity approach: parity health and safety committees in companies, parity associations for each industrial sector that wanted them and a parity Board of Directors at the Commission de la santé et de la sécurité du travail. The reform became law and was ratified in 1979.

As director general of Auto Prévention, Ms. Lapointe participated in the founding of one of Québec's first sectoral associations. This advisory bureau brings together six employer associations and four union associations, representing some 10,000 businesses and 65,000 workers in this sector of the economy. In essence, its mission is to improve health and safety conditions in the automotive services sector, and its services to business include training, consulting and technical assistance, information, research and documentation.

From 1994 to 1996, Ms. Lapointe temporarily left her position at Auto Prévention and became special adviser to the Premier of Québec, responsible for youth, the status of women, and autonomous community action (associative life). During this period, she was in contact with many women's groups and community organizations. In 1995, the Secrétariat à l'action communautaire autonome was created, along with ten Carrefours jeunesse emploi, single points of access for youth employment. There are now 50 such Carrefours in Québec.

Auto Prévention is a sectoral parity association active in the prevention of work accidents and occupational illness in the automotive services industry. It actively encourages women to enter its field of interest through two main areas: occupational health and safety, and parity.

Increasing everyone's awareness about occupational health and safety has an essential role in eliminating and controlling risks present in the work environment. Not so long ago, physical strength was an essential criterion for working as a mechanic or in a body shop. Increasingly, physical strength is giving way to specialized equipment. The automotive trades have improved considerably over the past 15 years and all the technological progress achieved in the field now allows both men and women to perform these jobs. The success of garage owner-mechanic Johanne Daly is proof that it is possible for a woman to succeed in this field despite all the obstacles. The current proportion of women in automobile sales, maintenance and repair is less than 1%, showing there is still much to be done.

The commitment to parity arising out of the combined efforts of employer and union associations clearly shows a force with deep repercussions in the industry. Auto Prévention's experience has repeatedly proved that actions taken as part of a parity approach achieve conclusive results. Our association is unique in the world and today is represented by our two co-presidents, Mr. Jacques Béchar, employer co-president and director general of the Corporation des concessionnaires d'automobiles du Québec, and Marc-André Gariépy, union co-president and president of Local 4511 of the National Automobile, Aerospace, Transportation and General Workers Union of Canada (CAW-Canada).

After 17 years of parity action in this area, we have seen a real reduction in industrial accidents and occupational illness: when *Auto Prévention* was founded in 1982, there were 12 000 industrial accidents per year in the automobile industry. This number has now dropped below 5 000 accidents per year, clear proof of this approach's success. We can hope that this same commitment to parity could act as a lever to assist the integration of women into the automotive trades.

In April 1997, the co-presidents of *Auto Prévention* and I participated in the Rhône-Alpes-Québec colloquium on *Women in Non-Traditional Occupations*. This colloquium enabled us to discuss and share our experience with our French counterparts. On this occasion, we were struck by the exceptional determination of women engaged in non-traditional occupations both in France and in Québec. We also noted that they have a common characteristic: a passion for their trade. This prompted

Auto Prévention to produce a video aimed at enhancing the image of the automotive trades and encourage a new clientele of young people, especially women, to choose these fine occupations. The video, entitled a *La passion du métier*, was produced in cooperation with the *Commission de la santé et de la sécurité du travail* and was the subject of several television programs and coverage. It was also widely distributed among automobile companies and automotive training centres alike, and especially to teachers and guidance counsellors in the education network.

La passion du métier shows the remarkable progress achieved in automobile repair and maintenance sector in terms of both technology and working conditions. In addition to presenting the testimony of women and men who are passionate about their trade, this video shows the equipment and new work methods that make it possible to improve safety in the workplace and attract young people, especially young women.

Undeniably, occupational health and safety and a commitment to parity on the part of a particular industry can be seen as two key factors that facilitate the integration of women into traditionally male trades. However, there is still much to be done before women naturally turn to these trades; some barriers are still very strong.

Occupational Health and Safety: Myths and Realities



Micheline Boucher

When women enter non-traditional occupations of a primary or secondary sector that are of a “manual” and/or that involve regular use of tools or equipment, occupational health and safety have to be a top priority. Why?

Let us first look at the differences between men and women. Without dwelling on cultural differences or prejudices, there are biological differences: height, body segments, weight, muscle mass and sexual ones.

The question is this: How can these biological differences be taken into account in order to help women enter and remain in non-traditional occupations?

We can start by making the following observations:

In the first place, mechanization and automation have considerably changed many jobs by reducing the muscular effort required.

Secondly, if a job is too demanding for some women, it is very demanding for anyone.

There are four main areas where occupational health and safety can intervene to help women integrate into and maintain non-traditional jobs involving physical strength:

- 1) Allowing women the possibility of adapting the operations to their body, their strength and their pace. Jobs that offer this freedom of action allow individuals to pace themselves and adopt different strategies. These jobs usually involve long or very long work cycles: farmers, gardeners, letter carriers, mechanics, household appliance repairers, etc.

- 2) Taking differences in body dimensions into account by transforming work surface heights from “fixed” to “adjustable”, and by offering different sizes of tools (wrenches, pliers, saws, etc) and equipment (boots, gloves, clothing, hard hats, etc.).
- 3) Reducing efforts required by adding mechanical assists (winches, conveyors, hoists) or, if this is impossible, by promoting teamwork.
- 4) Providing support to the training period in terms of the physical skills to be acquired and the psychological, social and cultural measures for integrating and maintaining women in these non-traditional jobs.

To properly adapt jobs to women who want to occupy them, it is essential that their health and safety in these jobs not be in jeopardy. A concerted effort by unions, workers and companies is necessary to choose the right tools, offer the proper equipment, modify workstations and even re-think the organization of work so that it is less demanding on everyone. This concerted effort is not always easy. It is often long and difficult because the arrival of women challenges many practices and attitudes, both cultural and in terms of health and safety. This often obliges everyone to review established practices and behaviour in the work environment.

We firmly believe that this concerted approach and the resulting changes will benefit everyone, because the goal is to make all positions accessible to the widest possible range of people.

Male and Female Students: Same Difference?



Marie-Claude Chartier
Femmes regroupées en options non traditionnelles (FRONT)

Marie-Claude Chartier is trained as a lawyer and has been working in the community milieu since 1994. At present she is completing a Master's degree in social and labour law at

Université du Québec à Montréal where her research focuses primarily on sexual harassment in the hostile work environment typically associated with traditionally male occupations. A FRONT employee since September 1998, she heads a pilot project being conducted at three trade schools in Montreal in an effort to improve study and job-entry conditions for girls enrolled in predominantly male study programs.

In the fall of 1999, *Femmes regroupées en options non traditionnelles (FRONT)* launched a research project focusing on the integration of girls and women into trade schools and the labour market. The research was the outcome of repeated suggestions from the women workers belonging to our organization who, for the most part, had attended schools where they were a minority and wanted an assessment of the reception women get there.

Three vocational schools were targeted for the study. They represent three sectors where women are a very small minority of female workers, namely the construction, automotive and aerospace industries.

The objective of the project was to arrive at an accurate assessment of the situation faced by girls in trade schools and, secondly, to adopt measures to facilitate their integration into these schools and their employment search.

In order to make as accurate an assessment as possible, from November 1998 to August 1999 we:

- Interviewed current students to ascertain current study conditions and their views on measures could be taken to improve their integration into the school.¹
- Interviewed former students who finished the program during the past three years to establish the learning conditions prevalent when they were at school, what measures could have been taken to make a difference, how their job search went following graduation and how their careers had been going.²
- Interviewed teachers at the schools to gain a better understanding of what girls entering the school and non-traditional trades means for them, the problems the girls face, etc.³

Sexism in school

The interviews of both current and former students at the three schools reveal that most of the difficulty, aside from personal problems such as finances or difficulty balancing family and school, involves the attitude of students and teachers.

The type of behaviour they complained about essentially involves jokes with a sexual innuendo, vulgar gestures, and sexist comments to the effect that women aren't strong enough to carry out the tasks of their trade, excessive paternalism, and ridicule when they asked questions. In many cases, the girls lamented the fact that the teachers witnessing these incidents did nothing or demonstrated the same sexist attitudes. It should be mentioned that, while only a minority was guilty of this form of behaviour, it was enough to have a negative impact on the atmosphere in the classroom. Here are a few quotes from the girls from the three schools to convey the nature of the problems they face there:

I had macho teachers who pretended they didn't see the women in their class. One of the teachers told the three women in the class that they were out of place because they weren't good enough. We went to see the principal and the matter was straightened out.

I have a teacher who's always making dirty jokes. Once he said to me: "The other teacher wants me to tell you you've got great tits." The girls don't like to ask a number of teachers any questions because they're ridiculed by the guys or even by the teachers.

The guys are afraid we're stealing their jobs. I often have to put them in their place. We have to ask teachers questions in private if we don't want to get laughed at by a minority. This behaviour sometimes gives me second thoughts about my choice of career. Yet the teacher's attitude is very positive: he keeps on saying that there's no such thing as a dumb question.

There are misogynists in my class. They tell me things like "Stay home and wash the dishes." The teacher lets them get away with it. The guys laughed and the teacher failed to maintain respect. I complained to the principal's office. The guy who was giving me the hardest time backed off but the rest of the class ostracized me. They're coming around little by little; my teammate is talking to me again. I would have liked to have another girl with me. I found it hard to go and complain about a fellow student, to expose the abuse.

Nearly all the teachers we interviewed said they had actually witnessed "dirty" jokes and sexist comments at school. Moreover, half of them feel that the sexist attitude of students is the most common problem facing the girls apart from their lack of physical strength. Despite this observation, the teachers do not enforce strict discipline in response to this type of behaviour. While some do not tolerate any comments of this sort in their classroom, most consider it better not to intervene except in the case of a serious incident directly affecting a female student. Often they only intervene at a girl's request or when it's apparent from her reaction that the situation is making her uncomfortable.

The teachers generally justify their hands-off attitude by saying it's a way of preparing the girls for the industry environment. They feel the girls have to have some sense of humour to gain acceptance by the group.

A large majority of the teachers believe that some of their colleagues have doubts about the presence of girls in their respective schools. Paradoxically, only a few of the teachers we interviewed thought that the faculty's attitude could cause problems.

The teachers we talked to at the aerospace and automotive schools consider physical strength the most common problem facing the girls during their studies. A distinction must be drawn, however, between the teachers in the two industries with respect to the extent of the difficulty. The aerospace teachers feel that the physical strength required to do the job may make the work tiresome but is no obstacle to women working in the industry. Some automotive teachers view physical strength as an essential requirement for working in the industry. In particular, the diesel mechanics teachers are convinced that most girls do not have enough physical strength to do all the jobs associated with that field. The small number of women in the industry and the lack of female teachers in the school may underlie this belief. Unlike the aerospace teachers who see almost all their female students hired upon graduation, many of the automotive teachers said they knew of only a few or none of their female students who had found a job after graduation, apart from those who were self-employed or had joined the family business.

All the automotive teachers, with the exception of one, said that physical strength is one reason for the industry's reluctance to hire women and half of them feel this reluctance is justified. The teachers, instead of encouraging the girls to remain in a field relatively unexplored by them and giving them tips for succeeding, tend to discourage them from day one and steer them to other less physically demanding sectors. This attitude perpetuates a vicious circle: the fewer women there are in an industry, the less teachers are inclined to encourage women to enter it, and the less support the girls receive in their efforts the fewer of them there are in the job market to serve as successful role models.

We should point out that physical strength is far from being a major hurdle according to both current and former students of the three schools. A very small fraction of the women we interviewed mentioned it and, among those, some spoke about a dusty workplace and uncomfortable positions rather than sheer strength. Rather, what hurts the girls are comments to the effect that women can't do the work associated with the job.

Sexism at work and during job search

In aerospace, the placement rate is almost 100%, which explains why 16 of the 17 former students we interviewed are working in a field related to their training. Most found jobs immediately after their practicums and therefore did not have to go looking for work. With a few exceptions, all the women workers said they were satisfied with their wages, work schedule, relations with their employer and fellow workers, sense of fulfillment from a job well done, and opportunities for advancement.

Although the workers did not explicitly cite it as a problem, in some cases it was apparent from their comments that they have to deal with sexist comments and behaviour at work. It is interesting to note that 14 of them felt that educating employers is one way of helping women fill and keep jobs in the aerospace industry.

The situation is far less rosy in the automotive and construction industries, where the former female students we spoke to said they encountered all kinds of obstacles while looking for a job and then at work. In their view, most of the problems stem from a shortage of jobs and industry reluctance to accept women. Moreover, these are the problems that led about half the women we interviewed to abandon these trades. Here are a few comments made by former female students at the two schools:

I've heard employers say at least ten times, "What am I supposed to do with a female welder?"

Employers are highly reluctant to hire a woman. They ask a lot of questions about children, daycare...I've already been asked if I was pregnant or had tubal ligation. There's a lack of support from the unions, who don't provide much information about employers.

I worked for six months in my field and then gave up: I'm now in charge of benefits. I decided to give up my trade because of the prejudice women face and employer reluctance to hire them.

I looked long and hard for a job in the metropolitan area. I did the rounds of the dealers. I felt like a Martian when I stepped into a garage. The employers often teased me...

There's a great deal of reluctance to hire women. We have to cope with the attitude of employers when looking for a job and it's insulting. A few employers treated me badly, laughing at me, saying the job was taken or that I wouldn't be strong enough. I applied for 20 positions before finding a job.

The data we collected on the problems encountered by former students while looking for a job or at work is minimal due to the small number of respondents. While we cannot draw any general conclusions, we do not want to gloss over the information provided by the 22 interview subjects. Their comments made it clear that sexism is a factor that women regularly have to deal with when looking for work or on the job. In our opinion, the extent of the problems they experience is no accident

and reflects the reality facing many women working in the construction and automotive industries. This hypothesis is supported both by knowledge of those sectors gained from *FRONT* members working at a construction or automotive trade, and by earlier studies focusing on the position of women in the construction industry. The 1996 report⁴ on female access to the construction industry prepared by the *Commission de la construction du Québec (CCQ)* in association with *FRONT* specifically discusses the problem of the interaction of women into that sector. Among other things, this study interviewed 143 women who had left the construction industry; 17% of them said that sexism and discrimination were their main reasons for leaving their trade. In particular, the study found that "...women, especially those who entered the trade with no family ties to the employer, very regretfully had to abandon a trade they loved because they were often fed up with having to face discrimination when it came to hiring, or having to endlessly prove their competency." The high level of mobility among construction workers intensifies the problems of integration experienced by women because they constantly have to start the adjustment process all over and gain acceptance in their new workplace.

The job shortage in some of these sectors may account for some of the hostility in these industries toward women who are considered to be "job-stealers", unlike aerospace where their presence is needed to meet industry demand for labour.

Another factor may explain why it is easier for women to enter the aerospace industry: the fact that they are often hired *en masse* by large corporations and end up working with other women in the same department. This is not true of the automotive and construction industries, where female workers are usually the only woman on the job.

It is urgent and imperative to convince industry that women are capable of practising trades traditionally the preserve of men. Nearly all of the former students, including those in the aerospace industry who encountered no placement problems, feel that education would help women fill and remain in non-traditional jobs. Similarly, most of the teachers feel that girls entering the labour market is contingent upon employers recognizing their abilities. Those opposed to educating the industry do not deny the reluctance to hire women, but rather feel it is justified or so great that education would not

change anything. In this regard, we are convinced that it is essential to make industry and teachers aware of female role models with successful careers in these fields, or else they will simply keep on discouraging the girls who enter their classrooms or businesses.

Steps taken by the school administrations

Our research project extended to other topics such as sexual harassment and the perception of measures specific to girls, which are covered in a more detailed study. Various measures were also proposed to the schools as a result of our survey findings.

Female workers from the target industries gave talks in the three schools during the past year. At two of them, the school administration also took steps with community agencies that specialize in training and employability to organize job-hunting workshops specifically for girls. The results of our research at the three schools led us to recommend educating the teaching staff about the reality faced by the girls, sexual harassment and sexism, and the girls' ability to do the work associated with the trades being taught. As a result of publishing our study's findings, one administration undertook to adopt a policy against sexual harassment and sexism, and to hold an awareness workshop on this topic next year. The adoption of our recommendations will also be discussed in the very near future with the administration of another school that participated in our study.

Teacher education was not approved by one of the three school administrations, which withdrew from the project during the year. According to them, there is no problem of integrating girls that can be solved through awareness. Female students who are incapable of adjusting to the school will also fail in the labour market despite any corrective action taken at the school. The administration feels that any criticism or acknowledgment that there are problems is pointless. It wants tangible measures to increase the number of girls. We believe

that belittling the problems facing female students places the entire onus for the success of their adaptation to their milieu on women. According to this view, female students have to establish their own place, adapt to what appears to be an immutable environment, maintain a positive attitude at all times, have a great sense of humour, be exceptionally fit physically and mentally, and lastly go it alone in dealing with any potential problems they encounter with teachers or fellow workers.

Despite the problems they face, all the current or former students with few exceptions intend to graduate if they have not already done so. Most of the behaviour they complained about was generally not extremely serious, but rather an accumulation of minor incidents that can make going to school difficult for the female students.

Behavioural change cannot take place if their detrimental effects on the girls' quality of life at school and in the workplace are denied. School administrations and faculty must be aware of this and willing to help bring about change. Even though the problems encountered by girls at school generally do not stop them from pursuing their careers, we believe that the school must

play a predominant role in achieving the desired change in attitude. This change is essential because it will help give women easier access to the labour market in a job suited to their skills.

Female students pursuing a non-traditional trade all too often face the twofold task of learning the job and changing attitudes. We would like to see the latter shared: therein lies the basic thrust of our efforts. The participation of the two schools in the project and their willingness to institute measures to improve the quality of life for their female students makes us hopeful despite the difficulties that exist. Once again, we wish to thank the participating schools for their openness and generous availability, and hope that the benefits of this project will eventually extend to other schools.

¹ Seventy students were interviewed. This number covers nearly all the female students enrolled at the three schools when the survey was conducted: 19/24 in automotive, 34/36 in aerospace, 17/23 in construction.

² Thirty-nine former female students at the three schools were interviewed. Fifteen had been students in automotive from 1995 to 1998, 17 in aerospace from 1997 to 1999, and seven in construction from 1996 to 1999. The sample is small because in many cases the addresses of former students that the schools provided were no longer valid. Nonetheless, we felt it worthwhile to report on our findings.

³ Thirty-one teachers were interviewed: 16 in aerospace and 15 in automotive. This represents approximately one third of the faculty at each school.

⁴ COMMISSION DE LA CONSTRUCTION DU QUÉBEC, document prepared by the Direction de la formation professionnelle and the Direction de la qualification professionnelle, "Rapport du comité sur l'accès des femmes dans l'industrie de la construction" (1996), p. 87

Employment Equity Programs: A Progress Report



Lucie Marchessault-Lussier

Lucie Marchessault-Lussier is Status of Women Canada's Regional Director for Québec. She heads a staff of ten who serve the entire province from Montréal and Québec City.

Over the years, Ms. Marchessault-Lussier has been involved with various local and provincial parent committees as well as with women's organizations. She chaired the women's committee of the Canadian section of UNESCO and was a member of the Conseil consultatif canadien d'administration de Centraide-Montréal [Canadian Administrative Advisory Board for United Way-Montréal].

She presently serves on the executive committee of the Jules et Paul-Émile Léger Foundation, and chairs an inter-departmental panel on the implementation of the Federal Plan for Gender Equality and the gender analysis within federal ministries in Québec.

While a student, Ms. Marchessault-Lussier was awarded the Governor General of Canada's Medal. She holds a Master's degree in adult education.

She has also acquired extensive experience in project management at the volunteer level, as well as with the Secretary of State, the Centre de recherches sur l'informatisation du travail (CRIT) and Status of Women Canada.

Status of Women Canada was established by the Canadian government in 1976 "to coordinate policies related to the status of women and manage the associated programs." Its mission is to promote gender equality and women's full participation in the economic, social, cultural and political life of the country.

The agency's prime responsibilities are to:

- use the information and tools at its disposal to ensure that legislation, policies and programs advance women's equality throughout the federal government;
- conduct gender-based analysis of legislation, policies and programs, and recommend changes to ensure that government decisions are of benefit to all Canadians, women and men equally;
- promote and monitor the progress of the status of women throughout the country;
- fund policy research and integrate the research findings into the policy development process;
- provide financial, technical and professional assistance to women's and other voluntary organizations at community, regional and national levels, to support actions which advance women's equality;
- collaborate with provincial and territorial governments, international organizations and other countries, women's organizations, and other stakeholders, to address women's equality issues.

The main purpose of the agency is to promote gender equality in all spheres of Canadian life.

Through its *Federal Plan for Gender Equality*, the Canadian government is committed to ensuring that all future legislation and policies include, where appropriate, an analysis to determine if their impact on men and women might differ.

The priorities of Status of Women Canada are to:

- improve the economic autonomy and well-being of women;
- eliminate systemic violence against women and children; and
- advance women's human rights.

The Women's Program also provides financial and professional assistance to women's groups and organizations that undertake initiatives to advance gender equality. Over the past 25 years, in keeping with our priority

of contributing to women's economic autonomy, we have funded a large number of women's groups and initiatives geared towards work and women's employment, including some in non-traditional fields. We will now cite a few examples of the initiatives to which we have contributed.

Status of Women Canada consults women's groups and other equality-seeking organizations to obtain their views on certain issues, such as the follow-up to the World Conference on Women held in Beijing; it also serves as a channel for communicating information and liaison among groups that share the same interests.

Status of Women Canada makes the public aware of the issues related to gender equality by publicizing women's achievements; one such effort is Women's History Month, whose theme this year is *Francophone Women in Canada*.

Lastly, Status of Women Canada cooperates with provincial governments and intervenes with international organizations to promote gender equality.

Employment Equity Programs: A Progress Report



Suzanne Pelletier

Suzanne Pelletier has been working for the Public Service Commission for over 10 years. Since April 1999, she has served as Regional Counsellor, Québec Region for the Positive Measures Program. This program is part of a four-year national project aimed at producing a nationwide inventory of systemic obstacles to employment equity for the four designated groups: visible minorities, disabled persons, aboriginals, and women where underrepresented. A budget of over \$40 million has been allocated for this national program. Ms. Pelletier's job is to coordinate the development, submission and approval of various projects under the program's Partnership Fund at all federal departments in Québec. To date, some 500 middle and senior managers have been informed of the program, and 13 projects are underway at over eight federal departments. Ms. Pelletier received a certificate in leadership, communications and human resources from the Université du Québec à Hull (UQAH) in 1983. She began her career in human resources/employment equity in 1982 as a compensation counsellor with the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) in Hull. In 1996 Ms. Pelletier was honoured for her outstanding contribution to the campaign to recruit female firefighters (a non-traditional job) throughout Québec. Her E-mail address is suzanne.pelletier@psc-cfp.gc.ca.



Johanne Trottier

Johanne Trottier, who holds a B.A. from the Université de Montréal, has spent over 25 years working as a human resources counsellor for the federal government. Over the years, she has held various positions in the field of personnel recruitment. She began her career in Ottawa as a staffing counsellor in the Department of the Secretary of State. Next she joined the central agency for personnel recruitment in the Public Service Commission. Since then, she has been involved in external recruitment, advised employees whose positions were abolished, and ensured the promotion of the four target groups (women, aboriginals, disabled persons and visible minorities) within the public service. She is in contact with various clientele seeking employment, such as university students and other groups, associations or help centres for members of the designated groups, as well as the general public visiting job fairs or other public forums.

The principles of equality and respect for diversity are woven into the linguistic, religious, racial and cultural fabric of Canadian society. These values represent the key components of the decision-making processes for the various measures and programs whose goal is achieving employment equity. The first program of special measures for employment equity in the federal public service was introduced in 1983 and was intended to remain in place for five years, i.e. until 1988. Known as the Affirmative Action Program, its purpose was to achieve a more equitable representation and distribution of women, aboriginals and disabled persons in the federal public service. In 1985, visible minorities were added to the target groups. From 1988 to 1995, numerous events occurred that resulted in a reinforcement of the employment equity programs. These included the adoption of legislation and policies, as well as a five-year extension of the special measures program. Moreover, it was at the beginning of this period that the federal government created the Task Force on Barriers to Women in the Public Service whose report, "Beneath the veneer", was published in April 1990. The report recommended

a broad range of measures to recruit, train and retain women in positions at every level. In 1992, the government announced its intention of adopting legislation to enforce employment equity in the public service. As a result, the Treasury Board President is now required to table in Parliament an annual report on the status of employment equity in the public service. In 1994, the Treasury Board approved the implementation of a five-year Special Measures Initiatives Program which placed greater emphasis on innovation and flexibility in order to increase the representation of members of the target groups as well as to encourage a cultural change within the public service. Around the same time, the government tabled a new employment equity bill in the House. This law would apply to all public and private sector employers under federal jurisdiction, including the public service. On December 15, 1995, the Employment Equity Act became law, with the Canadian Human Rights Commission designated as the agency responsible for enforcing the law within federal departments. The current Act aims to achieve equity in the workplace so that no one is denied employment benefits or opportunities for reasons having nothing to do with their competency. To achieve these goals, it seeks to correct the unfair treatment experienced by women, aboriginals, disabled persons and visible minorities in the realm of employment. This is based on the principle that, in addition to equal treatment for all, employment equity requires special measures and arrangements to accommodate differences. To help federal departments fulfill their obligations under the law, the Treasury Board, in association with the Public Service Commission, adopted the *Employment Equity Positive Measures Program*, which took effect in April 1998. This program, by far the best since 1983, primarily aims to create a public service free

of obstacles to employment equity. It consists of four components: the *Partnership Fund*, to facilitate the establishment of shared-cost regional programs for removing obstacles to employment equity; the *Intervention Fund*, to launch and manage strategic initiatives for resolving current issues which are of substantial importance in the federal public service; the *Career Counselling Office*, to provide career-counselling services to members of the target groups; and, the *Enabling Resource Centre for Persons with Disabilities*, to help managers in the public service meet the special needs of the disabled as required by law and government policy. This new program will meet the needs of government departments and members of the designated groups in the realm of employment equity, particularly with respect to increasing representation, reinforcing the obligation to produce results, and providing practical services for workplace arrangements. When the program expires in March 2002, we believe that the government departments will have been able to increase the representation of the four target groups in the federal public service. We also expect to see a change in departmental culture in the workplace so as to improve the integration of employment equity strategies. In conclusion, these measures reflect the Canadian government's firm commitment to employment equity and its determination to create a workplace that represents the diversity of Canadian society while ensuring that all Canadians have equal opportunities for employment in the federal public service.

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The Diversification of Career Choices: The Relational Aspect



Lucille Bédard

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After earning a Bachelor's degree in teaching in 1971, another Bachelor in education in 1981 and a Master's in counselling and guidance in 1983, Lucille Bédard undertook doctoral studies in guidance at Université Laval in Québec City, Canada.

Her professional experience includes employment as a worker, trainer and researcher in the fields of female guidance and women's career development. In 1989 she cofounded the Centre de recherche québécois sur l'insertion socioprofessionnelle et le counselling de carrière, now CERDEC, at Université Laval and served as its administrative director for four years. Since 1988 she has been director of the guidance and counselling clinic at Université Laval's Faculty of Education.



Armelle Spain

After earning a Bachelor of Arts degree in 1966, another Bachelor's degree in psychology in 1969 and a Master's in psychology in 1972 from Université Laval in Québec City, Armelle Spain earned a Ph.D. in counselling psychology from the University of Southern California in Los Angeles, in 1977.

Since then she has pursued an academic career at Université Laval in Québec City, where she currently holds a position as a full professor. Her work primarily involves educating future guidance counsellors. From 1994 to 1997 she was the director of graduate programs (Master's degree and Doctorate) in guidance. A regular researcher with the Centre de recherche sur le développement de carrière (CERDEC), her teaching and research focuses, among others, on areas such as counselling supervision and the career paths of adults in general and women in particular.

Armelle Spain and Lucille Bédard have published over 50 articles in Canadian and European journals. Moreover, they coauthored the two volumes entitled *Devenir, Approche éducative en développement de carrière au féminin* and *Guide d'animation de l'atelier d'orientation pour jeunes femmes*, works for which they received two prestigious awards: the 1995 Prix de la Corporation from the Ordre professionnel des conseillers et conseillères d'orientation du Québec and the Prize for Training and Counselling Material from the Canadian Guidance and Counselling Society. As a research team, they have received grants from the provincial *Formation de chercheurs et aide à la recherche (FCAR)* fund as well as from the national Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC). They also participated in an extensive nationwide program, sponsored by the Canadian Guidance and Counselling Foundation, to design effective guidance tools for young people. Lastly, as career counselling experts, they regularly receive invitations from provincial, national and international organizations either to present papers, serve as consultants, or to train workers and trainers.

In 1989 the Canadian Guidance and Counselling Foundation, whose mission is to develop guidance and counselling in Canada, launched a national initiative whose goal was to create new methods of career guidance, counselling, education and to train counsellors in association with universities, colleges and the government. This initiative, known as “Design and Mobilization of Counselling Resources for Youth”, produced more than 27 innovative programs including *Devenir* Atelier d’orientation pour jeunes femmes [Guidance Workshop for Young Women]* (Spain, Hamel et Bédard, 1994a and b). But why have a special form of guidance for girls? Is it vital and urgent? And if so, on what principles should it be designed and what benefits would it bring?

In answering these questions, some historical and background data will first be provided to shed light on the current problems faced by women in their career development. This paper will then describe a form of guidance developed in that context, thereby proposing a renewal of the practices used with that group. This will be followed by an explanation of the theoretical foundations and principles of action underlying *Devenir*, a brief description of the program along with examples of how it can be applied and adapted to different groups as well as be evaluated. Lastly, we will state the contributions and limitations of this approach, and more specifically those related to diversifying the girls’ career choices.

In recent decades, women’s active lives have changed profoundly, especially in terms of their careers. However, this increased presence in the labour market does not appear to be leading them to adopt a professional behaviour consistent with the one prevalent in our society. Consequently, women still seem special, indeed immature and deviant, and unfortunately often feel out of place themselves. We find that women’s career paths are characterized primarily by what they are not, when compared to the male model. And we still deplore the lack of theories of career choices and development that take into account the way women are and do things, even though guidance experts are fully cognizant of the

close ties between professional and personal identity, and know that making a career choice is an act of revelation of oneself-in-the-world, and that this decision enfolds a developmental function. Guidance is therefore still based on the male values and models inherited from working with that group, and is slow to recognize the real issues facing women. Meanwhile, more and more women require assistance services tailored to their reality. The development of means of action whose theoretical foundation, basic values and implementation methods meet the needs of women was therefore becoming vital and urgent. It is against this background that *Devenir* was created, following almost two decades of research into women’s career development by our team and, more specifically, an analysis of young women’s needs.

Theoretical Foundation

Devenir has a threefold theoretical foundation: the relational aspect, a global perspective in envisaging the future and the singularity of women’s career paths.

The relational aspect is a concept that helps us to understand women’s development and guides numerous studies in female psychology. Defined as the tendency to create and maintain links with significant persons, the relational aspect conditions the development of women’s identity (Josselson, 1987), moral sense (Gilligan, 1986) and manner of learning (Belenky et al., 1986). This line of thought, which reflects the different path they take in their development, also invokes theories of career choices and development. Thus, like the work of other researchers, our findings indicate that the relational aspect proves to be a fundamental factor guiding resolution of the motherhood-and-career dilemma and revealing how young women perceive their future. The relational experience of women, which looms as an active principle in their development, therefore constitutes the first cornerstone of *Devenir*.

The second has to do with how women perceive their future, namely as a whole rather than fragmented or compartmentalized. Beyond the choice of career as such, career-related issues blend in with the concerns surrounding their entire lives (Cook, 1991; Gallos, 1989).

More specifically, the needs study we undertook before designing *Devenir* revealed concerns with regards to career, love, motherhood and social life—interrelated spheres of activity to which each woman devotes time according to a script that reflects an arrangement consistent with her relational issues and that is entirely her own.

The singularity of women's career paths, which are sinuous and unpredictable by nature, is the third and final cornerstone on which *Devenir* was built. To be precise, a career path is not necessarily seen as an uninterrupted, unequivocal pursuit of success or vertical promotion at any cost. A career is not what determines the itinerary of women's lives, but rather the investments they make in different activity spheres based on a personal sequence marked by relational concerns, with everything this method of functioning implies in terms of altering course and uncertainties. *Devenir* was therefore designed to encompass the relational, global and singular aspects characteristic of women's career development. These three theoretical factors, and above all the integration of the relational aspect with a guidance process, are what make *Devenir* so original and innovative when compared to existing efforts. By being as wide open as possible to the issues of the female experience, this approach provides an answer designed to be more appropriate to women's real needs today.

Principles of Action

With the main objective being to put young women in touch with their relational universe, it was decided to use group work based on an educational approach to career counselling. Career counselling is primarily a means of helping people who need assistance in their career path. Because of its humanist thrust, it aims for the acquisition of skills that enable each individual to realize their unique potential. Its scope extends beyond the simple choice of a career and the unique moment of that type of decision to span the full duration of an individual's life and her career as a whole. In this light, career counselling becomes a stimulus, is future-oriented, fits into a developmental perspective, focuses on prevention and constitutes a process. Consequently, the counsellor becomes a guide who facilitates the process rather than an expert who determines its content.

In concrete terms, the woman will be stimulated and supported in her exploration of herself and her environment to increase her knowledge and understanding of these two dimensions. On a personal level, she will be more specifically asked to discover herself, to ascertain, among other things, her values, talents, interests and motivation. With respect to her environment, her reflection will delve primarily into the changing nature of life, the uncontrollability of relations with others, the differences in lifestyle as determined by economic, marital and parental status, and lastly, on how the working world functions, how it is organized, the trades and occupations it offers, and the values associated with work. With these keys in hand, women can gain more power over their own lives while at the same time building up confidence in their own talents and in their ability to make flexible, informed and realistic decisions.

To this definition of career counselling we added two other factors which shaped the model of intervention we developed: firstly, knowledge of female development which states that women's relational experience is the leitmotif of their lives, that through which they develop, which associates maturity with interdependence or the ability to reconcile one's own interests with those of others, and in which relationships are viewed not as a sign of immaturity but rather as the links along a woman's path; and secondly, the problem involving recognition of the relational aspect's role in the process of guiding girls and the necessity of helping each one of them grasp its importance in her own life. These three principles defined *Devenir's* character and model of intervention.

Devenir

BRIEF DESCRIPTION

Devenir is a group effort involving some 15 women and spanning four weeks. The procedure is essentially educational, in that participants will learn how to plan their future, while carrying out this planning by means of the process they go through by taking the course. The teaching method used is experiential. This approach has a twofold advantage: first, it allows for personalized learning in keeping with participants' efforts; secondly,

it reflects how women learn—namely, more effectively in situations where they are participating observers, immersed in experience, and have to understand the opinions of others than in a conventional classroom setting.

GOAL AND GENERAL OBJECTIVES

Devenir's mission is to encourage the socioprofessional integration of young women. In keeping with this general goal, the program has three main objectives that guide participants in their efforts: to develop a significant, realistic and achievable roadmap for their future; to begin, resume or continue making progress towards fulfilling their life's dream; and to gain more power over their lives by understanding as clearly as possible the factors related to their advancement.

These goals and objectives dynamically echo the theoretical foundation on which *Devenir* is based. Thus, by focusing on each participant's life dream and the multiple factors associated with it, rather than simply on their choice of career, they reflect the general nature of women's concerns, take into account their relational considerations and are consistent with the singularity of their path. It was in this spirit, and above all in this direction, that *Devenir* was undertaken.

