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Women in Higher Education Since 1970:

The More Things Change, the More They Stay the Same

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Senior women looking back over their careers noted the increased presence of women, changes in policies or behavior, and/or improvements in beliefs or attitudes. However, almost half also noted family problems that remain for women, and about two-thirds described biases against women that remain a part of higher education today.

Women who began academic careers in the United States in the early 1970s have witnessed and experienced dramatic changes. These changes since the early 1970s were stimulated by application of affirmative action to higher education (Astin & Snyder, 1982), commissions on women (Glazer-Raymo, 1999), and, perhaps more subtly, by the development of women's studies (Beck, 1990) and the gradual incursion of feminist perspectives across disciplines.

Any woman whose career spans the period from the early 1970s to the present can recognize the increased numbers of women in faculty and academic administrative positions.

From 1976 to 1997, the combined number of women faculty members and women in higher education executive-administrative-managerial positions more than doubled. In the same time span, women as a percentage of full-time employees increased from 25% to 36% of full-time faculty members, and from 26% to 45% of full-time executive-administrative-managerial positions (National Center for Education Statistics, 1998, 2001). Attitudinal changes both allow such changes in numbers and follow from them, and of course the whole academic culture changes as the percentages of men and women change.

The changes in numbers have been very gradual, however, and it is unclear how salient the differences in

higher education are to women who themselves are immersed in the academic environment. At a time when younger academic women could take improvements for granted, it is particularly important to determine whether senior women, who are able to compare the past and present, perceive women's current situation as equitable or as still necessitating redress.

The concepts "glass ceiling" (see Morrison, White, Van Velsor, & Center for Creative Leadership, 1987) and "chilly climate" (see Sandler, 1986) still are well-understood and frequent depictions of structural and attitudinal constraints impeding women's progress in academe. But, are they still applicable? Recent books and articles about women in higher education administration bear titles including alarming phrases, such as "Stranger in a Strange Land" (North, 1991), "Against the Tide" (Walton, 1996), and "Cracking the Wall" (Mitchell, 1993). Books and articles about women in the faculty similarly describe "Outsiders in the Sacred Grove" (Aisenberg & Harrington, 1988), "Ivy Halls and Glass Walls" (Bronstein, Rothblum, & Solomon, 1993), and "Women and Minorities in Peril" (Tack & Patitu, 1992); encourage "Storming the Tower" (Lie & O'Leary, 1990), "Arming Athena" (Collins, Chrisler, & Quina, 1998), and "Lifting a Ton of Feathers" (Caplan, 1994); and admonish women to "Shatter the Ceilings, Polish the Floors" (DeAngelis, 1995). These sources and others (e.g., Christman, 2003; Glazer-Raymo, 1999; Glazer, Bensimon, & Townsend, 1993; Glazer-Raymo, Townsend, & Ropers-Huilman, 2000; Johnsrud & Heck, 1994; Ransom & Megdal, 1993; Simeone, 1987) use anecdotal accounts, national statistics, or surveys of background and job characteristics to describe women's obstacles as well as headway against them. Yet, there are few compilations of systematically collected self-reports describing how women experience the current higher education environment. The most relevant of those are discussed below.

Aisenberg and Harrington (1988) interviewed 25 tenured women and 37 women who had been deflected from the normal tenure-track career path In both groups, the authors found the same themes of "professional marginality and exclusion from the centers of professional authority," which they attributed to the persistence of "social norms that are constructed to cast women in subordinate, supportive roles in both their private and their public lives" (p. xi). It is significant that these women still felt unfairly marginalized in spite of higher education's apparent acceptance of newer norms of equal opportunity, but it is also important to note that the interviews for this study occurred in 1983-84, so the situation could have improved in later years. In the early 1990s, Walton (1996) asked 20 women leaders of British and American institutions to write accounts of their career paths, addressing common questions including hindrances they had experienced. Many of these women began their careers well before 1970. Although most acknowledge a sense of going against traditional expectations of women ("against the tide") in their rise to the top positions, their accounts emphasize individual circumstances and their success and personal style rather than perceptions of higher education or changes in academia over their careers.

Astin and Leland (1991) collected case studies of three generations of women educational leaders (77 altogether). Their study arose from a 1983 conference of the middle cohort, Instigators, whose leadership from the 1960s to mid-1970s resulted in legal and institutional changes benefiting women in higher education and society at large. Their younger Inheritors began to assume leadership in the mid-1970s and reported greater support, role models, and mentoring (often from Instigators). Like the earlier cohorts, Inheritors reported discriminatory experiences, at least early in their careers. The authors' treatment of the Inheritors is primarily in terms of comparison to the earlier cohorts, so the date of the most recent situations they have described is not clear, although it must be somewhat before the 1991 publication date, at which point most Inheritors were in their early to mid-forties. At that time, all three cohorts of educational leaders expressed their concerns about several continuing problems they perceived for women: subtle discrimination; isolation and non-acceptance within the traditional male hierarchy; balancing family, work, and personal agendas; economic issues, including pay inequities and child care; and confusion related to feminist identity.

