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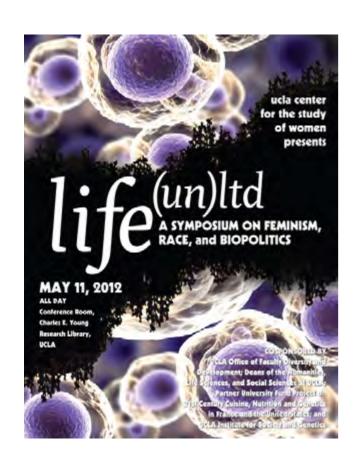UCLA Center for the Study of Women

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CSWupdate

Examining the Underrepresentation of Women in STEM Fields

Early Findings from the Field of Computer Science

by Linda J. Sax

DESPITE an emphasis in recent decades on creating equitable classrooms and recruiting young women into science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM), women have been persistently underrepresented in the STEM disciplines in both higher education and the workforce (Davies & Guppy, 1997; England & Li, 2006; Fox, 2001; Jacobs, 1995; 1996; Mullen, 2010; Sax, 2008; Spelke, 2005; Turner & Bowen, 1999). Except for the biological sciences, which now attract slightly more women than men, women remain underrepresented across the STEM fields, and most particularly in physical science, engineering, and computer science (see Figure 1) (Sax, Jacobs & Riggers, 2010).

Over time, research has identified key issues affecting women's interest and enrollment in STEM fields (Margolis & Fisher, 2002; Sax, 2001; Seymour & Hewitt, 1994; Sonnert, 1995; Xie & Shauman, 2003). These factors generally fall into five categories: demographics (for example, race and class), academic background (for example, the number and level of mathematics and science classes taken in high school), self-confidence (such as perceptions of one's ability in math and science), personality and values (including level of interest in scientific careers, work-related values and preferences), and structural barriers (for example, classroom experiences and support of others outside the classroom setting) (Blick-

enstaff, 2005; Cole & Espinoza, 2008; Espinosa, 2009; Kinzie, 2007; Sax, 1994; 2001; 2008).

Despite the plethora of studies examining the root causes of the gender gap in STEM, a significant problem is that most research considers STEM fields in the aggregate and does not account for possible differences in the factors that predict interest and enrollment in *specific* STEM fields. Because not all STEM fields face the same degree of gender segregation, we cannot expect all STEM fields to attract the same types of students, especially since students likely have

different motivations for pursuing one STEM field versus another.

Further, while predictors of STEM aspirations have been identified in numerous studies, research has generally not examined the extent to which explanations for women's underrepresentation in STEM may have *shifted* over the years. Since the characteristics of college-going women and men have changed over time (Sax, 2008), and perceptions of various STEM fields may have evolved over the years, it is important to know whether individual STEM disciplines attract a
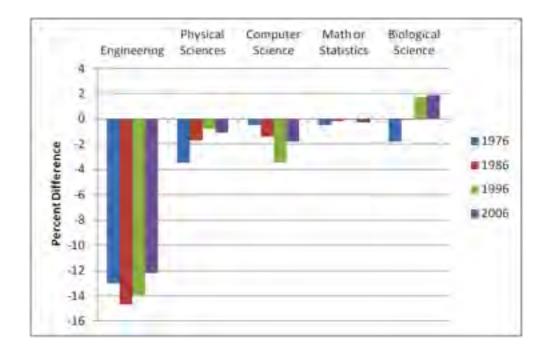

Figure 1. Difference in the percentages of women and men intending to major in STEM by field and year. *Source: Cooperative Institutional Research Program, UCLA*

different configuration of women and men today than in the past.

To explore these questions, my research team and I (along with my co-principal investigator, sociologist Jerry Jacobs from the University of Pennsylvania) are currently engaged in a study of the changing determinants of the gender gap in five STEM fields: engineering, computer science, biological science, physical science, and math/statistics. This research is supported by a grant from the National Science Foundation (HRD #1135727) with additional support provided by a Faculty Development Grant from UCLA's Center for the Study of Women.