THE TREE METAPHOR

The framework of *Devenir's* guidance process is based on the metaphor of the tree, which illustrates the complexity of interactions among psychological processes and various contexts. This symbol of the tree represents a person: each participant. The tree has its own individuality and an environment in which it takes root and grows, just like a person who has an identity and a family, social, professional and cultural environment in which they develop. On the one hand, the metaphor encompasses the theoretical foundation of the program by describing the person as a whole and binding their identity, relational aspect and future plans into a consistent, dynamic entity. On the other hand, the

image of the tree portrays the orientation process of a changing person who, instead of honing in on a career choice, is called upon to develop, expand and manifest their identity in the various possible interdependent activity spheres of their future life. The tree metaphor therefore gives the intervention both a perspective and a momentum that are integrative rather than eliminatory.

This metaphor gives meaning to the tree's seven components—namely the soil, roots, trunk, main branches, leaves, sap and air—and to the two ways in which it develops. If we view these components in light of our cornerstones, the soil represents the significant persons in each participant's life; the roots, how she cultivates relations with them; the trunk, her identity as a whole and more specifically in terms of her interests, talents, motivation, personal and professional values, and success criteria; the three or four main branches, the activity spheres of her future life; the leaves, how she appears in the world; the sap, the relational aspect as the active principle in women's development; and the air, her social, professional and cultural environment. The tree's development is characterized by two movements: the first has to do with its innate growth, originating from its own nature and the nutrients it draws from the soil; and the second involves the exchange with the surrounding air, just as a person develops his or her own identity through relations with important persons and exchanges with his or her environment.

This symbolic tree—both as divided into parts and as a whole—accompanies participants in their efforts because, in the course of the activity, each gives her tree personal meaning. The image is therefore not used as a projection by the group leaders, but rather as an exploration and integration guide for participants.

TOPICS

The fifty or so activities on the program schedule fall under three headings: self-understanding, knowledge of the environment, and learning how to plan. Although these topics resemble the traditional structure of a guidance process, their relational content renders them distinct.

Self-understanding is not merely a question of understanding one's self, but rather, mostly a question of understanding one's self in terms of one's own relational context in order to then grasp the place and role it occupies in one's career path. This topic refers to the first way in which the metaphorical tree develops and the activities it encompasses involve exploring four of its components: the soil, roots, trunk and sap.

Knowledge of the environment extends to the multiple dimensions of life. It goes beyond a simple exploration of trades and occupations to encompass the culture of the working world, an examination of the relational networks inherent in jobs, lifestyles, strategies for family and career actualization, and the dynamic aspect of adult life and human relations. In terms of the metaphor, these activities correspond to the second way in which the tree develops and focus on exploration of the air.

The final topic, learning how to plan, involves providing participants with a model for planning and teaching them how to use it. Here, special emphasis is placed on the changing nature of life and its ineluctable transitions. The activities in this case involve mapping out plans for the future, namely the tree's branches and leaves.

PROCEDURE

Devenir's participants will learn and implement a model for planning their life's dream that will constitute the orientation process. At the first stage, participants draw up their initial plan that emerges as an extension of themselves with no regard for environmental constraints. They do this by collecting the elements of understanding themselves, namely those that describe their identity (trunk), relational style (roots), the important people in their life (soil) and their relational concerns (sap). This approach is based on the tree's first way of growing which involves innate development.

The second stage introduces the encounter with the environment in order to map out the real plan. Thus, after exploring the elements characteristic of the air in which the tree lives, participants adapt their original plan to the limitations and opportunities of their environment. This interaction with the surrounding air reflects the second way in which the tree grows, through

a similar exchange. The roadmap developed at this stage takes into account both the individual, through her original plan, and the social setting in which she lives. This map corresponds to the tree's leaves and main branches, as each participant imagines them at the completion of this stage.

The third stage clearly focuses on implementation of the plans drawn up in the two preceding phases. The activities now involve preparing an action plan and timetable, commitment to and self-affirmation through the roadmap, and recognition of the advantages and limitations of their plan. In brief, the model of planning that guides the orientation process for participants harmonizes with the three topics of the program as well as with the metaphorical tree.

ACTIVITIES

In addition to the daily activities that set the pace of the course and those related to a group process in keeping with a proven pedagogical sequence, the program includes a variety of other activities to help participants attain the stated objectives; these include frequent discussions, work in pairs, threes or as a full group, lectures, visualization, psychodrama, and creations such as drawings, posters, a show or a literary composition. By the end of the workshop, they will also have conducted four interviews and heard two testimonials. Even though it is all coloured by the relational aspect, certain specific activities underscore *Devenir's* innovative nature. Combined into a trilogy, their objective is to understand how this dimension affects women's identities, career paths and life dreams.

Application, Adaptation and Evaluation

The experimentation-evaluation process confirmed the effectiveness of the entire *Devenir* program in terms of its general objectives, namely in the sense that participants, on the whole, prepared a plan for the future which they pursued while exercising more power over their lives. The most remarkable evaluation results are a "dedramatization" of the orientation problem and participants' resumption of progress towards subsequent

socioprofessional integration based on a more or less long-term plan. It should be pointed out, however, that this program does not automatically culminate in immediately entering the job market. *Devenir* relies instead on the long-term effects of a total intervention whose three general objectives, as stated above, have been attained based on the evaluated results. Taking into consideration their own reality and learning a process were the two factors that participants appreciated the most. The activities of the “self-understanding” and “learning how to plan” phases are particularly associated with this result. Our findings also lead us to recognize the benefits of the group approach because it is through discussion, sharing and helping each other that women break out of their isolation and learn best, even more so than in an expert-client relationship. Furthermore, other characteristics of *Devenir* contributed to the positive results. We might mention the temporal perspective, the metaphor of the tree and the experiential learning method. Lastly, there is no need to mention the interest in an approach that from the outset recognizes the importance of the relational aspect in women’s lives rather than hiding it or considering it as a potentially damaging weakness.

In Québec, an adaptation of *Devenir* was developed to meet the specific needs of single mothers between the ages of 18 and 30 who were welfare recipients with little education. This seven-week adapted version, involving a 20-hour weekly schedule, was named *Devenir autonome [Becoming independent]* (Spain et coll., 1997) and the women reported that, as a result, they delayed a second pregnancy, took action, gained greater self-esteem and self-confidence, learned to reconcile multiple roles, regained power instead of being subjects, experienced a success by completing a project, dared take their place and assert themselves, discovered their potential, regained hope, saw themselves in the working world, broke out of isolation, found solutions and concrete support for certain problems, discovered new avenues,

gave themselves room and became more familiar with available resources. This initial experiment led project officials to recommend offering more sessions.

In France, *Devenir* was used in guidance and skills inventory sessions by the Maison de la promotion sociale d’Artigues, the Atelier pédagogique personnalisé de Bayonne and the Centre interinstitutionnel de bilans de compétences de Bordeaux. These attempts now enable us to make a few observations about the use of this approach in that country (C.I.B.C. 33, 1995; MPS, 1995, 1996; Ginisty, 1997).

First, there was a consensus among the counsellors that this approach made their work easier. The explanation of values and references to the work along with the methodical and methodological organization of the successive investigations clarify the counsellor’s role and mission. But *Devenir*’s essential contribution lies in its ability to give participants more power over their own lives. And it does so by working on a person’s “identity capital” through a succession of sequences that creates an organized awareness of her personal and relational resources. Moreover, the pragmatism of this approach allows strategies for career realization to emerge through interaction with the reality of their environment, yet in a framework geared towards organizing and constructing representations. In so doing, *Devenir* becomes symbolic and meaningful, and affects the individual’s identity. In today’s increasingly complex world where collective identities are vanishing with the result that the ability to represent, understand and construct one’s identity is substantially altered, *Devenir* proves to be a valuable alternative.

A review of *Devenir* provides additional information about the benefits cited by participants: a tremendous increase in independence and self-confidence, better communication skills, deeper knowledge of themselves and a broader vision of the working world, more realistic reintegration plans, more self-assertion and a sense of being better prepared to take action after having purged any fatalism and pessimism and envisaging an occupation compatible not only with family obligations but also with the reality of their socioeconomic environment. Ultimately, participants regain power over their lives along with a sense of having greater control over their future.

The *Devenir* guidance program offered in its entirety in Québec and in France along with its adaptations has so far proven beneficial, but the evaluative studies must be continued in order to arrive at a more accurate measurement of its effects.

Devenir's Contributions to Diversifying Choices and Limitations

Before going any further, it is worth repeating that *Devenir* was not designed exclusively to encourage women to enter non-traditional fields. Rather, as we said, it was created to help girls draw up a meaningful, realistic and achievable plan for the future, developed as an extension of their identity and unique relational setting while taking the environment into consideration. In other words, the image of the tree symbolically encompasses every aspect that must be taken into account to make an informed decision congruent with the individual concerned.

With regards to non-traditional occupations, we, like Landry (1999), consider it essential to provide girls with the support they need to imagine every possible opportunity, yet without creating undue pressure for one particular choice. But, due to the abundance of ignorance, prejudice and obstacles associated with non-traditional occupations (Greene and Stitt-Ghodes, 1997; Hémond, 1999a), these questions must be dealt with head-on in any guidance process. Lastly, like Fortier (1999), we value the honest, realistic promotion of non-traditional careers. In this respect, *Devenir* includes activities along these lines.

To be precise, in exploring occupations and careers, participants must find out about as many as possible in every field. Also, in selecting the guest speakers who talk about their careers in relation to other activity spheres, it is desirable for the choice to fall on areas the women are less likely to explore, such as non-traditional occupations or science and engineering. Lastly, the reports on the job interviews that participants have to produce must be coordinated so that ultimately the group covers all 12 employment sectors. The group leaders have strict orders to ensure that every sector is explored, particularly science, wildlife, mechanics, industry and business. This provides an opportunity to meet women in jobs "off the beaten track."

With regards to the self-understanding phase, all the activities related to interests, talents, values, success criteria, motivational factors, family-career strategies, and lifestyles contain elements related to non-traditional occupations. To cite a few examples: What employment sector attracts me the most? At what organizational level (support personnel, technician, professional or manager) do I want to work? Would I like to carry out research studies, scientific or technical work, understand or design mechanisms, study the clinical or physical reactions of elements? Do I have the skills required to lead a team, assume responsibility, read blueprints, roadmaps or wall maps? Am I motivated to take on challenges, exercise power, gain prestige? We might add, however, that these factors are not introduced at the expense of others related to the more traditional occupations and careers pursued by women. It should be recalled that the meaning given by the individual to her orientation plan is of prime importance for its fulfillment, and that undue pressure towards non-traditional occupations runs counter to *Devenir's* humanist thrust (Spain, Hamel and Bédard, 1997). Incidentally, might not the dropout problem associated with non-traditional training and occupations (Landry, 1999) be the consequence of making an inadequately informed and significant choice?

According to Crozier (1996), individuals whose sense of identity is based on a relational self tend to choose "relational" occupations. Yet this does not mean that their choices are limited to careers as an educator or nurse. Quite the opposite: these stereotypes must be overcome to show that pursuing a traditionally male path can also allow them to express and achieve a relational sense of self. For example, technology, more than an end in itself, can also be regarded as having a human and social dimension, and fitting into a personal desire to help people and contribute to society (Fortier, 1999, p. 15). *Devenir* group leaders must therefore be careful to provide accurate information and minimize the consequence of biases against non-traditional occupations. In this regard, the documentation available to

participants must include material such as *Folles du génie* that demystifies non-traditional occupations. In fact, the testimonials and material compiled in this book (Hémond, 1999b) will remove some of the prejudices and narrow ideas that exist with regards to engineering. It shows how a career in engineering can fulfill the professional lives of women interested in creativity, human relations, and tangible achievements, without shattering their personal plans. One might also suggest *Des métiers pour les filles* (collection published by Éditions Ma carrière inc., 1998) which is a guide for exploring non-traditional occupations and careers for women that describes the position these women have succeeded in carving out for themselves, over the years, in fields long reserved for men. The questions being asked by the younger generation eager to pursue a different path are all answered by those who have blazed the trail!

Furthermore, guidance experts must seriously take into consideration the context of the type of work environment and ask those interested in non-traditional occupations to clarify their own work values, interests and expectations, so as to have their choice be one that is as informed as possible (Cook, 1993). Hence the purpose is not to provide a flawless portrait of non-traditional occupations, but rather to “tell it as it is.” Non-traditional occupations involve not only benefits, but also obstacles that have to be overcome (Hémond, 1999). Temisjian (1999) notes that the entry of women into jobs whose structure and content are organized essentially by men represents a major problem for women... The established requirements of the job, such as the hierarchical work structure, do not necessarily correspond to the female model (p. 14). Meanwhile Fortier (1999) emphasizes the fact that, for a woman to succeed as an engineer or in any other profession, motivation is important because the environment does not always welcome women and makes it hard to reconcile

development of a career plan with that of a personal and family life plan. This female engineer recommends promoting the profession by openly describing the problems, ones that include competition and rivalry, informal alliances and the male culture, in order to rectify expectations that cannot be fulfilled in practice and to make women better prepared to cope with these difficulties. In *Devenir*, one activity essentially focuses on this culture of the working world because, when we talk about the future and socioprofessional integration, it's a question of finding out in what type of world the person wishes to develop. Since the working world is a so-called masculine world built on male concepts of work and success, it is built around male standards and values. This activity seeks to provide a portrait of these accepted work values and emphasize that individuals can have values that more or less correspond to the portrait. After learning about the culture of the working world, participants are asked to compare the socially accepted work values and criteria of success with their own.

Conclusion

In brief, *Devenir* is an orientation workshop which, rather than serving exclusively to encourage women to enter non-traditional fields, aims to diversify their career choices by permitting a wide-ranging exploration of the working world and offering a means of self-understanding so that they can draw up plans that are consistent with their identity and take into consideration the environment and the interaction between the two. Moreover, the program covers the relational issues of women's career paths, their global perspective in envisaging the future, and the singularity of each one's path. Clearly, these factors are built-in rather than negated because *Devenir* assumes to work with women by recognizing intelligence, consistency, and the value of their way of doing things, one in which a career is not a locomotive to which one's life is tied. In this reorganization of values lies the gist of the challenge facing anyone interested in leading this group orientation program or using its approach for individual counselling.

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* The development of *Devenir* was subsidized by Laval University, the Canadian Guidance and Counselling Foundation, and Human Resources Development Canada.

Anyone interested in obtaining a complete bibliography of the writings by the creators of *Devenir* bearing on their surveys of the literature, methodology and research findings should contact CERDEC, Faculté des sciences de l'éducation, Université Laval, Québec, Canada, G1K 7P4, Telephone: (418) 656-2131 ext. 2256, Fax: (418) 656-2885, E-mail: Armelle.Spain@fse.ulaval.ca.

Egalitarian Approaches in Training: Diversification or Equality of Results?



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Introduction

My presentation will discuss the following question: in the struggle against the systemic discrimination that still puts women at a disadvantage in the job market, what type of approach, including the school system, can guarantee greater equality between men and women? Given the principle of *equal opportunity* for girls in access to the school system and non-traditional training, to what extent can greater gender equality be ensured in our society? Can this orientation be reflected in an *equality of results* to more concretely rebalance the societal contrast between the sexes, starting primarily with education? In other words, to what extent can the school system be used to eliminate inequities and above all promote greater gender equality?

In a 1995¹ study for the Commission, I found that both the pre-university and university education of boys and girls still differ in part, a situation likely to disadvantage numerous women after they join the work force. Moreover, I observed that the job-entry results of men and women with equivalent education varied considerably, even to the extent of being considered inequities. The educational gains (enrollment, degrees) achieved by women to date have only been partially transposed at the time of their entry into the work force, a finding echoed in a 1999 report from the Ministère de l'Éducation.² This finding led to the confirmation that, despite a general objective of equality through education, the school system may largely contribute to, but does not, on its own, determine the automatic application of gender equality in the employment system and within society as a whole.

1 Applications Restricted to Education and Egalitarian Principle

A general principle of equality of results aimed at promoting a gender balance is described here, not only for application to the school system, but also primarily for transposition to society.

1.1 THE DIVERSIFICATION OF WOMEN'S EDUCATION (NON-TRADITIONAL AND OTHER OCCUPATIONS): GAINS AND LIMITATIONS

The phenomenon of sexist education in the school system is generally explained by exclusion based on the student's sex. It leads to promoting women's access to traditionally male fields.

In this context, the solution to the problem of women's underrepresentation in some industries and jobs is the diversification of girls' educational choices to ensure an insertion that is more in line with that of boys. Diversifying the education of girls is therefore often considered the perfect means of desexualizing skills. This diversification of girls' educational options assumes that the results of workforce entry would equal that of boys if girls had greater access to so-called male fields such as non-traditional occupations. But does this educational option, without guaranteeing workforce-entry results, automatically lead to social equality between the sexes? In effect, how can, for example, an increase in the representation of girls studying towards high-tech careers, which are considered the jobs of the future and therefore automatically superior in terms of benefits, ensure gender equality in the labour market? No one would dare guarantee that these specialties lead to it *ipso facto*, particularly in a context where the depth of current changes to the notion of work are leaving many people bewildered, even in the so-called industries of the future. But above all, is it not wrong, in this case, to base the ideal of gender equality solely on the question of girls' educational choice and motivation, as this approach would have us do?

Before we can approve this or any other option with respect to regulatory measures to be adopted, certain factors must be examined more closely.

1.2 HOW ACADEMIC SUCCESS AND PERFORMANCE STANDARDS ARE MORE IMPERATIVE IN THE CASE OF GIRLS

Pursuit of the goal of equality stems from a universal principle that is abstract or theoretical. Thus plans to diversify female education are usually based on an implicit standard of gender equality. The educational projects involving non-traditional occupations developed solely for girls rely on a standard of performance and academic success that is applied to girls more than it is to boys.

Despite the undeniable benefits of these efforts, notably the increase in the educational potential of girls, which is seen more and more often, their limitations or constraints quickly become apparent and are easy to pinpoint.

In fact, the option of diversifying female education, operating on the basis of the school system, is rooted in the ideology of individual choice. This option is misleading however, because for most girls, as studies show, their career choices are often dictated by life choices. Their family situation, and not just the nature or anticipated value of their educational baggage, is what determines their career choice. Moreover, this option is incomplete if we consider that entering the work force depends equally if not more on labour market conditions and policies as on the individual qualifications and skills that applicants have acquired through education. Furthermore, we have already surveyed the phenomenon of diploma inflation, one that can affect some female categories in apparently promising fields.

The assumption of career choice would therefore appear to be highly debatable, especially in light of our indicators which found that, given *chosen* equivalent education (same level and degrees in the same field), the workforce-entry results of women are not equal to those of men (unemployment rate, occupation, earnings, etc.).

Hence increasing female representation in a field of study does not automatically close the gender gap in the job market (income, promotions, etc.). The evidence is

clear that gender equality and coeducation cannot be achieved simply by addition: adding women where now there are only men. Diversifying female education and occupations runs up against many other issues. The sexual division of labour is not just a technical problem or mechanical split between jobs adapted to each gender's specific characteristics, which education claims to develop. For this reason, the "logic of education" alone cannot solve the problem of evaluation and recognition of female jobs as a preoccupation underlying the egalitarian objective in the struggle against sexual discrimination. The strategies for achieving this type of change are complex because they imply that a better balance must be achieved between individuals of different sexes, in other words between men and women as producers in a society and not just at school. Only efforts aimed at linking education with society could bring about these more profound changes.

1.3 A SUMMARY OF EXISTING MEASURES AND PRINCIPLES

To explain and eliminate the inequities, the analysis of education as a complex system means taking into consideration the perverse effects of certain forms of interventions in the classroom that are based implicitly on the sex of the student (just girls in this case). The sociological analysis then serves to elucidate the mechanisms of abstract egalitarian projects and the perverse effects of policies and new school regulations intended to be generous.

Structural changes to educational rules and policies have sought to reorganize the general context in which teaching and learning take place. To date, corrective measures to abolish sexism in education have been attempted (primarily in the United States but also in other English-speaking countries and Canada).

1.3.1 A REVIEW OF THE LEGISLATION ACROSS CANADA

The educational approaches that first interested us are those which, through provincial (antidiscrimination) legislation across Canada, are based on the principle of equality (or equity).

So far, an initial survey and synthesis has been carried out to determine the government's position, in each Canadian province, on gender equality in education.³ We therefore now have some information for describing the equity (or equality) principles and measures established in each province. An analysis of these principles and measures as applied to education and occasionally, by extension, to other fields as well, enables us to outline the egalitarian applications adopted. This study can also indicate, in a more detailed manner, the specific role played in each province's initiative by the presence of a *charter of rights and freedoms*, which is very useful to agencies such as the *Commission des droits de la personne et des droits de la jeunesse*, whose mission is to interpret and enforce the provisions of the Québec Charter.

What specific egalitarian approaches for women (guidelines and policy statements as well as intervention measures) have been adopted in the field of education in each province across Canada?

While there are obvious similarities in the equality framework of several Canadian provinces, as is rendered evident in the official statements we reviewed, striking disparities are apparent in its transposition into the adopted approaches. Some provinces, such as Saskatchewan and British Columbia, have taken an approach built around equity of sex, whereas most of the other provinces, including Alberta, Manitoba, Ontario, Québec, etc., and this judging from the source documents we examined, have adopted less structured and even less formalized egalitarian approaches for combating discrimination.

Rather than reiterating the entire legal-philosophical discussion on the meaning of the concepts of equity⁴ and equality that each province cites, we will only note that these disparities are primarily manifest in the overlapping variations in terminology. In fact, in referring to equality between the sexes, most provinces talk about "gender equity" rather than "sex equity" (six out of eight provinces use *equity* rather than *equality* and five of the six use *gender equity* rather than *sex equity*. When Ontario—the only province to do so—uses the term "sex equity", it is to be understood in terms of socialization and refers to objectives (equal opportunity, equal access, equal representation, etc.) to be attained between sexual categories. In this perspective, equality of the

sexes means female socialization and the elimination of stereotypes to provide access (opportunities) or enable success (results).

The truth is that the preferential use of either “sex equity” or “gender equity” is not always clearly apparent at the level of a province’s definition of the theoretical framework. Are we to conclude from these variations in terminology from one province to the next that their concepts of equality differ, since legal-philosophical traditions and even options inevitably determine the choice of terms? In this perspective, it would be interesting to undertake at some point a more in-depth analysis of contemporary legal-philosophical definitions of the concept of equality, as well as to ascertain how, in particular, the very concept of gender can be concretely integrated into precise objectives of equality between the sexes.

In fact, we find that two provinces, British Columbia and Saskatchewan, have a specific policy on equity and/or equality of the sexes in education. A third province, New Brunswick, has apparently also approved such a policy. Note that these policies are relatively recent: they date back to 1991 in Saskatchewan and 1989 in British Columbia and New Brunswick. Manitoba has no policy on sex equity but a law, the Code of Human Rights, that explicitly prohibits discrimination on the grounds of differences between the sexes as well as differences based on sex. Finally, in addition to Manitoba, six other provinces have no specific policy on equity and/or equality of the sexes in education; these are Alberta, Prince Edward Island, Nova Scotia, Ontario, Québec and Newfoundland.

Yet this lack of integrated policy does not mean that the issues of female education are completely absent from the government statements or measures we looked at. Most Canadian provinces have adopted specific gender-equality measures for the field of education. Depending on the province, however, these measures are more or less integrated into and coordinated with the overall egalitarian approach each province has adopted. Also, the provinces with specific policies on female education are those with the most elaborate strategies and measures (British Columbia and Saskatchewan), as attested to by the official documents. Yet a review of the documentation reveals that Alberta, Manitoba, New Brunswick and Québec have developed measures that, while very summary at times, refer to a definition of

the general problem of inequalities between the sexes. These measures generally take the form of resource and evaluation guides for teachers and schools, to purge educational materials (curricula, textbooks, etc.) of sexual stereotypes so as to make them nondiscriminatory. Let us note that Québec has also adopted educational measures (police technology in college, construction trades in high school) that target women as a discriminated-against group. Most provinces (Alberta, British Columbia, Manitoba, New Brunswick, Nova Scotia, Ontario, Québec and Saskatchewan) therefore have this type of tool even though they have not adopted an explicit policy on gender equality in education.

Moreover, certain provinces’ specific educational measures for women go beyond this strict framework to also encompass the problems women face and the difficulties they encounter in the labour market (Alberta’s approach) as well as the issue of conjugal violence (British Columbia’s approach). Finally, if a province’s egalitarian approach explicitly refers to human rights (New Brunswick, Nova Scotia, Saskatchewan, etc.), this approach extends not only to sexual discrimination and women’s education, but also to other forms of discrimination (based on ethnic origin, socioeconomic status, handicap, religion, etc.). Although in these cases the initiative stems from the province having a charter of human rights or similar legislation (Multiculturalism and Human Rights in British Columbia; Code of Human Rights in Manitoba; Multiculturalism/Human Rights in Education in New Brunswick; Charter of Rights and Education Act in Saskatchewan), responsibility for implementing the measures is, in most provinces, at the discretion of the Ministry of Education. Overall, six provinces have intervention strategies or tools despite having no general policy on gender equality in education. We might add that British Columbia and, even more so, Saskatchewan, stand out very sharply from the other provinces in terms of the theoretical articulation, the scope and the pertinence of their proposed strategies.

We can close by saying that the differences in terminology and in the types of egalitarian approach adopted appear to reflect a theoretical concept of equality which is constantly being reinterpreted according to never

agreed-upon nor definitive legal-philosophical terms. This leads one to ask what real impact a framework for equality that is more virtual than prescriptive can have on the relation between the sexes. Conversely, we can also wonder how far one can go in transposing, to the educational system, concrete prescriptions stemming from a framework whose goal is equality. For what ultimately emerges from our analysis is a variable capacity to mobilize on the basis of a precise, consistent and homogeneous egalitarian approach, and to transpose this approach into concrete applications and perhaps, above all, into programs (creation, production) common to the players involved at the different levels and defined in an operational manner: which means not only coordination, but also a division of responsibilities to gain real control over the objectives of equality and the determination of precise means of attaining them.

1.3.2 QUÉBEC AND EQUAL OPPORTUNITY PROGRAMS IN EDUCATION FOR WOMEN

Article 86 of the Québec *Charter of human rights and freedoms* calls for the establishment of equal-opportunity programs for women, among others, in the field of education. In fact, these programs aim to encourage a nondiscriminatory or more equitable representation of members of groups that are the victims of discrimination (examples include members of ethnic or visible minorities, as well as aboriginals) in study programs where their numbers are sparse. This is a means of creating a better link between the education and employment of these individuals insofar as they have the qualifications required to embark on a career.

It was against this background that a policy technology program was introduced at three Québec CEGEPs in the Montréal region (Ahuntsic, John Abbott and Maisonneuve) in January 1995, a first for the CEGEP system. Among the goals of this equal opportunity program (EOP) was to raise the percentage of women admitted in police technology programs to 41%, thereby ensuring that the representation of women on the police force more closely matches the population they serve.⁵

In addition to the implementation of an EOP in education, we might note that some other forms of intervention have also taken place in Québec. For example, an agreement with the paper industry in Témiscamingue has led women (and aboriginals) to enroll in vocational studies in paper technology so that they can apply for the jobs available at the pulp and paper mills in the area.

Finally, we might mention that various partners are developing a multistage action plan to increase women's representation in the construction industry work force. To create a pool of women capable of entering and remaining in the industry, a series of upstream measures are planned (occupational exploration techniques and promotional tools, interorganizational coordination, employment training, places reserved for women in study programs, etc.). Meanwhile, the recommendation that Québec school boards reserve a minimum number of places for girls in construction trade programs remains under study by the Ministère de l'Éducation.⁶

1.3.3 TO DO: A GENERAL EVALUATION OF PAST EFFORTS AND THEIR IMPACT

While it has been important, up to this point, to know what provinces adopted (or did not adopt) specific approaches to gender equality in education, it is essential to determine the real impact of these approaches. What type of gender equality are these approaches trying to achieve? And what results have they produced in terms of equality between the sexes? Additional research will be necessary to answer these questions and assess the real effect of existing measures.

Moreover, international comparisons would also enhance an evaluation of the regulatory measures tried so far in education, and this by leading to a clearer understanding of their impact.⁷ In this regard, a review of the international literature would be essential for measuring attainment of the stated objectives and determining the concrete effects of egalitarian reforms in the schools, with a view to mapping out what means to use.

If achieving greater equality between the sexes means taking action in schools, any measures that are adopted must strive for concrete results not only in education, but also in society, as we will now see.

2 Elements of a Broader Egalitarian Approach

Given the factors we have already mentioned, let us now repeat the basic question: What principles of equality should underlie an approach and what concrete egalitarian objectives should this approach strive for, in terms of the sexes as specific categories?

General theories of equal rights expect universal equality in the educational mission, without concretely specifying the results in terms of the social categories of sex. Thus in the theoretical debate on equality in education, we cite equal access and opportunity as values, without considering the results, by assuming an implicit equivalence of individuals (defined apart from any specific categorical criterion such as sex, for example).

2.1 INTRODUCTION OF AN APPROACH BASED ON EQUALITY OF RESULTS: REQUIREMENTS AND STAGES

Specific feminist theses have shown that egalitarian ideals have not completely gotten through to women (jobs, pay, etc.), thereby underscoring their social nonequivalence in comparison to men.

2.1.1 Taking equality/inequality indicators into account

To more firmly grasp and ultimately combat the inequalities between men and women, indicators⁸ of male-female equality/inequality in society must be taken into consideration. A project to promote gender equality should aim for results that are tangible or measurable through indicators such as, for example, pay and other employment income, as well as paid work, occupational discontinuity and its discriminatory consequences for women.

Pay and other employment income

In explaining the pay gap between men and women, we should take into account not only educational standards (type of training, degrees, level of education, etc.) but also the inequitable situations that persist in the job market with respect to pay and work income even when qualifications are equal.⁹

Paid work, occupational discontinuity and its discriminatory consequences

Moreover, in measuring pay inequalities between the sexes, we still use the standard of the full-time lifelong job, whereas we should consider not only pay and employment income, but also the earnings from freelance and contract work.¹⁰ In limiting the analysis to the standard paid job, we blind ourselves to the social forces which today still make women's economic status inferior to that of men even though massive numbers of them have entered the work force in the past three decades.

Furthermore, a phenomenon such as career interruption, which already affects women more than it does men, combined with the problem of the negative and even discriminatory consequences that women face as a result of these interruptions, can explain, at least in part, the gap in employment income between the two sexes. Women devote more time and have no hesitation about interrupting their career path to take care of their family; particularly, they suffer the consequences of this at various levels. Studies done at the *Commission des droits de la personne et des droits de la jeunesse*, using cases of discrimination based on pregnancy for the Rights and Labour Tribunals, clearly show that women still suffer discriminatory consequences when they take, for example, a maternity or parental leave, even though they are fully entitled to one by law.

Among other discriminatory consequences upon returning to work from a leave due to pregnancy we find, for example, non-recognition of the seniority accumulation during such a maternity leave (case at Ville de Montréal¹¹). We also note non-recognition of pregnancy benefits as replacement pay during a precautionary cessation of work and a maternity leave with the discriminatory effect of a reduction in the plaintiff's vacation (Roussin case¹²) or severance pay.

Other discriminatory consequences, this time observed upon returning to work from a parental leave or other type of leave for parental obligations: loss of seniority by contractual teachers (case of a school board in Québec), and consequences that in some instances (case of a Québec public servant submitted to Labour Tribunal arbitration) can extend to loss of employment after a maternity or parental leave.

The conceptual approach that must be adopted as a solution to inequalities between the sexes must therefore combine egalitarian principles with the contribution of feminist theses. The latter have clearly revealed the systemic aspect of sexual discrimination through the interconnected mesh of forms of discrimination linking school, work and home. Yet, these exhibits are based on an argument focused solely on women and the implicit sexual difference, a one-sidedness that has prevented recognition of the spheres shared by the sexes at school, home, work, etc. Nonetheless, the feminist theories and their applications, focused on the differentialistic approach, have long been unable to go beyond this level. Hence they were incapable of leading to a concrete, explicit concept of the equality of individuals of different sexes in terms of general social relations.

Therefore, as we have seen, equality of opportunity in education, a desirable social principle, does not mean equality of results. Nonetheless, blurring the line between equality of opportunity and results so that they seem a natural extension of each other is an attractive option because it places the virtualities of the educational system on a very high plane.

Meanwhile the interpretation of equality of results may take two different forms in the field of education: same progress or same choices.

- Same progress: promoting equal school progress among individuals, based on a starting point (e.g. enrollment), can mitigate an early stage of inequality, as mentioned.
- Same choices: equality exists only if there is a proportional representation of each group (sex in this case) at the level of educational choices and academic success (for example in degrees awarded). Here the only obstacle would appear to be the choices individuals make. This interpretation, however, overlooks the fact that some groups, women for example, may “choose” certain options in disproportionate numbers for reasons that are cultural in nature (family obligations in sight and anticipation of a shortened, deferred or piecemeal career, for example; or else, career choice as an extension of the woman’s function within the family) while boys may decide to invest less in academic performance, also for cultural reasons.

With both versions of the principle of equality in education we find that, while they pursue valid universal social goals, they provide no assurance of specific “results.” This type of universal egalitarian principle does not, in practice, guarantee a concrete equalization of educational and social benefits.

- Same results: women achieving workforce-entry results equivalent to those of men would therefore constitute final-stage egalitarianism. This type of equality would be defined in terms of destination (equality of employment income, for example) rather than just starting points (equal opportunity in access and academic success). At this stage, this would require determining gender equality after emerging from the school system, in other words, where the real stakes (social and economic) of education come into play within society.

Naturally, at this point the two principles set forth in the Charter come to the fore: equal access to all jobs in the market and equal pay for equivalent work.

2.2 TOWARDS PROMOTING A GENDER BALANCE

In setting concrete equality objectives, for individuals of different sexes, in society’s common spheres, we can look to the feminist theses. Beyond all implicit sexual differences, we can recognize the equivalent status of individuals of different sexes by clarifying the issue of gender equality between them in those common spheres.

Concrete promotion of gender equality would require changing the framework in which boys and girls “choose” their educational orientation, progress along that track and enter the job market—in brief, changing the social relationship between the sexes.

2.2.1 *Examples of concrete measures, including a few European experiments*

While concrete measures to promote equality between men and women shape school conditions prior to entering active life, in order to ensure that the real egalitarian effects are truly transposed socially, the educational proposals must also be connected to empirical workforce-entry conditions.

Since educational and labour-market realities still make widespread use of different logic for men and women, despite the development of models in this area,

the egalitarian ideal must therefore take them directly into consideration. Thus in the school system, if we want to achieve greater equality between the sexes by diversifying the traditional education of girls, for example, logically we must also consider modifying that of boys. Incidentally, some egalitarian experiments along these lines are already being conducted in Europe, particularly in Ireland, the United Kingdom and Denmark; they involve introducing boys to non-traditional work experiences. Apart from the school system as such, since the changes concern both men and women, the two categories should equally be involved in them.

2.2.2 *Towards rebalancing gender differences*

For ultimately the key question, which primarily concerns the changes to be made to the status of women, is related to what effects need be obtained in terms of the social relationship between the sexes. Any concrete measures proposed must therefore encompass a variety of facets in the pursuit of gender equality. This type of perspective concretely links proposals for women's education and training to the core issue of women's financial freedom in society. This financial freedom of women must incorporate genuine equity objectives. The research themes being pursued at both international and Québec institutions explore the reconciliation of family and work obligations and are focusing on concrete action consistent with the new realities facing both working women and men. Consequently, the analysis of this research orientation is bound to have an impact on the very definition of the concept of education and training for both girls and boys, and to do so in light of the sharp rise of continuing education in advanced societies.