As part of a larger project on the socialization of junior faculty, Tierney and Bensimon (1996) interviewed

99 junior tenure-track women on 12campuses during 1992-93 and 1993-94. They explored the hiring process and the reception of the new faculty member once hired and concluded that these women generally face a climate that does not support or affirm them, due primarily to unconscious sexism that persists in the traditionally male academic environment. Many women reported difficulty being included by male colleagues and felt that acceptance required their acting unduly good-natured and helpful. Those with family concerns often felt they had to hide this aspect of their lives. Junior women who were in situations with a critical mass of female colleagues tended to report a more favorable situation. Tierney and Bensimon (1996) argue that the typically non-supportive climate for women and their reactions to the institutional culture are related to previously demonstrated gender differences such as higher attrition, lower tenure and promotion rates, and lower productivity for women. The experiences of these junior women are important, but it is unclear to what extent their experiences are dependent on their insecure junior status, and new entrants to higher education cannot by themselves demonstrate whether women's situation has improved or remained constant.

Washburn (2004) compared the concerns expressed in 1988 and 1997 by women professors at a Midwestern Research Institution. Following the 1988 survey, the institution made visible efforts to address women's concerns. The women responding in 1997 expressed fewer concerns than in 1988 in every category. Only 5% expressed concerns about number and distribution of women faculty and only 8% about institutional support in 1997. Although concerns in all other categories also had dropped dramatically since 1988, sizable percentages of respondents still expressed concerns in 1997 about promotion and tenure processes (22%), salary (23%), women's influence and power (29%), institutional response to worklife issues (34%), and general climate (46%). Furthermore, Washburn's analyses of statistics available in these areas indicated that the respondents' 1997 perceptions overestimated the improvement in their situation relative to 1988 and relative to national data. Washburn argues that the university's visible actions to address grievances affected many women's experience and, consequently, their career satisfaction, in spite of little demonstrated improvement. Although limited to a single institution and a short time period, Washburn's study illustrates the importance of considering experience as well as statistics in assessing the change in women's situation in higher education.

Although each of these studies makes its own contribution to understanding whether higher education is approaching parity for women, it seems important to add reports from a broad sample of senior women who observe the current environment from a variety of academic positions, and to gather these reports before the women who began careers in the 1970s begin to retire. Consequently, the purpose of the current study is to document senior women's own experiences of the most important changes during their careers and of the most important areas in which parity has not been achieved. Qualitative methodology seems most appropriate to investigate experience (see Kimmel, 1989). Rather than providing a structured questionnaire with forced choices that would have directed women to answers which the author thought might be important, this study employed open-ended questions asking respondents to describe their own careers. However, in contrast to the previous qualitative work using interviews or questionnaires, cited above, this study demonstrates the connection of the conclusions to the data by presenting the results of the content analyses rather than presenting the conclusions alone. The respondents included both faculty members and those administrators whose careers typically begin with doctoral degrees and faculty positions.

Method

Survey

Using a snowball sampling technique (Patton, 1990), I distributed a letter of explanation and an open-ended questionnaire by electronic mail to women identified through listsers of academic deans and higher education administrators, through multi-disciplinary lists of faculty members, and through acquaintances at my own and other institutions. Faculty women and academic administrators or other administrators who

began with faculty positions were invited to answer the questions and/or to forward the explanation and questions to others who might do so. Those who assumed their first positions in higher education in the 1970s or a few years earlier were particularly encouraged to participate.

A series of open-ended questions asked respondents to describe positive and negative experiences early in their careers and in their current work. The two questions relevant to the current report appeared at the end of the questionnaire and asked respondents to address directly the most important changes and unchanged factors they had observed:

1)   More generally, in what ways do you believe that the situation for women has changed over the time of your career in your current institution and other institutions in which you have worked in higher education in general?

2)   Are there important issues for women in your institutions or in higher education in general that have not changed over the course of your career? What are the most important of these?

Respondents

Most respondents replied by electronic mail, several sent answers by regular mail, and three asked for telephone interviews, in which case they simply gave their answers to the same questions orally to the author. Useable responses were obtained from 98 women. Of these respondents, 11 were current or recent presidents or chancellors; 40 were academic deans, vpaa/provosts, or their associates working in academic or faculty affairs; 9 were other administrators; and 38 were faculty members. Respondents' disciplinary backgrounds spanned the humanities, social sciences, and natural sciences including medicine. They were located across the country (plus several in Canada) and at institutions that represented every Carnegie classification and that included some women's colleges. Respondents were invited to identify characteristics besides gender (such as ethnic background) that might have affected their treatment, but few did so. It must be assumed that most are white.

Although 96% had received doctoral or terminal M.F.A. degrees, a good number of the participating women began academic positions before obtaining the doctorate. Other women received their final degrees well before they sought or were able to obtain a full-time position, so either date of degree or date of first academic job could mark the start of the academic career. Only five had not received their highest degree or begun an academic job before 1980. Moreover, the distribution of starting dates was skewed toward the late 1960s and early1970s; 84% of the women in this study either received their highest degree or began an academic job by 1976.