Our research benefits from a massive dataset of more than 10 million college students surveyed via the "Freshman Survey" administered at over 1,000 colleges and universities over the past four decades. The Freshman Survey is a national longitudinal study of entering college students conducted by the Cooperative Institutional Research Program (CIRP) at UCLA's Higher Education Research Institute. The Freshman Survey includes dozens of measures relevant to STEM, including: self-ratings of academic and mathematical abilities, high school academic achievement and preparation, major choice, academic and career goals, life goals, value orientations, and demographic backgrounds. Our study will access data between 1971 and 2010 with the ultimate goal of advancing our understanding of the types of women and men who pursue specific STEM majors, and how those characteristics vary both across STEM fields and over time.

GUIDING QUESTIONS

Our research utilizes national data on incoming college students collected over the past 40 years to address the following research questions:

- How has the gender gap in incoming students' intent to major in STEM fields changed over the past three decades?
- Over the past three decades, to what extent are the changes in the gender gap in STEM majors due to: (1) shifts in the *distribution* of characteristics (for example personality, self-confidence, and educational orientations) among undergraduate women and men, or (b) shifts in the *predictive power* of variables for women and men?
- How has the salience of the specific student characteristics predicting selection of STEM majors changed over time for women and men?

A FOCUS ON COMPUTER SCIENCE

We are in the early stages of this three-year project, and have elected to begin our investigation by focusing on the field of computer science. Given the importance of computer science as a foundation for technological advances, the field offers an interesting case for understanding the underrepresentation of women in STEM in general. Indeed, computer science exhibits one of the most severe gender imbalances among the STEM fields, with female college students comprising less than 18 percent of all bachelor's degree recipients in this field in 2008-09 (U.S. Department of Education, 2011).

Interestingly, though computing occupations represent an increasingly dominant share of STEM occupations (Carnevale, Smith & Melton, 2011), the study of computer science does not enjoy the same popularity as it had during the rise of the personal computer in the early 1980s and the Internet boom of the late 1990s. In fact, bachelor's U.S. degree production in computer science has been on a sharp downward slope since 2004 (U.S. Department of Education, 2011). Some computer scientists view the decreased popularity of the field as a sign of crisis, suggesting that the computer science field is losing potential talents to other prominent fields such as finance or bioinformatics (Foster, 2005). Understanding the predictors of computer science interest for all students, with special attention to women as a population that is underrepresented in the field, will aid efforts to increase the enrollment and diversity of the computer science field.

Moreover, with regard to the gender gap, the underrepresentation of women in computer sci-

ence has important consequences for individual women and for society as a whole. First, argued at the individual level, women's lack of interest and participation in computer science education and hence the workforce translates into a gender gap in economic opportunities, as computing occupations often offer relatively high salaries (Margolis & Fisher, 2002). Secondly, considered at a broader level of national competitiveness and the field of computer science itself, the absence of contributions from women (a group that makes up a significant portion of our population, and more than half of our new college graduates) undermines the competitiveness of the computing labor force by limiting the range of perspectives and considerations of its participants (Carnevale et al., 2011; Lewis, Harris, & Cox, 2000; Margolis & Fisher, 2002; Papadopoulos, 2006). The lack of women in computer science also works against efforts to recruit greater diversity into the field by perpetuating a more homogenous (masculine) image of the field (Lewis, Harris, & Cox, 2000), thereby creating a cycle of discouraged participation by women.