An educational policy integrated with a real employment policy, for example, would undoubtedly work because it would lead to a shake-up in many of the strategies for making use of women workers. Similarly, a genuine egalitarian approach in our type of society, pursued on both a political and economic level, would be convincing if accompanied by a redefinition of the responsibility for children (and other family obligations).

To reach both men and women in an effort to reconcile family and career obligations, one might suggest, for example, applying a policy of parental leave, work

schedule adjustments and reduction formulas, and various childcare services, all of which are consistent with the proposals now emanating from both national and international organizations. All these measures, striving towards changes whose effect will be to rebalance the position of women and men, will likely always encounter resistance, given that they touch social issues linked to promoting the development of an egalitarian view of the male/female relationship in society. But if the effort clearly aims to abolish, in an advanced society such as Québec, any rigid demarcation of social roles solely on the basis of an individual's sex, this is a battle in which men and women stand united.

Conclusion

To change the structure of the relationship between the sexes in our society, concrete equality objectives must therefore simultaneously incorporate three analytical categories or contents:

- Content of the level of the individual as a person
 - Content of the collective level of sexual categories
 - Content of the level of institutional rules
- At the level of the individual, the political effort at change should focus on information and the personal motivation of women (and also men) as individuals. Potential action might therefore take the form of orientation, socialization, or recycling, etc.
 - At the collective level of sexual categories, the analysis must focus, starting at school, on the systemic mechanisms that differentiate access to certain specialties. In the labour market, the measures must correct signs of economic inequality between men and women, especially in hiring and on the job. The inequalities are certainly apparent in traditional, typically feminine jobs, but they are also in the work and profile of atypical precarious new-generation women workers (educated, skilled, etc.). The inequalities can take the form of lower pay, or the lack of security, stability, opportunities, or promotions; they can also appear as discriminatory personnel-management rules, particularly for leaves (maternity, parental), seniority, etc.

Among the possibilities for remedial action is an upgrade of certain job titles and pay in traditionally female occupations that should be pursued, as in the case of Québec's Pay Equity Act. If, upstream from the job market, in other words at school, we continue breaching the male ramparts, we should also measure the phenomenon of diploma inflation which appears to be affecting certain new female categories. Lastly, basic protection should be developed for the atypical categories.

- In terms of institutional rules, measures should rebalance economic occupations and social activities. In our advanced societies, unemployment, underemployment, precarious employment and poverty exclude many people from the work force despite their academic qualifications. In this context, "economically non-profitable" activities (training, volunteer work, artistic creation, household chores, childcare, nursing, care of family, etc.) are keeping more and more people occupied. At this level, the possibilities of social reorganization should enable us to rethink and even redistribute the workload (and the prosperity it creates). For example, flexible work schedules would make it easier to reconcile the various forms of personal activities and responsibilities (family, work, education) throughout an individual's lifecycle.

An effective approach to equality should be built around the types of concrete measures we have outlined. The school system's ability to promote real gender equality therefore depends on going, to some extent, beyond strictly education bounds, and this within an overall effort to balance the relationship between the sexes.

¹ See Lucie France Dagenais, *Recherche sur les inégalités scolaires: discrimination sexuelle en éducation?*, Commission des droits de la personne et des droits de la jeunesse, 1995: 58.

² Isabel Bernier, *Tendances relatives à l'intégration des femmes diplômées des universités au marché du travail*, Gouvernement du Québec, 1999: 58.

³ See Lucie France Dagenais, "Description des approches d'égalité entre les sexes en éducation dans les provinces canadiennes", *Revue canadienne de l'éducation*, vol. 21, no. 3, summer 1996: 241 to 256.

⁴ See Magdi Sami Zaki, "Définir l'équité", *Vocabulaire fondamental du droit*, 1990.

⁵ In this regard see: Commission des droits de la personne et des droits de la jeunesse, *Les programmes d'accès à l'égalité au Québec. Bilan et perspectives*, December 1998: 121 and 145.

⁶ *Idem.*, p. 115-119.

⁷ In this regard, we cannot fail to mention the similar interest, albeit more recent than in Québec, in these issues by some European countries at a conference held in August 1998. See Paul Fogelberg et al. (Edited by), *Hard work in the Academy. Research and Interventions on Gender Inequalities in Higher Education*, Helsinki, University Press, 1999: 288.

⁸ Seer Frank S. Jones, PhD and Leroy O. Stone, PhD, *Conceptual Issues, Technical Problems, and Statistical Integration Questions in Work on Gender Equality Indicators*, Background paper, F.R.S.A. Analytical Studies Branch, Statistics Canada, 1999: 155.

⁹ On this subject see Dagenais, *idem* (March 1995: 27-41).

¹⁰ See Lucie France Dagenais, *Travail éclaté, protection sociale et égalité*, Éditions Yvon Blais, 1998: 233.

¹¹ See Lucie France Dagenais, *Discrimination fondée sur la grossesse: une analyse sociale à partir de la discontinuité professionnelle des femmes*, expertise sociologique, Commission des droits de la personne et des droits de la jeunesse, September 1997.

¹² See Lucie France Dagenais, *Interruption d'emploi aux fins de maternité et pénalités financières*, sociological opinion on a case, Commission des droits de la personne et des droits de la jeunesse, April 1999.

¹³ "Non-traditional work experience:

"Projects in Ireland (IRL 17, 18), the United Kingdom (UK 27, 28), and Denmark (DK 3) developed non-traditional work experience courses for girls, and one project, (UK 27) also introduced non-traditional work experience for boys.

"Boys were placed in nurseries working with young children and in old people's homes (UK 27). In an Irish project's mini-company (a school-based activity combining work experience and education for enterprise) boys were responsible for baking cakes and selling them in the local community (IRL 18).

"For girls, this meant visits to, or placements in, manual crafts such as carpentry, joinery, plumbing, painting and decorating, bricklaying, plastering, and scientific/technical fields such as electronics, micro-computing, welding and engineering.

"To find firms where girls can work alongside women trained in these fields can be a problem. Projects in Rennes (F 11), Shannon (IRL 18), Manchester (UK 27) compiled local directories of women working in manual crafts and technical trades as a resource to help teachers responsible for locating work experience placements. The Danish (DK 3) and Shannon (IRL 18) projects used the facilities of technical institutes and workshops to provide introductory courses for girls in which they could sample various manual trades in well-equipped workshops."

Source: European Community, "Transition of young people from education to adult and working life", *Gender equality strategies from the second transition programme*, Brussels, February 1988.

¹⁴ See: Bureau international du travail, *Travailleurs ayant des responsabilités familiales*, Geneva, 1993: 278.

Successful Networking: Each Partner's Role in Translating an Idea into a Reality



Gertrude Peinhaupt
Managing Director of nowa
(together with Heide Cortolezis)

Born in 1963, Gertrude Peinhaupt was Collaborator at the Women's Counselling Service Graz from 1984 to 1992. From 1992 to 1994, she developed and directed the "Women in

Technology and Trade" project and initiated the Regional Economic and Qualification Initiative Graz and Surrounding Communities association.

Ms. Peinhaupt has also held positions in feminist educational and social work (Frankfurt 1990-1992), project management, guidance and control as well as systemic organizational development (1996-1997).

nowa Network for Vocational Training is a nonprofit organization based in Austria. Since 1994, *nowa* has been acting as a regional initiative of the City of Graz and 25 communities of the county of Graz-Umgebung.

This nonpartisan association expresses the commitment to an active economic and employment policy for women on a regional level.

nowa is a new strategic approach to women's vocational training that focuses on non-traditional occupations. It was developed in response to the somewhat unsatisfactory experience with traditional models of qualification for women.

Thus, it necessarily uses an approach that specifically addresses the issues that women face, and bundles measures into integrated concepts in order to provide more continuous and comprehensive assistance and guidance.

Together with employers, *nowa* develops curricula for women. The main focus are occupations related to the new fields of technology.

nowa Is Currently Running Three Projects

1) NOWA-REGIONAL VOCATIONAL TRAINING INITIATIVE FOR WOMEN

A project by the order of the Public Employment Service and the Styrian government.

- a) *Individual qualification counselling.*
- b) *Courses in how to plan career and vocational training.*
- c) *TEKnowa*, a program supporting women's interest in technical occupations and trades.
- d) *Innovative training programs:* Together with employers, *nowa* develops gender-oriented training programs that focus on occupations in technical fields.

2) NOW@MOBILE INTERNETCAFE FOR WOMEN

nowa established the first InternetCafe for Women within the Fourth Medium-Term Action Programme for Equal Opportunities of Men and Women.

- a) *InternetCafe*, Learning and Resource Centre, free access to IT, learning-software, and a wide range of courses.
- b) *First European mobile Internetcafe for women*.
- c) *now@-URBAN* is appointed by the City of Graz to offer its female inhabitants living in a disadvantaged part of the city training opportunities by and through new technologies.

NOWA-EMPLOYMENT NOW COMMUNITY INITIATIVE

A project of the EU within the NOW community initiative that was launched on January 1, 1998.

The project was motivated by the fact that job offers decrease much faster than the actual work available, the latter being increasingly allocated through independent service contracts or set term employment. The aim of the project is to establish a service pool in which women can offer their tailor-made and company-related services to enterprises in the region.

The project aims to support women in *finding employment* after thorough consultation, orientation and qualification, thus avoiding the difficult endeavour of self-employment and *securing more reliable income*.

Below you will find further information about the work of the nowa - Regional Vocational Training Initiative for Women

OUR MAIN OBJECTIVES ARE TO:

- promote adult education for unemployed women
- open up new fields of activity and develop new job profiles for women
- stimulate businesses' willingness to train women
- promote women in fields of technology
- encourage women to choose technical professions and use new technology

Our partners in the achievement of these objectives are women interested in training and finding a job, the Public Employment Service, communities, adult educational institutions and businesses.

nowa acts as a hub between women interested in "non-traditional" training, innovative enterprises and communities. Our work is to identify the interests of women, companies and communities, and to develop solutions that meet the needs of all the parties.

WE FEEL THAT THE MOST IMPORTANT CONDITIONS FOR SUCCESS ARE:

- Regional networking, regional embodiment, including all regional actors when planning measures.
- Close cooperation with regional companies.
- Bundling of various measures into integrated concepts in order to support women throughout their endeavour and right into integration to the job market.
- Flexible tools to support flexible programs.
- Focus on techniques and new technologies as new fields of activity in companies.

As we mentioned above, we have two target groups: companies and unemployed women.

OUR WORK WITH COMPANIES:

The work we do with companies primarily involves determining how they want to develop their business and supporting their development of human resources in accordance with their visions and goals.

- Analyzing their fields of activity.
- Researching new qualification needs and overall requirements.
- Trial internships in companies.
- Counselling concerning subsidies and grants.
- Creating jobs and developing new job profiles.
- Designing demand-oriented training.

OUR WORK WITH WOMEN:

For women seeking second-chance education in non-traditional occupations, our services aim at enabling women to come to a meaningful career choice that will bring them long-term benefits.

- Reflecting previous career.
- Professional orientation.
- Searching and promoting technical interest with women-specific pedagogical approach.
- Investigating the job market and the vocational training market.
- Learning about job profiles and working conditions.
- Trial internships.

Once interests that are shared by women and companies are determined, we develop tailor-made training plans that suit both the interests of women participants and the need of the employer.

Together with both partners, we create individual training plans and programs (training content, period, amount of grant). On-the-job training internships in the company, theoretical training in adult educational institutions or vocational schools, interdisciplinary training and coaching are carried out at *nowa* (threefold training system).

An *individual training plan* (always including theoretical training at schools, adult-education institutions or colleges and on-the-job training in companies) is being developed together with the participants to meet both the needs of the regional labour market and the participants' abilities and knowledge.

A mandatory part of the training plan is to obtain expert opinions about the usability of training plans in the region; moreover trial internships of the desired profession is also an essential part in order to be able to examine how a career choice corresponds to the real market situation.

Furthermore women are supported with the implementation of their training plan, training enterprises are counselled and formalities of the training contracts are completed.

Lastly *nowa* provides women with women-specific guidance during their training. Taking place once a month for all participants as part of their theoretical training to help them acquire key qualifications, this interdisciplinary training also gives the women an opportunity to share their experiences in non-traditional professions.

INNOVATIVE TRAINING PROGRAMS:

In collaboration with the business, we develop training programs for a wide range of areas, focusing on non-traditional occupations.

At the beginning there is only an idea.

We obtain expert advice, we orient ourselves towards ideas brought forward by companies, develop the curriculum jointly with companies that hire trainees and with adult education institutions, we plan and organize the training.

After a period of on-the-job training with the participating companies, thus facilitating decision-making on both sides of the training, the applicant will be hired by the enterprise in compliance with the conditions of subsidized employment. An employment agreement between the employer and the employee is drawn up.

The training course always concentrates on three parts:

- On-the-job training with the participating company.
- Theoretical education in an institution for adult education and teaching.
- Interdisciplinary training and key qualifications at *nowa*.

EXAMPLES OF TRAINING WHICH WE HAVE CARRIED OUT:

- Qualified interior planner and consultant
- Basic course for the tourism and leisure industry
- Communication and computer-based information management
- Qualified car sales personnel
- CAD constructor for the automobile industry
- Assistant for information and communication technology
- CNC-technicians for automobile production
- Computer technician

THE ADVANTAGES FOR OUR PARTNERS:

- Women get opportunities to explore new profession fields.
- On-the-job and demand-orientated training are created permanently.
- Companies get motivated employees for new job profiles.
- Women obtain vocational training and jobs which fit their interests.
- According to our evaluation, long-term integration in the job market is significant.

Encouraging Women to Enroll in Engineering Programs



Cocky Booy **VHTO National Organization of Women in Higher Technical Education and Positions**

VHTO, the National Organization of Women in Higher Technical Education and Positions, works in many different ways to increase the involvement of

women and girls in advanced technological education, the technological employment market and government policy. We support and inform female technology students and engineers. Through network activities, databases, mentoring programs and internships, we bring women and technology together.

As a result of these activities, VHTO has a great deal of (quantitative as well as qualitative) data about this group of students and engineers, and up-to-date expertise about technological education and fields of employment.

In my presentation I will highlight some of our activities:

Quality Improvement and Expanding the Allure of Advanced Technological Education

Projects centred around learning styles, activating education methods and a 'gender inclusive curriculum' directly appeal to the quality of education. Quantitative management information, research and staff support sustain the emancipation policy of educational institutes. Training programs prepare students for a multifaceted future.

Supporting Junior Female Engineers and Assisting them in their Career Development

Projects like Mellow (international) and Meta support female technology students during the transition from study to employment, and later, once they have several years of work experience, with the development of their careers. These activities also contribute to keeping female engineers in the technological employment market.

Support in the Recruitment and Career Policy of the Technological Business Community

The 'Databank for female engineers' brings supply and demand together. Projects on combining work and private life, the transition from education to work and mentoring aim at increasing the inflow and strengthening the position of female engineers in the technological employment market.

Improving the Connection between Advanced Technological Education and the Knowledge and Interests of Girls in Secondary Education

This is achieved by means of projects in order to improve the cooperation between universities of professional education and secondary education, departing from the perspective of girls. Examples are an annual information magazine entitled 'Bits & Pieces' and 'Setting out for a day with female engineer' (another subdivision of the international Mellow project). But also by calling attention to commonplace technology, educational modernization of courses and the omnifarious career possibilities with an advanced technological education.

Although the innovative activities of my organization are primarily focused on women and girls, they have a much broader impact. Both male and female students and engineers benefit from these innovations.

As a result of being the national coordinator of WiTEC (Women in Science, Engineering and Technology in European Countries), VHTO is able to set up and test initiatives in the field of women and technology with transnational partners. In addition, participation in this European network offers many possibilities for translating foreign renewal impulses to the Dutch education and employment market.

In my presentation I will give special attention to the I+I project:

In this NOW (New Opportunities for Women) project, schooling in IT (Information Technology) has been developed for women returning to the job market. This project consists of an introduction of the 'vocational training for women' (vrouwenvakscholing) method developed by the vocational training centres for women. In this project VHTO will work together with three universities of professional technological education, the National Bureau for Women's Vocational Training and three women's vocational training centres.

For the transnational segment of the project, VHTO has joined 'IT-women', a cooperation of similar projects in Belgium, France, Germany, Northern Ireland and Denmark.

Encouraging Women to Enroll in Engineering Programs



Saskia Hovinga

Saskia Hovinga is 38 years old and lives with her husband and their two children, 9 and 4 years old, in Heemstede, Netherlands. Since 1987, she has worked with various employers on the theme of how to create better access for women in technical pro-

fessions. She has been involved in the design of policies as well as participated in practical actions such as developing new education programs or influencing employers to create jobs for women. Until October 1999, she worked for VVS Netherlands and has focused on the formula developed by the women's vocational training centres to improve access for women in non-traditional jobs.

Organization's Sector of Activity

VVS operates throughout the Netherlands under the authority of:

- Intermediaries: regional employment services (RBAs), departments of local social services and implementing bodies of trade associations (UVIs).
- Large companies such as IBM, KPN Telecom, Philips, Rabo Bank and ING.
- Branch organizations in the wholesale business, the building trade, the metal and electrotechnical industries, housing corporations, institutes for social services, small and medium-size enterprise and others.
- Ministerial departments, such as the Ministry of Economic Affairs, the Ministry for Social Affairs and Employment, and the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science.

Our sector of activity is therefore private, public, industrial and community.

Proposed Topic

Woman's Vocational Training Centres: A Formula That Works to Create Access for Women to Non-Traditional Occupations

Presentation Outline

I would like to talk about the methodology that the Women's Vocational Training Centres have developed to improve access to the labour market for women, especially in non-traditional jobs and new technologies.

My presentation will contain more information about the following subjects: the position of WVTC in the education field of the Netherlands, our partners and then, of course:

The Formula

- Market research
 - orientation
 - research in the areas of employers, trade unions, sector organizations, regional board of employment services
 - research among the target group
- Developing contents of the training/characteristics and organization of the training process
 - short
 - built on experience
 - strongly practice-oriented
- Mediation and guidance
 - precourse: recruitment, information, intake, selection
 - during the training period: training and guidance, individual counselling, job application training
 - after the training: supporting reentry to the labour market, reunion activities, network formation
- Conditions
 - short-term courses, part-time training, availability of day-care facilities, no classes during school holidays, no financial barriers, easily accessible by public transport, no formal entry qualifications for participation
- Training method
 - group study, oriented on professional practice, makes use of already acquired knowledge, experience and skills, adapted study material, treat participants as adults

Courses in Non-Traditional Occupations

- Informatics
- Printing and allied trades
- Engineering
- Construction
- Electronics
- Processing industry

Results

- Success rate
 - completed course: 90%
 - job/further training: 80%
- Total number of women trained > 8000
- Number of women taking courses per year > 1500
- Courses implemented: 40

Similar Projects in Other Countries

The Netherlands have an extraordinary new export product: vocational training for women. Several countries in Europe and beyond are discovering the expertise of VVS, and seek collaboration: Eastern European countries, Baltic states, Scandinavia, Portugal, but also the Antilles, as well as South-American and Southern-African countries.

VVS is actively participating in European action programs, such as NOW, Interreg, Leonardo, Socrates, PHARE, ESF and Adapt. The internationalization of education, an important issue in Europe, is taking shape through research, the implementation of new curricula, student exchanges and the internationalization of existing courses.

VVS is an active participant in IRIS and Cedefop.

With its knowledge of market research, VVS contributes to the realization of equal opportunities for women in Europe and beyond.

VVS is strongly in favour of the dissemination of knowledge and experience, and is eager to learn from other European countries and gain insight into foreign cultures, in order to understand them better and appreciate them more.

Mentoring: An Avenue Worth Exploring!



Cobi van Wijngaarden **CINOP**

Cobi van Wijngaarden (1960), CINOP, Netherlands, studied Social Sciences in Utrecht, the Netherlands. In 1987, she went to Mexico to do research about bilingual education in an indigenous village, and in 1989, she worked for the trade union, as an instructor. Since 1993, she has worked in various organizations whose main goal is to improve vocational education in the Netherlands. Since 1994, she has been an active mentor in vocational education, and she has written articles and organized conferences on this theme. She is currently working within CINOP as a national project leader of "Mentoring Bve", providing support to community colleges in the implementation of mentoring programs in the schools.

In this presentation, I would like to introduce the concept and the possibilities of mentoring, especially for girls who study technology and who would like to pursue a career in a non-traditional profession.

1 The Origins of Mentoring

Mentoring is a relatively new concept, with very old roots. In the Homer's *Odyssey*, a "Mentor" is the person who appears to Odysseus and to Telemachus, to help them. Guided by the goddess Athena, Mentor helps them to find their direction in life. Later, the term "mentor" referred to a more experienced person who helps younger people with life questions. During the last 10 years, there is a growing number of mentor projects in Europe, a specific way of guiding young persons which was started in the USA in the eighties. The main characteristic of mentoring is that a student is matched with professional who acts as a role-model and coach, to encourage students to develop their own identity and find their own way in study, work and life.

2 Situation in the Netherlands—the Position of Girls in Non-traditional Education and in Technology

In the Netherlands, there is an enormous inequality in regards to female studying and working in technology. The government has made this one of its priorities and has launched projects to motivate female students to choose a career in a non-traditional profession. One of the items in this policy is "techno-mentoring."

3 Techno-mentoring

Mentoring for girls in technical vocational education. The national Techno-Mentoring project started in 1996 to improve the position of female students in technical vocational education. I will tell about the Dutch experience with techno-mentoring, the positive aspects, the problems, the good practice examples and the effects.

4 Conceptual Framework—the Possibilities of Mentoring

Although all people involved in mentoring are very enthusiastic, the most important question is: What can you learn from your mentor? Does a mentor really help to improve the position of female students in technology, and why does it work? To answer this kind of question, we need a conceptual framework. First, we make a distinction between different kinds of projects:

- *Tutoring*: The accent is placed on cognitive learning capacities. Older students act as mentors.
- *Student-mentoring*: The accent is placed on cognitive learning processes as well as on learning processes focused on the possibilities to change the perspective on study and being young. Older students act as mentors.
- *Mentoring*: Suited for learning processes that are focused on the possibilities to change the perspective on study and the life-perspective, such as the development of a personal identity. Professionals act as mentors.

When do we choose tutoring, student-mentoring or mentoring? It depends on the goals targeted. In the different phases of students' academic careers, you can use different kinds of mentor projects:

CHOOSING A TECHNICAL CAREER

Mentoring helps students to develop:

- a more specific image of the profession they long for
- a clear plan to realize the chosen profession
- a more specific perspective of the meaning of labour for themselves and for others.

MAINTAINING YOURSELF IN A TECHNICAL CAREER

An increasing competence to maintain yourself in a technical career can be developed:

- a growing feeling of having control of one's situation
- an increasing self-awareness of the way one functions at school
- a growing knowledge of one's strengths and weaknesses

TAKING ON RESPONSIBILITY, FINDING A WORK-LEARNING ENVIRONMENT AND MAINTAINING YOURSELF DURING PRACTICE

A growing competence for choosing a work-learning place and maintaining yourself during practice:

- a growing ability to see the meaning of work for others

- acquiring better insight into the specific function that is desired for the future
- gain a better understanding of the kind of organization or company where you would like to work

CAREER LEARNING

Mentoring helps to find answers to questions such as:

- What kind of a person am I? What are my motivations, interests, strengths and weaknesses?
- Based on my personal characteristics, in which sector can I make a meaningful contribution to society?
- In which role can I realize a meaningful exchange with others?

5 Factors that Ensure the Success of the Mentor Projects:

- Think about the goals you want to realize, make choices.
- Clearly define the procedure to determine what kind of mentor a student needs.
- Make decisions about the strategy.
- Be aware of the consistency of the projects.
- Ensure that the mentor projects are well organized.
- Develop and maintain good relationships with companies.

Why Must Women Entrepreneurs Be Exceptional? Because They Are!



Nete Svennekjaer **Public Employment Service (PES)**

Nete Svennekjaer is an Equal Opportunity Adviser and Consultant with the Danish Public Labor Market Service in the region of Vejle, developing internal staff education.

Since 1989, she has participated in projects for W.E. both in Denmark and in several other European countries, and worked as a Consultant in European Union projects in Romania, Ukraine and Russia, among others, mostly concerning W.E.

She is a member of the KIN, Women In Network, Steering Group.

Background

Historically in Europe, starting up a business and establishing a network within the area has for a very long time been reserved to men. Back in the Middle Ages, a woman was not “allowed” to be a craftsman. However, under certain circumstances, the widows of craftsmen were permitted to run their husband’s business. Around the 18th century some exceptions were made, e.g. the weavers’ guild permitted women to work at home, but did not accept women as members.

There is a long historical tradition of men as entrepreneurs. Some trade unions include in the qualifications for vocational education that the apprentice can choose to continue as a journeyman or as a master craftsman after the apprentice traineeship, e.g. all the previous master craftsman education.

We all know of the success story of the man who started a small business from his father’s loft, and developed it into a worldwide company. When men want to start their own business, they have no trouble finding role models to guide them in their endeavour. This is more difficult for women, since they have very few role models to follow.

Throughout history, men have established formal and informal networks, e.g. lodges, trade associations, etc. Naturally, many of these networks are open to women, but the historical background and tradition, which are the foundations of the construction of these networks, are based on the qualifications and concerns of men.

Therefore, it is difficult for women to recognize their own problems/models, and this means that it is difficult for them to use the existing networks. Furthermore, there are differences in the foundations of their own businesses, which means that women’s needs are greater and different than those of their male counterparts.

Why Must Women Entrepreneurs Be Exceptional? Because They Are!

Women	Entrepreneur Profile	Men
Often in services or social work	<i>Age: 30–45 years Education: Medium term Married and have 1–2 children</i>	Often in production
Which will not grow too large	<i>Want to start a small business:</i>	Which will have increased growth
Interests or hobbies—the idea determines the business	<i>The idea for their own business arises from:</i>	Research showing a need for the product—the product determines the business
Very careful, especially as to finances; often have insufficient working capital	<i>Start of business:</i>	Larger financial risk along with larger working capital
Service	<i>Attaches importance to:</i>	Product
Have difficulty with changes impacting the family, are inclined to develop the business according to the needs of the family and give up opportunities where the family would have to adapt to the business	<i>Product renewal:</i>	The needs of the business have priority over the family. The business and the family are regarded as two separate entities.

Differences Between Male and Female Entrepreneurs

We need to be aware of the gender-based barriers that result in women and men being perceived and treated differently as well as of the differences in the choices that male and female entrepreneurs make. Differences can be observed in the way men and women develop ideas, choose trades, start up and manage a business, and develop products.

All future entrepreneurs have a lot of problems to overcome and knowledge to acquire, from the moment the idea for their business is born to the actual launch of the business.

If the entrepreneur does not go through this carefully before the start-up, she will have to solve these problems during the very demanding start-up of her own business, which should have been solved before the start-up and which might not even have been predicted.

What Can and Should Be Done:

1. MAKE THE W.E. WAY OF DOING BUSINESS VISIBLE AND LEGITIMATE

Women entrepreneurs are often told (and believe) that their way of starting a business is wrong. But if society creates frameworks for women and accepts their way of doing business, it can be of benefit for all parties. Women should believe in and be proud of their business. They are extremely important for society.

- W.E. thinks and acts in unified wholes
- They are open about their business
- They are good at and used to work in networks and teams
- They are innovative—new thinking
- Open to new ways of doing business

2. CREATE FRAMEWORKS WHERE W.E.

CAN TRY OUT NEW WAYS AND METHODS

It is important to create venues where W.E. dare to test new ideas, where they can engage in healthy give-and-take discussions, where the attitude is positive and supportive.

3. COLLECT AND PUBLISH DOCUMENTATION ABOUT W.E.

It is my firm belief that a lot of ways that W.E. do business are the methods of tomorrow, and that both men and women would benefit from it, if they only knew. The more we publish documentation, the more we have reasons and tools for changing the attitude toward W.E.

4. ACT "POLITICAL"

Women must learn to be active in the decision-making process. They must have control over their own situation and believe in themselves.

To act political means to tell society what and how they want things to be done, how they think it should be possible to change laws and rules which do not fit with their way of doing business.

5. CREATE FRAMEWORKS WHERE THE W.E. CAN MEET AND SUPPORT EACH OTHER

It is of great importance to support women in the establishment of networks for which the women define problems, needs and contents themselves, networks which can be used as role models for future women entrepreneurs and the steadily growing international cooperation, e.g. within export/import.

WHY NETWORK?

When you start your own business, you may lose:

- *Colleagues/common frame of reference*
- *Solid job with set working/free time*

- *Set financial situation*
- *Set job contents with solid agreement*
- *Set competence*
- *That others are responsible for the result of your work*

As a general rule, as an employee you can plan your day.

When you start your own business, you may get:

- *Variable working schedule—free time and working time is difficult to separate*
- *Unknown economy*
- *You plan your own work*
- *A lot of competence*
- *You alone are responsible*

So in other words, as women entrepreneurs you have started a whole new way of life!

Your business determines your day.

But—and there are a lot of *buts* in your new life:

- Loneliness
- Lack of people to share your experiences with
- New qualifications needed
- A lot of questions and new situations to make up your mind about and make decisions about
- Great risks you will have to take without knowing the result
- And most of all very few people to share it with

So what *can* you do to improve your situation?

You can join a network.

What Do You Gain by Networking?

CONTACT WITH WOMEN WITH COMMON UNDERSTANDING

Other women who are in the same situation as yours, women who also started up their own business and need somebody with whom they can discuss their daily work and problems, share with others who understand how they overcame a difficult situation—and are proud of it.

VISIBILITY

Suddenly you will discover that you are not alone, that there are many other women who share a common ambition, women who understand what you mean when you tell them about your business.

ACCEPTANCE

In a network you feel accepted. You can be proud of what you are doing. The other networkers will not get tired of hearing about your mistakes, they will listen carefully because they can learn something from you and they will share your mistakes or triumphs with you.

Society's attitude toward women's often non-traditional businesses is still marked by a certain lack of acceptance (female entrepreneurs' projects are still regarded as hobbies created by circumstances—unemployment—not equal to that of men). This is experienced, for example, in difficulties in obtaining the loans required on reasonable terms.

Together you are a group that will be accepted in society.

ROLE MODELS

When men want to start their own business they just have to look around in society, and they will find a lot of examples of how other men did it. Each country has its own stories about successful businessmen, but very few examples of businesswomen. You can become each other's role models.

KNOWLEDGE/SUPPORT OF BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT

Many women entrepreneurs start up a business as self-employment, and they do not want the business to expand to a point where they have to hire staff. But being a success, you will come to a point where you will have to decide how to grow.

Each of you have the knowledge about how to develop your business. By sharing it with each other, you will be able to increase your own knowledge.

BELIEVE THAT IT IS POSSIBLE TO INFLUENCE

SOCIETY/GOVERNMENT POLICY

How is it that we know about lobbyists, about enterprises that get together and put pressure on and seek to influence political decisions, and yet we often do not think this is possible for women?

Together, in increasing networks, it is possible for women entrepreneurs to influence government policy.

TO MAKE COMMON DEMANDS

In addition to finding out about their many similarities, women also find out about their similar problems. Together in networks it is possible to make common demands to society.

Our experience at KIN is that women entrepreneurs are good at working in networks and helping each other. It is almost as though "networking" had been invented for and by women.

Women want direct contact when they trade with each other.

- *They are not afraid to share knowledge.*
- *They willingly share good ideas.*
- *They ask for advice and use it.*

In fact, networking is *In* and women are the ones who can develop it and find new methods, which will benefit society as a whole.

Since 1989, KIN, Women In Network, has been working with women entrepreneurs both nationally and internationally within EU projects and with transnational partners. It appeared in this past 10 years that women's ways of new thinking in business are especially innovative and it helps to develop new ways of doing things, for example:

- how to create and work together in networks
- making the export/import avenue open to women entrepreneurs
- opening up to new forms of corporations

In the long term, this will be a benefit for all entrepreneurs.

KIN, Women In Network, is not a closed ghetto but new thinking and inventive being together, where new ways and methods are created to benefit all entrepreneurs.

In networks, the synergy effect becomes clear –that 2+2=7

Kin Caravan:

- Women entrepreneurs meeting across borders
- Exchanging ideas and information
- Finding each other for trading and cooperation
- Learning from each other
- Marketing their products

Products from KIN CARAVAN:

The Official Statement to the European Union about Women in Business

KIN'S TRADE EXHIBITION CARAVAN

FOR WOMEN ENTREPRENEURS IN OCTOBER 1999

An exhibition/sales Caravan of buses and exhibition-trailers with women entrepreneurs from all Europe started off in Denmark. After two days Vejle, the KIN Caravan, went on to Copenhagen, Berlin, Paris and Brussels.

The KIN Caravan had organized events in each of the four cities such as welcome, music, exhibition and sales to the public from the exhibition-trailers etc.

On the way, the participants in the KIN Caravan held meetings, workshops, etc.

The KIN Caravan tour ended in Brussels with the release of an official statement for the EU Commission and a closing reception for the participants.

MAIN PURPOSE OF THE KIN CARAVAN, WWW.KINCARAVAN.DK:

Give the women entrepreneurs more visibility and support, show the quality of their products, services and business concepts.

Draw the attention of local communities, social bodies and governmental authorities to the necessity for women to develop businesses and contribute in the local economical development.

Give women entrepreneurs the opportunity to meet and share experiences, assess each other's products/services and learn from each other across regional/national boundaries and international borders.

Bring women entrepreneurs to think professionally in new methods/ways of product development, PR, sales, representation, etc.

Make women entrepreneurs become proud of their work.

EXPECTED OUTCOMES OF THE KIN CARAVAN:

Generate long-term impact on women entrepreneurs' possibilities such as:

- Increasing export/import of products and services
- Creative development of new business ideas and initiatives
- Increasing of the individuals' "trade horizon"
- Developing the women's understanding of the EU as a natural home market
- Developing new methods of trading
- Implementation of equal opportunities in governmental and N.G.O. organizations

KIN Trade House--A Window On the World,

www.kin-handel.dk:

- Make W.E. visible
- Show their products
- Give them space for networking
- Create a platform where they can meet society, customers and dealers
- Give space for "political" thinking

MAIN OBJECTIVES:

- Establishment of a trade house in which future and newly-established female entrepreneurs will be able to show their products beyond the local area in which their business is located, and thus expanding their markets.
- Cooperating with and developing new activities with trade houses in the transnational partner countries involved in this KIN project.
- Giving future and newly-established female entrepreneurs the opportunity—quickly and efficiently via other trade houses in the EU—to make contacts with potential collaborators in other EU countries.
- Cooperating internationally and developing new activities in the EU with similar trade houses which will be or already have been established (e.g. Women's World Banking in Madrid, the Trade Houses in Stockholm and Göteborg) and thus developing new ways of trading and cooperating which can be used in the future by all entrepreneurs.

OBJECTIVES:

- Give newly-established female entrepreneurs the possibility of higher-quality product development through inter-trade on a larger market and where there is a possibility of impartial opinion of the product.
- Give newly-established female entrepreneurs the opportunity to import and export across national borders.
- Give women who want to start their own businesses the opportunity to meet with already established female entrepreneurs—meet the role models.
- Give newly-established and future female entrepreneurs the possibility of making contacts across regional, national and transnational borders.
- To give newly established and future female entrepreneurs the opportunity of participating in short, needs-adjusted courses, which at the same time will help them attain their objectives.

The Trade House is intended to form frameworks around several different activities such as:

- Exhibition area where agents can select possible products for further sale.
- Possibilities for everyone interested in visiting the exhibitions and doing business.
- Training in short, required courses both for future and newly-established women entrepreneurs.
- Small seminars both for Danish and other European women in business.
- Contact forum for Danish women entrepreneurs and other European women in business.

The purpose of the Trade House is to transform collective national and international experiences into reality as soon as possible. Here, too, all initiatives must take place in close collaboration with transnational partners and existing trade houses, with major input from the participants.