Qualitative Analysis

Each question was analyzed separately. Both questions invited respondents to indicate multiple elements that had changed or not changed for women, so each respondent's answer was broken into separate elements where the respondent appeared to shift to a new point. As is often suggested for qualitative analysis (e.g., Marshall & Rossman, 1995; Patton, 1990), an inductive process was used to determine categories that were distinct and internally consistent. That is, the categories were determined by first skimming the answers to determine preliminary categories. The separated elements were then placed into the larger categories with new categories added when points did not fit the existing categories, and with categories combined when points appeared to fit in either of two categories. The wording used by respondents was maintained in the categorization process to facilitate such changes in categories, as well as to describe the separable types of issues (subcategories) identified in each category. Each point made by a respondent was placed into only one major category, so the percentage of respondents who reported a change in that category could be calculated by dividing the number of respondents represented in that category by the total number of

respondents answering the question. Each separable point also was placed into only one subcategory within a category, but a single respondent could have several different points classified into different subcategories in the same category. In fact, a distinction made by respondents frequently was the rationale for maintaining separate subcategories for closely related points, even though this resulted in many small subcategories.

Results and Discussion

Changes

All 98 respondents answered the question requesting that they describe changes over the course of their careers, and all but two respondents identified some changes. They typically mentioned one to four changes, a few mentioned more. For example, in one of the fullest answers, an academic associate dean with responsibility for several university-wide programs answered,

The changes for women have been significant. Affirmative action in the academy has had an effect. A more open and democratic process of evaluation and review also has changed things significantly Having more women in professional positions has halted the "token woman" issues at least in the Arts and Sciences. There seems to be more support and understanding for family issues.

Not surprisingly, certain changes appeared in many answers, often with similar wording. It was possible to categorize the separate changes cited into five broad categories: *General, Increased Numbers or Access*, *Changes in Policies or Behavior*, *Changes in Beliefs or Attitudes*, and *Professional, Disciplinary, or Scholarly Influences* As stated previously, each separate change cited by a respondent was placed in only one of these major categories. For example, from the associate dean's answer above, significant changes was placed in the *General* category, too many professional women to be "tokens" was placed under *Increased Numbers or Access*, affirmative action was categorized under *Changes in Policies or Behavior* as was open and democratic evaluation, and support and understanding for family issues was placed under *Changes in Beliefs or Attitudes*.

In these women's opinions, higher education definitely has changed during the course of their careers (see Table 1). The majority mentioned increased numbers of women or increased access to positions. A sizable percentage thought of the changes in terms of either improvement in explicit policies or behavior or improvement in beliefs or attitudes, or both. A description of the answers in each category follows. (Numbers in parentheses represent number of respondents, except where explicitly identified as percentages.)

General.

General answers were those that stated change had occurred without specifying the area changed; general changes were mentioned by 38% of respondents (37 women). Using the women's own terminology to form subcategories of equivalent or similar answers, the most frequently assigned subcategories were those that contained comments mentioning increased opportunities (10 women); stated that there were significant, dramatic, or massive changes (12); or gave more qualified responses that conditions were somewhat, generally, marginally better, or only more flexible (9). In less frequently assigned subcategories, two women each described the change as a less bad situation in terms of lower barriers/easier times, or qualified the change as being greater earlier than recently. One woman commented that the situation had already been good in women's colleges, and one that the situation had improved dramatically in previously all male institutions.

Professional, disciplinary, or scholarly influences.

Only eight women (8%) thought to answer this question in terms of *Professional, Disciplinary, or*

Scholarly Influences. Two women mentioned the impact of women's studies, and one each mentioned the related and overlapping areas of student interest in women's studies, interest in women's history, interdisciplinary scholarship on gender/race/class, women's interests impacting teaching and scholarship, institutions wanting courses and scholarship on women, disciplines being more open to women scholars, growth of women's areas in disciplines, support from professional women's associations, and scholarship on academic women's experience. (More than eight specific changes are listed because some women mentioned more than one subcategory of change that fit this category, as is true in the other categories as well.)

Increased numbers or access.

The majority of the respondents (53%; 52 women) mentioned one or more changes that were categorized as *Increased Numbers or Access* to positions. The most frequent subcategories were those containing answers that referred to more women in general or without specifying in what areas (14); more women, hiring access, or critical mass in the faculty (14); more senior women or leaders (10); more women administrators (9); more tenured women or full professors or senior critical mass (6); and more or more varied mentors or role models (5). Answers from two or three women each were placed in subcategories that referred to more women as graduate students and doctorates, students in traditionally male fields or schools, and faculty in traditionally male fields. Most other answers were more specific versions of the frequent answers. One to three women each referred to more opportunities to advance or for senior positions, more senior administrators, more faculty leaders, more senior positions in professional organizations, too many professional women to be tokens, and more networks or informal support groups. Quite a few women mentioned more than one subcategory of changes in this category.

Changes in policies or behavior.