EARLY RESULTS

Though it would be easy to describe women in computer science simply as "underrepresented," in actuality *women's underrepresentation in computer science has fluctuated over time* (see Figure 2). Two particularly notable periods are the ad-
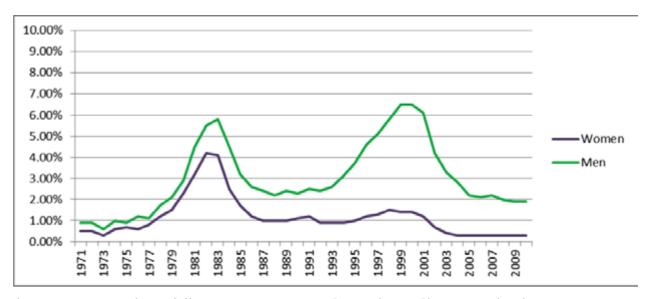

Figure 2. Proportion of first-year women and men intending to major in computer science. *Source: Cooperative Institutional Research Program, UCLA*

vent of personal computers in the late 1970s and the Internet boom in the late 1990s. Though the first period was successful in attracting women, the second period was not. Notably, both periods reveal a widening of the gender gap pertaining to interest in computer science among entering college students. Interestingly, the gender gap in computer science interest is actually larger today than it was decades ago, revealing a trend that is not observed among other STEM fields where the gender gap has remained fairly stable (for example, engineering, math/statistics) or has diminished (for example, biological science).

These trends beg the question of why computer science remains so unattractive to women,

even during times when the field of computing has offered (or appears to have offered) many opportunities. One interpretation for the starkly different trends for women and men is that the two genders differ on traits that are important in selecting a computer science major or career, such as an interest in science and high confidence in one's mathematical abilities. Another interpretation may be that there are gender differences in the *reasons* why women and men pursue computer science; thus, fluctuations in computer science interest might reflect students' changing perception of the field.

Accordingly, our second research question examines these possibilities by calculating the

proportion of the computer science gender gap that is explained by mean-level differences in the characteristics of women and men, versus gender differences in the predictors of computer science interest. Preliminary analyses reveal that, especially in recent decades, *the primary explanation for the gender gap is that women and men differ in the factors that predict interest in computer science*. This finding suggests that efforts to close the gender gap in computer science would be unsuccessful if the goal were simply to align women's and men's average levels on characteristics such as math confidence (a positive predictor) or interest in social activism (a negative predictor). Instead, efforts to recruit more women into computer science ought to be sensitive to the fact that women and men differ slightly in their *reasons* for selecting (or not selecting) computer science as a field of study.

To explore this further, our third research question sheds light on which specific predictors of computer science interest differ for women and men and how this has changed over time. Early results reveal *gender differences in the salience of the vast majority of student characteristics examined*. That is, either the predictive power is significantly different for women and men <u>or</u> a characteristic predicts computer science interest for one gender only. For example, math self-confidence has become a weaker predictor of computer science interest for both women and men. As the nature of the field has evolved, especially with the rapid growth of computer technologies and applications, are students less likely to view mathematical skills as a necessary prerequisite for computer science? If yes, such a trend would bode well for reducing the gender gap in computer science, since women's consistently lower ratings of math ability often preclude them from pursuing STEM fields (Sax, 2001, 2008). In addition, we have found that artistic inclinations have become less of a deterrent to majoring in computer science for women, but not for men. This raises the question of whether women increasingly view computer science as a way to express or apply their artistic abilities. Combined with the declining salience of math ability self-ratings, these early results provide some evidence that the perception of computer science may have shifted slightly away from a math-focused field, and perhaps more towards a creative vocation, at least for women. As we continue in our research, we will explore this possibility in greater depth.

CONCLUSION

As this research project further examines computer science, and then moves on to the engineering, math/statistics, physical sciences and engineering fields, it will generate new knowledge about *which* types of incoming male and female college students are attracted to *which* STEM fields, and how these characteristics have *changed over time.* Such information is critical because it can inform and improve efforts to recruit a diverse population of women (and men) into the scientific and technological workforce. Awareness of gender differences in these shifting characteristics can help to specifically recruit women to STEM fields where they are most underrepresented (for example, engineering and computer science). Without this knowledge, STEM recruitment efforts at all levels of education run the risk of relying on long-standing assumptions regarding which women and men are likely to enter these fields at the aggregate level. By expanding our understanding of who chooses STEM fields, and how that has changed over time, this project will provide a service to society at large, encouraging educators and administrators to consider how teaching, recruitment, and outreach practices might be altered to reduce the gender gap in college STEM participation.