Furthermore, short training courses on topics such as product development, how to participate in fairs, how to set prices, trading, economy, PR and marketing will be developed for future and newly-established women entrepreneurs as a regular part of the activities in the house.

As the orientation of the Trade House is highly dependent on its users, it is not possible, from the start, to describe all the activities that may develop during the project. Therefore it is necessary to maintain ongoing evaluations of all activities.

Women On Air

Margaret Tumelty

Women On Air

Margaret Tumelty is a Training Manager with Women On Air. She has a Bachelor's degree in Communication Studies from Dublin City University and has studied Equality Studies at University College Dublin. She has worked in Nevis Community radio in Scotland as well as with two community stations in Ireland, Raidio na Life and North East Access Radio (Nearfm).

Background to Women On Air's Sector of Activity

Radio Broadcasting in Ireland is divided into two distinct sectors. The first is RTE (Raidio Telefis Eireann), which is the national broadcaster, and independent radio, which includes all licensed radio stations outside of the RTE structure. In 1988, the Independent Radio and Television Commission (IRTC) was established by the then Government as the regulatory body for all broadcasting outside of RTE. It was the responsibility of this commission to license independent radio and television, which subsequently began in 1989.

Independent radio is comprised of two types of station: local commercial radio and community radio. There are currently 22 local commercial stations and 15 community stations. In total there are just over 900 people working in the industry. The Women On Air project has worked solely with the independent radio sector, and in order to fully understand the context in which this work has progressed, it is important to understand the nature of the independent radio industry.

Local commercial radio stations, of which there are 22, were set up in 1989. Many of these stations had been broadcasting illegally as pirates for many years and when licensed were mainly staffed with broadcasters who had gained their experience and skills within the pirate sector. These stations are distributed evenly on a geographic basis throughout Ireland and are licensed to broadcast to a specific franchise area. They are businesses, managed by a board of directors consisting of representatives from prominent business and public interests within their franchise. Staffing levels vary between 30-80 employees, most of whom are working part time. The rationale behind the establishment of these stations is that they provide a specifically local service, in particular carrying local news and information. Despite a rocky financial beginning, these radio stations are now very profitable and the latest radio listenership figures cite that over 56% of the adult listenership within the country listen to local radio. In 1997-98, these stations collectively made a profit of 32 million from advertising and sponsorship sales.

The Community Radio sector is a lot younger, licensed in 1995 after a 10-year period of intense lobbying. Community Radio is based on the principle that stations are owned, managed and controlled by the community they serve. They are mostly managed by cooperative structures, are nonprofit organizations and are staffed primarily by volunteers. Community Radio is community development through the medium of radio. Based on the AMARC Charter, these stations have an obligation to provide a public forum for their community. Their programming is alternative, and because they are nonprofit, their funding is drawn from a variety of sources, mainly sponsorship, grant aid from development organizations and public fundraising. The sector is growing, despite constant funding difficulties. Staffing is mainly by volunteers, and each station has on average three full-time employees and a small body of staff funded by a government employment scheme.

What We Knew Starting Out....Women and the Media

(The following is an extract from the Breaking Glass Walls report, written by Maria Gibbons and NEXUS research cooperative, commissioned by WOA and launched in 1997)

There has been extensive study on the portrayal of women in the media and indeed of their position in the media as employees. Employment patterns in the media industry internationally are widely recognised as being structured in a gendered way and existing research identifies some general tendencies that seem to apply worldwide. Firstly, men largely dominate the media industries numerically. Secondly female and male employees are clustered vertically and horizontally within and among media organisations. Across the board, men dominate the technical/operational and production/management sector, while women are over represented in general administration and production support grades.

In many countries, overt sexual discrimination against women is now legally forbidden or inhibited by prevailing social mores. However, many kinds of organisational procedures and practices can lead to indirect discrimination/disadvantage for women. For instance, the informal recruitment procedures common to the media industries are based on personal contacts and “old boys” networks, which tend to exclude women. Similarly the lack of formal career structures means that ascent

through the hierarchy depends unduly upon personal contacts and acceptance. Another important barrier within the organisation comes from the attitudes of male colleagues and decision-makers. Discriminatory attitudes towards women on the workfloor seem to be common practice in media production worldwide. For instance, Baehr & Ryan and Gill have outlined attitudes of managers and programme controllers which play a part in discouraging women particularly from taking up presentation/DJ work.

These range from perceptions of women’s skills and interests to perceptions of audience preferences. As Gill states:

“the role of the radio station was made invisible in these accounts, and discussion of employment practices and institutional sexism were conspicuous by their absence. In this way broadcasters were able to present themselves as non-sexist, whilst they simultaneously justified the lack of women at the radio station.”

The domestic and parental responsibilities of working women have been a double burden in all professions. ‘Traditional’ working patterns in the media as elsewhere do not take family responsibilities into account and as such they function as obstacles to the advancement of women in the media. For example, long and irregular working hours, forcing staff to make a choice between their careers and their families. Women journalists and broadcasters tend to be younger and to have fewer dependants than their male counterparts.

Whatever their causes, the ‘glass ceiling’ appears to be a worldwide occurrence, operating as an invisible barrier blocking women’s advancement in the media industry. Furthermore there appears to be a “glass wall” inhibiting women’s progress into the programme making area. (Breaking Glass Walls, 1997)

Women’s absence in program-making has social and more importantly cultural implications. The media is in many ways the mirror of the society in which it is based, and the absence of female voices, stories and experience exacerbate already existing inequalities between the sexes. Since it is a public forum, it is important that women be represented within this industry which is so crucial to shaping public opinion and effecting public attitudes. While women may be represented on a daily

basis as opinion givers, it is equally important that they are represented at a “gate keeping” level, that is, that they are equally represented among those with editorial control.

Why Women On Air?

Women On Air was established in 1996. The organization is a consortium of three quite different organizations: Connemara Community Radio, the National University of Ireland, Galway and the Independent Radio and Television Commission.

The project is funded in part by NOW (New Opportunities for Women), which is a strand of the EU Employment initiative. Employment is one of the Human Resources initiatives of the European Commission. It targets groups that face specific difficulties in the labour market and has four interrelated strands: Horizon, Integra, NOW and Youthstart. The aims of the Employment initiative are to promote social solidarity and equal opportunities, contribute to the development of human resources and improve access to the labour market. Between 1998 and 1999, 127 projects received support from the EU Employment initiative in Ireland. These projects provide training, guidance and other interventions to more than 25 000 people. In 1996-1999, Employment in Ireland will have a total expenditure close to 70 million.

Women On Air was established under the second round of the Employment NOW initiative in 1996, and subsequently received funding under the current and final 1998-99 cycle.

WOA’s overall aim is to promote equality of opportunity for women in independent radio broadcasting in Ireland. Its specific objectives are:

- Provide more women with access to training and employment in independent radio broadcasting.
- Enable more women to participate and progress in the medium of radio, in a voluntary or professional capacity.
- Raise awareness of gender issues in independent radio broadcasting and challenge structures in that sector that act as barriers to women’s participation and employment.

- Promote good practice in equality issues within radio by generating ideas on practical and creative approaches to promoting equality of opportunity and by encouraging and supporting change in this area.

WOA’s Target Groups

- Women who wish to participate in a paid or voluntary capacity in independent radio but lack the necessary experience and qualifications and for whom access to mainstream training and education is problematic.
- Women who are already employed in some aspect of the independent sector and who wish to gain entry to or progress within certain sections where they are particularly underrepresented.
- Employers and station management in the independent radio sector.

Research/Training/Policy Development

Over the past four years, Women On Air has used three main actions to achieve its goals: training, research and policy development. The following outlines the rationale behind each action and the benefits of each to the project.

RESEARCH

In order to raise the gender issue, there was a real need to establish that there was a problem in the first place. Within the sector and within RTE, there are a handful of prominent female broadcasters. Whenever the issue of gender inequality in relation to broadcasting was mentioned, the inevitable reply by industry employers was to point to these women as examples of successful females. In other words, the implication was that if women really wanted to get ahead in the industry, there was nothing stopping them. WOA commissioned the first baseline study of the industry to establish women’s position. The results were publicized and disseminated within the industry. This was very important for the project in that a basis had been established which enabled WOA to approach the stations with a real picture of the employment situation. The results bore out our experience of the industry, mainly that women are absent from higher management level, that those women who are involved in programming tend to be single, mobile and without dependants, and that women appear to need to be very qualified in order to gain

employment. The research functioned as the basis for each of our subsequent training and policy actions. Reaction by the industry to these findings was two-fold. As the research received publicity in a number of newspapers, some employers were defensive and felt that WOA was attacking the industry with these figures, labelling it sexist and discriminatory. However, others were genuinely surprised at the results, but kept repeating a number of old mantras:

“We can’t find women for the jobs”
“Women don’t want to be DJs”
“There’s no discrimination in this station”

Whatever the response, the research had begun a process of awareness raising, albeit in a sometimes hostile environment, and the challenge for WOA was to respond to the results in a positive manner.

TRAINING

As a project activity, training provision was acknowledged as an action that could contribute to women’s progression within the industry. In particular the three areas of underrepresentation identified by the research were targeted, namely, DJing, technical skills and management training, which are not catered for at third level.

IN DESIGNING ITS TRAINING, WOA:

- Piloted a women-centred approach to training.
- Consulted with the industry in establishing an analysis of training needs.
- Involved the industry in the design and delivery of training.
- Ran training courses based centrally in Galway University.
- Ran training courses based in individual radio stations.
- Included many non-radio-related training modules, e.g. assertiveness.
- Facilitated networking between women working within the industry at various employment levels.

THE BENEFITS OF THIS WORK WERE AS FOLLOWS:

- It helped to develop the relationship between WOA and the industry.

- It introduced the industry to new models of training.
- It provided training opportunities for women at all levels within the sector which had not been previously available.
- It facilitated networking between women, and brought together key female members of the industry. Given the old-boy network approach to recruitment and women’s acknowledged lack of contacts within the industry, this began in some way to address these issues. Arising from one training initiative, a number of high-profile female broadcasters have established a Broadcasters Association which it is hoped will continue this work.

THE TRAINING RAISED A NUMBER OF ISSUES, HOWEVER:

- For women who had no previous experience in radio, but who completed one of our training initiatives, there were still difficulties in gaining access, even in a part-time or freelance capacity to the industry.
- Courses which had been run in conjunction with radio stations and hosted by them were very successful. However, they did not necessarily translate into opportunities for broadcasting on completion of the training.

Despite very positive feedback from participants on the training, it became obvious that training alone would not necessarily achieve WOA’s overall goal to get more women into the industry. However, it did enable WOA to pilot this type of training with the industry, and WOA will make recommendations to the IRTC and the relevant industry bodies later this year. It is hoped that these will be incorporated into the development of a long-term training strategy for the industry.

THESE RECOMMENDATIONS WILL INCLUDE:

- The relevance and importance of running women-only training, especially in the area of technical training.
- The importance of using female instructors, who also act as role models for participants.
- The importance of consulting with female staff regarding their training needs.
- The use of station personnel as instructors.

- That consideration of family commitments is given when setting training times and locations.
- The importance of networking between women employed in similar positions within stations.
- That training should not be limited to radio-specific areas, but rather that management and human resources training be included.

POLICY DEVELOPMENT

Mainstreaming is one of the key objectives of the NOW program in that innovative training and development at the local level must in some way become mainstream provision if the project's work is to continue. In this final stage of the NOW projects, the focus is definitely on developing policies and working with government agencies and mainstream providers in adopting the lessons learned "on the ground." However, despite its importance, it is very often the most difficult of activities.

As our experience of training showed us, working at one level, that of the individual, is not sufficient to effect change throughout an industry sector. Without a change in attitudes at management level, training is insufficient as an action for effecting change.

For WOA, having the IRTC as a partner organization has been crucial to the project in that it has meant that the project has direct access to the industry's policy maker. As the IRTC was centrally involved throughout the four years of the project's operation, it has helped shape our policy recommendations and in many ways can also claim ownership of the process.

However, policy work is notoriously slow. The temptation is to push policies that you as an equality practitioner feel would contribute to equal opportunities. However, without the support of the target group and in some sense their input and cooperation, these policies and subsequent attempts at their implementation can be meaningless. This all takes time! Although WOA has taken a number of policy initiatives over the last four years, this work has been mainly concentrated in the last six months. After researching the whole area of equal opportunities within other industries in Ireland and having spoken to a number of station bosses, it became apparent that appealing to the industry's "moral obligation" to foster equal opportunities would not work as a strategy!

Rather, WOA decided to promote equal opportunities within the overall context of good Human Resources Management. This was for a number of reasons. Firstly, when contextualized in this manner, equal opportunities is not quite the bitter pill that it was. Secondly, WOA firmly believes that good human resources practice benefits all, especially women. HRM policies such as family-friendly employment practices and formalized recruitment and selection procedures will augment women's participation in the labour market.

The project has had many debates on this issue. We had a number of concerns, the main one being whether equal opportunities would get lost in the bigger HR picture? Also, considerable unease at having to couch equal opportunities in something else in the first place. Promoting the business case for equal opportunities, however, has been useful. It has brought the area in from the cold and made it very relevant to "businessmen." The Irish economy is beginning to have very real difficulties regarding its available labour force, and human resources is becoming a more familiar catchword. Linking our work to the business objectives of the industry has made it more relevant.

The other development in Ireland that has created a climate in which the relevancy of equal opportunities is growing is the upcoming equality legislation and the new Equality Authority. For the first time, industry will have to answer to legislation and to a government commission regarding the equality measures it employs. The new Authority will have the legal right to conduct equality audits, and businesses found wanting in this regard will be brought to book.

The project has worked on two key initiatives in this regard. The first is *the development and implementation of a Human Resources initiative for the local commercial radio sector*. An overall HR management initiative was seen as the best working context in which to raise awareness of and give training in equal opportunities.

WOA conducted a consultation with the CEOs of local commercial stations earlier this year. Arising from this work, two HRM training seminars for senior management were held. Interest and attendance at both these seminars was substantial. Based on the enthusiasm and lessons emanating from these two seminars and discussions with the instructor, it was decided to bring a number of representatives together from the industry. This workshop was to facilitate a discussion on the

development of a long-term strategy around HR training for the sector. The workshop generated a number of proposals to the IRTC. It represented the industry's best thinking and the instructor's own experience in HR and equal opportunities. The IRTC will consider this initiative at its next meeting.

The second initiative *is the development of a customized quality mark for the local commercial sector*. WOA have researched the idea of a radio industry quality mark, which would develop an award system for the independent radio sector, recognizing good employment practice. This is in line with the idea that equality of opportunity is best achieved by integrating it into the broader picture, which encompasses general management practice and human resources issues.

A number of local stations have expressed an interest in this initiative and exploratory meetings were held between the IRTC and stations. Nine local stations have expressed an interest in this project and have discussed the outlay in terms of the time and resources that such an initiative would demand from participating stations. This initiative is also being considered at the next IRTC board meeting.

In summary then, WOA's policy work has concentrated around the following actions:

- Involving employers in an overall discussion around the development of equal opportunities within the sector.
- Working with the national radio regulatory body to research and develop policy for the sector.
- Conducting human resources training firmly built around equal opportunities for employers within the sector.
- Despite their absence at top management level, involving a number of high-profile women in these discussions.
- Drawing up training and policy recommendations for the national regulatory body.
- Commissioning follow-up research into the impact of Women On Air that will culminate in a final closing conference with all key actors within the sector, at which time each will be asked to respond to a number of key recommendations.
- Mainstreaming a number of our key actions which will continue after the project's end.
- Establishing links between WOA and other key policy makers in the area of gender equality.

Conclusion

In summary then, one of the main lessons which have emanated from the WOA project is the benefit of a multi-action approach. Our policy work has emerged from our training and research actions, and is stronger as a result. By working directly with the industry, the project developed a relationship with its main bodies that is vital in order to develop and implement real policy change. Women On Air will terminate at the end of this year, and there is plenty more work to do.

However, we hope that a sufficient number of our activities and policy recommendations will be mainstreamed and that this will in some way contribute to continuing our work to bring more women into broadcasting.

We are conscious, also, that in trying to establish mainstream provision, the project, if continued, serves to become that provision, and as long as it is present, mainstream bodies feel no need to develop their own initiatives.

Our initial aim was to be a catalyst that would raise awareness of the issues within the industry and, hopefully, by December 31, we will be able to stand behind that claim.

The following are recommendations which we feel emanate from our work:

- It is vital that the industry you are targeting be involved in your work in a meaningful way, not only industry practitioners but also policy makers.
- A multi-action approach allows for a more comprehensive strategy, establishing the context and then working at an individual level but also at a policy and industry level.
- Acknowledge that this work takes time!

The Integration of Women in Non-Traditional Occupations in Belgium, Spain and the Netherlands

Carme Alemany

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Leading publications

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1 General Problem Areas

The research we are presenting was funded by the European Union’s Leonardo da Vinci Program¹.

In the three countries under study, girls form a minority in the technical branches of vocational education² even though their presence has increased over the past 10 years (Belgium and the Netherlands). This situation allows employers to justify the absence of women in technical jobs.

The main purpose of our study was to outline strategies for improving women’s access to technical jobs traditionally considered as being “male” occupations. Yet because our research focused on businesses that favoured women’s access to these types of jobs, we analyze the barriers that were torn down. In other words, our study wanted to take a positive look at the problem; however, as we took a closer look at the issue we realized we could not just focus on employers’ “good practices.”

First of all, we should mention that it was very difficult to find organizations that had taken steps to encourage women’s access to technical jobs and, among those, it was soon found that the women in those positions are a tiny minority compared to the male work force. We also found that, even in this type of organization, there are still numerous barriers obstructing women’s access.

2 Status of Women

A 1986 study on women and technology, conducted in the Netherlands³, showed that employers were wary about women's technical qualifications. Our study leads us to conclude that such prejudices still persist in Spain, but that gender-based biases have declined in the other two countries. In general, however, women are obliged to prove—above all to their fellow workers—that they are as qualified as men. Furthermore, employers have taken the stance that many men do not yet accept women in technical jobs, and even that technical jobs are considered as being too hard for women. All these excuses keep employers from hiring women or lead them to hire women only for certain technical jobs such as computer-assisted industrial drawing or those jobs requiring a great deal of precision, whereas the other jobs remain a male domain.

3 Working Conditions

Working conditions rank among the barriers standing in the way of women's access. These include work schedules (Spain) as well as the impossibility of working part-time (Netherlands and Belgium). This factor may largely explain women's reluctance with regards to this type of occupation. Shift work also poses serious problems for women, given that they have difficulty reconciling work and family responsibilities. In Belgium, women are still prohibited from working on night shifts and employers are reluctant to hire them because they are less flexible than men.

Women also face other problems, ones that do not constitute a concern for their male colleagues. They receive less support because their technical skills are not always acknowledged.

Women also have fewer opportunities for promotion than do men. This would appear to be related to two types of barriers. On the one hand, women have to prove themselves more than men in order to receive an internal promotion; and on the other, they often prefer to remain in the more subordinate positions.

4 Employer Strategies

One reason why employers are led to encourage women to hold technical jobs is a shortage of skilled labour. There is also the belief that mixed crews produce better results, as they are more flexible. These factors largely explain the interests that guided the employers under study. Yet for actions of this type to be more effective, employers should make them better known, and this in order to achieve better results and gain more publicity, because more often than not, women are unaware of the employer's corporate objectives. The women in technical jobs must also be given more support, so that they may gain a greater degree of acceptance from their colleagues. Lastly, employers should provide both the men and the women holding technical jobs with equal opportunities for promotion and, should remove the barriers that keep women from filling positions of responsibility.

¹ In Spain it was also funded by the Basque Institute for Women in Government (Emakunde).

² Vocational training comes at the end of general secondary school.

³ Duppen D. van & R. van Tilburg.

From Coed Schools to Coed Technical Training¹



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Background Information

The research was done in three Spanish towns: Madrid, the state capital, a mixture of a service and industrial city; Barcelona, the second Spanish town, famous for its dynamic industry; and Oviedo, a smaller city in the North of Spain, with a past of heavy industry and mining, but a present of industrial decline.

We studied the following branches of higher-level vocational education: "Image and Sound", "Development and Application of Building Projects", "Telecommunications and Information Systems" and "Development and Control of Computer Application." With the exception of "Development and Application of Building Projects" in Oviedo (not in Barcelona), in all groups studied, boys outnumbered girls considerably. More than 80% of the teachers were male.

These courses are new in the Spanish education system. They are some of the few postsecondary education courses aside from university programs. The entry requirements are nearly the same as for university, although they accept lower grades. The aim of these courses is twofold: they try to train technicians in highly demanded jobs; they represent an effort of the Ministry of Education to dignify the low status of the vocational education in Spain, incorporating to it students from the academic branches of secondary education. Teachers have had refresher courses, and resources have been added to the schools to reproduce a current working environment.

1. General Situation

In Spain, women's participation in technical studies at the university level has increased noticeably in the last 15 years, although their numbers are far from being similar to those of men. In contrast, the technical studies at the intermediate level, known as Vocational Education, did not have a similar increase and the traditional branches (mechanics, electricity, electronics, etc.) continue to be male-dominated.

The introduction of the 1990 Education Act should bring about important changes in primary and secondary education, because this Act presents non-sexist education as one of its main objectives. But our hypothesis is that the traditionally male-dominated branches of technical vocational education will also "contaminate" with an androcentric character the introduction of new vocational courses.

This new Act introduces interesting changes regarding the steering of girls toward vocational education. On the one hand, the introduction of new branches of technical studies aimed at meeting the new demands of the labour market make them appear (by reason of their novelty) as less sexist than traditional technical studies. Consequently, more girls feel attracted to these studies. On the other hand, the introduction of new technologies in the branches regarded as non-technical make girls lose their fear with respect to the new technologies. As a consequence, girls count for 30% of the total enrollment in branches such as "Image and Sound", "Audio-visual production" and "Computed Aided Industrial Design."

This context brought us to study the situation of young women in the new branches of vocational education (from a non-sexist perspective). Our aim is to verify whether the legislation has been successful in promoting coeducation, as it was intended, and to offer corrective measures to make the technical environment more attractive for girls.

2. Methodology

This research is framed in a twofold theoretical approach: we participate in a constructive view of the social world and of the social sciences; we adopt a feminist perspective on technology and teaching. Both positions lead us to consider the technological development and their products as outputs of a social process that

excludes women from the technological sphere and that teaches technology within an androcentric bias. But at the same time, this theoretical framework allows us to produce an analysis and some propositions aimed to favour a female vision in the technical world and to the teaching of technology in a more gender-neutral way.

To fulfil our aims, the present research is based on several methodological tools:

- a) Content analysis of the texts used for teaching.
- b) Classroom observation and analysis of the interaction between students (male and female) and between teachers and students (male and female).
- c) Semi-directed interviews with the teachers focused on their evaluation of the classroom participation of male and female students and the students' perspectives in the labour market.
- d) Single-sex collective interviews (focus group) about their position and participation in classroom life and their professional expectations.

2.1. CONTENT ANALYSIS

Language and society interact and reflect each other, therefore "*strategically it is possible to stress cultural change either in one or the other, and above all, do not wait passively for language to change*" (Luce Irigaray, 1990). To analyze the language of the texts used in traditionally male-dominated fields of study would allow us to see if the proposed non-discrimination by sex is reflected in the language used in technology texts. If language does not appear as gender-neutral, we will propose some actions to teachers and schools, in light of the directive to "not wait passively for language to change."²

In order to analyze the texts systematically, we did a classical quantitative content analysis of all the texts used in the courses to be investigated. Following in the footsteps of previous researchers (Kate Myers, 1987; Shulamit Reinharz, 1992; Marina Subirats and Amparo Tomé, 1992), we designed 10 different record cards in which to include a detailed account of every reference to male or female in the text. We count and categorize the male and female presence at syntactic, semantic and graphic levels.

2.2. CLASSROOM OBSERVATION AND ANALYSIS OF THE INTERACTION BETWEEN STUDENTS (MALE AND FEMALE) AND BETWEEN TEACHERS AND STUDENTS (MALE AND FEMALE)
Following the patterns of previous feminist ethnographers such as Kate Myers, Michelle Stanworth, Sara Delamont and others, we observed the schools from a variety of planes:

- a) the whole school, entrances, aisles, classroom, etc.
- b) interaction in the classroom between male and female students
- c) interaction in the classroom between teachers and male and female students

We also produced record cards to systematically count almost every interaction in the classroom, both at a quantitative and qualitative level, recording the type and style of the interaction.

With the records, we can describe not only the social activity in the classroom separated by gender, but also the atmosphere: balanced, dominated by boys, by girls, cooperative, competitive, etc.

To prepare and carry out the semi-directive interviews with teachers and career advisers and the student focus group, we tried to follow the standard procedures (Dean Hammer and Aaron Wildavsky, 1990) and feminist approaches to these techniques (Shulamit Reinharz, 1992; Hellen Robersts, 1982).

3 Main Results

3.1 CONTENT ANALYSIS OF THE TECHNICAL TEXTS

Our aim with the content analysis is to determine how the profession is portrayed to students in the text and images in technical manuals, texts and other printed material. We also analyzed how men and women are presented in the texts and illustrations.

The results show that the documents are directed at a male population, with rare exceptions (2% of the text used). The profession is represented as a male job. There are no professional women named or represented in the pictures.

The representation of the masculine and feminine gender corresponds to the traditional roles, that is, women are represented in secondary roles or in their traditional role, whereas men are the protagonists of the illustrations.

Finally, young women who chose these studies lack models to identify with, whereas young men can feel well represented and strengthened in their professional choice.

Most of the texts used for teaching were not actual school manuals but were ordinary books, guides or booklets with instructions addressed to professional technicians.

3.2. CLASSROOM OBSERVATION AND ANALYSIS OF THE INTERACTION AMONG STUDENTS AND BETWEEN TEACHERS AND STUDENTS

We found two types of lessons: teacher dominated and the practical workshop. In the former, the teachers either ask general questions that the students can answer on a voluntary basis, either during or at the end of their presentation, or the teachers plan breaks to allow the students to ask questions.

In the practical lessons, teachers try to create a working environment similar to the one that the students will find in their future jobs. The students work by themselves, individually or in teams, and the teacher is there to answer questions or give advice.

The teachers—most of them men—are generally more concerned with the students' (male and female) final academic results than with the real equality of opportunities in their teaching. In the courses with a visible number of girls, there are always some female students among the best. Consequently, the teachers do not see the need to introduce measures to favour the educational insertion or participation of girls in the classroom, as the results show that the girls do well, when there are girls in the classroom. In courses with few or no girls at all, teachers did not feel concerned by this fact.

The observation of the classroom progress shows that girls occupy less “public space” (taking turns to speak, intervening during the lecture, etc.) than boys. On the other hand, girls establish contacts and intervene in the classroom within the “private space” (they talk to the teacher on a one-to-one basis at the beginning or end of the lecture, they rarely speak out in front of the class but they discuss the difficulties of the work among themselves, etc.). This pattern of behaviour leaves the “public space” free for the boys, who continue to occupy centre stage during the lessons, while the girls remain “invisible.”

In this way, the lessons progress at a pace and in a style that suits male mental structures, that is, public participation, individual action, some competitiveness, etc. Whereas girls appear to prefer a lower public profile and cooperative work in small groups or pairs. It can be said that the presence of girls in these technical branches does not introduce changes in teaching styles. Mixed schools allow girls to enroll, but this in itself is not a guarantee that the content, pedagogic methods or school style is that of coeducation. Nobody (teachers, students, nor the group of girls that we interviewed) is consciously aware of this situation. Only after we showed the results of our observations in the focus group did the girls feel the need to revise their position and participation in lessons and to discuss sexism in education.

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¹ This research was supported by the Spanish Institute of Women and the General Direction of Science and Technology (DGCYT).

² Please consult the *Propuestas para evitar el sexismo en el lenguaje*, booklet published by the Institute for Women Affairs of Spain.

Advancement of Women in Non-Traditional Occupations in Mali



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Objectives

- To contribute to the extension of the schooling of girls, to the training of girls in different occupational fields and in all spheres of social and economic life, and to the emancipation of women through girls;
- To facilitate their access to positions of responsibility;
- To offset the discriminatory myth of the status of women.

We have found that the schooling of girls has been marginalized since colonial times. With the educational reform of 1962 (two years after my country gained its independence), the government launched an appeal to banish the myth surrounding the schooling of girls. As a result, in larger communities, many parents diffidently began sending their daughters to school. It is therefore why we actually have so few women in management positions. Now, with the advent of the Third Republic, the government has found it necessary to create, through the Ministry of Basic Education, a special cell linked to the Direction nationale de l'enseignement fondamental (DNEF) in an effort to accelerate the schooling of girls. The techniques used are:

- presentation of skits on state television and radio
- meetings to appeal to communities and management committees
- discussions on state radio and television
- video screenings followed by discussions in certain places across the country

This schooling of girls must lead to their receiving training in vocational training centres and female learning centres, and this in order to enable them to acquire the skills needed for non-traditional occupations.

Educating Girls: An Analysis of Factors Influencing Their Course of Study and the Role of Educational and Vocational Information and Guidance



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Introduction

A landlocked country in the heart of West Africa, Burkina Faso's socioeconomic performance ranks it among the least developed countries in the world (173rd out of 176, according to the latest UNDP report).

Covering a territory of 274,000 km², the country had a population of 11.6 million in 1999, approximately 52.4% of who were women and 49% were under 15 years old. Burkina is primarily an agricultural nation: in 1997 the active population represented 51% of the total population, with 92% working in the primary, 2% in the secondary and 6% in the tertiary sector. In terms of education, the results are the worst. Education statistics for 1998-1999 indicated:

- a 20.7% literacy rate
- a 41.9% primary education crude rate
- a 11.14% secondary education crude rate
- less than 1% with a higher education

It is within such a background that the problem of educating girls exists.

For several decades now, the authorities aware of the stakes involved in education have been seeking effective solutions to the numerous problems associated with the expansion of the system in general and most particularly, with promoting the educating of girls.

Creation of the National Educational and Vocational Information and Guidance Centre (CIOSP) was one of the decisions made under the government policy of adapting the school system to Burkina's socioeconomic reality. In this regard, the CIOSP is responsible for providing students in the educational system with information and guidance to facilitate their transition from school to the workplace. The educating of girls ranks among its priorities inasmuch as the level of education and school dropout rate of girls is the weakest link in the educational system. We will begin by describing the characteristics of the educational system as a whole, then move on to discuss the policy of promoting the educating of girls so as to remove the barriers they face and lastly, based on these observations, we will outline the efforts made, in the context of the CIOSP action plan, for promoting the educating of girls.

1 Characteristics of the Educational System

A legacy of the colonial era, Burkina's educational system is governed by Bill D13-96 ADP, which became law on May 9, 1996, and which addresses the orientation of education. At present, its administration is the responsibility of two departments: the Ministry of Elementary Education and Literacy, and the Ministry of Secondary and Higher Education and Scientific Research.

1.1 ORGANIZATION OF THE EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM

The Orientation Act, the fundamental document underlying the educational system, aspires to educate as many citizens as possible and to supply the country with managers with high degree of expertise and skills; it seeks to accomplish this through three types of education:

1.1.1 Formal education, consisting of categories of scholastic education, namely:

- elementary education: preschool for children between the ages of 3 and 5, and primary school for children aged 6 to 12;
- secondary education that includes general, technical and vocational schooling leading to a diploma.

1.1.2 Informal education that includes all non-certificate learning outside the school system, one example of this being literacy courses.

1.1.3 Casual education, encompassing what is learnt through one's family and/or social groups, in the streets or by means of the media.

1.2 CURRENT TRENDS IN THE EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM

Burkina's educational system, particularly in the case of its modern-style school set-up (whose indicators are measurable), has numerous inadequacies despite the numerous efforts made under the country's overall development policy. It is characterized by poor quantitative development, poor performance, poor system relevance and poor resource-management capacity.

1.2.1 Poor quantitative development

- a) A low coverage rate: a number of phenomena point to this weakness:
- Preschool education that is still in an embryonic stage: in 1997 the facilities could only accommodate 1.44% of schoolable children.
 - Primary education, a national priority: the crude rate for this level of education remains below 50%. In 1997-1998, only 40.9%, or 7,776 children, had access to primary school. From 1990 to 1997 the average growth rate in the number of students was 6.38%.
 - Secondary education: with a crude rate of 11.17% (1997-1998) at this level of schooling, it represents the educational system's first bottleneck: less than 40% of those leaving primary school have access

to secondary school. Here private schools play an important role: in 1997-1998, they accounted for 46% of secondary schools and 36.34 % of the student population.

- Higher education has a crude rate of 0.72%. The budget policy (quotas on bursaries) applied since 1991 has a negative impact on access to higher education.
 - A low literacy rate: nearly 80% of the population is illiterate.
- b) Low transition rates: less than 40% of children who finish primary school have access to secondary school and barely 20% of secondary-school graduates can enroll in higher institutions.
- c) Regional disparities: the country's educational facilities are concentrated in the large urban areas, and over 50% of the institutions are in the two major cities.
- d) Gender disparities: the underrepresentation of girls is a fundamental characteristic of the educational system. At the primary level in 1997-1998, with its crude rate of 40.9%, girls represented less than 40% of pupils; in secondary schools, they represented 37.13% of students and at higher institutions, 22% to 23% of the student body.

1.2.2. Poor internal performance: this phenomenon is characterized by high failure rates. It takes 12.2 student-years, instead of six, to produce a primary school graduate; 17 instead of four for a high-school graduate; 10.7 instead of three for a college graduate; and at university, over 50% of students repeat their freshman year.

1.2.3 Low pass rates on system exams: less than 50% of students successfully pass the different exams (certificate of primary studies, first cycle educational diploma, Bachelor degree).

1.2.4. The poor relevance of the system is characterized by difficulties in finding jobs and the rural exodus...

1.2.5. Poor resource-management capacity

The government spends about 13% of its budget on education. This represents over 60% of the budget allocated for social programs: education, health, and employment.

2 Policy on Promoting the Educating of Girls

Any political measures adopted to promote the educating of girls, who are underrepresented at every level, can only be effective if based on an analysis of the reasons for their undereducation.

2.1 INFLUENCING FACTORS

Since the advent of modern education in Burkina, from colonial days to the present, girls have constantly been victims of the same factors that stand in the way of both their access to schooling and their remaining in school. These factors fall into four main categories: historical and political, economic, sociocultural, and pedagogical.

2.1.1 Historical and political factors

Historical and political factors play a very important role in the educating of girls.

The initial objectives set for schools by the colonial government, namely to ensure the cooperation of chieftains, notably through their sons, gave boys a certain historical lead on the girls, whose education was first provided mainly by missionaries for religious purposes. Following independence, the Burkina government, in trying to create an elite capable of ensuring the country's rapid development, also reinforced this historical lag.

The original inequalities have remained practically intact in the three decades following Burkina Faso's independence, and the promotion rate of girls as compared to boys has remained at around 36%, with a slight improvement to 37% in the 1980s and to 38% in the 1990s.

2.1.2 Economic factors

The educating of girls runs up against two economic realities:

- The main obstacle is insufficient government resources to implement the political will and the stated policy of educating all school-age children.
- Household poverty: even when there are no costs for attending school, the cost of school supplies that parents must pay is exorbitant when compared to their means: approximately 18,000 francs CFA (\$45 CDN) at the primary level and 50,000 francs CFA (\$125 CDN) at the secondary level. This state of affairs constitutes an obstacle for poor families and widens the education gap, at the expense of girls, for several reasons:

- 1) Sending girls to school represents a loss in terms of the help they provide by doing chores.
- 2) Girls are considered an investment: marrying them off as soon as possible is an economic necessity because of what the marriage can bring. Furthermore, in rural areas where girls are expected to be spouses and mothers, sending them to school is considered a useless investment.