The category *Changes in Policies or Behavior* was used for the respondents' perceptions of overt, observable changes in institutions' policies or individuals' behavior toward women; 41 women (42%) mentioned such changes. The most frequently assigned subcategories were the overall response of less blatant discrimination or sexist behavior (12) and references to affirmative action or changes in search practices (8). Three similar responses noted simply that women are sought for jobs. All other answers fell into small subcategories of one to four answers, which could be loosely grouped. More general policy advances were cited by one to three women each: less discriminatory policies; equal opportunity or legal protection; gender equity initiatives; institutional protection/remediation/back-up for women; and the fact that the infrastructure has been developed, trails blazed, or roads paved. In addition to the large subcategory of less blatant discrimination and sexist behavior above, more equitable treatment was mentioned by one to three women each in terms of women being treated better, equitably in some cases, or equally; compensation being more equitable or equal; equal opportunities for advancement; more open, democratic evaluation; more recognition for women's achievements; and more equitable assignments. Improved policies related to family or timing in women's careers that were mentioned by two to four women each included family-friendly policies in general, childbearing/rearing or family leave, and tenure-clock policies. Somewhat different overt changes mentioned by one or two women each were governance being changed by women's interests, mentoring programs and programs for women, men contributing more to family duties, less sexual harassment and greater willingness of women to complain, and women's making public complaints about inequity.

Changes in beliefs or attitudes.

Reported changes in sensitivity, perceptions, or acceptance regarding women in higher education, including women's own beliefs and attitudes, were classified as *Changes in Beliefs or Attitudes*. One or more changes fitting this category were offered by 42 women (43%). None of the specific types of changes were reported

by more than four women. Although these perceived changes could be grouped loosely, differences in respondents' terminology made it difficult to combine these responses into subcategories without losing information. Quite a few women's answers contained two closely related statements that they clearly intended as different points. The distinctions these women were making would have been lost if only larger subcategories were presented. Because the whole point of this study was to hear these women's own voices, it was not appropriate to combine these small subcategories into larger subcategories. Therefore, larger groupings of subcategories are presented in Table 2, but with the smaller subcategories maintained. A single woman could be counted in more than one subcategory in each grouping but only once in each specific subcategory. These women's perceptions of changes in beliefs and attitudes could be loosely grouped as changes in sensitivity, lessened prejudice against women, improved attitudes specifically toward women's advancement, changes in women's self- perceptions, and changes in attitudes toward family issues. The 42 women represented in Table 2 made 54 separate statements about their perceptions of changes in beliefs and attitudes toward women.

Interrelationships.

Although the separate factors salient to the respondents in formulating their own statements of changes are interesting, it is important to note that some answers referred to important interrelationships among categories. For example, the listing of increased numbers of women, even of mentors, probably underemphasizes the degree to which the respondents saw the whole environment as consequently changed. A woman who had held positions in several administrative divisions at her institution commented, "…as more women have assumed leadership positions and been successful, the overall situation for women was bound to be affected." One president wrote,

There are many more opportunities now for women. At [my university], 50% or more of our faculty hires are women. Men and women are tenured at equal rates and more and more women are being tapped for significant administrative roles. I am very pleased to see these changes and believe they will only enhance opportunity for women at all levels.

The effect of numbers on treatment were addressed by the chair of a science department at a Master's institution who pointed out,

There are more women colleagues. For whatever reason (it might just be that you end up talking in the bathroom), women tend to interact in groups just as men have traditionally done. Also in meetings men are more apt to use sexist language and behavior if you are the only woman in the room than if there are more women present. Thus by having more women colleagues, men are at least superficially more respectful.

Another woman scientist at a Baccalaureate college stated, "The sheer numbers have changed things for the better. It is not acceptable in most circles to discriminate openly, and it is even difficult for hard-line women haters to find excuses to keep women out."

A woman in the humanities at a Baccalaureate college noted the relationship between having "more voices and more voice." Another humanities professor at a Canadian institution commented, "There are more of us, we are more 'at home' in the professions and the institutions, and our interests (the whole range from private to public) have impacted considerably on scholarship, teaching, and university governance."

Similarly, those who mentioned legal changes probably viewed them as important determinants of other changes, whether or not they made the connection explicit. And those who mentioned less blatant discrimination probably recognize its illegality as a factor. A dean at a Master's institution stated, "...laws and their implementation have changed, so searches, affirmative action initiatives, sexual harassment,

discrimination, salary differentials, etc. have been impacted in turn."

Perceptions of causal relationships cannot be established by a study of this sort, but several respondents implicitly acknowledged their complexity. One president included numbers of women, knowledge of women's situation, and laws as determinative:

Most obviously, there are many more mentors for women these days and much more has been studied and written about the experience of women in academe. It's hard to emerge from graduate school, in particular, without a keen understanding of the challenges ahead and also the resources available. More women occupy senior roles and provide models for others as well as the ability to change institutional cultures. The importance of women's studies is well established. Affirmative Action has much to do with this positive evolution.

Consistent with this answer, the belief that women have helped themselves is implicit in many of the answers about numbers (especially answers involving critical mass, women leaders in faculty and administration, and mentoring or role models) and in the few answers about disciplinary changes.

Qualifications.

It is important to note that quite a few respondents added qualifications to the positive changes they described, such as "still not where should be" or "still a ways to go," in some cases even adding factors that were more appropriate for the next question on the questionnaire dealing with unchanged factors (these statements were included in the results for that question, which was analyzed separately). One president's comment, "Obviously, women are more frequently (but not THAT much more frequently) in positions of leadership" was typical of these qualifications. Many such comments were made about senior positions in the faculty or administration, and the persistence of an "old boys' network." An associate provost at a research university gave this less-than-enthusiastic description of changes: "Many more institutions now consider women as appropriate candidates for senior positions; in some cases, women are treated equitably. My current institution is on the low end of the equitable continuum."