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BY EMILY MUSIL CHURCH

Gaining Her Freedom

SLAVERY AND CITIZENSHIP IN THE FRENCH ANTILLES

"Solitude," a statue in Guadeloupe to a woman who fought against slavery. *Photo courtesy of Max Mongongnon / www.ouassous.com*

Memorial in Martinique to the French abolition of slavery on May 22, 1848.
Photo courtesy of the author

EXPLORING THE HISTORY OF WOMEN OF AFRICAN DESCENT WHO HAD WORKED FOR RACIAL JUSTICE AND WOMEN'S RIGHTS IN THE FRENCH EMPIRE SINCE ITS INCEPTION.

ON May 11, 1850, two years after slavery was abolished in the French empire, a 36-year old woman on the French Caribbean island of Martinique walked to her local municipal office with five children in tow to have all of their names moved from the list of legal human property to the official government list of French citizens. Less than a century later, this woman's great-granddaughter, Paulette Nardal, served as a representative at the United Nations for France's overseas territories. I first went to Martinique in 2002 to research the role Paulette Nardal had played in the negritude movement, a cultural and literary movement of the 1930s to affirm Black cultural identity. I wanted to find out more about her and her six sisters who were

THE FRENCH ABOLISHED SLAVERY INITIALLY IN 1792... IN MAY 1802, NAPOLEON BONAPARTE TOOK CONTROL OF THE FRENCH EMPIRE AND REINSTATED SLAVERY....THE INSTITUTION OF SLAVERY CONTINUED FOR NEARLY ANOTHER HALF CENTURY, AND WAS NOT ABOLISHED PERMANENTLY UNTIL MAY 1848

among the first women of African descent to be educated in Paris in the French colonial system. They were journalists and activists who fostered important networks of intellectuals from Africa, Europe, and the Americas. Although scholars recognized the importance of the Nardal sisters for connecting Black intellectuals across the Atlantic, there had been scant historical research into their lives. Over the past decade, my research into their lives has brought me to France, Senegal, Guadeloupe, numerous archives in the United States, and return trips to Martinique. I am working on a book that weaves the story of the Nardal sisters and their intellectual circle into the larger historical context of the development of modern human rights. What I found as I did my research into the Nardal family was that there was a rich history of women of African descent who had worked for racial justice and women's rights in the French empire since its inception. In my latest trip to Martinique I was able to mine the archives and trace the Nardal family's ancestors back to enslavement and began thinking about how the Nardals' ancestors experienced race and gender in their time. Slavery was abolished in the French colonies in 1848, but it would take another hundred years for Black women to be granted the rights of full, voting citizens. Women of African descent in the French empire were active participants in securing their freedom from enslavement through suffrage.

The vast French colonial empire was based on an economy that relied on the enslavement of Africans, the domination of women, and the exploitation of colonial labor. Exploration, settlement, and ultimately colonization of lands across the Atlantic have been crucial elements in France's history and development since the seventeenth century.[1] Sugar cultivation in the Caribbean marked a dramatic shift in Atlantic trends, as European powers—primarily the French, British, and Dutch—fought for control over these profitable islands, and demanded a sharp increase in the number of enslaved people they were exporting from Africa.[2] Millions of Africans were forcibly brought to the Americas, and today the vast majority of people living in the Caribbean are of African descent. As long as there has been slavery, there have been people who fought for their freedom from slavery. Resistance to slavery is often thought of in terms of armed rebellion, but enslaved women employed many additional techniques in their resistance such as controlling their fertility (to either avoid or create offspring with white masters in particular), poisoning food and livestock, and running away to maroon societies.[3] When the French Revolution threw the French empire into chaos, enslaved people used the opportunity to organize greater resistance to slavery.