2.1.3 Sociocultural factors

Ancestral traditions and the sexual division of labour place girls and women in an inferior position and limit their availability for education and training.

School is considered a place of depravity where the educating of girls brings about a change in behaviour that threatens the status quo of the social order, one based on male dominance over women. Moreover, forced marriages, unwanted pregnancies, and the power of religion are other factors affecting the girls.

2.1.4 Pedagogical factors

Pedagogical factors are also a major obstacle to the educating of girls because of their special status and the role society assigns to them.

Girls are subject to the perverse effects of educational programs (content and methods inconsistent with their traditional world), the sexist attitude of some teachers who consider girls intellectually inferior to boys, sexual abuse, and insecurity that stems from going to school far from home and from the educational facility's unsanitary conditions.

These factors all combine to produce bad results: repeated grades, dropouts, and a higher failure rate—on exams—for girls than boys.

These influences have led Burkina officials, its development partners and women's groups to adopt specific measures aimed at promoting the educating of girls.

2.2. ACTION TAKEN TO PROMOTE THE EDUCATING OF GIRLS

2.2.1 *Government action*

The political will to change the current situation regarding the educating of girls is reflected in specific measures, related to education, such as:

- implementation of the recommendations of the Panafrican Conference on the Educating of Girls held in March 1993 in Ouagadougou;
- the head of state's participation, in terms of making a commitment and creating educational structures (ES, CEBNF, etc.) to promote the educating of girls;
- the creation of administrative structures to manage the promotion of women and the educating of girls: the establishment of a government department for the promotion of women in June 1997, the setting up, in September 1996, of a branch to promote the educating of girls and, in 1998, of a reflection and action committee for the educating of girls (CRAEF), which oversees the project to educate African girls in mathematics and science (FEMSA);
- the development of a 1994-2000 action plan for the educating of girls;
- creation of a training module for student teachers on sexist stereotypes and the influence of educators on the academic performance of girls, especially in the areas of science and technology;
- awarding secondary-school bursaries to girls as a priority;
- reserving 60% of the rooms in university residences for girls.

2.2.2 *Actions taken by development partners*

In recent years, non-governmental organizations and funding agencies have invested a great deal in development projects to promote women and girls in Burkina Faso. Their involvement has taken the form of:

- awareness and follow-up campaigns with female students to prevent school failures and promote the areas of science and technology
- the construction of schools that take female access to education into account by expecting that 50% of the places will be allotted for girls

- covering the cost of tuition and school supplies for girls from very poor households... (Peace Corps)

This promotion policy also calls for bursaries awarded on a gender basis, practicums for girls, university enrollment of all girls with Series C Bachelor degrees starting in the 1999-2000 academic year, and the creation of scientific clinics for girls, the latter specifically designed so as to break the psychological barrier that exists with regards to science.

These different actions that have been taken or are planned reveal the extent to which everyone involved in education realizes the precarious position of girls.

2.3. THE EFFECT OF THE ACTIONS

Despite the concrete action and various measures taken to promote the educating of girls, the problem remains: their representation is still below average. In 1998:

- their illiteracy rate was about 80%;
- the admission rate in the 1st year of primary was 27.6% for girls compared to 40.3% for boys;
- the same phenomenon occurs at the secondary and postsecondary levels, where girls represent 35.4% and 24.14%, respectively, of the student population.

This poor performance on the part of girls cannot be dissociated from that of the educational system as a whole. Education, considered a priority in government policy, benefits from the support of a group of development partners.

Yet the impact of the numerous efforts remains limited due to several constraints and dysfunctions, notably:

- the low level of government resources in comparison to the educational needs;
- a high population growth rate, 2.64%: the schoolable population is estimated at over 2.12 million, or 18% of the total population;
- the lack of coordination among the various partners to harmonize their actions: there is no framework for coordination, nor are there adequate structures for harmonizing educational efforts;
- the nonuniform development of different levels of primary schooling at the expense of secondary and higher education.

The perverse effects of these dysfunctions are even more intense with regards to the education of women and especially girls, seeing as they reinforce the negative factors already weighing them down.

As part of its activities, the CIOSP has mapped out lines of action that may help solve some of these problems.

3 Perspectives, the Role of Educational and Vocational Information and Guidance

Aware of the precarious position of girls in the school system, the CIOSP has developed a special program to support them, as part of its educational and vocational information and counselling efforts. This consists of creating the necessary conditions for providing girls in school with regular guidance and raising the awareness of parents, given the fact that they play an important role in the choice of career and even in their access to school.

3.1 ACTIONS TAKEN BY THE CIOSP

- a) Organization of group information sessions in schools for girls in order to make them aware of the stakes involved in education in general and in science and technology studies in particular (1998-1999).

Starting with the current school year, to offer more effective support to girls, this activity will be conducted in association with other bodies endeavouring to promote the educating of girls.
- b) Publication of a document discussing female professionals who can serve as role models. Featuring women in non-traditional occupations or professions, this document seeks to show that young women can not only balance family life and career, but also succeed at both.
- c) Creation of a network of correspondents throughout the country that will provide follow-up to the CIOSP awareness-raising efforts. The foundation for this was laid at an October 1999 training workshop for teachers and resource persons. The participation of these correspondents will also make it possible to draw up an inventory of everyone involved in the educating of girls. Yet the Centre is already working with some certain women's groups, NGOs and the technical branches of the government departments responsible for education.

These include:

- The United States Peace Corps, which has set up a financial aid project for girls from very poor communities. The project aims to cover the cost of school supplies and find working women to serve as mentors for some of the young girls. Among their efforts, we might also mention the organization of field trips to laboratories and businesses in an effort to get select girls interested in science and non-traditional occupations;
- The Human and Family Code project: a joint effort was made to include human rights issues in the information and awareness activities. Girls are often the victims of certain social situations (forced marriage, levirate, etc.) that have a negative influence on their education. Knowledge of the Code will help them to better defend themselves and assert their rights.
- The Association of Women Scientists of Burkina (AFSCI-B), which is helping to prepare the document on women role models.

3.2. FUTURE ACTION

In the short and medium term, action is planned along various lines:

- a) Geared towards students and their parents

The focus here is on trying to diversify girls' career choices. Our efforts involve:

 - Awareness and information campaigns, aimed at youths and their families, on the topic "Les métiers n'ont pas de sexe" [Occupations have no gender]. Changing perceptions of the trades and improving knowledge of the working world through visits to businesses where women hold interesting technical positions, testimonials from successful women in a technical occupation, etc.
 - The production of printed and audiovisual material developing this idea. These documents will be widely circulated in schools.
 - A thorough job is planned, in close cooperation with other organizations such as women's groups, in order to focus the different information and awareness campaigns aimed at families, students, teachers and educational system officials regarding the problem of girls' orientation.
 - Schools taking the orientation of girls into consideration.

b) Geared towards educators

As part of the basic education of future teachers, we will need to gradually develop a means of teaching them to analyze gender bias and its impact on the social life and careers of women. For this, training courses on this topic will be organized for instructors.

Continuing education geared specifically towards information and guidance personnel will focus on the issue of equal opportunity for girls and boys in the school system and diversifying the orientation of young girls. Information and guidance personnel are expected to design an orientation process that will allow young girls to choose any track without being made to feel inferior.

Conducting an information campaign pertaining to the levels of education and to degrees. Show girls that the higher a degree they hold, the more immune they will be to the unemployment currently affecting a large percentage of the educated youth. This latter phenomenon occurs because these young people are dropping out of school at an earlier stage, usually without a diploma.

The CIOSP, which sets the standard for educational information and guidance in Burkina, is keenly aware of the importance of its role in the process of keeping girls in school and orienting them towards scientific fields. As such, it has established an information and awareness activity program, as well as a special cell at the Centre to oversee this program. Encouraging youths and helping them overcome the taboos and sexist prejudice about so-called "male" occupations calls for efficient school information within the educational system, and this in association with all partners in education by means of a dynamic educational process.

Conclusion

In closing our analysis of the topic, we must admit that the problem of taking into consideration women in general, and girls in particular, and this in the educational system, persists. Despite all the efforts and measures of the past ten years, the level of representation of girls in the system is below that of boys.

Although access to primary schools has improved for girls, the same is not true of secondary and post-secondary education. This calls for a firmer commitment and the adoption of measures in more harmonious manner to solve the problem.

The fact is that the bulk of resources went to the development of elementary education, which was declared a "national priority." It continues to receive the bulk of the resources provided both by the government and funding agencies, at the expense of other levels of education. This has resulted in bottlenecks, particularly in the transition between the primary and secondary level.

When there is a scarcity, the weakest are always the first victims. This is true in the case of girls, particularly given that in addition to sociocultural factors that tend to thwart their development, they are also subject to a selection forced by the insufficiency of accommodation facilities.

As such, only concerted action by all development partners interested in the educating of girls can lead to a positive change that will benefit all girls. We remain convinced that it is by such means that educated young women will retain more control over the socio-economic environment in which they live and over those educational paths that best match their personal and career ambitions.

Partners for Equality



Corrie Campbell
Ministry of Women's Equality,
British Columbia

Partners for Equality
British Columbia's Ministry of Women's Equality cooperates with women-serving organizations,

educational institutions, business and government agencies to increase the number of women in non-traditional occupations and industries.

Securing increased representation of women in non-traditional occupations and trades is a critical component of improving women's economic well-being and narrowing the wage gap between men and women. This workshop explores a number of strategies employed by the Province of British Columbia and the Ministry of Women's Equality to provide women with access to training and employment in trades, construction, computing and high technology industry.

Computers for Lunch

Enhancing the computer skills of women, particularly those women in professions or occupations which are female dominated, reduces barriers to women's employment in the high technology sector. The Computers for Lunch course at Simon Fraser University (SFU) is an exciting example, helping female elementary teachers and their students to expand their knowledge of computers. Funded by the Ministry of Women's Equality and Simon Fraser University's Innovation Award, the course supports self-directed computer literacy study by both education students and practicing teachers who have access to the Internet. Learning is Internet-based and interactive. It provides technical preparation for curriculum development on the use of information technologies.

The Computers for Lunch Web site consists of about 500 interlinked web pages covering these activities:

- *Publishing Your Work*: 3 units on desktop publishing for novice, intermediate and advanced levels.
- *Web Page Authoring*: Step-by-step support in web page construction for intermediate and advanced uses.
- *Digital Videos*: Computer-based video capture and digital drag-and-drop video and audio editing skills for beginner and intermediate grades.
- *Web Navigation Skills*: Navigational basics for beginner and intermediate learners, and introductory Web research skills for advanced grades.
- *Charts and Graphs*: Teaching uses of spreadsheets and graphs through math/science activities.

The site will be fully “open to the public” on December 1, 1999, but its main menu of activities is available at www.computersforlunch.com. The Web site has been presented to school staff on their professional development days and has also been used by education students at SFU and the University of British Columbia (UBC).

Teachers find the Computers for Lunch Web site easy to use as a teaching resource for elementary children. The content is seen to be useful and relevant, and the interface is attractive, imitating “gaming” uses based on engagement in practical activity through image-based interactivity, rather than the reading of scrolling text. So far the Web site has been presented at three professional development days as well as at a number of informal student/teachers workshops, the 1999 Faculty Associate conference at SFU Horizons 1999 and the annual conference of Computer-Using Educators of BC. The site was also presented at the Navigating Intelligence: A Banff Summit conference on the designs and applications of intelligent tools at the Banff Centre for New Media Research, and at the WebNet99 World Conference on the WWW and the Internet. It was well received at both.

Community Internet Training Project

The Community Internet Training Project (CITP) is another example of a successful initiative intended to improve Internet usage by women-serving organizations and other community-based advocacy groups. The CITP was a key component of the BC Electronic Highway Accord, announced in Fall 1995. The Accord is designed to foster universal affordable access to communication networks and information services for all British Columbians.

Under the CITP initiative, the Ministry of Women’s Equality administered \$500 000 in funding from the BC21 infrastructure program to provide community-based registered nonprofit societies with training materials and grants of up to \$2500. Grants allowed the organizations to buy Internet software, a computer modem, an Internet connection, and training for one staff member. Organizations eligible for the CITP included nonprofit groups whose primary purpose is to

serve, advocate for, or work with women, people with disabilities, aboriginal peoples, immigrants and members of visible minorities. In return for the funding, each group was required to train approximately 40 people in the use of the Internet over the following 12-18 months.

The CITP was completed in December 1998, and helped over 200 community-based organizations provide Internet training to over 3000 members, staff and clients. Community response to the program has been very positive.

Community Internet Training Project Report

As of April 29, 1999, the completed Final Training Report Forms report training 2215 women and 757 men (total 2972) in use of the Internet.

The following groups received training:

Group	Women	Men	Total
First Nations	169	46	215
Members of Multicultural Groups/Visible minorities/Immigrants	522	297	819
Persons with disabilities	233	190	423
Youth	258	231	489
Not designated	1133	36	1169
Total			3115

ARC: Alternative Routes to Computing

Current estimates indicate that women make up about 10% of the information technology work force. Partnerships among government, educational institutions and the private sector are a critical and innovative means of increasing the representation of women in non-traditional fields and the high-tech sector.

Working in cooperation with the business community, the Ministry of Advanced Education, Training and Technology, the Ministry of Women’s Equality, and the Industry Training and Apprenticeship Commission, the departments of Computer Science at the University of British Columbia and Simon Fraser University have developed the Alternative Routes to Computing (ARC) program. The objective of the ARC program is to

increase the participation of women and men in information technology careers and to address the province's critical need for more highly qualified personnel in this area. The funding contributions provided by the corporate sponsors and the provincial government are primarily aimed at reducing the cost of the ARC program to the point where it is comparable to that of other computer science programs, thereby making it affordable to students. Corporate sponsors for the program include ISM BC, CUE Datawest, Electronic Arts Canada, Hong Kong Bank of Canada, IBM Canada, IBM Global. (See Appendix attached for a complete list.)

ARC is a two-year post-graduate diploma program comprised of four 4-month terms of university level courses (primarily in computer science), one 8-month term of university level course (primarily in computer science) and one 8-month term of paid work experience in industry following the first two academic terms. ARC is intended for highly motivated individuals with a bachelor's degree in any field, an excellent academic record, but little or no programming experience. Most of the students would not have succeeded if placed in large computer science courses without this additional support.

One of the key groups at which the ARC program is directed is mature female students who left the work force to raise a family and those who have recently completed a degree and reached high academic standing in their field. In 1998, 21 out of 29 students (72%) were women. This represents a significant improvement over the usual representation of women in computer science programs at 15%. Aspects of the program that are viewed as being particularly attractive to women include:

Charging regular tuition fees (\$2250 Canadian) and including a paid work term so that students do not have to accumulate significant levels of debt.

- Guaranteeing that at least 50% of the students in the ARC 1998 group be female.
- Providing additional support and mentoring from teaching assistants.
- At least one small class restricted to ARC students for each of the first two terms.
- Requiring absolutely no mathematics or computer science prerequisites.

In its first phase in 1998, the ARC program experienced a number of growing pains. Many students had difficulty with math classes and the mathematical portion of the computer science classes. Many students found the time commitment required for the course to be onerous and felt that they had not been adequately warned about this requirement. There were difficulties in placing all 29 students in co-op terms. In some cases there were mismatches between the skill level of the student and the requirements of the workplace. Splitting the ARC students into separate groups at each university resulted in small-group dynamics with some definite negative consequences. Additionally, it was very expensive, as it required duplication of effort and resources by both universities.

Despite these initial problems, virtually everyone involved in creating ARC feels that the program is, overall, a great success. The 29 students in the program have done well academically, achieving a grade point average about 5% higher than the average achieved by students in the regular computer science programs. Also, the ARC students are doing exceptionally well in their work terms. Almost all are finding the work experience extremely enjoyable and rewarding, and not nearly as difficult as their two previous academic terms. Employers are delighted with their performances. They particularly appreciate the students' maturity, willingness to take on challenges, eagerness and ability to learn. For the ARC organizers the most rewarding aspect is that the majority of students feel that ARC has fundamentally changed their lives for the better, opening doors that they never believed were there for them. The ARC 1998 students will return to UBC and SFU for their academic courses starting in January 2000. The next year's enrollment of ARC students will be starting at the same time.

ATC was developed jointly by UBC, SFU, IBM and Sierra Systems Consultants, under the auspices of SWIFT (Supporting Women in Information and Technology).

The ARC program stemmed from work undertaken by Maria M. Klawe, now Dean of Science at UBC, in her capacity as NSERC-IBM Chair for Women in Science & Engineering in BC and the Yukon.

Industry, Training and Apprenticeship Commission (ITAC)

In 1997, the government of British Columbia established the Industry Training and Apprenticeship Commission (ITAC) to create an industry-driven training and apprenticeship system. The objectives of the system are to be accessible and responsive; undertake assessment of the needs of the BC labour market; increase the number of skilled persons in designated trades and occupations; *and increase the proportion of underrepresented groups in designated trades and occupations.* To this end, the Deputy Minister of Women's Equality sits as a member of the Commission's board; an Under-Represented Groups Task Group was formed; and a gender-inclusive lens has been applied both to the development of strategies and to joint initiatives between ITAC, business, labour and education. The results have been positive: in 1998, women accounted for 28% of the new apprentices in BC, or 118 out of 506. This is a significant improvement from the representation of women in 1997, which was 26 out of 326 new apprentices, or 8%. As of 1998, women in registered apprenticeships have increased significantly, from 5% to 6% overall, with about half based in traditional trades that have had predominantly male membership. This trend is expected to continue.

ITAC is working on developing new trades/occupations and crafts in a variety of new sectors such as aeronautics and aerospace. It is working with industry to develop appropriate standards and curricula for these new trades. ITAC is also working to ensure that many of these trades/occupations are those which typically attract and retain women, such as hospitality, the film industry and high technology. ITAC staff continue to develop and maintain strong links to women through

the BC Federation of Labour, community service organizations and First Nations, immigrants, persons with disabilities and mainstream communities. Internal changes to procedures and information gathering will continue to support the change process.

ITAC's current goals include increasing the number of people in apprenticeship and industry training from 20000 to 50000 within the next five years, with emphasis on increasing opportunities for women at all levels in all sectors, trades, occupations and crafts. Current pilot projects are either focused exclusively on women or include women in the mix of participants. With the budget allocated to underrepresented groups, ITAC anticipates supporting projects in 1999-2000 that will provide training opportunities to approximately 400 people.

Current ITAC Equity Projects

EMERGENCY COMMUNICATIONS CENTRE/
VANCOUVER COMMUNITY COLLEGE PROJECT

ITAC is co-funding a training program for people with developmental disabilities in the food services industry, using the cafeteria facility at the Emergency Communications Centre as the combination workplace/training centre. Eight people received intensive training over two 6-month sessions.

DISCOVERY TO APPRENTICESHIP

In cooperation with the federal government, ITAC is co-funding a pre-trades training/intervention initiative offered by the United Food and Commercial Workers Local 2000 in New Westminster, aimed at multi-barriered youth aged 19-29. This project includes Highway Constructors Ltd. as a partner. Under this initiative, 40 people were provided with a 16-week training course that allowed them to explore career options in the trades. Women accounted for 40% of these students.

GETT CAMPS ("GIRLS EXPLORING TRADES AND TECHNOLOGY")

ITAC funds a series of day-camps located in various communities around the province, which provide tools and trades orientation to girls aged 10-13 (grade 6) through week-long project-based camps.

The camps are led by women who serve as both trainers and role models. Through this initiative, more than 700 girls have participated over four years. In 1999, ITAC supported six camps that were attended by 216 girls.

NAK'AZDLI TSEK'HU CONSTRUCTION TRAINING PROJECT
ITAC funded this 32-week program for 12 aboriginal women through May. Several have become apprentices and five others have formed the Tsek'hu Construction Company, providing repair and maintenance services in Fort St. James.

NORTH ISLAND WITT
ITAC is co-funding a new Women in Trades and Technology training program based at North Island College. Delivery model includes taking the training out to the remote communities of North Island, rather than having the women participating in the program move to a central location for the training. Through this 32-week project, 16 women have been exposed to a variety of trades.

PRIOR LEARNING ASSESSMENT RECOGNITION
Working with a number of government jurisdictions and some immigrant community service providers, ITAC funded a pilot project to determine alternative models of assessment of people, including women, who have foreign trade credentials. Ongoing work is focused on a variety of self-assessment models, as well as on revised technical training delivery options.

SECONDARY SCHOOL APPRENTICESHIP
New initiatives with the Ministry of Education are focusing on expanding SSA to include more young people, with particular emphasis on attracting the participation of young women in both new and traditional trades. In 1997/98, young women accounted for 53 out of 435 SSA participants. Current work is underway to establish a solid connection between the new Career Training Centres and the SSA training program.

BCIT Women Welder's Program

The British Columbia Institute of Technology (BCIT) women's welders programs is part of the BCIT Women in Trades Initiative that is geared towards providing trade skills to women whose job prospects may be

limited. This program is specific to learning new aluminum welding skills. To date there have been two classes of graduates from the program, totalling 24 women. A key feature of the program is that it attempts to address the barrier of isolation that is often faced by women who enter male-dominated fields. In this program, women welders are trained in a group environment and placed in the workplace together. To qualify for the training program, women must already hold a welding certificate or have graduated from an approved welding, steel fabricator/fitter or other entry-level trades training program.

Project Agreement Model:

Build BC Act and Highways Constructors Ltd.

Securing increased representation of women in non-traditional occupations and trades is a critical component of improving women's economic well-being and narrowing the wage gap between men and women. One of the key ways of encouraging women's participation in non-traditional trades and the construction industry is through equity hiring on government-funded capital construction projects.

One of BC's leading innovations for enhancing equity hiring and increasing opportunities for non-traditional occupations for women was the creation of Highways Constructors Limited (HCL) through the BC 21 program. The BC21 program was established through the enactment of the Build BC Act in 1993. The purpose of the Act is to facilitate the expansion and diversification of the British Columbia economy. Under the BC21 program, government uses public capital spending to achieve goals including regional economic development, community-based job creation, local business development, as well as *work force training and the employment of members of equity groups*. The best-known specific application of this policy framework is \$1.2-billion Vancouver Island Highway Project (VIHP).

The HCL was set up as a subsidiary company under the British Columbia Transportation Financial Authority (BCTFA). HCL serves as the vehicle for implementing government's BC21 objectives.

This model is applied to BCTFA projects where total project costs exceed a \$30 million threshold.

HCL has two explicit mandates. These are:

- 1) To provide the labour force and labour relations structure for construction work on the VIHP.
- 2) To support the BCTFA objectives of facilitating the expansion and diversification of the BC economy through the methods outlined in the Build BC Act including:
 - Coordinating government activities to achieve economic and job creation goals.
 - Encouraging public and private sector investment and job creation initiatives.
 - *Targeting activities towards traditionally disadvantaged groups.*
 - Promoting training and investment in people.

HCL's function is to be the exclusive employer for all construction on the VIHP. Workers are employed by HCL not by individual contractors. HCL's employees are assigned to contractors who reimburse HCL for the labour it supplies to them. HCL has a number of levers with which to achieve its local and equity hiring objectives. These include:

- A blanket union membership requirement which gives HCL the ability to assign individuals to contractors.
- The obligation to respect provincial seniority rights is waived.
- The right to give hiring preference to local residents living within 100 km of the work site.
- The right to dispatch qualified equity workers, newly trained equity workers and equity trainees to the job sites, in preference to other workers.

The representation of women in the BC construction industry is very low at 0.3%. Reported barriers to female participation in construction include:

- On site job environment.
- Heavy physical demands in certain areas of work and trades.
- Mobility of the construction industry. The need to move from one job to the next is said to be particularly difficult for women with families.
- Low retention rates within the industry for those women who completed training programs and obtained employment.

At the beginning of the VIHP in 1994, there was an inadequate supply of qualified equity group construction workers. Accordingly, HCL was given funding from the Provincial Government's Ministry of Skills, Training and Labour to train a total of 260 workers: 60 women, 100 aboriginal people, and 100 local residents. Training was provided for labourers, truck drivers and heavy equipment operators.

An Equity Integration Committee was established to select the applicants to be given training. Applicants outnumbered trainee positions at a ratio of 20 to 1. The Committee included representatives from First Nations, women, visible minorities, union contractors and HCL staff as well as a representative from the Ministry of Women's Equality. Hiring targets were not established. Instead HCL focused on putting in place the mechanisms to ensure that it would make significant progress in equity and local hiring.

Elements of the HCL employment equity program include:

- 1) Education and Awareness
- 2) Equity Outreach Programs
- 3) Skills Development
- 4) Bridging Programs
- 5) Removal of Barriers/Providing Support
- 6) Equity Integration Committee
- 7) Program Assessment

One of the key components of HCL's equity and local hire program is ongoing program assessment and data collection. Data is collected on the number of hours worked and is reported by number on the payroll, hours worked, union membership, contractor, occupational classification, residency and equity group status.

Application of the HCL project agreement model is controversial. The road-building industry has consistently opposed expanding the application of the model. However, the model is supported by the BC Highways and related Construction Council. Other critics question the impact of administering the project agreement model on total project costs, both capital and operating. BCTFA and HCL indicate that administration of HCL can add between three and six per cent to the total cost of a project depending on its type and size.

Nevertheless, the HCL model is seen as highly successful. Monitoring reports for the VIHP indicate that between July 1994 and March 1999, 15% of total workers hired were from one of the equity groups (women—6%; First Nations people—7%; visible minorities—2%; and people with a disability—1%). At the time of the project onset, it was estimated that women comprised less than 1% of those working in construction occupations.

The HCL model is now being applied to other provincial highway construction projects in excess of \$30 million. These include the Cache Creek to Alberta Border project, the Port Mann Bridge expansion in Vancouver, the Lion's Gate project in Vancouver, the John Hart Bridge project in Prince George, and the Nisga's Highway in the Nass Valley. The model is also to be applied to construction of the \$1.2 billion SkyTrain expansion.

Conclusion

All the strategies described above have profiled agencies working in partnership and innovations in service delivery to achieve the objective of increasing the representation of women in non-traditional trades and occupations. Government and agencies such as the Ministry of Women's Equality must foster the synergy and creativity that stems from different sectors of society working together to achieve this goal.

Appendix

Corporate Sponsors for Alternative Routes to Computing

1. BC Cancer Agency
2. BC Tel
3. CUE Datawest
4. Electronic Arts
5. Envision
6. Haig Farris
7. Hong Kong Bank of Canada
8. HP
9. IBM Canada
10. IBM US
11. ISM
12. LGS
13. MDA
14. Ministry of Advanced Education,
Training and Technology
15. Ministry of Women's Equality
16. Peoplesoft
17. SAP
18. Seagate Software
19. SHL
20. Sierra Systems Consultants Inc.
21. Spectrum Signal Processing
22. Sun
23. UBC Alumni

**Talk by Betty
De Wachter**



The *Employment-NOW* community initiative



After having been a teacher in classical languages, I left to oversee an in-service training centre for teachers and trainers offering courses in adult education and introducing aspects of innovation in re-training. I left the education system to work on local development issues: I was in charge of a Youth Service focusing on the development of information and participation and citizenship at local level in the Flemish Community of Belgium. The International Youth Year in 1985 put participation up front as one of its main themes. With several projects run by young people, I took part in an international conference and came into contact with programs set up by the European Commission. Since that time, I have been working on European programs such as the Transition Programme of Young People to Adult and Working Life and the PETRA program, the Action Programme for Vocational Training of Young People. In collaboration with representatives of Member States, I have produced two publications within the framework of the PETRA program: one on the initiative and creativity of young people; and another one on equal opportunities of girls and young women in vocational training. I am currently working for the Employment-NOW program, the largest program in the European Union for developing and implementing new ideas for women's training and employment. In this context, I have collaborated in European working groups focusing on two main themes: female entrepreneurship and the desegregation of the labour market.

Bridging the Gender Gap: Improving Women's Access to Different Sectors and Occupations

Employment-NOW (New Opportunities for Women) focuses on improving participation by women in the labour market, on reducing unemployment among women and on improving the position of those already in the work force. With a total budget of nearly 1 billion Euros, it is the largest program in the European Union for the development, testing and implementation of innovative ideas concerning women's training and employment (1994-1999). In collaboration with transnational partners, *Employment-NOW* projects are developing innovative and concrete measures to achieve equality of opportunity in the labour market. Many projects involve women's organizations, local and regional authorities, trade unions and employer's associations, firms, guidance, training and employment centres.

More than 60% of the 1750 *NOW* projects give high priority to the desegregation of the labour market. The diversification of vocational choices is the focus of 460 projects and 345 address women's access to managerial positions. Some combine the two elements by targeting women in the professions, such as architects, engineers, lawyers and accountants. Others help women to set up businesses in traditionally male-dominated domains.

Given the importance of the desegregation theme within the *Employment-NOW* Community Initiative, a European working group has been set up led by Belgium Flanders in collaboration with nine other Member States and the European Commission. This working group has elaborated three sub-themes:

Horizontal desegregation: the position of women in growing sectors, such as information technologies and emerging new jobs.

Reconciliation of professional and family life: child-care, part-time work, telework and other forms of flexible work organization.

Vertical desegregation: the position of women in management positions; career development; positive action.

The European working group on desegregation highlighted Employment-NOW projects that are training women to work in traditionally male jobs. Nevertheless, this approach is only effective for labour market integration if preceded or accompanied by actions to make the workplace environment more women-friendly.

Other projects have developed successful strategies to convince public and private employers of the business advantages to be gained from using untapped female potential for management positions. Equal opportunities can thus become an integral part of human resource development.

A number of Employment-NOW projects have demonstrated that emerging growth sectors such as ICT and the environment can provide better opportunities for women to break into previously male-dominated domains.

(Concrete examples of good practice of NOW projects to underpin these findings.)

Desegregation of the labour market will remain an important issue for future policy development in employment at European level. Pillar 4 of the European Employment Strategy aims to strengthen equal opportunities policies for women and men. Guideline 20 on “Tackling Gender Gaps” specifies that Member States will “take action to bring about a balanced representation of women and men in all sectors and occupations” and “consider an increased use of measures for the advancement of women.” Good practice developed within Employment-NOW Community Initiatives could serve as a model for measures proposed in the future.

Recommendations



Workshop 1

- *Developing learning programs oriented to non-traditional occupations for women*
- *Sensitizing parents to their role in socializing children and educating them about egalitarian relationships*

Workshop 2

- *Mobilizing agents of change: in schools, sensitizing guidance counsellors; in unionized companies, sensitizing union representatives*

Workshop 3

- *Publicizing the Lippé decision on harassment in hostile environments*

Workshop 4

- *Sensitizing girls and their parents about the importance of scientific and technological education, from the elementary level onwards*
- *Coordinating and regularizing activities in the schools to promote careers in the sciences*
- *Supporting projects that have proved their worth*

Workshop 5

- *Carrying out sensitization projects concerning non-traditional occupations in all regions of Québec*
- *Introducing this sensitization as early as possible in the schools*
- *Offering special support for women in vocational education centres*

Workshop 6

- *Taking concrete steps to oppose sexist or sexual harassment in the workplace*
- *Making the question of broadening vocational options for girls a government concern and a priority for the Minister of Education*

Workshop 7

- *Setting up support networks for women in schools or in the workplace*
- *Offering professional development workshops on managing mixed teams*

Workshop 8

- *Evaluating the consequences of women leaving non-traditional occupations and pointing out the financial losses suffered by workers and companies*
- *Developing strategies for convincing women to stay in non-traditional occupations*
- *Transmitting to foreign participants the main facts of the research work published by the Minister de l'Éducation under the title: Au delà des mythes: les hauts et les bas des travailleuses non traditionnelles.*

Workshop 9

- *Preparing teaching personnel to intervene in a class in which women are a minority in order to encourage them to pursue their studies and offer them the best study conditions possible to do so*
- *Making sure that both schools and employers join forces in supporting the socioprofessional integration of young women*
- *Adopting, in every school, a clear policy on sexist and sexual harassment and ensuring its application*

Workshop 10

- *Asking Status of Women Canada to monitor Canadian policies to ensure that they include women's concerns*

Workshop 11

- *Translating and distributing the Devenir program and presenting it in the schools, both to girls and boys*

Workshop 12

- *Reserving places for women in areas of study in which they are a minority, at the secondary, college and university levels*
- *Contributing to changing attitudes by demonstrating the inequalities related to salaries and working conditions experienced by women*

Workshop 13

- *Concentrating efforts to integrate women in employment sectors that are more open to women*

Workshop 14

- *Bringing women together in a number of networks to discuss the problems experienced by women in the labour market and to find solutions (subjects may include sexist or sexual harassment, discriminatory hiring practices, suppression of feminist convictions in order to find or keep a job)*

Workshop 15

- *Creating an international mentoring network*

Workshop 16

- *Publishing a document describing successful ventures by women entrepreneurs in Denmark or elsewhere, and distributing it in Québec to support entrepreneurship among women*

Workshop 17

- *Improving employment equity programs to obtain a better balance between men and women workers*

Workshop 18

- *Following developments in a new policy of non-sexist education being introduced in Spain to encourage diversification of career choices among women*

Workshop 19

- *Sensitizing women to the education of African girls and encouraging those with an education to become social role models*

Workshop 20

- *Highlighting inequalities of salary between men and women, as well as the link between women's poverty and their absence from strategic sectors such as that of new information and communications technologies (NICT)*

Round Table 1

- *Including actions to increase women's access to non-traditional occupations in the plan of the Ministère de l'Éducation for promoting vocational and technical education*
- *Encouraging the development of summer camps for girls to demystify tasks and occupations traditionally reserved for boys*

Round Table 2

- *Developing mentoring programs and support networks*
- *Presenting non-traditional occupations and scientific and technical careers to girls as early as the elementary school level. Using strategies involving hands-on discovery or exploration, industrial visits, games in day camps or summer camps, etc.*
- *Including in various codes of ethics the provision under which a member may lose the right to practise if found guilty of discrimination or harassment*

Round Table 3

- *Sensitizing employers about their role in supporting the women workers they hire*
- *Ensuring that more women are represented in decision-making sectors*

Round Table 4

- *Emphasizing the leadership role of national unions in issues involving the status of women, and increasing the role of local unions in integrating women workers exercising non-traditional occupations in companies*
- *Convincing employers of the valuable socioeconomic contribution of women workers exercising non-traditional occupations*
- *Organizing other forums of the same type to allow for better discussions among women workers, unions, businesses and social participants*

**Talks by
Round Table
Moderators**



Educational Strategies to Raise Awareness of Non-Traditional Occupations



Geneviève Dumont

Centre Étape inc.

Geneviève Dumont has been a guidance counsellor, training counsellor and development officer for over 10 years at Centre Étape inc., an organization in the Québec City area that, since 1979, has focused on

improving the socioeconomic status of women by promoting their access to financial freedom through work.

Recent Achievements at Centre Étape inc.

In 1999, I created a training program whose goal was to help women with little schooling enter the job market as manual labour in industries of the future.

In 1996, under the regional program to encourage women to enter non-traditional occupations, I developed and delivered an awareness and information campaign. This program targeted those persons evolving in the education and labour system who wanted to actively encourage girls and women to enter non-traditional occupations.

In 1994, under the same regional program, I devised a series of activities consisting of career guidance services, job-hunting assistance and school readiness workshops for women interested in entering non-traditional occupations or fields of study.

Talks

In 1998, invited by Coordination à la condition féminine at the Ministère de l'Éducation to conduct a workshop, as part of a career and professional development day in Québec City, on avant-garde tools for discovering winning careers for girls.

In 1998, guest speaker at École Odilon-Gauthier in Charlesbourg and École Saint-Louis in Loretteville to conduct an awareness-raising workshop for girls addressing the issue of non-traditional occupations and entitled "Croyances ou réalité?" [Myth or fact?].