Also typical was the distinction between a decrease in blatant discrimination and the persistence of subtle discrimination, and several respondents commented that progress has lagged for women who are in traditionally male fields or who are not white, middle class, and heterosexual. Concern about whether improvements for women are secure was explicit in several answers. A scientist at a women's institution commented, "Gender bias became more subtle, though it did not disappear. I think it is becoming more overt again." A dean at a women's college put her concerns in terms of affirmative action:

Generally there are more women around and in roles of leadership. How they/we got here was at least partly affirmative action. I am troubled at how fast and to what extent society's support for affirmative action has shifted—and what this may mean in terms of few opportunities for women and minorities.

Another dean referred to the financial situation of higher education, "But it could go bad, with retrenchment—no hiring and the over-reliance on lecturers." One humanities professor's description of changes illustrates the "yes, but" nature of many of the responses: "More of us, but not enough more. Individual situations may be better, different, whatever...but collectively we still fight the same battles, struggle with the same struggles." The areas about which these women are most pessimistic are illustrated by their answers to the second question with which this article deals.

Constancies

Three respondents omitted the question on issues for women that had not changed; 95 gave answers, typically citing one to four factors that they considered unchanged. As for the first questions, using

the same process and with the same qualifications, these answers were classified into six broad categories: *General*, *Constraints*, *Areas with Underrepresentation of Women*, *Behaviors or Self-Perceptions that Disadvantage Women*, *Family Issues*, and *Bias*. As evident in Table 3, four of these categories had low numbers of responses.

General and constraints.

Of the women answering this question, a few (10%; 9 women) included *General* comments, on the one hand that there are many unchanged factors (3) or the same battles and struggles (1), or on the other hand that all important factors had changed (4), that changes were massive and continuing (1), or that improvements were more obvious than deficiencies (1). A few (5%; 5 women) cited one or more *Constraints* to change that did not fit into other categories and some of which were unrelated to gender. Of these, two cited tight budgets or retrenchment and one each cited competitive organizational politics, misanthropic public officials, lack of philanthropists supporting women, women and men speaking different dialects, and violence and the need for peace in the world.

Areas with underrepresentation of women.

Areas with Underrepresentation of Women were salient to about one-quarter of the respondents (23 women; 24%), in spite of the overall impression of increased numbers of women in higher education. The most frequently assigned subcategories contained statements that cited these underrepresented areas: leadership positions or administrators (6), high level administrators (6), and faculty members in nontraditional areas (5). Other underrepresented areas were identified by only one or two respondents each: tenured or full professors/senior faculty, minority women, chaired professorships or positions of honor, senior faculty in nontraditional areas, chairs or administrators in nontraditional areas, women (and men) of color in administration, lower class women in administration, senior administrators in finance, board of trustee members, and mentors. Many of these less frequently cited areas are more specific versions of the most frequent responses in this category. In summary, those who gave responses in this category expressed an awareness that progress for women has been uneven or at least slower to reach more competitive positions and women who are not white, middle class, or in traditionally female areas.

Behaviors or self-perceptions that disadvantage women.

A smaller number of women cited self-perceptions that limit women's success or skills they find lacking in women. *Behaviors or Self-perceptions that Disadvantage Women* were identified by 16 respondents (17%). Three respondents mentioned women thinking their spouses' careers were more important. Self-esteem issues were mentioned by two women. Other areas were noted by one woman each: being committed to teaching and service, not being selfish enough to protect one's own creative work, lacking negotiation skills, being less assertive than men, being more careful that one can support one's position than men, difficulty exercising non-feminine leadership, graduate school not preparing women for faculty positions, more women dropping out of graduate school, feeling stress over family and work demands, competitiveness and mistrust among women, and young women being unaware of gender's role in society. Not surprisingly, most of the traits cited are related to traditional gender role socialization. Some are not negative in the abstract but only in the context of skills needed in a traditionally masculine profession.

Family issues.

Family Issues were cited by almost half of the women answering this question (43 women; 46%), with a high degree of overlap in the answers. The most frequently assigned subcategory was balancing

career and family demands or personal and professional demands, which were mentioned explicitly by 20 women. Other closely related subcategories were childcare problems (12), childbearing/childcare leave and family policies (5), conflict of the childbearing/rearing and tenure clocks (6), more being expected of women relative to childcare and the home (6), institutions' expectations assuming no family work (4), the need for different career paths or policies such as flex time (5), and two-career couples and partner hiring policies (4). One respondent mentioned each of the following difficulties for women: having to make choices not required of men, lacking wives, being slowed down in their careers unless they have unusual husbands or hired help, lacking mobility, being noticed for family time rather than hard work in their career, bearing primary responsibility for eldercare, and lacking access to contraception and abortion.

As one of two frequently cited areas that remain unchanged (the other being *Bias* below), these *Family Issues* require further description. In these answers, many women cited responsibilities for childcare or the difficulty of balancing family and career as constraints that affect women more than they affect men. Most of the family issues cited would apply to women in other careers as well; however, the fact that women are evaluated for tenure and are expected to demonstrate singular devotion to a career during their prime childbearing years is a problem specific to these higher education careers that begin with a faculty appointment.