1. Quinn, Frederick. *French Overseas Empire.* West Port, CT: Praeger Press, 2000: 79.
2. Klein, Martin. *Slavery and Colonial Rule in French West Africa.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998: 3.
3. For more on this, see "Ch. 7: Women and Resistance" in Bernard Moitt's *Women and Slavery in the French Antilles, 1635-1848,* Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2001.
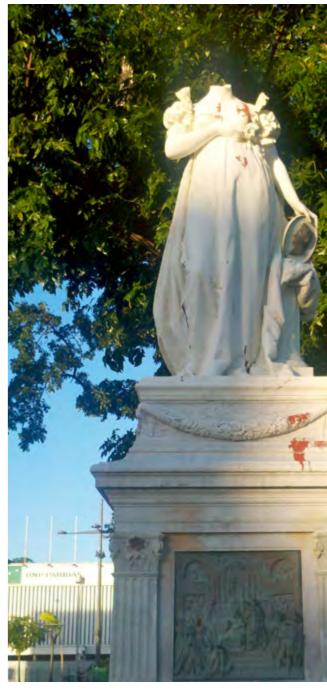
The French Revolution in the late eighteenth century overthrew monarchical rule in favor of democratic ideals. The grotesque hypocrisy between these ideals and the entrenched system of slavery that fueled the French empire inspired slave revolutions throughout the colonial empire. The most successful was in Saint-Domingue, renamed Haiti after independence, where their revolution resulted in the formation of the second republic in the Western hemisphere (after the United States). Haiti's success inspired further uprisings by people enslaved throughout the Atlantic world. The French abolished slavery initially in 1792, but the British sought to seize French territories and maintain slavery. Guadeloupe, the French Caribbean island near Martinique, ignited in a series of uprisings. In contrast to the image of male, armed rebels, Guadeloupe celebrates the legacy of one of the women heroes of this revolt. Solitude was a woman who had run away from the plantation where she was enslaved to join a maroon society. Pregnant when the revolution was at its height, she was famed for her courage in battles even while very pregnant. In May 1802, Napoleon Bonaparte took control of the French empire and reinstated slavery. Solitude and her comrades, however, continued to fight and elude the authorities until November 1802. The institution of slavery continued for nearly another half century, and was not abolished permanently until May 1848.[4]

4. Quinn, *French Overseas Empire*, 95.

Today, you can see the historical memory of women and slavery portrayed in stark contrast in two statues. The first, erected in 1999, commemorates Solitude, the revolutionary pregnant freedom fighter, standing proudly in a defiant pose in the middle of a prominent traffic circle on the Boulevard of Heroes in Guadeloupe *(see photo on page 9)*. The second is a statue commemorating the Empress Josephine, Napoleon's wife who was from Martinique *(at right)*. In 1991, the statue was beheaded with red paint poured from the neck and red spray paint written across the memorial in Creole "slavery is a crime against humanity."[5] Many Martinicans believe that Empress Josephine, who had grown up in a white slave-owning family in Martinique, had a hand in convincing Napoleon to reinstate slavery after the French Revolution.

Even during the French Revolution, there was a sense that women were being excluded from the rights of citizens in the Republic. Olympe de Gouges, a French female playwright, wrote "*Déclaration des Droits de la Femme et la Citoyenne*" in 1791, modeled after the famous 1789 Declaration of the National Assembly, in which she argued that women were equal to men. For this she was executed at the guillotine two years later. The "rights of man" promoted in the At-

5. When I first saw the statue in 2002, those were the words inscribed. In her book *Cultural Conundrums: Gender, Race, Nation, & the Making of Caribbean Cultural Politics* (University of Michigan Press, 2006) her Prologue "Josephine Beheaded" says that words were "Respect Martinique. Respect 22 May [the date that slavery was abolished in 1848]" so it seems that the phrases are updated or changed over time.