In 1997, to mark March 8th, International Women's Day, I was invited by the Régie des alcools, des courses et des jeux to talk to female personnel from Québec City and Montréal about the values favoured by women in comparison to those held by our society.

Current Project

At the request of the Éditions Septembre de Québec publisher, I am presently writing a book on non-traditional occupations. Release is scheduled for fall 2000.

Centre Étape inc.: Its Mission

Centre Étape inc. is a nonprofit organization whose mission is to help improve socioeconomic conditions for women by encouraging them to enter or reenter the labour market in both traditional and non-traditional occupations.

An Innovative Project...

When we assess the situation, it becomes very clear that men and women do not have the same status in the job market. Even today, the majority of women continue to enter traditionally female industries where employment is often underpaid and not very attractive in terms of employee benefits. It is thereby essential to intensify the efforts to encourage young girls and women to opt for non-traditional careers, especially in fields related to the industries of the future.

Against this background and in keeping with its mission, Centre Étape inc. launched, in 1996, an innovative awareness and information program to promote female access to non-traditional schooling and jobs.

For Whom and Why...

The program’s objectives are to *raise awareness, inform and equip* those working actively with a female clientele¹ that might be interested in non-traditional schooling or jobs so as to significantly increase the proportion of women studying, holding a degree or certified and employed in non-traditional industries.

Raise Awareness, Inform and Equip—of course, but How?

Activities are organized to make awareness and information workshop participants realize the decisive role they can play in helping women enter and remain in non-traditional occupations.

1. AWARENESS WORKSHOP

The first session, entitled “What about you?”, makes participants aware of the positive or negative role (influence) they can play when it comes time for women to make career choices. The second session, entitled “Myth or reality?”, gets participants to question any beliefs they may have about non-traditional occupations. Finally, the third session, entitled “Transfer of skills and interests”, provides participants with a tool they can use to encourage women to consider career options on the basis of their interests and talents instead of stereotypes.

2. INFORMATION WORKSHOP

This workshop provides information to participants with regards to:

- a) the socioeconomic reality of Québec women
- b) a statistical portrait of women on the job market and at school
- c) what motivates women to consider non-traditional occupations

Participants then receive a document called *The Toolkit* that provides them with the tools necessary for informing and educating their clients about non-traditional occupations.

THE TOOLKIT INCLUDES:

- a table listing non-traditional occupations with strong employment opportunities in the greater Québec City area
- how to plan and organize conferences
- portraits of women in non-traditional jobs
- a few appropriate publications
- a few suggestions with regards to appropriate videos
- a list of non-traditional occupations

Program Benefits

After trying the program with workers in our region, we noticed an increase in referrals to our services geared towards women interested in exploring or entering non-traditional occupations. Moreover, the trial days held in Québec City and elsewhere across the province generated a strong interest in the issue of non-traditional jobs. Finally, we believe the program made participants from the educational system and employment sectors more aware of the role they can play as agents of change with respect to women entering non-traditional fields of study and occupations.

¹ Guidance counsellors, teachers, employment officers.

Educational Strategies to Raise Awareness of Non-Traditional Occupations



Guylaine Dutrisac

Formation'Elle,

Centre des femmes de Montréal

Following undergraduate studies in French literature, Guylaine Dutrisac specialized in educational and vocational information and obtained her Bachelor's degree in 1996. Since then

she has worked as a labour counsellor for the Centre des femmes de Montréal at Formation'Elle, where she prepares and leads workshops, evaluates and improves the non-traditional careers exploration program, and also does individual counselling. She helped create a video entitled "Élargir ses horizons", a work which was co-produced by the Conseil d'intervention pour l'accès des femmes au travail (CIAFT) and Vidéo Femmes.

Since 1998, in her capacity as assistant director, she has helped promote an awareness program for counsellors that seeks to encourage girls and women to opt for non-traditional careers, as well as a self-help training program for female students and women workers in non-traditional industries.

Since March 2000 she has headed a training project for telecommunications commercial and technical representatives organized in association with Collège Ahuntsic.

The mission of the Centre des femmes de Montréal, founded in 1973, is to help women help themselves. Steadfastly committed to meeting the specific needs of women in the Greater Montréal area, the Centre focuses its efforts on providing occupational and educational services, counselling and guidance. The Centre also endeavours to inform the public about women's issues and to encourage social change in the realm of the status of women.

Created in 1993, Formation'Elle is one of the services provided by the Montréal's women's centre. Its predecessor was the Travail non traditionnel (TNT) organization that offered services for women in non-traditional occupations during the 1980s. TNT closed its doors and the Centre des femmes De Montréal, through Formation'Elle, took up the torch.

At the outset, Formation'Elle helped those women who had previous training or experience in non-traditional occupations to find jobs. It subsequently expanded its services by establishing various training programs as well as an exploration and orientation program for women interested in non-traditional jobs but lacking the information required to make a decision and embark on a career.

In an effort to make the general public aware of non-traditional occupations, Formation'Elle provides a speaker service for school and community conferences.

To equip counsellors with the tools they need to give women better information about the value of considering non-traditional careers, Formation'Elle has developed an awareness and information program for school, community and employment officials.

Formation'Elle also provides co-counselling training for women students in non-traditional programs, as well as a service where experienced women serve as mentors for new graduates in manual, technical and scientific fields.

Lastly, Formation'Elle offers a mentorship service to offset the lack of female role models as well as to meet the need for supporting those women considering or embarking on a career in a so-called non-traditional field.

My presentation will focus on the latter three services: the training for counsellors, the co-counselling training for female students, and the mentorship service.

Counsellor Awareness

Inspired by the program developed by the Centre Étape de Québec organization, and after having adapted it to local conditions and characteristics (high-tech, ethnic communities), Formation'Elle now offers similar training in the Montréal area. The course was given to two groups: a control group to test the content and a real group.

The feedback from the course was very positive. Participants unanimously agreed that the day was profitable and even highly profitable. First, it helped to dispel myths in their view of non-traditional occupations by making them aware of both the advantages and difficulties associated with such a career choice. They said the training helped to clarify their role as sources of information and awareness. One person said, "It's up to us, the counsellors, to promote this aspect in our environment. We too have to dispel the myths that may still surround non-traditional occupations."

Others valued the information they received, saying it rounded out their perception. Another person said, "The session enabled me to think in depth about this issue, to see its contours and constraints as well as the opportunities for our clients."

The training also gave participants a means of observing their own way of dealing with girls and women interested in non-traditional occupations, and seeing what kinds of practices might be favourable, apparently neutral or unfavourable. For example, failing to provide information or to become involved appears to be a neutral practice, but the results are more unfavourable than favourable in light of the goal of encouraging girls and women to consider non-traditional options when choosing a career. Thus, what became apparent was that the counsellors were happy to talk about the matter, in order to thereafter feel more comfortable conveying the information to their clients. Some people said the training sparked their curiosity and that they were going home with a desire to broaden the scope of the information they provided their clients.

The interactive formula used for the awareness day was also appreciated. Participants found the format of exploring their own ideas, expressing their views and engaging in discussions with others before moving on from where they stood highly effective, in comparison to a highly theoretical lecture.

Co-counselling Training

The co-counselling training provided by Formation'Elle is intended for women students in non-traditional fields. Inspired by the approach of Professor Jacques Limoges of the Université de Sherbrooke, this course aims to counter the discouragement and the occurrence of dropouts among girls and women in non-traditional programs. It helps to reinforce the co-counselling abilities that the women already possess so that they can more easily deal with the problems that arise when they enroll in a non-traditional school or training program.

Co-counselling involves giving and receiving. Professor Limoges uses the image of the seesaw: when one person is down, the other is up and can help the former regain their balance. For example, all female students may experience difficulty in adjusting to their studies, their male peers, the faculty, or the curriculum—but not necessarily at the same time, nor for the same reasons, nor in the same manner.

We say “reinforce the co-counselling abilities that women already possess” because we know that women generally find it easy to talk about their problems. What we do is improve their ability to listen and identify the problem in a situation.

This is a 15-hour course that brings together women from different vocational schools, for example, a dozen women from three or four schools. The course enables them to practice listening to each other, clarifying a situation, and trying to identify the true problem—using both real and fictional cases—so that they can come up with appropriate solutions. Thereafter, when they go back to school, they know that they can effectively turn to one another for help.

Once again, because it’s co-counselling, would-be participants must be willing to help and be helped. In other words, the training can result in both the satisfaction of helping and the security of knowing that aid is available as needed.

On the other hand, it’s very difficult to assemble a group of female students. From one school to the next or even from one program to the next, they may have different schedules and different family situations; this made it impossible to deliver the course to a group last year. We therefore focused our efforts on individual support and suggested that participants avail themselves of networking and of our mentorship service.

Mentorship Service

The mentorship service was tremendously successful this year. Formation’Elle now has a pool of some 50 mentors, recruited from among the women who use our services and who have graduated or worked in non-traditional fields. To become mentors, the women must love what they’re doing and be willing to help new graduates or women exploring their career options.

The mentorships can take different forms and meet a variety of needs. For example, the two women may talk on the phone or in person, and the mentor may be required simply to provide information (about her industry, education, etc.) or to provide support with regards to adjusting to school, looking for a job, or adapting to the workplace.

During the past year, Formation’Elle paired off some fifty mentors and women. These are only the mentorships we know about; others may have been formed without our knowledge.

In closing, we see that the Centre des femmes de Montréal has taken a number of initiatives over the past six years to empower women in their choice of non-traditional careers, and that these actually go beyond Formation’Elle’s original purpose. The needs expressed by our participants on a daily basis constitute a source of inspiration.

During the past two days, this international conference has given us an opportunity to see that we have come a long way in recent years, yet still have a long way to go. Services such as the counsellor training, the co-counselling training for female students and the mentorships pairing experienced women workers with newcomers are the real contribution of a community organization actively working in the field to help women gradually acquire personal, occupational and financial freedom.

Educational Strategies to Raise Awareness of Non-Traditional Occupations



Anabelle Paxton
Lower Mainland
WITT Association

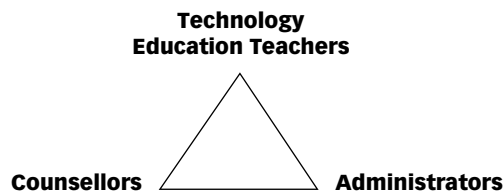
My presentation will be about the recruitment of young females in technology education (shop) classes at the local level in the secondary school system with reference to a special recruitment technique called Spend-A-Block.

Technology education in the secondary school system includes mechanics, carpentry, electronics, metal shop, robotics, drafting, auto-cad, machine shop and jewellery. The approach for technology education is based on a problem-solving hands-on approach versus the vocational industrial education method.

Shop classes historically have been the exclusive domain of male students. Only in the last 15-20 years have some brave or determined young female students frequented these shops. The percentages of females in the classes were negligible. While there have been sporadic attempts at having young women involved in technology education, most of these endeavours started with hope and ended with no staying power.

The recruitment of female students in the secondary school system needs a more systematic approach.

- It starts with discussions and agreements among three major stakeholders in the local school: the administrators (principals and vice-principals), technology education (shop) teachers, and counsellors.
- Planning a strategy or strategies for recruitment.
- Follow up results of recruitment between the technology department and the counsellors.



Discussion among the major stakeholders are necessary before recruitment can commence. The stakeholders are as follows:

Technology Teachers

Technology teachers are the key players in this triangle. It is essential that recruitment of female students be proactive and creative. For successful recruitment, a team effort is necessary. The reason for this is to even out the amount of work that is required.

The Technology Department must:

- Come up with a solid recruitment plan.
- Talk to the principals and vice-principals.
- Call a meeting of all the stakeholders (counsellors, administrators, technology education teachers).
- Begin the recruitment strategies.
- Follow up with all the stakeholders and recruiting.

Administrators (Principals and Vice-Principals)

It is extremely important to have the administration behind you. You could fall into snags or experience lack of cooperation from one of the stakeholders. The principal or vice-principal could sort out this problem.

Counsellors

Building a positive relationship with the counselling staff is crucial for the recruitment of female students. In the end, the students sign up with their individual counsellor. Make sure that the counsellor(s) understand the importance of technology courses. A meeting with the counsellors is important to make sure that they are all on board, knowing what needs to be accomplished to make the equity process a success. If it is possible, having the principal or vice-principal at the initial meeting would have more impact.

Meeting with counsellors, the Technology Department must:

- Present a clear plan of what it is trying to accomplish.
- Ask for feedback.
- Ask questions as to how the recruitment can work for the counsellors and the Technology Department.
- Make sure that the counsellors will respond and explain how they can make their participation work.

Venues for the Recruitment

The recruitment for females should happen in an *all-female setting*. Since there has been very little history of females taking courses in this department, female students felt uneasy expressing their feelings about taking these classes in a mixed setting. It is necessary to build support for young women to take the classes. An all-female recruitment environment sets the stage to welcome them in the department. The students can talk amongst themselves or convince a friend to take the course with them.

Examples of places that could be all female *CAPP* Class or Gym Classes*. In my recruitment process, I choose gym classes. The students responded well to the discussions and were more than willing to sign up for classes.

**CAPP* Career and Personal Planning Courses

Recruitment Technique–Spend-A-Block (SAB)

Spend-A-Block is a recruitment technique to increase the number of females in the secondary school system. Secondary schools divide their classes into blocks of 80 minutes. There are four blocks or classes in a regular day of school. The technology education teacher develops an exercise that a student can complete in a 80-minute block of time.

- E.g.
- Carpentry*—a corner shelf
 - Mechanics*—four modules that students can circulate from changing a tire to changing a rim on a tire, grease bearings or a intro and hands-on brake job
 - Electronics*—putting together a winky board

The SAB gives female students an opportunity to enter a shop of their choice and work on a project in an all-female environment. Some of the reactions from the students during recruitment and the SAB are that they would like to have all-female shop classes. The number of sign-ups for the SAB and the amount of time the technology teachers are willing to put into this project will determine the number of SABs you will organize.

In my talk, I will include:

- Statistics of sign-ups.
- Time spent on recruiting.
- How to conduct recruitment of female students.

Learning Strategies to Raise Awareness of Non-Traditional Occupations



Francine Payette
Writer, Programme des programmes
Direction de la formation générale
des jeunes (DFGJ)
Ministère de l'Éducation du Québec

Francine Payette's career in education spans some three decades. She has summarized the fruit of her experience

with teenagers and their parents in a book entitled *L'adolescence, une étape dans la vie des parents* [Adolescence: A Stage in Parents' Lives].

Educated at the École des sciences humaines, she became vice-president of the Société des professeurs d'histoire du Québec (SPHQ) in the early 1980s.

For six years, she cowrote the questions for the Génies en herbe television program broadcast by Radio-Canada. With other educators, she launched the provincewide "Génies en herbe/pantologie" movement that is celebrating its 15th anniversary this year.

In the fall of 1997, she chaired the organizing committee for the provincial conference of Québec private school student leaders. The theme, "Bâtir un réseau de leaders au service de la collectivité" [Building a network of leaders serving the community], encouraged the emergence and cultivation of leadership skills among Québec's adolescent population.

Following a talk she gave in Santiago, Chile, she came up with the idea of bringing together youths from both the northern and southern hemispheres to consider and discuss the topic of education. Shortly thereafter, she organized a videoconference involving young Chileans and Canadians. This event took place on April 17, 1998 as part of the cultural program of the Summit of the Americas in Santiago.

In July 1999 she helped found the Centre de développement pour l'exercice de la citoyenneté (CDEC). The favoured policy instrument or approach was discussion. Debates were held in secondary schools in the fall of 1999, as a means of supporting the deliberations of youths studying one of the four fields of the Sommet du Québec et de la jeunesse (Québec Youth Summit). The young people submitted their recommendations to François Legault, the Cabinet Minister responsible for the event.

Throughout the past 40 years, our society has been preoccupied with providing a greater number of people access to a quality education. This democratization of education in Québec has led to a remarkable growth in the number of degrees awarded in all disciplines.

Yet no matter what level of education we consider, we see major differences separating the boys from the girls. The girls are more successful and are more perseverant than boys with regards to their studies. Moreover, there are still too few girls in certain industries of the future, particularly information technology and communications.

Four of the 21 existing educational fields account for 80% of professional women graduates (administration, commerce and secretarial, food services and tourism, health and beauty). Similar breakdowns can also be found at the college and university level.

How do we encourage girls to consider a wider variety of career choices?

During the past decade, Québec society has engaged in deliberations that have led to a school curriculum reform that takes into account all the issues cited.

The Ministère de l'Éducation is presently experimenting with this new curriculum in the first cycle of primary school. The curriculum encompasses eight realms of experience in the lives of youngsters in an effort to make disciplinary learning more meaningful and enable the development of attitudes and behaviours that favour the emergence of a more just, more democratic and more egalitarian society.

One of these realms of life experience focuses on *the person in the making*; this is the area of *personal and vocational guidance and entrepreneurship*. By exploring this area throughout preschool as well as in primary and secondary school, the youngsters gradually master the skills required *to become involved in personal, school and vocational projects from the standpoint of self-fulfillment and becoming a dynamic part of society*.

Starting at the preschool level, youngsters learn to:

- imagine themselves carrying out a project
- find the information required to create a project
- sort out the information that is useful and relevant to a project's realization
- make decisions
- plan the stages required to complete a project
- bring a project to fruition

During the three primary-school cycles, pupils will have brought to fruition a few projects that reflect their dreams of the future, their personal, educational and career ambitions. They will express their fantasies in different forms through projects that are tied to their preferences, their likes and their strengths. They will consult various resource persons and information sources in order to explore the careers and occupations in their community and this in relation to academic disciplines such as languages, the social sciences, technology, science and mathematics, the arts and personal development.

Students will learn to map out appropriate steps and strategies for successfully carrying out their personal, school and career projects.

Gender Equity and the Integration of Women into the Australian Legal Profession

Juliet Bourke

Legislation and Policy Division

NSW Attorney General's Department

Juliet Bourke is a lawyer working as a Senior Policy Officer in the Legislation and Policy Division of the New South Wales Attorney General's Department in Sydney, Australia. She commenced legal practice in the late 1980s and now advises the NSW Government on human rights and anti-discrimination law. Juliet's legal practice has a particular emphasis on gender equity, especially in the legal profession.

Ms. Bourke represented the NSW Attorney General on the committee she and the Minister for Women established to redress gender bias in the legal profession, and she subsequently coauthored the report Gender Bias and the Law: Women Working in the Legal Profession. Report of the Implementation Committee (1996). Between 1996 and 1999, she was tasked with monitoring and, where appropriate, implementing the Committee's recommendations. She is the primary author of The Review of the Report Implementation Committee (1999). Juliet also represents the Attorney General's Department on the Law Society of NSW's Gender and Industrial Issues in the Profession Taskforce.

Juliet Bourke holds a Bachelor of Arts degree, a Bachelor of Laws degree and a Master of Laws degree with Honours. Juliet's Honours Thesis, Professional Women: Balancing Career and Family Responsibilities, is currently being published as a monograph (University of New South Wales Studies in Organisational Analysis and Innovation, Industrial Relations Research Centre, University of New South Wales, Sydney).

She has published a number of papers on work and family issues, discrimination law and gender bias in the legal profession. She is an editor and writer for two legal publications (Employers's Legal Guide and HR Manager), and she is an industry consultant on workplace flexibility with Work+Life Strategies.

The purpose of this paper is to report on the progressive development and implementation of broad-ranging reforms to integrate women into the Australian legal profession.

Canadian and Australian women share a similar background of complete exclusion from legal studies and the legal profession at the turn of this century, and more than equitable inclusion among law students as well as a significant representation among legal practitioners at the end of the century. Yet research in both countries continues to demonstrate that women legal professionals remain occupationally and hierarchically segregated.

In New South Wales (the most populous state in Australia), women have comprised 50% of law graduates for the last five years (and a substantial proportion for the last 15 years), and in 1999, 33% of the solicitors branch of the legal profession are women. Yet we are a minority in the senior ranks, accounting for only 12% of barristers (and 2% of senior counsels), 15% of the judiciary and 7% of partners in private practice. In terms of occupational segregation, some practitioners still assume that women lawyers are more suited to family, child and welfare law, and less suited to commercial, industrial and constitutional law. Women are underrepresented in private practice and overrepresented in government and community practices.

During this century, women have regularly lobbied the Government and professional bodies (such as the Law Society of NSW) to formally recognize and redress gender bias in the legal profession. Initially, a handful of pioneering women struggled to be admitted as solicitors and barristers, and much later (in the 1970s and 1980s) superwomen behaved as "honorary men" in order to occupy the top positions. Nevertheless women continued

to be treated as “other” and remained underrepresented among the upper echelons of the legal profession.¹ Consequently in the 1990s, much greater attention has been dedicated to surfacing covert barriers to women lawyers’ inclusion and progression. Of particular concern has been the impact of legal work practices which reward lawyers who work full-time (if not excessive) hours and marginalize those who seek to balance work and family responsibilities. The more recent research and interventions are detailed below.

In 1994, the NSW Government commissioned independent research to investigate the reasons for the disparity between women’s greater participation in the legal profession and their continued underrepresentation at the top. The researchers interviewed a range of legal professionals and in 1995 released their report entitled *Gender Bias and the Law: Women Working in the Legal Profession*. One of the most important features of the report was its formal validation of women’s anecdotal evidence that the legal profession differentiated between practitioners on the basis of their sex rather than their competence. The researchers identified an array of systemic structural and attitudinal barriers to women’s equitable participation, and recommended comprehensive reforms.

In 1996, the Attorney General and the Minister for Women established an “Implementation Committee” of key legal players from within and outside government to implement these reforms and to make further necessary recommendations. The Committee gathered further information on gender bias by devolving into sub-committees and hosting focus groups. In late 1996, the Implementation Committee released its report which recommended changes to government employment practices, legislation and educational programs. The recommendations covered a diverse range of strategies to promote cultural change in the legal profession by government, non-government and professional bodies. In particular the Committee’s recommendations included that the:

- NSW Government foster the implementation of flexible work practices in the Government sector.
- NSW Government adopt a contract compliance policy (by which private bidders for Government legal work would be rendered ineligible if they did not comply with Affirmative Action standards).
- NSW Attorney General increase the transparency and accountability of the judicial appointment process.
- NSW and Commonwealth Attorneys General expand the coverage of sexual harassment legislation to include those in tenuous employment relationships (e.g. volunteers and trainees).
- Law Society of NSW explicitly prohibit discrimination and sexual harassment by legal professionals.
- Law Society of NSW mandate that solicitors be educated on EEO and anti-discrimination law and practices.

Since 1996, the Attorney General’s Department has monitored, and where appropriate introduced, many of the reforms recommended by the Implementation Committee. In general terms, implementation has been less speedy and comprehensive than it would be desired. Of note was the Law Society’s² and the Bar Association’s decision not to explicitly and formally prohibit discrimination and harassment by legal practitioners in the course of legal practice. As a result, in October 1999 the NSW Attorney General introduced a Regulation to prohibit such conduct, and noted that breach of the Regulation may lead to disciplinary action. Furthermore, the Law Society declined to mandate education as recommended by the Committee, and so the Attorney introduced a Regulation to require solicitors to attend courses on EEO, anti-discrimination and OH&S every three years.

One of the consequences of the Government's attention to gender equity in the legal profession has been a raising of awareness (and expectations) among the profession itself. Thus the Law Society has recognized the implications of the fact that a sizable proportion of its members are women, and almost 60% of those women are in their primary years of childbearing and child rearing. Consequently the Society is now playing a more active role in addressing the concerns of female solicitors.

The Law Society's recent strategy to redress gender bias has been to focus on the inter-relationship between the structure of legal work practices (particularly the emphasis on full-time and excessive hours as a measure of commitment and "professionalism") and practitioners' ability to balance family responsibilities. This strategy follows the case of *Hickie v Hunt & Hunt Solicitors* ([unreported] HREOC, 7 March 1998, H96/185), in which the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission found that a requirement that a legal partner work full-time (rather than part-time to accommodate her family responsibilities) was unlawful because it indirectly discriminated against her on the basis of her sex.

In 1998, the Law Society conducted the Family Responsibilities Study of 368 solicitors (including employees and employers). The study found that a significant proportion of respondents had responsibilities for dependants, including for children (mostly aged 4 to 12 years) (48%), and adults (19%), yet work practices were predicated on the assumption that someone other than the practitioner was providing the necessary care. Consequently practitioners experienced considerable stress and found difficulty in complying with the start and finish times of office hours, attending meetings and networking after hours, and taking work home.

Furthermore, the study found that solicitors worked long and intense hours—even in comparison with the high number worked by most Australian professionals. In particular, over 60% of employees, associates and salaried partners worked more than 60 hours a week, and over 80% of equity partners usually worked an average of 80 hours a week. It is therefore not surprising that 80% of the solicitors surveyed reported that work impacted upon their spouse/partner some or all of the time. Moreover, the study found that the impact of long work hours was an issue for both male and female solicitors.

In response to these findings, in 1999 the Law Society established the Gender and Industrial Issues Taskforce. The Taskforce recommended a range of strategies to improve the quality of practitioners' lives, be they men or women, with or without dependants. The highlights of the Taskforce's recommendations (which were adopted by the Council of the Law Society in July 1999) were that the Law Society:

- And LawCover,³ measure the extent to which stress affects the quality of members' lives. The Taskforce observed that stress has repercussions on solicitors' personal health and well-being as well as on the quality of their services to clients, and noted anecdotal evidence which suggests that there is a positive correlation between work-related stress and the making of mistakes or ill-considered decisions, and the potential for negligence claims and complaints.
- Investigate the reasons why solicitors leave the profession (the Law Society's data on the non-renewal of practicing certificates indicates that family responsibilities is the primary reason why women do not renew their practicing certificates).
- Facilitate the development of an interactive workplace project on the implementation of flexible work practices in private firms; and
- Recognize and reward firms that have successfully implemented flexible work arrangements and other innovative practices to promote EEO.

The presenter represented the NSW Attorney General on the Implementation Committee, and has formally monitored the introduction of the Committee's recommendations over the last three years. She also participated in the pilot study for the Family Responsibilities Study and is a member of the Law Society's Gender and Industrial Issues Taskforce. In relation to the integration of women into the NSW legal profession, it is her experience that:

- Partnerships with government and non-government agencies will produce a range of proposals (including those which are innovative and those which are realistic).
- Entrenching women's concerns on the political/bureaucratic agenda/calendar will ensure that they receive regular attention by those who can effect reforms.
- Formal monitoring and evaluation of progress should not be neglected by lobby groups.
- It is difficult to introduce reforms which target systemic and entrenched power-bases (so a variety of strategies should be employed).
- Cultural change is slow and incremental, and needs to be persistently pursued.

In summary, the equitable integration of women into the Australian legal profession continues to be a challenge—even in the late 1990s. In previous generations women struggled to enter the legal profession and its upper echelons. Whilst these barriers have now been formally overcome, it has only been achieved on the basis that women conform to the rigors of existing workplace practices.

One of the most significant practices which discriminates against many women is the assumption that practitioners have no (or very limited) active caring responsibilities. It has now become clear that the legal workplace itself must change and become more flexible if it is to ensure that women (and men) with family responsibilities remain within the profession, and progress in their careers. Current strategies to achieve this end are quite diverse and include research, rewards and regulation.

¹ Bourke, J. (forthcoming), *Professional Women: Balancing Career and Family Responsibilities*, Monograph, UNSW Studies in Organisational Analysis and Innovation, Industrial Relations Research Centre, University of New South Wales, Sydney.

² The Law Society of New South Wales is the professional association for the solicitors branch of the legal profession. It represents and regulates nearly 14 000 solicitors in NSW. The Bar Association is the representative and regulatory body for over 1800 barristers in NSW.

³ LawCover provides the largest and most comprehensive professional indemnity scheme for solicitors in Australia. All solicitors in private practice in NSW, whether as a sole practitioner or in a partnership, join the Scheme.

Practices to Increase the Number of Women in Certain Occupations and Professions



Josée Durand

Josée Durand
Syndicat des techniciens
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Rossana Pettinati
Ordre des technologues
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Only fairly recently have women embarked on careers as electrical engineering technicians. Their average seniority at Hydro-Québec is in fact only 11 years and they represent a mere 3.8% of the total staff.

Since the workplace was unprepared for the arrival of women, their integration was not smooth sailing. Hence in September 1996, local 957 of the Syndicat des techniciens et



Rossana Pettinati

techniciennes, in association with trade employees' local 1500 and office workers' local 2000, signed an agreement with management aimed at achieving equality in the workplace by developing and implementing a complete equal-opportunity program within the company. In terms of undertakings, it was absolutely essential to create a healthy work environment, free of harassment and discrimination, given the need to increase the number of women holding non-traditional jobs and to recognize a situation calling for immediate systemic action.

Three years later, we can measure the substantial progress on paper, but the real world is a different story.

The Status of Women Committee, although relatively new, nonetheless remains highly active. In concert with the entire union structure, we are taking concrete action in order to improve working conditions for women by focusing our efforts on the needs they have expressed. We regularly publish information on various issues affecting them and on the positive impact this can have for men. We inform women of their rights and represent them before management when these rights are not respected.

Today's society has entered an era of globalization. "Reorganization", "restructuring" and "rationalization" have become buzzwords. A concern with regards to respecting employees' rights, health and safety and labour relations can be considered not only a waste of time, but also a waste of money. And in light of current economic conditions, it seems that these issues are not always a priority.

In our colleges, there has been no significant increase in the number of women enrolled in the program for electrical engineering technicians. Their percentage has remained practically the same for the past 20 years. There is still a false perception that this occupation is a highly manual one, with physical strength still being emphasized as a requirement. We think that men have an innate talent for technical work, one which may be difficult for women to acquire. Women in this field are still considered intruders and oddities. Yet those who opted for this occupation over the past 30 years have had, despite the difficulties, interesting and exciting careers.

Some conclusions can be drawn from all this. Women's issues do not exist in a vacuum. When there are no legal obligations, governments and employers do not always adopt measures to make women feel welcome and further their integration, particularly with regards to training and preparation programs for existing employees. We must therefore be proactive in this area and make every effort to ensure that women know their rights.

At the dawn of the second millennium, what can we do to make women feel more welcome and improve their position as electrical engineering technicians? We must inform and raise the awareness of teachers, guidance counsellors, fellow workers, families and society. These are our allies in our struggle for respect, dignity and integrity. Women must be able to make informed choices free of any social or economic constraints.

Practices to Increase the Number of Women in Certain Occupations and Professions



Lorraine Michael
Women in Resource
Development Committee

Lorraine Michael was born in St. John's and has worked in Newfoundland and Labrador for the majority of her professional life.

From 1963 to 1976, she taught in various communities throughout the island of Newfoundland including Bell Island, Baie Verte, Codroy Valley, St. Lawrence and St. John's.

From 1980 to 1990, she was Director of the Office of Social Action in St. John's. In this position, her community development and advocacy work included socioeconomic issues affecting women's lives. From 1991 to 1999, she was Women and Economic Justice Program Coordinator for the Ecumenical Coalition for Economic Justice, a national research body based in Toronto. This position involved research concerning the impact on women's work of economic and fiscal policy changes both within Canada and internationally. As part of this work, she worked closely with the National Action Committee on the Status of Women (NAC). She co-chaired the NAC Women and Economy Committee, served as a NAC executive member and co-chaired NAC's priority campaign on the Future of Women's Work.

From 1997 to 1999, Lorraine Michael served as member of the Voisey's Bay Environmental Assessment Panel to which she was nominated by the Innu Nation. The impact of the proposed mine in Voisey's Bay on women was a notable focus of the work of the panel.

In spring 1999, Ms. Michael was appointed Executive Director of the Women in Resource Development Committee. WRDC is committed to "advancing women's economic autonomy in the development of natural resources in Newfoundland and Labrador by promoting involvement of women in resource development projects." A key WRDC goal is to influence public policy regarding women's role in the development of natural resources.



Dorothy Robbins
Women's Policy Office
Government of
Newfoundland & Labrador

Dorothy Robbins is the Director of Research and Planning with the Women's Policy Office, Executive Council, Government of Newfoundland

and Labrador. Her background is primarily in social policy analysis and development. She holds an MSW (Social Policy & Administration) from Memorial University of Newfoundland. She has been involved in the women's movement since the early 1970s when she was one of the founding members of the Labrador West Status of Women Council. Since then, Ms. Robbins has been involved with numerous women's groups as a volunteer and as a staff member. In 1981, she was hired as the first Administrator of the Provincial Advisory Council on the Status of Women.

She has been on the national board of the Canadian Congress for Learning Opportunities for Women and, in 1987, coauthored a proposal for Women Interested in Successful Employment (WISE), a career exploration and personal development program for women that continues to operate in three locations in Newfoundland.

Ms. Robbins is currently an active member of the Newfoundland and Labrador Women's Health Network and is on the Steering Committee of The Maritime Centre of Excellence on Women's Health. She is also a board member of the Women in Resource Development Committee.

Women's Policy Office is a central agency of the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador that works with all government departments to advance women's equality. One of our immediate goals is to increase the number of women participating in expected growth areas of the labour force. In our province growth is expected in natural resource development industries such as mining, hydroelectricity development, and the petroleum industry. These are all areas of the economy where women have been underrepresented.

An opportunity to concentrate on increasing the number of women in the petroleum industry came in November 1998, when we were successful in having a part of the Offshore Skills Development Fund designated as an Equity Fund. The Offshore Skills Development Fund was established to assist residents of our province to prepare for occupations in the offshore oil and gas industry.

The Equity Fund has two components. The first is a training grants program. Through this program, women who are new entrants to petroleum-related trades and technology training can qualify for a grant of up to \$3000. This grants program has been operating since late January 1999. In order to qualify for a grant, a woman must be accepted into a training program that will prepare her for a trade or technical occupation in the petroleum industry. She must also be in need of financial assistance. Need is assessed through the Newfoundland and Labrador Student Aid system. If a student qualifies for a student loan, she is considered financially eligible for this grant. As of September 30, 1999, 49 applications have been received and 24 have been approved. Most of the grants have been for three-year technology programs, such as nautical science, marine environmental technology and petroleum engineering technology.

The second component is a community development project called Breaking Down the Barriers. The objectives of this project are: to raise awareness among women about petroleum-related occupations through outreach

and educational activities; work with training institutions, employers and unions to decrease systemic barriers for women in the petroleum industry; and, to assist with the recruitment and retention of women in the industry by improving training and work environments.

This component is being delivered through a contract with the Women in Resource Development Committee (WRDC), a community-based women's group with representation from a number of women's groups across the province. This partnership is a good example of government working with women's equality-seeking groups towards a common goal. The project also provides an opportunity to forge links with other partners—employers, unions and educational institutions—who must become involved if we are going to significantly increase the number of women who are employed in technical and trades occupations in the petroleum and other resource-based industries.

My co-presenters will now provide you with information about the Women in Resource Development Committee, more details about the Breaking Down the Barriers project and a related project that the group currently has underway.

In 1999 WRDC became an incorporated legal organization committed to increasing women's involvement in all aspects of resource development in Newfoundland and Labrador. The objectives of this new organization include:

- Conducting gender-based analysis of resource development projects and related policies, environmental assessments, research and socioeconomic impacts of resource developments.
- Advocating, supporting and assisting with mobilization for women and community organizations.
- Involvement in labour-market adjustment initiatives designed to 1. decrease barriers to women's full economic autonomy, 2. increase women's level of education in areas related to resource development, 3. reduce occupational segregation and barriers to safe workplaces and educational environments and 4. increase employment and pay levels of women in resource development industries.

Currently WRDC is interested in four natural resource development industries: mining, petroleum, fishing and forestry.