Although many suggested that conflict between work and family roles was unsolvable given the reality of time constraints, others suggested that traditional expectations exacerbate the problems for women. The provost of a liberal arts college pointed out,

If a male colleague (or even my husband) spends a little time doing childcare, he is praised, celebrated, loved; if a woman does childcare, it is just her job, nothing special. Women still have to deal with the way that pregnancy and its aftermath interfere with a "normal" career trajectory.

Some respondents reported traditional gender expectations regarding the family as a problem for both men and women. As a scientist at a women's institution acknowledged,

It is still not acceptable for fathers to be the primary care-givers or even to be active sharing care-givers—this is not an issue for women per se but for families. Institutions have not changed their expectations of faculty, which may have been appropriate when women were unmarried or men had full-time wives at home, but are now unrealistic.

And a few women made explicit their desires for more flexible policies. A scientist at a Southern Master's institution stated concerning maternity/paternity leave,

My institution is not enlightened in this respect. There is no paternity leave and maternity leave, in the science area, is pretty much limited to six weeks with pay. If you are efficient enough to have your child during the summer, there is no leave. That meant that I taught full time after my son was born in the middle of August. The administration has seemed less willing to consider creative solutions to the maternity leave problem, such as a reduced load, followed or preceded by a heavy load. I think that the most likely solution to the problem will occur when a number of men start demanding paternity leave.

Such answers suggested that family-friendly policies could ameliorate some remaining family-work conflicts.

Bias.

Two-thirds of the respondents still perceive *Bias* in higher education (65 women; 69%). A number of subcategories could be formed from repeated answers, but, as in other categories, some subcategories were quite specific and distinctive. Although more women specifically identified salary inequity than any other

factor (14), and several mentioned sexual harassment (4) or simply unfair treatment (3), most of their answers did not deal with overt discrimination. A large number of women reported some version of subtle bias intrinsic to higher education as a traditionally masculine enterprise. Several women chose similar words to describe the remaining discrimination: subtle or underground discrimination (6); male rules, male standards, male hierarchy (6); glass ceiling (5); having to work harder or be better to succeed (5); and tenure, promotion, or advancement in rank being harder (4). The terminology selected by one to three women to describe a more specific area of bias also is illustrative and is shown in Table 4. An attempt was made to arrange similar answers in close proximity to each other in this table. The 65 women represented in this table made 111 separate statements specifying areas of remaining bias.

Most of these respondents do not perceive remaining biases as blatant discrimination occurring across all situations, but as more subtle biases implicit in stereotypical expectations of women and in masculine institutional traditions that remain from a time when women were explicitly excluded, a time that most of these respondents can remember from the beginning of their careers. The difficulty of changing what is seen as the fundamental nature of the academy was expressed in a variety of ways. Some expressed their disappointment at the failure of higher education to reach equity as might have been predicted from the rapid gains of the early 1970s. Some suggested backsliding, as discussed in the section on reported changes. As a scientist in a Northeastern Baccalaureate institution indicated,

…the appearance of equality is somewhat illusory. The same students (white males) who say that affirmative action is not needed because women can compete say that employers should be able to hire the person with whom they are most comfortable—and, although they do not say so openly, that is going to be another white male. It would be very easy to return to overt discrimination.

Conclusions

Although open-ended responses do not contain all the features that a respondent would agree are significant if she were asked specifically, they do indicate which aspects are most salient. This study demonstrates that women looking back over their own careers are aware of the dramatic changes for women in higher education since the early 1970s. The changes in numbers are dramatic enough to have been mentioned explicitly by over half of the respondents. Like the educational leaders in the Inheritor generation (Astin & Leland, 1991), these women, in a wide variety of academic positions, are aware that they benefit from the presence of other women in the academic workplace. Beyond changes in numbers, these senior women believe that life is now easier for women in higher education than it was when their careers began. Almost as many women mentioned improvements in overt behavior or explicit policies and improvements in attitudes toward women or women's issues as mentioned increased numbers.

If only the first question were considered, it might seem curious that women in this study were cognizant of dramatic changes but that so many gave qualified answers, describing areas of difficulty remaining for women. Even most of the answers that did not list specific qualifications used terms such as "improvement," "more," or "better" to describe the changes, rather than claiming women now are treated or regarded equitably. This finding is, however, perfectly consistent with the fact that all but 4 of the 95 women (96%) answering the second question mentioned continuing disadvantages for women, including 69% who perceived remaining areas of bias against women. In fact, looking at the two questions together, one of the most striking findings is the consistent distinction made by many women between the reduction in overt, explicit discrimination and continuation of subtle, underground bias. In addition, almost half (46%) of the respondents mentioned difficult family issues for women, and areas with continuing underrepresentation of women were salient to almost a quarter (24%). These results are consistent with other questions answered by the same senior women. As described elsewhere, they reported a high level of stress in their own lives, often related to family issues and conflicts between other roles and career expectations (Gerdes, Spring

2003), and they offered younger women mixed advice, encompassing optimism due to improvements but also cautions or strategies for dealing with the problems still likely to affect women in academic careers (Gerdes, 2003).