The beheaded statue of Empress Josephine in Martinique. *Photo courtesy of the author*

WOMEN OF AFRICAN DESCENT IN THE FRENCH EMPIRE FOUGHT FOR THEIR FREEDOM FROM THE EARLIEST RECORDS OF THEIR ENSLAVEMENT. THEY SOUGHT ACCESS TO FREEDOM THROUGH NUMEROUS FORMS OF RESISTANCE AND STRATEGIC ALLIANCES.

lantic revolutions in the late nineteenth century were not granted to any women, or most men of African descent. The revolution of 1848 granted "Universal Suffrage" which allowed men who were citizens to freely choose their deputies and councilors, although it excluded suffrage for all women.[6] It also excluded the majority of Africans who remained non-citizen subjects in the French empire.[7] The same year, the French Minister of Education proposed to include girls in their law of compulsory education until the age of fourteen. His position that girls should be educated was so radical that it forced him to resign due to controversy.[8] These democratic reforms continued to be extremely limited for those who were not European men.

In the late nineteenth century, as industrialism and capitalism were growing and thriving in Western Europe, there was an increased demand for more materials, workers, and trade routes to and from the colonies. In the short time between 1880-1900, European colonial empires claimed all of Africa, with the exceptions of Liberia and Ethiopia.[9] France added the bulk of West Africa as well as French Equatorial Africa, French Somaliland, and Madagascar to its colonial empire. Unlike the British colonial policy that implemented "indirect rule" in the colonies, viewing colonized lands as separately governed entities; French colonial policy was one of "direct rule." It viewed the lands it had colonized as an extension of France. The accompanying ideology was known as the French *mission civilisatrice*, or "civilizing mission." This philosophy promoted the idea that the infusion of French culture could improve the lives of the "uncivilized" and "savage" indigenous peoples from the colonies.[10] Although slavery was legally abolished in the French colonies, forced labor continued to be widespread in Africa. The *Code de l'indigénat* was a legal code adopted in 1887 that gave colonial administrators authority to fine and jail indigenous people without trial.[11] The

Statue of Gerty Archimède in Guadeloupe.
Photo courtesy of the author

6. Senators were elected by indirect suffrage.

7. Quinn, *French Overseas Empire*, 156.

8. "Women's Rights in France," S. Joan Moon in Encyclopedia of 1848 Revolutions, 2005. www.ohiou.edu/~chastain/rz/womrgt.htm. Accessed April 27, 2007.

9. Boahen, A. Adu. *African Perspectives on Colonialism*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1987: 27.

10. Conklin, Alice. *Mission to Civilize: The Republican Idea of Empire in France and French West Africa*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2000: 8.

11. Quinn, *French Overseas Empire*, 118.

immense extension of the French empire during this period created a distinct difference between the "Old Colonies"—such as those in the French Caribbean—and the new colonies in Africa. People from the Old Colonies were granted more rights and were considered more "civilized" than the new African subjects. It was during this period that families such as the Nardals were able to slowly gain some of the privileges of citizenship.

The Nardal sisters' father, Paul Nardal, was one of the first men of African descent to be sent to France to get educated in the late nineteenth century. It was rare for Black men to get such an education, and virtually unheard of for Black women. Paul Nardal's daughters, then, became among the very first group of women of African descent to be eligible to be educated in Paris a generation later, although they were still not voting citizens. In the French context, where deep connection to *la Patrie* is particularly central to national identity, those seeking reforms had to carefully negotiate between patriotism and international progress. During World War I, when British and American women were on the verge of achieving suffrage, the main French suffrage group, *Union Française pour le Suffrage des Femmes*, declined to sign a peace petition with international women's groups, citing their patriotism and support for France as reasons to not join.[12] For Black women, whose loyalty to France was even more in question as the French feared anti-colonial organizing, challenges to the French system were even riskier. Paulette Nardal, however, became involved in women's groups soon after her arrival in Paris in the 1920s. She joined the *Union Féminine Civique et Sociale*, a moderate feminist group founded in 1925 to create a group of elite, civically engaged female leaders and to promote women's emancipation in the social agenda of the Catholic Church.[13] From 1935 to 1939, she had published in a number of journals, including *le Cerf*, promoting the organization.[14] When the Nardal sisters were back in Martinique after World War II, they organized women into a political delegation to reshape their political and domestic roles where they went door-to-door, organized conferences and expositions, and infiltrated the local media with new ideas. Other women in the French Caribbean created similar types of women's groups, many with ties to international organizations.