The incentive for creating WRDC was a report released in 1996 by Women in Trades and Technology, Newfoundland and Labrador. *Women, Employment Equity and the Hibernia Construction Project* is a study of women's experience on the Hibernia Construction Project in Mosquito Cove, Newfoundland. This project included the construction of the production platform's massive concrete base, one topside module and various topside assemblies. Upon completion, the production platform was floated out to the Hibernia oil field, Newfoundland's first producing offshore oil site.

The study of women's experience at this construction site included all aspects affecting women living and working at the Hibernia site: training, hiring, advancement and wage-rates, layoffs and recall, sexual and gender harassment, stress at work, support and representation, accommodations, dining, recreation and leisure facilities and concerns about personal safety. In all of these areas, women indicated significant issues creating difficulties for women. The Hibernia Study, as it is known, includes 10 recommendations, four directed at unions and management and six at government. For the purposes of this workshop, I shall focus only on the study's findings regarding the training and employment of women and men on the Hibernia Project. In preparation for the construction phase, 102 women, comprising 4% of the total of men at 2361, were trained. Of the total trained, 65 women (3% of the total of men) and 1844 men were hired. At the total peak employment 5000 men and 236 women were hired. Of the women, only 45 were in trades and technology occupations (see attached chart). These figures are rather bleak. The most current figures that we have of employment on the Hibernia Project are no better. They show 18 women as compared to 350 men working in offshore operations, with only 4 of the 18 women in trades and technology occupations (TTO.) In onshore operations, there are 64 women compared to 238 men. We do not know how many of those women are in TTO. What we see, then, is that women comprise only 12% of workers involved currently in the Hibernia Project.

Breaking Down the Barriers, which has already been referred to, is designed to deal with the systemic reasons for this low participation of women in the petroleum industry. With the money from the Equity Fund, WRDC hired a Petroleum Industry Outreach Coordinator (PIC.) Since taking up her position in May of this year, the focus of the PIC has been on making contact with the petroleum industry and with government agencies dealing with the industry. This work has been centred mainly in Newfoundland and Labrador, though it also included gathering information from the industry in Nova Scotia. The main purpose of this outreach is to raise the awareness of the barriers that militate against women's participation in the petroleum industry. We are also trying to create cooperation between WRDC and the industry in setting up training opportunities for women. We are interested both in orientation training that opens up women to the possibilities for them in trades and technological opportunities in oil and gas and in actual training for employment in the industry. Already in the short time that we have been doing this work, some promising conversations are occurring with both industry and training institutions.

We have been in contact with Sable Offshore Energy Incorporated (SOEI) in Nova Scotia concerning the work they are doing regarding diversity and women's participation in their company. Furthermore, we are getting information about the equity programs of companies in other provinces involved in the industry in Newfoundland and Labrador. We believe that knowledge about equity-related activities in other regions, especially if carried out by the same companies, will give us leverage as we pursue such ideas in our province.

WRDC has already developed, in conjunction with the provincial public college system, an Orientation to Trades and Technology (OTT) program that will be delivered throughout the province at the various campuses of the College of the North Atlantic. The OTT is designed to orient women to the various training options available in order to prepare them for employment in the natural resource development sector. The program offers hands-on trades and technology skills,

academic study in mathematics and sciences, safety and workplace experience, body strengthening, as well as addressing issues that women face when they work in traditionally male-dominated jobs. One component of the OTT is a unit on the petroleum industry and the related trades and technologies to which the women have been introduced during the course. The goal of this unit is to introduce the participants to the specific opportunities available in the industry.

We are currently pursuing the idea of collaborating with a small engineering company in St. John's in the design and delivery of this component. We are also discussing with this company the possible joint delivery of a computerized training program designed to orient people who already have trades and technological training to the opportunities in the petroleum industry. Initially this company had not thought about the gender issues. Since meeting with us, they are very open to and interested in building in a feminist analysis.

This breakthrough with one company is important to our work. We have the expertise to help the industry in pursuing a feminist analysis as they do their planning, as one company is learning. The challenge will be to convince the bigger players that they need this expertise.

As we have worked with the College of the North Atlantic around the delivery of the OTT, they have shown an understanding of and interest in the analysis that we bring. As a direct result of this joint effort, the College is launching into a program of gender-sensitivity training throughout all the campuses of the institution. Initially the training will be with all staff.

I mentioned that one of our objectives is to advocate, support and assist with mobilization for women and community organizations. We work towards this through the work of the PIC as well as two community development coordinators who are doing outreach to women's organizations, industry and community groups on a local level. Their work parallels that of the PIC, preparing the ground for the informational meetings and workshops throughout the province that are planned as an essential part of the work.

We have been doing this work for only a short time and really can only tell you about where we are to date without too much analytical data. We shall be continuing to focus on contacting and information-gathering for another couple of months. I should point out that getting information about the employment status of women in the petroleum industry, especially in the

History--The Hibernia Project

Construction Phase	Women	TTO Women	Men
Training	102 (4%)	72	2361
Trainees Employed	65 (3%)	40	1844
Total Peak Employed	236 (4.5%)	45	5000
NODECO	87	32	2095
PASSV	21	8	1217
Major Offshore	69	0	99
Production phase			
Offshore	18 (4%)	4	350
Onshore	64 (21%)	Unknown	238
Total	82 (12%)		588

Table No. 1: Women VS. Men on the Hibernia Project
WRDC orientation: July, 1999

offshore operations, is not easy. The figures are almost impossible to get. It seems fair to say, however, that the picture has not improved since the release of the Hibernia Study. While a new quantitative study has not been conducted, we do have up-to-date anecdotal information gathered from women who call us spontaneously to let us know about barriers they are facing in training and in the workplace, especially around accreditation issues, e.g. apprentices not being able to get the hours on a construction site needed in order to qualify for journey status. Twice, recently, women have said the barriers are so great they are thinking about giving up the trade they love.

Obviously the most difficult piece of work facing us is making inroads with the companies and unions so that we can affect policies that will improve hiring and retention of women in the petroleum industry. It is a slow process. One thing we are observing is that it is more than helpful if we can find individuals within the industry, the educational institutions and other related agencies who have an interest in or commitment to equity issues. For example, the company that I have referred to is small and has a president who is more than open to looking at creating opportunities for Newfoundlanders in general and women in particular. Actually, he is driven by the fact that he does not think Newfoundlanders are getting maximum opportunities within the petroleum industry inside of their own province. The College of the North Atlantic is represented on our board by the Director of Programs, a woman who is committed to improving the status of

women in training in traditionally male-dominated areas, especially in trades and technology. As well, Dorothy Robbins, my co-presenter, represents the Women's Policy Office on our board. I believe that such collaboration is particularly necessary if we are to make inroads into the petroleum industry which, especially in the offshore operations, appears to be beyond rules and regulations when it comes to issues of equity. We shall continue to seek such colleagues throughout the companies, unions, education institutions and government agencies in our long-term goal of creating a voice and a place for women in the development of the natural resources of Newfoundland and Labrador.

Thank you.

A Partnership Model to Promote Socioprofessional Integration and Employment Retention

Marie Doyon

Sectoral management counsellor, responsible for the Women's Advisory Committee.

Trained as a guidance counsellor, I have worked mainly on helping various adult groups reenter the labour force. Since 1992, I have been working for the Ministère de l'Emploi, where my primary responsibility has been developing various assistance programs for individuals in the process of entering or reentering the job market.

For the past year, I have held the position of sectoral management counsellor and I am responsible for the Women's Advisory Committee. As such, my role is to work with the Committee to ensure that its briefs with regards to issues involving women and employment are taken into consideration in Emploi-Québec policies and guidelines. I also contribute to various Committee projects and tools that further its mission.

Emploi-Québec is a government organization whose structure is based on the management by consensus-building of the various partners associated with the job market; hence, partnership is a key factor in the implementation of its mission.

Emploi-Québec's mission is to produce employment for the available work force, to promote skills development, to improve the supply of labour and to develop this work force so as to achieve a balance between supply and demand. It was therefore in pursuit of this mission that the Women's Advisory Committee teamed up with Emploi-Québec in order to foster and support the entry and reentry of women into the job market as well as their employment retention.

To fulfill its mandate, the Advisory Committee consists of members of the Réseau des représentantes à la condition féminine aux instances régionales, of labour unions and of various women's groups active in the area of workforce skills development. The Committee's role is to provide opinions and recommendations with regards to the various intervention strategies that should be adopted when dealing with women.

In particular, the Committee is authorized to:

- define the issues with regards to women and entry or reentry into the job market or employment retention
- help determine Emploi-Québec's priorities with respect to women
- participate in overseeing and evaluating the forms of action

Additional funding may be provided for various activities that the Advisory Committee wishes to personally undertake with respect to certain women's issues. This year Emploi-Québec has approved two projects: a handbook for women enrolled in training programs in non-traditional occupations and a diagnostic study of the job market and Québec women. The Advisory Committee's representative, Thérèse Sainte-Marie, will describe their achievements in more detail a little later.

More specifically, Emploi-Québec supports the efforts of women who register for training courses in non-traditional occupations by providing funds for the "Hats Off To You!" competition and by adopting incentives to encourage women to enroll in these programs.

Emploi-Québec also funds community organizations that offer specific job-related services for women. In particular, some of these organizations help women who are in the process of enrolling in training programs in non-traditional occupations. This assistance ranges from guidance to support while in training or when they run into special vocational maladjustments.

For Emploi-Québec, the Women's Advisory Committee is an essential partner in the development of policies and actions geared to the female work force. Its presence ensures Emploi-Québec of a vital link between women and the government agencies responsible for helping women actively contribute to Québec's labour market.

A Partnership Model to Promote Socioprofessional Integration and Employment Retention



Isabelle Dugré

Replaced by

Sylvie Rouillard

Femmes regroupées en options non traditionnelles (FRONT)

Isabelle Dugré. Prior to joining the STCUM as a maintenance plumber in 1996, she spent five years working as a

plumber on construction sites in the Greater Montréal area.

A founding member of FRONT, one of its directors since 1992 and currently the organization's president, she has been involved in numerous projects carried out by this network of women workers: an access program for women in the construction industry, the schools project, poster campaigns and the workshops held during the course of various forums and colloquiums related to non-traditional occupations.

Her primary focus is on an increase in the number of non-traditional women workers and above all, on an improvement of their educational, placement and working conditions (and my own at the same time!!!).

Sylvie Rouillard has worked for FRONT since January 1999 as a project manager and the officer in charge of union life. She is presently working on a university degree in labour relations.

Ms. Rouillard served on FRONT's board of directors for two years and on the furniture industry parity committee, as a CSD representative, for five years. She was an active union member from 1988 to 1998, focusing primarily on the status of women and training.

A shop joiner by trade, she spent 15 years working for a small business in the Beauce region before being dismissed in 1997 because of her views.

Approach

FRONT is a provincewide organization of women that occupy positions traditionally held by men (we call ourselves "non-trads"). Founded in 1992, our network's mission is to provide these women workers with *support, mutual assistance and referrals*.

To do this, non-trads from all parts of Québec have been getting together, discussing issues, sharing experiences and helping one another for several years.

At FRONT, we are building this network and creating links. For us, partnership is a natural and essential way of doing things. Isolated in our workplace, we quickly learn to rely on one another so as to be successful in our efforts to improve our situation. Every form of collaboration is valuable, particularly with the unions' status of women committees that, in our view, are the standard bearers for the demands of those working in non-traditional occupations.

Our greatest reassurance comes from the fact that we are no longer alone. We are no longer special cases, rare stories, and the exception. And for us, knowing this is a real relief.

Achievements

Over the years, we have developed not only an analysis of the non-traditional job market, but also a global vision of our situation as a female minority. Our commitment is both collective and individual. Yet we share a common vision: we cannot shoulder the burden of integration alone. Our efforts aim at collaboration with various parties to overcome all the difficulties encountered by women who opt for non-traditional occupations.

We want all women who so desire to have access to training programs in the field of their choice and the assurance of being able to learn in peace. We also

demand equal opportunity hiring, and those working conditions essential for employment retention and advancement.

All the efforts made by our organization show that it is only through collaboration with the various parties involved that progress and change become possible. As evidence we have the projects that were undertaken and carried out with unions, employers, training centres, government ministries, and community groups.

Examples

- Our membership, alongside the Commission de la construction du Québec and employer and union organizations, on the committee responsible for establishing the program for women’s access to the construction industry.
- Our membership on the tripartite committee of the Société de transport de la Communauté urbaine de Montréal (STCUM), along with the union and employer, is also geared to setting up an access program. The common goal is meeting the employer’s labour requirements without violating the collective agreement and while truly respecting the needs of those primarily concerned, namely the women.

Incidentally, this is not the first instance where we have collaborated with the STCUM: two provincewide poster campaigns, launched by FRONT in public transit systems, were made possible by the generosity of transit corporations, who provided us with advertising space. Various school boards and training centres also contributed to the success of these projects.

Major achievements were made possible as a result of support from numerous government partners at both the federal and provincial levels:

- the action research project on the status of women in non-traditional occupations in the Montérégie region and in Montréal
- the distribution of a series of posters, created by FRONT, throughout the Québec educational system
- the three-year action research project in three Montréal trade schools
- a visual awareness campaign in Montérégie farmland
- training workshops
- training conferences for people in non-traditional fields

These are just a few examples of the extensive collaboration that is essential if we are to attain our objectives.

The Importance of the New Partnership Model

We need support from public organizations not only for funding but also for the development of strategies, means and perhaps obligations to promote the change in attitude that is essential for women in non-traditional occupations to be able to work under normal conditions. So that one day these women collect their pay solely for the work they have done: because they don’t get paid for the numerous efforts at integration that they make every day, and sometimes continue to make for years. We consider it essential that all those striving to improve the lot of these pioneers take their experience into consideration. We would like to see more cooperation in terms of actions still to be taken. This condition is essential for the new partnership to be fully realized.

Are the Results Worthwhile?

Despite our desire and need for collaboration, we cannot afford to wait for everyone to reach the same point in their analysis of the situation. Let’s not forget that, underneath the statistics on women workers, there are sometimes women who are undergoing experiences that are, to say the least, highly disturbing.

Some situations remind us of the urgency of taking action. For example, the female mechanic I spoke to yesterday—properly trained but relegated to doing oil changes—is unfortunately not alone. There’s also the woman who dropped out of school because she could no longer tolerate the hardships linked to integration... The pregnant worker, laid off because the collective agreement had no provision for maternity leave...The female construction worker who only landed her first job after 150 applications...

For these women, waiting for a consensus to be reached before action can be taken means that it may be too late. Real progress is being made, but those who hold that women's access to non-traditional occupations is a done deal are considerably out of touch with reality!

We can't hide that. For this reason, it's essential that we take into consideration the actual experiences of, and the analysis developed by, women in non-traditional occupations if we really want to further their interests.

Finally, we're speaking here because we want to put an end to the contempt we often face when talking about our everyday situation. It's also so that all women who opt for a non-traditional career see their strongest desire fulfilled: to work freely at a trade they love and that they have chosen.

What these women have to say is not mere testimony. It is enhanced by the strength gained from our common experiences.

We have always been and remain prepared to work with all those who believe in it. We want to share the analysis that we have developed over all these years.

It is becoming clear to us that our expertise is beginning to gain recognition. As evidence, we can cite our involvement:

- the selection of the prize winners in the "Hats Off To You!" competition
- the Destination avenir au féminin Committee
- the development of the script for the stage play "Parminou" (from last night)
- producing the brochure *Filles et techno, ça clique*
- the 35th Mondial des métiers, by means of a photo exhibit of non-trads on the job
- international conferences on women and non-traditional occupations

Each of these occasions provided an opportunity for women in non-traditional occupations to speak out on the issues that concern them. We now hope to be involved when the truly important decisions are made...

While it is true that collaboration with all of our partners is essential for us, it is equally true that the projects and plans contemplated by these partners cannot be carried out without the cooperation of women in non-traditional occupations.

A Partnership Model to Promote Socioprofessional Integration and Employment Retention¹

Sylvie de Grosbois

Education

Ph.D. in epidemiology and biostatistics, McGill University, Faculty of Medicine, Department of Epidemiology and Biostatistics; M.Sc. in biology, Université du Québec à Montréal; B.Sc. in biology, Université du Québec à Montréal.

Work Experience

Coordinator of community services at the Université du Québec à Montréal since 1987, occupational health and safety and environment coordinator of community services at UQAM within the framework of the UQAM-CSN-FTQ and UQAM-CEQ agreements. Also active as a researcher and lecturer at the university, from 1985 to 1998.

Training

Central Labour Bodies

Trainer for members of the status of women and the health and safety committees of the QFL and CNTU since 1982.

Main Partnership Grants Sought and Obtained as Senior Researcher or Research Assistant

1993–2000 L'invisible qui fait mal: contrer la banalisation du travail des femmes et de ses effets sur la santé. Conseil québécois de la recherche sociale (several grants) and the Ministère de l'Éducation, community services fund.

Monographs

L'essayer c'est l'adapter: les obstacles ergonomiques à l'accès des femmes aux postes traditionnellement masculins, Presses de l'Université du Québec à Montréal, 1990; Les solvants en milieu de travail, Presses de l'Université du Québec à Montréal, 1886.

¹Since 1972, UQAM has experimented with and adopted an approach enabling faculty members to carry out research or educational projects in partnership with labour organizations. The purpose of this paper is to report on this experience as well as on our practices in terms of the partnership with the three central unions: the Centrale de l'enseignement du Québec (CEQ), the Confédération des syndicats nationaux (CSN), and the Fédération des travailleurs et travailleuses du Québec (FTQ). Following a brief description of the institutional mechanisms, I will discuss the keys to the success of these partnerships, and then cite a number of issues favouring the socioprofessional integration of women and employment retention.

The Assumptions Underlying

the University Mission of Community Services

UQAM's decision to officially recognize an institutional mission of community services stemmed from its nature as a public university and its desire to contribute to the proletarianization of knowledge. The development of genuine partnerships with labour organizations was and still is based on a number of assumptions, only a few of which I will mention here:

- recognition of labour organizations as being the university's full partners in matters related to research and education
- an acknowledgement that the know-how of workers can contribute to knowledge within the context of research or educational projects
- the need to establish institutional mechanisms and criteria to ensure both the social value as well as the scientific or academic quality of projects
- an emphasis on the transfer and dissemination of knowledge

A Description of Several of the Institutional Mechanisms Adopted

The first institutional mechanism was the recognition and integration of this type of work with academic duties. Then came the creation of the Community Services Department and the presence of coordinators to focus on cultivating the partnership. The agreements that UQAM has had with the FTQ and CSN since 1976, and with the CEQ since 1991, make it possible to undertake joint research and educational projects which can be planned, managed and evaluated by mechanisms designed for that purpose.

A Description of Our Partnership and a Few Keys to Success Based on Our Experience

Since 1993 we have been working on a research project aimed at exposing women's health problems. The various research projects that we have undertaken or are presently pursuing have enabled us to identify working conditions that are problematic for women. This new knowledge, we hope, will lead to recognition of these problems by occupational health authorities and to changes in the workplace.

This work is a team effort, encompassing academics from various fields, the union personnel involved with the status of women (departments, committees and networks of militant women) and with health and safety at the CSN, FTQ and CEQ, as well as the coordinator responsible for relations between the partners. Research undertaken in this context is automatically the focus of a cooperative program by the partners, one with structures that guarantee a reciprocal transfer of knowledge throughout the project.

We have formed a steering committee that oversees all the research. It meets at least four times a year. For each field study, a local project committee meets whenever necessary.

The partnership is demanding, for it involves the interaction of constituencies with very different dynamics: that of university research and education on the one hand, and that of hands-on experience, the organization, and both individual and collective action on the other. Several factors have become apparent as keys to the success of this partnership; our lengthy experience of over a quarter of a century of cooperation has made us realize that it takes more than getting people to sit down together for them to work together in a concerted effort. Here are a few of these keys to success:

- The project must meet precise, identified needs with which groups are faced and for which university expertise is available. These needs for education or research are translated into specific questions to which the groups want answers in order to further their efforts. In turn, the university's analysis is enriched by the concrete facts provided by the community partners.
- The time frame for completion that the groups want must be compatible with the research's methodological requirements and with the academic's research schedule.
- Because the research topic is considered a priority, the external group must participate actively and supply resources—human, first of all, to supervise the project and provide the required contacts in the field, but also sometimes financial.
- The partnership calls for an investment by both the community groups and the universities. This partnership must be one based on respect for each partner's knowledge and intuition, with ongoing support along those lines provided by the coordinator.
- The academics that contributed to a research or educational project know that there was follow-up on the project and that the community benefited as a result; the knowledge was transferred to the group and the research results reached its members. The effort provided a tangible service for people and helped to improve their understanding and even their situation.

A Few Problems and Issues

The UQAM model has been cited as unique in Canada and as being suitable for fostering cooperation between social groups and academic researchers. But it's also an approach that is difficult to establish and maintain. Creating a healthy partnership is hard because it involves the confrontation of two organizational cultures—that of the external groups and that of the academics—with different approaches to knowledge, action and even time. In fact, the groups normally want action in the short or medium term, whereas the work of academics has more of a long-term focus. This assumes developing an atmosphere of trust, a shared vision of the project objectives and of the chosen procedure. It involves an ongoing negotiation process that respects each party's skills and abilities; moreover, the parties may have different expectations and part of the coordinator's job is precisely to facilitate the project's running smoothly as well as the existence of a healthy atmosphere from start to finish.

The University-Community Partnership: Impact on the Socioprofessional Integration of Women and Employment Retention

The basic assumptions underlying our university-community partnership are new. For many years, through our research efforts, we have helped shed light on the requirements of women's jobs and on the inadequacy of workstations and tools in non-traditional occupations. We have been able to compile knowledge and forward it to various union officials such as those concerned with the health of female workers, those responsible for occupational health and safety and with the status of women. All of these persons are not "traditionally" required to take concerted action, and here again I might add that our approach is innovative and has paid off.

If we want to advance the socioprofessional integration of women, the community players must be able to take united action and for this, they have to be "enlightened" and equipped. We have met this challenge and are continuing to do so, not just locally but also internationally, given that our work, published in Europe through the Bureau technique syndical ("Comprendre le travail des femmes pour le transformer"² [Understanding women's work to change it]) has become the standard reference.

This university-union partnership has led to a better understanding of the realities of women in the workplace, whether they hold traditional or non-traditional jobs. Moreover, the results of this partnership have been distributed to government agencies such as the IRSST, CSST and the federal government's Women's Health Bureau. This better understanding of the facts by all the parties involved enables us to think in terms of "prevention" to help women enter the labour market and retain their jobs.

¹Sections taken from the report by Michel Lizée, Coordinator of Community Services at UQAM, "25 ans de partenariat avec les milieux syndicaux, communautaires et de femmes", Proceedings of the Fédération québécoise des professeures et des professeurs d'université: La Recherche universitaire et les partenariats, Montréal, December 10 and 11, 1998.

²Comprendre le travail des femmes pour le transformer, edited by Karen Messing, Bureau technique syndical européen pour la santé et la sécurité, 1999.

A Partnership Model to Promote Socioprofessional Integration and Employment Retention



Louise Gagnon-Lessard
Conseil régional de développement
de la Montérégie,
Présidente du comité Condition
féminine en développement régional.

Louise Gagnon-Lessard first became a community activist in 1981 as a founding member of the *Collective par et pour elle (CPPE)* in Cowansville. With this feminist team, she played a leading role in her position as its first coordinator in establishing the *Centre femmes des Cantons*. She also contributed to the study “*Pornographie: cause importante de la violence envers les femmes*” and to all the projects that emerged as offshoots. Moreover, the CPPE received the first *Idola-St-Jean* award in the history of the FFQ.

She was also a member of the first board of directors that created the *Regroupement des Centres de femmes du Québec*. At the same time, she served on the coordinating committee of the *Table régionale des groupes de femmes de la Montérégie* for five years.

Starting in 1986, she established and then headed *Passage Yamaska*, an organization dedicated to helping women find jobs. As a result of this, she served for two years (including one as chair) on the CIAFT’s board of directors. She then spent four years, from 1993 to 1997, as president of the *Regroupement québécois des organismes pour le développement de l’employabilité (R-QUODE)* and co-chair of the *Canadian Coalition of Community Based Training*.

In 1993, as a member of the CIAFT Montérégie, she participated in all the activities of the *Comité de condition féminine en développement régional de la Montérégie*, a committee that she has chaired since 1996. This involvement resulted in her overseeing all the efforts that led to the signing of a specific agreement on the status of women for the Montérégie region. Meanwhile, via the agency she headed, she developed and organized *Passage non traditionnel*, an organization providing women with guidance and helping them enter non-traditional occupations (1997 to present).

Ms. Gagnon-Lessard’s educational background is in administration, yet she is self-taught in all matters related to community development. Her career has constantly been motivated by her personal commitment as a feminist and community activist. She has a profound faith in human beings and in their ability to control their own destinies if given the opportunity and the necessary support.

She also serves on the boards of directors of the *Haute-Yamaska* and the *Brome-Missisquoi* local development centres and represents community and women’s groups on socioeconomic issues.

In 1993, as Montérégie was beginning a strategic planning exercise to develop the first regional framework agreement, representatives of women’s employability groups, the *Association des collaboratrices et partenaires en affaires (ACPA)*, the regional table of Montérégie women’s groups, and the *Conseil du statut de la femme* mobilized to promote the status of women as a priority development sector for the region. A specific sector-based committee was responsible for planning the sector’s goals. Through its efforts, the following development priority was included in the 1995-2000 framework agreement: “To recognize the participation of women in regional development as an important economic contribution.”

In 1996, following the dissolution of the sector-based committees, we turned our committee into the Comité de la condition féminine en développement régional, which was entrusted with the responsibility of monitoring the 1995-2000 framework agreement for the sector. New members from agriculture, business, finance and government (including municipalities) were added to broaden the scope of the committee. The committee had a mandate to develop an action plan to improve women's lives and establish a common goal or goals that could lead to the signing of a specific agreement linking the government and sector organizations.

This action plan was tabled and adopted first by the board of directors of the Conseil régional de développement de la Montérégie (CRDM) and then, in June 1998, by the Conférence administrative régionale (an umbrella organization made up of the regional offices of all the ministries active in Montérégie).

To implement the different projects and activities arising from this action plan, we negotiated a specific agreement which includes 34 measures and initiatives with 10 partners from the community, the private sector and government. The commitments address the region's three priorities concerning the status of women:

- to increase the presence of women in local and regional organizations
- to promote the diversification of career choices for women
- to support entrepreneurs in acquiring or creating businesses

At the present time, each of the partners has produced an action plan and the activities are well under way.

The specific projects developed by women from Montérégie to address the three regional priorities are described below:

To increase the presence of women in local and regional organizations

In 1994, the CRDM had an equal opportunity policy, which it aimed to improve. With this goal in mind, it modified its structures in order to encourage women to participate in the CRDM, promote the organization, and do follow-up. It established an information program aimed at specific groups of women, to raise awareness and to encourage them to take part in its local and regional organizations. A bank of candidates was created for organizations that want to recruit women. In cooperation with the Ministère des Affaires municipales et de la Métropole, the CRDM will offer women from the region information sessions on municipal policy and training sessions for those who want to run in elections. These initiatives are proving very successful, and we have already seen an increase in the presence of women not only in decision-making organizations, but also as municipal councillors, mayors and wardens of regional county municipalities.

To promote the diversification of career choices for women

Our partner, Emploi-Québec, will support a network of five community organizations specialized in orienting and integrating women into nontraditional jobs, and in helping and guiding them in their job search. The organizations will also implement a mutual support network, covering nearly the entire region of Montérégie, to promote employment maintenance. For its part, Emploi-Québec will support the development of a training session for workers in employability and public service organizations to help them recognize suitability for nontraditional occupations. Emploi-Québec will then establish a referral mechanism between local employment centres (LECs) and the five specialized groups for women interested in traditionally masculine occupations.

The Ministère de l'Éducation, the school boards and the Montérégie colleges will study their guidance practices with women in order to increase awareness of nontraditional occupations. The school boards and colleges will set up a referral mechanism so that their vocational education graduates can have access to the Montérégie network of services, including placement services, of the five organizations in nontraditional sectors.

The Ministère de l'Agriculture, des Pêcheries et de l'Alimentation, with the help of the Institut de technologie agroalimentaire (ITA), the school boards and CEGEPs, will appoint a staff member who will be responsible for the diversification of career choices for girls and women. This staff member will support teachers and professionals, organize activities in the school, and evaluate the results of initiatives based on the internal action plan on the status of women.

To support entrepreneurs in acquiring or creating businesses.

The Ministère des Régions will produce a practical information and program guide on business support services for women, specifically intended for local employment centres (LECs).

Through a campaign in the schools, the Ministère de l'Industrie et du Commerce will make women aware of employment opportunities in the science and technology sector; through conferences aimed specifically at women in innovative and technology-related businesses, the Ministère will inform them about the specialized services available to entrepreneurs in the region. The Ministère will give particular attention and active support to women who are starting up technology-related companies, consolidating or expanding innovative businesses, or developing markets abroad.

In cooperation with the Fédération des caisses populaires Desjardins de Richelieu-Yamaska, the Ministère de l'Agriculture, des Pêcheries et de l'Alimentation will help finance a campaign targeting family farm owners and aimed at promoting farm transfers to their daughters. This project was conceived by the organization Femmes regroupées en options non traditionnelles (FRONT). The campaign will be launched on December 9.

Coordination assistance

To coordinate and monitor the implementation of the specific agreement and to support our committee, a development officer for the status of women will be appointed for the two years of the agreement. The task of this person, who will be responsible to the CRDM, will be to promote the committee in the region by ensuring its visibility and continued involvement in the community. This person will be a great asset for our sector.

The Ministère des Régions will act as an observer of the status of women, directing the regional administrative conference toward this issue. The Ministère will be responsible for collating the data that will allow us to assess the situation of women in Montérégie.

Towards the future

Since the beginning of 1999, the committee has taken on new mandates and broadened its scope to better reflect the issues: we have added representatives from the immigration and training sectors and from support and service organizations for businesswomen. The committee now functions as a permanent advisor on the status of women for regional economic development bodies, especially within the CRDM and its members. In fact, not only will it participate in the implementation and follow-up of the specific agreement, but it will also contribute to the second strategic planning exercise, which will lead Montérégie to the second framework agreement in its history. We will outline new objectives for the years 2000-2005.

Advantages of coordination

All the steps taken since the early 1990s have made the status of women sector a priority, with specific objectives.

As we have already mentioned, the committee has broadened its scope to include ministerial representatives, in order to fulfil its initial mandates. Since then, the synergy that has developed within the committee has helped to create the integrated specific agreement on the status of women in Montérégie, which is unique in Québec. With its dynamism and leadership, Montérégie represents a benchmark. Since our committee was initially made up mainly of women from the community, the contribution of the ministerial representatives has been most judicious and beneficial. Our joint effort has proved to be advantageous for discussions on the status of women and for cooperation between government and business. We have provided information and increased awareness, at the same time avoiding duplication of services on both sides.

Guarantee of success

The status of women in the Montérégie region is an area where key players in the community and government have come together in order to implement initiatives that reflect a collaborative approach involving the pooling of resources and skills, and coordination between public and community organizations.

Limitations

The status of women sector will most certainly lead to procedural changes within the ministries involved with the specific agreement. In this respect, their representatives on the committee are able to adapt to these changes much more quickly than the organizations they represent. This is understandable, given that what we are proposing involves changes to organizational culture—and even society. Our success depends on the good will of the ministries, as well as on the allocation of funding to carry out specific projects.

Conclusion

We have just finished five years of continuous collaborative work. We hope that the expertise we have gained will allow us to continue our efforts in light of our experience.

It is still too soon to assess the concrete results of our proposed initiatives. However, the Réseau des élues municipales already has at least one woman mayor, councillor or warden in each of the regional county municipalities of Montérégie. Moreover, according to the bank of candidates, women have already started to express their desire to sit on local and regional decision-making organizations. Five community resource centres have been set up to steer women toward nontraditional occupations.

We believe that we are on the right path. We realize that we have to continue and redouble our efforts, and we hope that the status of women in Montérégie will show a marked improvement in the future. This is the ultimate goal that we all share.

A Partnership Model to Promote Socioprofessional Integration and Employment Retention



Thérèse Sainte-Marie
Executive Director of the CIAFT
and Vice-Chair of the Women's
Advisory Committee

Thérèse Sainte-Marie joined the staff of the Conseil d'intervention pour l'accès des femmes au travail (CIAFT) in 1993 and has been the organiza-

tion's executive director since 1994. During the past five years, she has become known as the spokeswoman for the coalition in support of pay equity and she has coordinated the organization's mobilization efforts that led to the adoption of Québec's Pay Equity Act.

Yet Ms. Sainte-Marie's commitment to the issues related to women entering non-traditional occupations dates back to 1991, when she was a training counsellor for Options non traditionnelles, a Longueuil community organization dedicated to helping women obtain non-traditional jobs.

Since becoming executive director of the CIAFT, Ms. Sainte-Marie has written and submitted different types of documents aimed at rendering government and corporate officials aware of the importance of developing more effective policies and measures to help women enter and remain in non-traditional training programs and jobs.

Most recently, she coordinated the publication of an information brochure for young teenagers between the ages of 12 and 15. Entitled Les filles et technos: ça clique, it seeks to spark girls' interest in careers in technological fields. Eighty-five thousand copies were printed and the brochure was distributed as a special insert in the Québec magazine Filles d'aujourd'hui.

Ms. Sainte-Marie helped found Emploi-Québec's Women's Advisory Committee in 1996 and has served as its first vice-president since that time.

Presentation of the Women's Advisory Committee

The Conseil d'intervention pour l'accès des femmes au travail (CIAFT) has been the Women's Advisory Committee on labour development's mandatary since November 1996. This committee provides Emploi-Québec with advice and recommendations on all matters related to the development and training of women workers in Québec.

The Women's Advisory Committee has adopted as its mission the implementation of an action strategy whose goal is to provide each and every Québec woman with access to general and occupational training services, job entry and reentry services and employment retention services.

The committee currently consists of some 20 members from three main constituencies. Most of them are community or union representatives on Emploi-Québec's Conseils régionaux de partenaires du marché du travail, where they are responsible for issues related to the status of women. Three other members represent the CEQ, CNTU and QFL, and serve as official liaisons between their unions and the Commission des partenaires du marché du travail. Lastly, national women's groups are represented not only by the CIAFT but also by representatives of the Association des partenaires et collaboratrices en affaires (ACPA) and the Femmes regroupées en option non traditionnelle (FRONT). A professional from the Direction de l'intervention sectorielle also serves as liaison between Emploi-Québec and the advisory committee.

Since its founding three years ago, the Women's Advisory Committee has produced a number of briefs on issues such as the analysis of the status of women in the job market, services to assist women with labour market integration, the reorganization of the apprenticeship system, or yet still, the active labour market policy. We should point out that this year, in association with Emploi-Québec and the Ministère de l'Éducation, the Women's Advisory Committee will publish a handbook for girls and women enrolled in non-traditional occupational training programs.

The Status of Women Committee at Gaz Métropolitain



Linda Boisclair
Confédération des syndicats nationaux

The efforts of female workers in non-traditional jobs at Gaz Métropolitain eloquently demonstrates what can be accomplished when women take control of their own destinies and unite to protect their common interests and improve their working conditions. Gaz Métro hired its first female service technician almost 14 years ago. By 1992 the number of women had grown to six, although they were scattered throughout the organization. They were always happy to cross paths, but that was all. Nonetheless, they shared the same problems: work uniforms designed for men, harassment, and a sense of isolation. Their integration difficulties led to their getting together for dinner every two or three months, to chat and get to know each other better. Little by little, women in non-traditional jobs in other departments joined them. Eventually 20 of the 23 female workers at the company became “regulars”: clearly these meetings were very important. Moreover, the dinners created mutual bonds of sufficient strength for their individual struggles to become a common battle. We now have a Status of Women Committee—something never before heard of at Gaz Métro in terms of non-traditional occupations. Were it not for those dinners, this would never have happened.