The "outsider" status described by Aisenberg and Harrington (1988) and the problems identified by all three generations studied by Astin and Leland (1991) continue to be powerfully present as observed more recently by these 98 senior women. Although the women professors surveyed by Washburn (2004) in 1997 did not express concerns about underrepresentation of women, the current results are consistent with Washburn's respondents in other areas, particularly climate, worklife issues, and influence and power. Unfortunately, younger women seem to be starting their careers with many of the same concerns (Tierney & Bensimon, 1996) without personally experiencing the improvements that are salient to senior women. Although these studies that focus solely on women's perceptions cannot demonstrate that women in higher education experience more problems than men in comparable positions, that conclusion is consistent with other findings from national surveys. For example, women's reactions to the academic climate were more favorable than in the past in the 1998-99 HERI Faculty Survey national norms (Sax, Astin, Korn, & Gilmartin, 1999), but women still were less likely than men to believe female faculty were treated fairly, were more likely to report being sexually harassed, and reported more stress from subtle discrimination and the review and promotion process. In addition, women reported spending more time than men reported on household and childcare responsibilities, and reported more stress from managing household responsibilities and lack of personal time than men reported. These differences remained in the 2001-02 HERI Faculty Survey results (Lindholm, Astin, Sax, & Korn, 2002).

Unfortunately, perceptions that significant obstacles remain for women in higher education are accurate. In terms of numbers, women continue to be underrepresented in traditionally male fields, the upper ranks of faculty and administrators, and more prestigious institutions (Billard, 1994; Glazer-Raymo, 1999; NCES, 1998, 2001, 2002; Valian, 1998). Further, the representation in these areas of women of color is extraordinarily low (NCES, 2001, 2003). A fact that, ironically, might have been noted more frequently in the current study if the respondents had been a more racially diverse group. Women also are disproportionately overrepresented in non-tenurable and part-time positions, and women continue to earn less than men in comparable situations (Billard, 1994; Glazer-Raymo, 1999; NCES, 1998, 2001, 2002; Ransom & Megdal, 1993; Valian, 1998). The growth in numbers of women has arisen primarily from growth in the overall numbers of professional higher education employees (more than a 70% increase between 1976 and 1997) with a higher rate of increase for women than for men. Changes since the early 1970s might seem dramatic because of the growth in numbers, but, given the time span, the increase in the percentage of positions held by women actually has been so gradual that the term "slow" is quite appropriate.

According to NCES (1998) statistics, the percentage of faculty (part- and full-time combined) who were women grew only 6% from 1969 to 1979 and only 1% from 1979 to 1989. Similarly, Milheim and Astin (1993) estimate only a 7% increase between 1972 and 1989. Looking back over a longer time span, it is discouraging to realize that that the percentage of faculty (part- and full-time combined) who were women did not regain the level of 1939 until 1979 and grew only 12% further (from 29% to 41%) by 1997 (NCES, 1998, 2001). Although the growth of women as a percentage of full-time faculty cannot be examined as far back, the full-time comparison is most relevant for the current study and indicates the same slow growth. Although the increase in women as a percentage of full-time faculty from 25% in 1976 to 36% in 1997 was momentous, the fact that this change of 11% took 21 years makes it less impressive. The slow growth has continued since the senior women in the current study expressed their opinions in 1997, with the percentage of all faculty who are women increasing only an additional 1% and the percentage of full-time faculty who are women increasing a little more than 2% by 2001 (NCES, 2003). Women as a percentage of full-time executive-administrative-managerial employees also increased only a little over 2% between 1997 and 2001 (NCES, 2003). Moreover, it can be argued (Collins, 1998) that women are losing ground in higher education

in terms of the increasing gap between the number of women who hold doctorates and the number employed by institutions of higher education.

Consistent with the impression of many of the respondents, Valian (1998) highlights the importance of increasing representation to lowering other barriers, arguing that "being in a minority increases a woman's likelihood of being judged in terms of her difference from the male majority, rather than in terms of her actual performance" (p. 140). Integrating experimental research and statistics on women in traditionally male occupations, including academia, Valian concludes that women still lag behind men not because of their preparation, performance, or values but because of traditional gender schema and the accumulation of many small disadvantages, in other words because of subtle discrimination. Benokraitis (1998) distinguishes individual subtle sex discrimination from organizational, institutional, and cultural subtle discrimination that can be addressed only by fundamental changes in colleges and universities and in higher education in general. Along the same lines, Tierney & Bensimon (1996) argue that gender-neutral policies are not sufficient to eliminate discrimination, which would require "critical and gender-based appraisals of academic structures, practices, and policies as well as the elimination of language and interactions that create hostile, patronizing, or indifferent workplaces for women" (p. 76). Nor is increasing numbers sufficient. Glazer-Raymo's (1999) careful analysis in *Shattering the Myths: Women in Academe* not only demonstrates that women's progress in numbers has been overestimated but also debunks the myth that women are gradually achieving equality in higher education as their numbers increase. As factors that actually could worsen the situation of women, Glazer-Raymo cites some of the same factors that concern the respondents: a political climate that is increasingly antifeminist, the backlash against affirmative action, and the corporatization of the university, including the increase in part-time and non-tenure track faculty who are disproportionately women.