At certain moments, these women realized they were doing nothing less than making history, that they were quietly changing the hardest thing to change: attitudes! And they were doing it together, supported by their solidarity.

The reality of women who hold non-traditional jobs is attuned to the fact that female workers were the ones who created the Status of Women Committee given that they were the ones capable of defining their own problems. Management is far removed from the day-to-day reality of women workers and the union believes that women’s rights are upheld by the collective agreement, as are the rights of any other employee. This collective isolation of the female workers did not make their task any easier, even though it strengthened their determination to take action: it nonetheless intensified the necessity of finding allies. And despite their difficulty in making progress in this world of men somewhat ill-prepared for their arrival, the female workers at Gaz Métro were supported by the Status of Women Committee of the Confédération des syndicats nationaux (CSN).

You must understand that what is essential is the women’s efforts, and not the creation of a status of women committee which will only be a token if it is not the outcome of concerted deliberations. Moreover, recognition of such a committee by the local union is not something that is easily accomplished. At Gaz Métro, it is not yet a done deal...even though there have been real gains at many levels. We still have a long way to go, but we’ve taken the first steps and there’s no turning back.

But women cannot be alone in bearing the burden of change: employers and the unions must share responsibility for change. The transformation of the labour market affecting society as a whole makes the time ripe for collective adjustment. Training must be organized, corrective measures instituted, claims listened to. I’ve learnt a lot from the sisterhood of workers, but I’ve also suffered a great deal from isolation. With the setback, I don’t know what I would have done without the solidarity and the network of solidarity known as Femmes regroupées en options non traditionnelles (FRONT).

This network of Québec women workers set up as a community organization provides its members with support, mutual assistance and referrals in an effort to improve their school, job-hunting and working conditions. In it I found the courage to persevere: I am sold on the power of teamwork. The contribution of community groups concerned with the working conditions of women in non-traditional occupations gives a voice to those who have a hard time making themselves heard, gaining acceptance and being respected.

The unions have a key role to play in this dynamic, but it is important for them to develop ties to community groups so as to align their ideas with the realities of women workers, and make a concerted effort to determine precisely what action to take: revising clauses in collective agreements, educating and raising the awareness level of the new union representatives and delegates, recognizing women workers as persons with special needs, etc. And above all, the unions must not simply allow but encourage female workers to take their place within their organizations.

We have to create networks of solidarity in our respective workplaces and plan for the arrival of future women workers. The Status of Women Committee is one such forum, FRONT is another. They are oases where we can find the support required to explore various forms of solutions that, despite their simplicity, appear tremendously complex in periods of discouragement. And when all the social players concerned with the situation of women who dare make career choices with which society is not yet completely comfortable truly begin to work together, the changes necessary for women workers to flourish serenely in non-traditional occupations will be in place.

Supporting Women in the Workplace



Gaétan Châteauneuf

Gaétan Châteauneuf has worked as a diesel mechanic for the Société de transport de la Communauté urbaine de Montréal (STCUM) since 1977. He has served as president of the Syndicat du transport de Montréal (employé(e)s des services d'entretien) CNTU since

1992. He was a grievance officer from 1985 to 1992, and secretary from 1982 to 1984. From 1979 to 1982 he held various positions on the union council.

Other experience: creation of a tripartite committee with the STCUM and FRONT to further women's access to non-traditional occupations; vice-president of the maintenance personnel pension committee at the STCUM; member of the Comité de placement de la fiducie globale des régimes de retraite de la STCUM, and president of the urban transport division of the Fédération des employés et employées du service public de la CSN (FEESP-CSN).

Hello everyone,

I am pleased at this opportunity to talk about the project we developed to facilitate the hiring of women and youths for trade jobs. To accomplish this, we formed a tripartite committee made up of the STCUM, the Syndicat du transport de Montréal and Femmes regroupées en options non traditionnelles.

I will begin by describing the three principals, namely the STCUM, the Syndicat du transport de Montréal (maintenance personnel) CSN and Femmes regroupées en options non traditionnelles (FRONT).

The Société de transport de la Communauté urbaine de Montréal (STCUM)

The STCUM is the public transport authority for the Island of Montréal. It runs the buses as well as the subway and paratransit systems. The Corporation has 7,491 employees: 6,394 men and 1,097 women.

The Syndicat du transport de Montréal (maintenance personnel) CSN

Most STCUM employees are unionized. Among the six unions representing them, the maintenance union is the second largest, with approximately 2,040 members. Most of our members are tradespersons working in maintenance. This primarily includes jobs such as:

Bus	Metro
Diesel mechanic	Electronic serviceman
Coach builder	Mechanical inspector
Repairman-major/minor components	Electronic component repairmen
Repairman-electrician	General electrician: signaling; motive power, lighting
	Cable puller
	Electro-mechanical technician

Construction	Fabrication	Soutien
Carpenter	Machinist	Cleaner
Plumber	Sheet metal worker	Storeroom clerk
Sheet metal worker/roofer	Welder	Forklift operator
Electrician	Tool dresser	Trades helper
Elevator technician		Truck driver

All of these constitute non-traditional occupations. The persons holding these positions are required to work all kinds of shifts, schedules and timetables, depending on the job. In some cases, workers have to be available 24 hours a day, seven days a week. For other employees, the schedule varies if and whenever possible.

There are 1,953 men and 87 women working in this area.

Femmes regroupées en options non traditionnelles (FRONT)

FRONT is a provincewide association of women in occupations traditionally held by men. Founded in 1992, this network’s primary mission is to provide support, mutual assistance and referrals to these women workers to ensure them of:

- access to schooling in these fields
- a serene learning environment
- equal opportunity hiring
- the working conditions necessary for employment retention and advancement

To achieve this, FRONT works at different levels and uses various means of action; these range from information sessions for vocational school teachers to the creation of a mentoring system for women students and new women workers. They also apply political pressure to accelerate the change in attitude essential for women to become genuinely integrated into the workplace.

FRONT works with local unions and with central labour organizations to make sure that everyone is willing to give women the fair treatment that they deserve. It is also partnered with various feminist groups dedicated to promoting the role and position of women in Québec society.

A Bit of Background

In the past, our unit consisted almost exclusively of men. The only women in our union were the *office cleaners*. Their working conditions differed from those of the men: their hourly wage was about \$0.12 less than what the men in a similar category earned, and they worked 30 instead of 40 hours a week. Their hourly wage was eventually adjusted. As for hours, those who wanted to continue working 30 hours a week were allowed to do so while others opted for a transfer to 40-hour cleaner positions. Today, there is no one left with this job title because those who kept it were getting on in years and have now retired.

A Limited Equal-opportunity Program

For a number of years, *cleaner* and *maintenance worker* were the only trade jobs held by women. Moreover, the equal-opportunity program established by the STCUM in 1987 focused on these two positions. The program set a 40% target for hiring women for these two jobs, but included no quotas for other positions.

Nonetheless, a few women were hired for trade positions. One of the first came aboard in 1982 as an electronic component repair person. Subsequently, another woman was hired as a spray painter in 1987, and another as a machinist in 1988. More recently, the STCUM has hired women to fill the positions of building mechanic, welder, tinsmith, bodyfitter and silkscreener, but the pace of these hirings occurred in a manner that could be considered more or less drip-drip.

We were finding that few young people and ultimately few women were being hired for trade positions with the STCUM. The main reason for this was the employer's criterion of a minimum of five years of experience. This led us to approach management about changing the hiring criteria.

While lowering the experience requirement has resulted in, among other things, a widening of the door for young workers, it has not really improved access for women. That's why our efforts are now focused on women's access to non-traditional occupations. To get some help, we teamed up with FRONT.

Female Access to Non-traditional Occupations

Lowering the hiring standards does not ensure greater access for women to trade positions. First of all, few women opt for a career in the trades. Therefore women have to be encouraged to consider trade occupations. We also have to make sure that jobs are available for them when they finish school.

Furthermore, internal action is necessary to encourage women to enter and remain in non-traditional occupations. One such factor that must be dealt with involves the prejudices that some people have about women working in our shops.

Another factor to consider are the facilities in the workplace. It's all very fine to let women in, but they also need proper facilities such as washrooms, locker rooms, etc. This may seem trivial, but most of our shops were built at a time when only men worked in them, so they had no facilities to accommodate women, and this despite the fact that the health and safety committee has been trying to remedy this situation for 15 years.

In an effort to solve all these problems and find means of giving women access to non-traditional occupations, we decided to form a tripartite committee consisting of the employer, the union and FRONT.

Initially, we adopted a variety of approaches including:

- Where the number of employees permits, a lowering of the hiring standards so that apprentices can be hired;
- Working with managers in order to change their perceptions;
- Doing an analysis of the situation so as to help better plan labour requirements;
- Making alterations to the workplace in order to accommodate women.

We are now working with the Commission des droits et des libertés de la personne on a review of the equal-opportunity program. Accordingly, we have asked the Commission for information on the availability of women for each of our job categories.

FRONT's role is to produce educational and awareness raising tools, create training programs, establish a mechanism for women to access skilled trade jobs and develop measures to ensure equal hiring opportunities and employment retention for women in non-traditional occupations.

We agreed to participate in a survey done by Marie-Josée Legault of the Télé-université at the Université du Québec. The survey, which focused on the integration of women in non-traditional occupations, was conducted in four organizations in the Greater Montréal area and funded by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada (SSHRC). The results of the survey shed light on the obstacles and success factors related to the integration of women into the maintenance division at the STCUM. This report will guide our future efforts.

The union also adopted a policy against harassment which everyone knows about and which serves as a deterrent. It is also one of the positive results of Ms. Legault's survey.

Thus far, a few steps have been taken:

- We have succeeded in getting the hiring criteria lowered.
- We have made alterations to the premises to accommodate women, but a great deal remains to be done in this area.

The numerous projects that are currently in the planning stage include:

- Encouraging women to opt for skilled trades;
- Training women for non-traditional occupations;
- Reviewing the equal-opportunity program;
- Continuing to alter the premises;
- Pursuing our awareness program for managers and employees in order to eliminate prejudices;
- Introducing a mentoring program for newly hired women. Moreover, in this regard, the employer has agreed to allow time for a woman to serve as mentor when new women workers are hired.

As you can see, we still have a long way to go, but we are convinced that, with the cooperation of all concerned parties, we will improve the representation of women in skilled trade jobs at the STCUM.

Employment Retention Model and Accompanying Consulting Service



Kathryn Running
 (Kathryn Running & Associates:
 Human Resources Consulting)
 Réseau National WITT
 National Network

Introduction

In Canada, there has been a history of proactive effort designed to help women consider and engage in trades and technology occupations. As they have entered these traditionally male-dominated sectors, it has become apparent that a real, long-term challenge is *keeping* them involved.

Turnover can be the result of a non-accommodating environment. As such, the prevention of turnover is linked directly to accommodation of a diverse work force. The focus of WITT NN's work on the employment retention of women in Trades, Technology, Operations and Blue Collar Work (TTO/BCW) is to work with its labour market partners to help them determine how organizational culture (policies, practices, interactions) impacts job satisfaction, turnover and retention. A variety of products and services assists this mandate.

As a national nonprofit, charitable organization, WITT NN is uniquely positioned to have an impact on women's retention in TTO/BCW occupations specifically, and on overall employee retention in general, in a wide range of organizations and sectors. WITT NN is one of a few National Cross-Sectoral Councils¹ and as such has access to other Sector Councils through existing and potential networks and working relationships. WITT NN's broad national membership base also gives it a clear perspective on the issues that affect front-line women working in TTO/BCW occupations from coast to coast.

The need for a retention-focused project was identified through a variety of research initiatives at WITT NN but most specifically in Kathryn Running's research and feasibility work in 1997.² Kathryn's work focused on the need to develop a service that would enable organizations to understand their own workplace culture and work toward making adjustments that resulted in a more accommodating climate, specifically for women in trades and technology jobs. The resulting process takes a broad-based approach rooted in organizational development and human resources practices that affect all employees.

WITT NN's retention consulting approach is positioned to be a comprehensive long-term solution to *preventable* employee turnover and its costs. It is imperative that companies see tangible, direct benefits from the process. As a result, WITT NN has developed a business-case to support the marketing of the service to key company representatives and to ensure the "buy-in" of the company's key stakeholders. The business-case highlights the various direct and indirect costs of turnover, and explains the focus areas that affect employee motivation, job satisfaction, and company loyalty, which in turn affect turnover and retention.

The Retention Framework ("The Model")

WITT NN has developed a framework (see poster as an organizing framework) to facilitate the understanding of organizations and the culture that is created in them. It is used to introduce the complexity of organizations in a simplified way. The framework is used throughout the WITT NN Retention Consulting Service in the following ways:

- It provides a checklist for collecting and organizing consultants' learning during the Phase 1 organizational scan work.
- It provides simplified categories for reflecting issues back to organizations in the report from Phase 2.

- In Phase 3 work, it provides the members of the cultural audit team with an organizing framework for learning about retention, identifying risk points and making recommendations for change within the company.
- In Phase 4 and 5 work, it provides a list of best practices that the company may want to enhance or develop with the WITT NN consultant's help.

The framework is used to help consultants and the company representatives with whom they work to understand retention issues and identify risk points that affect retention in the company.

All companies want the most cost-effective solution to retention issues. By using the WITT NN Retention Consulting Service, they will know where they need to invest to positively affect retention. The work of the WITT NN Retention Consulting Service is designed to help companies identify what solutions they need to purchase in order to affect retention. Through the process, WITT NN consultants identify company-specific risk points that provide direction on systems or programs that need to be adjusted, eliminated or added.

This framework is based on a practical approach that identifies six separate dimensions within which retention can be explored and assessed. The auditing process organizes its exploration of organizational culture in the following categories:

- 1) Human Development
- 2) Human Relationships
- 3) Productive Activity
- 4) Space
- 5) Time
- 6) Financial Resources

The territory that WITT explores is the intersection of organizational and individual needs. The central challenge in promoting retention is in finding ways of making management's requirements for an effective and productive organization somehow fit with the individual's requirements for rewarding, remunerative work and for a compatibility with their personal life and commitments. This framework presents these intersecting needs for each of the six cultural dimensions, and notes the core best practices that organizations can address in order to support improved employee retention.

The best practices provide WITT NN consultants with a checklist of practices they can review during Phase 1 work. These are practices that can be developed or improved by all companies, and that will have an impact on improving retention.

The following are some practical examples of how various practical steps can contribute to retention and support a culture of diversity (refer to the poster for areas to explore various practices in each dimension):

- *Human Development*

Career and life pathing supports employees in planning for skill development and advancement within a company. It assists employees on an individual, customized basis to map out a plan for a challenging and rewarding career. This meets the organization's needs by promoting organizational commitment, technical qualifications and productivity.

- *Human Relationships*

Mentors help people "get to know the ropes" and allow them to benefit from the learning of longer-term employees. Mentoring programs are a good way of supporting retention by orienting people to the company, supporting people in acclimatizing to the culture, and tying them into networks that are so important to ongoing integration.

- *Productive Activity*

Employee participation in the assessment of work design and job descriptions ensures that they have increased challenge and variety as well as quality of work. This approach can be a great stress reliever and can contribute to reduced turnover and increased job satisfaction. In addition, the assessment process can be facilitated in a way that increases productivity and production quality.

- *Space*

A review of the use of space in an organization (including ergonomics, the way that space is allocated and the geographic distribution of work units) can increase employee health, safety and satisfaction. There are often assumptions in the organizational

culture about who merits space and how it should be organized that make it difficult for newcomers to be integrated comfortably into the organization. Attention to space issues can also support the development of a physical environment that optimizes productivity.

- *Time*

Time is a critical factor in supporting employees in balancing work and personal commitment. Corporate culture often positions time as a commodity that measures individual commitment and productivity. By changing attitudes toward time and its relationship to organizational commitment, the company can support people in meeting a range of personal and community commitments in addition to doing a good job. By supporting and providing flexible work arrangements (e.g. Flexitime and home-based work arrangements), productivity and employee satisfaction can be increased. In addition, creative and flexible policies regarding leaves (including sabbaticals, maternity/paternity leave, etc.) can promote good will, reduce stress and increase retention.

- *Financial Resources*

The provision of cafeteria-style benefits can offer the flexibility that will accommodate a broad range of individuals, cultures, etc. It sends the message that the company accepts and values differences and the need for choice.

This framework is useful in that it represents an abstraction of a real organization. There is a level of artificiality in this compartmentalized approach, but it has been designed to support a more simplified way of looking at organizations. Naturally, the categories are not separate, but rather are organically linked—there are overlaps between categories. It is for this reason that a holistic approach to looking at organizations is required.

Consulting Process

The process of organizational change is complex and fraught with resistance and possible setbacks. Meeting resistance and knowing what to do in the face of it requires a fact-based approach, but you must also address the emotional undertones that discussions about diversity often include. When people become sensitized to the issues and begin to see how inequities are built into our systems, they begin to know how to see bias and what to do to mitigate its impact.

By promoting action learning within the organization, the lens that reviews discriminatory practices and policies will be gradually built and put into focus. This project is designed to inculcate organizations' management and employees with the capacity to identify discriminatory practices and policies. The combination of the facilitated process and access to best practices supports their ability to go on to implement key changes.

WITT NN Employment Retention Consulting Service offers a facilitated process of organizational analysis and development that moves through five phases. The goal of this service is to assist organizations in identifying why people become less loyal to the organization or experience a decrease in job satisfaction, and to develop an action plan to improve retention.

WITT NN uses Action Research—an ideal approach when the issues are complex and overlapping. Action Research is a customized approach that allows us to work with company representatives to verify issues and gaps that affect retention, and to develop solutions for each organization's specific needs.

Action Research is inherently collaborative and action oriented. WITT NN consultants work with company representatives to identify issues, assess company and individual needs and make recommendations for company-specific solutions. When the people who are most affected by the issues are working to develop solutions, positive change becomes imbedded in the organization. WITT NN consultants support the development of an in-house retention committee to implement change, building the organization's own capacity for creating a positive workplace culture.

The following section provides a general overview of all phases of the WITT NN Retention Service. Other documents provide detailed agendas and lessons learned that provide WITT NN retention consultants with draft plans on how to provide the full service. Consultants in the next round of deliveries will work closely with a trained WITT NN retention consultant who will help guide the team through the delivery of the service at new pilot sites.

PHASE 1 Organizational Scan (on site)

The most logical starting point for the intervention is a diagnostic process that begins where the organization is at, gathering a history of work done to date, assessing progress and setbacks, identifying sources of resistance and support, highlighting key challenges and points of leverage for change. In essence, such a starting point facilitates the building of a positive foundation for long-term action, while also providing an organizational retention analysis that will enable WITT NN to develop a strategic approach to promoting change in organizations.

The organizational scan provides a cursory, customized identification of issues that affect retention. WITT NN conducts on-site research that includes the collection of information from focus groups and from interviews with individuals in the company. A review of documentation, policies and procedures also helps the consultants to identify the key retention issues and risk points.

ACTIVITIES

- Introductory presentation/workshop.
- Focus group of leadership-retention checklist completion.
- Focus group of organizational representatives-retention checklist completion.
- Interviews with key representatives individually and in groups (e.g. HR Dept.).
- Overview of systems, policy and procedures.
- Exploration and design of effective structures/committees for Phase 3 work.

OUTCOMES:

- Cite specific information about possible risk points or issues that affect retention to be used as a starting point for Phase 2 and 3 work.
- Confirmed company commitment to retention.
- Focused scope and mandate of the retention work with your company.

PHASE 2 Reporting (off site)

WITT NN consultants prepare a report that highlights the key retention issues identified during the organizational scan.

ACTIVITIES:

- Analysis of how the organization currently deals with diversity/equity and retention issues.
- Diversity profile-strengths and weaknesses.
- Next steps clearly articulated.
- WITT consultant prepares a report for further facilitation.
- Company contact identifies key people to participate in the cultural audit.

OUTCOMES:

- A report that includes:
- An analysis of key risk areas that affect retention in the participating organization.
- A diversity profile including areas of strength and weakness.
- A work plan focused on building a foundation for the understanding of retention issues and organizational culture and on verification of scan results by an internal retention work groups in Phase 3.

PHASE 3 Cultural Audit (on site)

This phase verifies the contents of the Phase 2 report through in-house research. The WITT NN consultants facilitate the planning and implementation of an in-depth, internally-directed organizational verification process. During this on-site research, the WITT NN consultants work with an internal retention committee. Using the results of the organizational scan, the retention committee conducts in-house research aimed at verifying the results from the work undertaken by the WITT NN consultants in Phase 1 and 2. Additional issues come to light through this work.

ACTIVITIES:

The facilitation of:

- Development of a formal retention committee with leaders at key levels of the organization.
- Training and capacity building to build an understanding of the complexity of retention issues and culture.
- Work group building.
- Facilitation of planning and execution of a more in-depth, internally-directed organizational verification of the contents of the report.
- Formulation of organizational retention and/or diversity goals/mission.
- Development and implementation of research agenda.
- Process for integrating the results of this work into organizational decision making and resource allocation.

OUTCOMES:

A formal retention committee with representation from key levels of the organization.

- Clear retention committee goals/mission.
- Verified risk point identification, preliminary analysis of cause and preliminary recommendations.
- Identification of a plan for integrating the results of this work into organizational decision-making and resource allocation.

PHASE 4 Strategy Development (on site)

Phase 4 develops an action plan to resolve the issues raised and verified during the cultural audit. Facilitated by the WITT NN consultants, the retention committee, unions and management jointly develop a customized and practical action plan.

ACTIVITIES:

- Work with the retention work group to develop recommendations for addressing the risk points identified.
- Meet with management and/or decision-making structures to determine priorities and allocate resources.
- WITT NN informs the client that it will prepare a proposal that matches their strategy adopted for meeting the organization’s needs in risk areas where we have expertise.

OUTCOMES:

- A plan of action to improve retention at the organization, based on results from the research conducted by the retention committee.

PHASE 5 Implementation (ongoing)

Implementation is ongoing and directed by the organization’s own union and management decision-making bodies. WITT NN’s specialty consultants and databases can be accessed on an as-needed basis.

OUTCOMES:

- A concrete proposal for how WITT NN meets needs in areas where we have expertise.
- Implementation of the action plan from Phase 5 work.
- Practical site-specific resources and required expertise are identified and/or developed depending on need (e.g. anti-harassment policies, career pathing, conflict resolution).
- Optional tools, resources and specialty consultants are available as needed.
- Regular meetings of the retention committee to assess progress.

¹ National Sectoral Councils were supported in their establishment by the Government of Canada (HRDC- partnership branch) in order to address a range of labour market issues across industrial sectors. WITT NN Sector Council was established with a mandate to work with its labour market partners to address gender issues. Other cross-sectoral councils include the Environment & Aboriginal Human Resources.

² A Focus on Retention of Women in Trades, Technology, Operations and Blue Collar Work, Kathryn Running & Associates: Human Resources Consulting, © WITT NN 1997

Supporting Women in the Workplace

Micheline Simard

Executive Director

Centre Émersion Manicouagan (inc.)

Employment History

Co-chair, Government of Québec, Comité d'orientation et de concertation sur l'économie sociale, Québec City, 1995-1996; Executive Director, Centre Émersion Manicouagan inc., Baie-Comeau, 1995 to present, Training Counsellor, Centre Émersion Manicouagan inc., Baie-Comeau, 1982 to 1985; Executive Director, Corporation Plein Air Mont Ti-basse, Baie-Comeau, 1980 to 1982; Mathematics teacher, Commission scolaire de Manicouagan, Baie-Comeau, 1967 to 1975.

Education

University courses in applied mathematics (secondary school level), Université du Québec, Chicoutimi, 1968 to 1973; Teaching certificate, École Normale Mgr Labrie, Baie-Comeau, 1964 to 1967.

The economy of the North Shore is primarily natural resources-based. The jobs created in these industries offer very good working conditions and are held mostly by men. Moreover, we consider them the last bastion of exclusively male jobs. For North Shore women, meeting the challenge of holding this type of job called for a special strategy.

Since its founding, the Centre Émersion de Baie-Comeau has sought ways to free women from the low-paying and often precarious job ghettos where they have been working for years. In order to narrow the gaps between male and female representation in these job categories, the Centre Émersion has developed a unique approach that enables a very large number of women to obtain and hold down this type of job.

The approach rests on three stages:

- 1) The signing of agreements with companies for the hiring of women and for the training of supervisors who will be called upon to manage mixed crews.
- 2) The creation of a tripartite committee (company, union and Centre Émersion).
- 3) The training of women, in preparation for holding this type of job.

This approach has produced excellent results. Not only are large numbers of women holding these jobs, but they are also keeping them. Once the agreement expired, the companies continued to hire women, with no external agency intervention. In our region, the extensive hiring of women in these industries has had a real impact on the enrollment of young women in non-traditional employment training programs.

Closing Speech by the Honorary President



Ms. Andrée Gravel, Honorary President of ZOOM

Director of External Affairs, Bureau d'affaires du Québec, Glaxo Wellcome Inc.



Dear Friends:

Allow me to start with the end: THANK YOU, THANK YOU ever so much.

Thank you all. I'm so proud of what we have experienced together over the course of the last few days that it almost makes me want to start all over again. I am already eager to see whether ZOOM on Women and Non-Traditional Occupations has accomplished anything concrete, whether our work has produced results, whether we have created the international solidarity necessary for supporting the integration of women in non-traditional activity sectors and occupations. I sincerely hope that our work will not have been in vain.

We have shared our points of view on the role and presence of women in the economic growth of our society. We have had the opportunity to learn about various innovative experiments. We have also discussed the difficulties and obstacles, still far too numerous, that need to be overcome in order for our goals to be achieved.

Simply put, I believe that I speak for many of us when I say that ZOOM on Women and Non-Traditional Occupations has set an important milestone. It will allow us to move forward toward our objective: improving the integration of women in economic activity. Finally, it will enable us to build the foundations for future action plans in the new millennium.

I would like to encourage you all to keep up the passion and enthusiasm you have shown since the beginning of this forum. We must face the facts: there is still a lot of work to be done in the areas of information, education and support for women who choose to pursue careers in non-traditional sectors.

Before you leave today, I would once again like to thank, personally and on behalf of all of us, all the members of the organizing committee of ZOOM on Women and Non-Traditional Occupations: Isabel Bernier, Nancy Clairet, Ginette Cochrane, Carmen Lajoie, Anne Thibault, Michel Villeneuve, Monique Bernier, Colette Duval, Claire Lemelin and Martine Meilleur.

I would like to express my sincere thanks for their support and for their outstanding collaboration in the organization of this forum. I would also like to extend my thanks to our partners: the Ministère de l'Éducation, Emploi-Québec and Glaxo Wellcome (my company), who made such an exciting event possible.

Finally, I sincerely and fervently hope that ZOOM on Women and Non-Traditional Occupations will become the platform for a true national and international network ideas and experiences. We must keep the fire burning and, to do so, we must never give up!

Thank you all, and to the participants who came from abroad, we wish you a pleasant stay with us and a safe trip home.

Théâtre Parminou



Alter Egos

The moderator welcomes the audience members and announces that the play they are about to see is interactive, i.e. that they will be active participants in the play. She then explains how they will be able to give advice to the characters (in the language of their choice).

Scene 1

The moderator introduces her niece, Marie-Michelle, to the audience. Even as a small girl, Marie-Michelle wondered what she would do when she grew up. She dreamed of becoming a plumber, a truck driver, a line installer, or why not, a pilot.

Scene 2

In their last year of secondary school, Marie-Michelle and her friend Stéphanie meet with the school guidance counsellor, who steers them toward jobs traditionally seen as “women’s” jobs, like cashier or nurse. The moderator asks the audience whether they received similar suggestions when they were the two girls’ age.

Scene 3

Marie-Michelle has just finished her first year of college (which, in Québec, comes between secondary school and university). She is having a discussion with her parents and trying to make them accept her decision to become a mechanic. She spent all of her childhood in her father’s garage, asking questions and helping out. The job really appeals to her, in spite of what her parents think.

The moderator decides to give Marie-Michelle a hand by asking the audience to give her advice. Should she stick with her decision to become a mechanic even though her parents don’t agree with her choice?

Scene 4

Undecided, Marie-Michelle becomes two separate characters. Marie portrays the more conventional or traditional side of Marie-Michelle, while Michelle represents her unconventional or “non-traditional” side. Each of these two characters will explore the options open to her. But first, Michelle meets with a guidance counsellor.

Scene 5

The guidance counsellor asks Michelle to take a hard look at what she will have to face if she does become a mechanic: jokes, coveralls that don’t fit right, pictures of women on the walls, sexist comments, and coworkers who can sometimes be a little “macho.” The guidance counsellor also asks Michelle to explain why she wants to stick with her decision in spite of all the obstacles in her way.

The audience helps Michelle by suggesting answers.

Scene 6

To make sure she is making the right decision, Michelle tries various non-traditional occupations. Marie also tries various traditionally female-dominated occupations. As Michelle and Marie mime the various jobs they try, the audience sees that both work hard physically, which debunks the myth that non-traditional occupations are more demanding.

Scene 7

Michelle's first choice passes the test. She really wants to become a mechanic and sticks with her decision. We next see her with a male coworker, Michel. Their truck breaks down. Michelle fixes the problem, which forces her coworker to re-examine his sexist ideas.

Scene 8

Michelle has her back turned to the audience, and appears to be giving tender, loving care to a baby. The "baby" is in fact the computer chip that goes inside a huge truck. The audience learns that Michelle is pregnant and that she is wondering whether or not she should continue working as a mechanic.

Scene 9

Michelle tells her boss that she is pregnant. Her boss is not happy: this means he'll have to find a replacement, reassign Michelle's customers to the other mechanics, and get them to accept the fact that Michelle will be taking pregnancy leave.

To ease the tension between Michelle and her boss, the moderator divides the audience into two groups and asks each group to give advice to one of the characters. After consulting with their respective half of the audience, the actors improvise a dialogue based on the suggestions they received.

Scene 10

A year and a half later, Michelle is back on the job. Things aren't easy with her coworkers, who won't even speak to her.

Scene 11

Michelle meets the guidance counsellor again, who is now an employment officer. Michelle wants to change careers. She doesn't know what to do. Some members of the audience tell her why she should stay a mechanic; others say why they think she should train for a new occupation.

Scene 12

A few years have gone by. Michelle is celebrating her 30th birthday. She sees Marie, her alter ego, again. The audience learns that Michelle has gone into the aerospace industry and has three employees under her. Michelle tells Marie that she should consider going into a non-traditional occupation. The moderator gives Marie and Michelle the magic formula that will make them one and the same person again.

Ciné-débat



5 Ft 2–80,000 Lbs/5 pieds 2–80 000 lbs

You've never seen anything like them. They're attractive, feminine...and fascinated by chrome and engines as they put the pedal to the metal from the cab of a gleaming 18-wheeler. These talented and daring trailblazers have chosen an unforgiving field where women can't afford to make mistakes. Kilometre after kilometre, they battle the odds as they ply their trade as truckers.

5 Ft 2–80,000 Lbs, a spunky and spirited film, plunges the viewer smack into the lives of La P'tite, L'Ange blanc and La Star, women who take no detours around the big issues such family, freedom, and solitude. Their energy is contagious as they debunk the most damning myths about women at the wheel.

This documentary takes us along for the ride as the three untraditional truckers pursue their childhood dream from Témiscamingue to Charlevoix by way of Montréal, Saint-Denis-sur-le-Richelieu, Beauce and Lac-Saint-Jean. With a humorous original song by Lynda Lemay in the background, these women who took the road less travelled move and inspire us. Chances are you'll never look at a truck the same way.

Director

Nathalie Trépanier

Produced and distributed
by the French Program of the
National Film Board of Canada

Running time: 51 min 48 s

Videocassette
identification no. *: C 9299 016
*Close captioned for the
hearing impaired

National distribution:
1 800 267-7710

International distribution:
International Program, D-12
National Film Board of Canada
Case Postale 6100

Succursale centre-ville
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*The Organizing Committee for
the ZOOM International Forum
on Women in Non-traditional
Occupations would like to thank
the following partners for their
financial, professional and material
support.*

Sponsors

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Bureau d'affaires du Québec

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Centrale des syndicats du Québec

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Public Service Commission
of Canada (Québec region)

Fédération des travailleurs
et travailleuses du Québec

La Presse

Pratt & Whitney Canada

Partners

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Office franco-québécois pour la jeunesse

*Alain Beaugier, Frédérique Bouyx,
Armelle Dugué et Michèle Passager*
Paris

*Gaétan St-Antoine
et Thierry Tulasne*
Montréal

	Special Acknowledgments	Proceedings	
<p>For Activities Related to the Forum</p> <p><i>Pierre Bélanger</i> École des métiers de l'aérospatiale de Montréal, Commission scolaire de Montréal</p> <p><i>Manon Bergeron</i> École des métiers de l'équipement motorisé de Montréal, Commission scolaire de Montréal</p> <p><i>Joanne Carrière</i> National Film Board</p> <p><i>Marc Duchesne</i> Bombardier Aerospace</p> <p><i>Alain Prud'homme</i> École des métiers de la construction de Montréal, Commission scolaire de Montréal</p> <p><i>Michèle Vatrin</i> Commission scolaire de Montréal</p> <p><i>Students from the Music Specialty</i> École Curé-Antoine-Labelle, Commission scolaire de Laval, under the direction of Danielle Levesque, teacher</p> <p>Live documentation for the production by Théâtre Parminou</p> <p><i>Carole Simard</i> Centre Étape</p> <p><i>Caroline Gauthier and Élise Marsolais</i> Formation'Elle</p> <p><i>Isabelle Dugré et Sylvie Rouillard</i> FRONT</p> <p><i>Hélène Ducharme</i> <i>Maureen Martineau</i> Parminou</p>	<p><i>François Cartier</i> Éditions Ma Carrière</p> <p><i>Claire Cousineau</i> FRONT</p> <p><i>Louis Dallaire</i> Institut québécois d'études stratégiques internationales</p> <p><i>Marc Desjardins</i> Desjardins Communications</p> <p><i>Guylaine Dutrisac</i> Formation'Elle</p> <p><i>Catherine Élie</i> Châtelaine Magazine</p> <p><i>Claire Gagnon</i> La Gazette des femmes</p> <p>The coordinators of the committees and sector tables, the labour adaptation committees and the advisory committees of Emploi-Québec</p> <p><i>Nicole McKenzie</i> Emploi-Québec</p> <p><i>Carmen S. Vaillancourt</i> Commission de la santé et de la sécurité du travail</p>	<p>Development</p> <p><i>Isabel Bernier</i> Liaison with speakers and supervision of texts Coordination à la condition féminine, Ministère de l'Éducation</p> <p><i>Colette Duval</i> Design, coordination and supervision Direction des communications, Emploi-Québec</p> <p><i>Anne Thibault</i> Design, coordination and supervision Coordination à la condition féminine, Ministère de l'Éducation</p>	<p>Translation</p> <p><i>Liette Michaud-Hedge</i> Coordination of translation Direction de la production en langue anglaise Services à la communauté anglophone, Ministère de l'Éducation</p> <p><i>Marc Pilon</i> Coordination of translation of English texts Direction des communications, Ministère de la Solidarité sociale</p> <p><i>Marie Shooner</i> Coordination of linguistic revision of French texts Direction des communications, Ministère de la Solidarité sociale</p>
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Production of Proceedings

Direction des affaires publiques
et des communications d'Emploi-Québec

Design and Computer Graphics of Text:

Philippe Barey

Prepress and Printing:

Les impressions Intra Média inc.

© Gouvernement du Québec

Legal Deposit—Bibliothèque nationale du Québec, 2001

ISBN 2-550-37242-5