The women in the current study, most of them senior professors and administrators, know that they have come a long way—but certainly not all the way to equal opportunity in higher education. Coming from many different backgrounds and doing their different jobs in their different institutions, these women personally have observed and experienced many of the very problems identified by feminist scholars who study higher education. They do not believe the struggle is over. And the nature of the struggle does appear to remain the same, in spite of the progress. These senior academic women would agree with Alphonse Karr, who stated over 100 years ago, "Plus ça change, plus c'est la même chose."

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Note

Table 1

Changes in the Situation for Women over the Course of Respondents' Careers

Changes	Percentage of respondents reporting this change
General	38%
Increased numbers of women or increased access	53%
Changes in policies or behavior	42%
Changes in beliefs or attitudes	43%
Professional, disciplinary, scholarly influences	8%

Table 2

Changes in Beliefs or Attitudes (Reported by 43% of Respondents)

Grouping	Number of women reporting this change

General statements of changes in sensitivity

    Awareness, understanding of gender issues   2

    Efforts to be sensitive, proactive regender issues   2

    Change in institutional culture, climate   3

    Women less special now   1

Lessened prejudice against women

    Disapproval of discrimination   1

    Appreciation of value of diversity   2

    Women more accepted, respected   2

    Less stereotyping of women   2

    Less male standard, need to fit male model   2

Female students and aspirations more respected   1

    Women more valued/listened to, more voice   2

    Women viewed as equal partners in educating   1

    Integrated, viewed as colleagues before women   3

    Not considered as tokens   1

    Women seen as chosen for their quality   1

    Feminist scholarship more respected   1

    Willing for students to value female perspective   1   (table continues)

    Students not "put off" by women professors   1

Greater awareness of sexual harassment   1

Improved attitudes toward women's advancement

Receptive to women in authority, leadership   4

    Accept women candidates for senior positions   1

    Successful women admired, not aberration   1

    Expect women to want to excel   1

Changes in women's self-perceptions

Women don't feel different from norm	1
Reality check with other women possible	1
Less feeling of isolation, vulnerability	3
Don't have to be "first woman to," exemplar	2
Women more at home in professions, institutions	1
Women expect acceptance in nontraditional field	1
Graduate students feel more powerful	1
Women understand challenges in higher education	1

Changes in attitudes toward family issues

Women seen as able to handle job & parenting	1
Women expected to use daycare	1
Support, understanding for family issues	2
Husbands more understanding	1
Recognition of need for diverse career paths	1

Table 3

Factors in the Situation for Women that have Remained Constant over the Course of the Respondents' Careers

Unchanged factors	Percentage of respondents reporting this factor
General	10%
Areas with underrepresentation of women	24%
Family issues	46%
Bias	69%
Behaviors or self-perceptions that disadvantage women	17%
Constraints	5%

Table 4

Remaining Areas of Bias (Reported by 69% of Respondents)

Area of bias	Number of respondents reporting this bias
Unfair treatment	3
Diligence necessary to preserve gains	2
Remaining salary inequities	14
Hiring, higher ability required for woman	2
Hiring in chauvinistic departments	1
Hiring into temporary vs. tenure-track	1
Lack of diversity in administration & staff	1
Old boy network	2
Tradition inhibits diversity, equity	2
Subtle discrimination, underground	6
Overall climate for women	2
Women still isolated, not seen as true colleagues	1
Male rules, male standards, male hierarchy	6
Linear, analytic way of knowing seen as superior	1
Faculty discourse masculine, combative	1
Exceptional women separated out for acceptance	1
Excellence less expected of women nationally	1
Less respect	1
Women professors less respected by students	1
Not respected if attentive to women's issues	1
Women's issues trivialized as "special"	1
Women expected to conform to feminine stereotypes	1
Women never thought of first to do something	1
Ideas of women discounted, not taken seriously	2
Not seen as competent, able to lead as men	3

Lack credibility as administrators		1
Men confused about how to treat women leaders		1
Women not trusted for tough questions	1	
Men think female colleagues poor at quantitative		1
Women not trusted fiscally	1	
Singled out as woman (token) in some areas		2
Women less welcome in pockets of university		1
Exceptions to sensitivity, comfort with women		3
Some faculty leaders "don't get it"		1
Bias against lesbian women for high positions		1
Harder for minority women		3
Sexism, racism, homophobia, & heterosexism		1
Harder if not white, heterosexual, & middle class		1
Glass ceiling		5
Have to work harder, be better to succeed		5
Tenure, promotion, advance in rank harder		4
Benign neglect recareer enhancing opportunities		1
Women given service jobs		1
Male bosses discourage women moving up		1
Male bosses overwork women		1
Achieve status when older, postmenopausal		1
Easily labeled aggressive, pushy		3
Negative labels compared to men with same traits		1
Delicate balance between being seen as wimp or bitch		1
Gender-related problems of women presidents		1
Curriculum in coeducation biased toward men's values		1
Classroom climate for students		1

Student culture treats women as objects	1
Women students seen as poor at quantitative	1
No commitment to solutions when women lag	1
Sexual harassment	4
No public outcry about sexual assaults	1