While women's political activism most often affected local issues, the inclusion of women into the global political arena after World War II allowed for their unprecedented circulation internationally both physically and intellectually. Before this time, Black women in particular—despite notable exceptions such as Ida B. Wells' trans-Atlantic anti-lynching campaign in the late nineteenth century or the Black intellectuals in Paris—had extremely limited mobility and access to international communities. That shifted dramatically in the mid-twentieth century, especially as French women first won the right to vote in 1944, realized in 1945. Black women in the French empire had greater opportunities to influence the global political landscape and worked to increase their influence.[15] Paulette Nardal was appointed as a delegate to the United Nations in 1946 where she worked on a committee focused on non-autonomous territories in the French empire throughout the globe. Gerty Archimède, the first Black female lawyer in Guadeloupe, first woman from the French Caribbean to be elected to the National Assembly, and Communist friend of Nardal's, traveled and worked in Senegal, Hungary, and the Soviet Union, among other places, as a result of her political inclusion. She spent several weeks in Côte d'Ivoire doing legal work to aid a vast number of detainees—many of them women—imprisoned for supposed crimes as starting schools without colonial authorization.[16] Women across the political spectrum joined with international women's groups to work for political and economic reforms, as well as improved rights for women in the domestic realm.

Women of African descent in the French empire fought for their freedom from the earliest

12. Rupp, "Constructing Internationalism," *The American Historical Review* 99.5 (Dec. 1994): 1588.

13. "Presentation de l'Union Féminine Civique et Sociale (UFCS)," CAF, Fonds 16AF.

14. "Paulette Nardal: l'âme de la perfection," *Carib Hebdo*, 1.

15. For more on the ways that suffrage was granted unequally based on a racial hierarchy, see Boittin, Firpo, and Musil Church in "Hierarchies of Race and Gender in the French Colonial Empire, 1914-1946," *Historical Reflections* 37.1 (Spring 2011): 60-90.

16. Laurent Farrugia, *Gerty Archimède*, Interview transcript. Jeunes Antil (1976): 52

WHAT I FOUND AS I DID MY RESEARCH INTO THE NARDAL FAMILY WAS THAT THERE WAS A RICH HISTORY OF WOMEN OF AFRICAN DESCENT WHO HAD WORKED FOR RACIAL JUSTICE AND WOMEN'S RIGHTS IN THE FRENCH EMPIRE SINCE ITS INCEPTION. IN MY LATEST TRIP TO MARTINIQUE I WAS ABLE TO MINE THE ARCHIVES AND TRACE THE NARDAL FAMILY'S ANCESTORS BACK TO ENSLAVEMENT AND BEGAN THINKING ABOUT HOW THE NARDALS' ANCESTORS EXPERIENCED RACE AND GENDER IN THEIR TIME.

The author in front of the street named for Paulette Nardal in Martinique. *Photo by Joshua Musil Church.*

records of their enslavement. They sought access to freedom through numerous forms of resistance and strategic alliances. Slavery was abolished in the French colonies in 1848, but it would take another hundred years for Black women to be granted the rights of full, voting citizens. In the series of democratic reforms that occurred in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century, women were categorically denied the increased rights of their male counterparts. As women slowly were granted greater access to the public realm in the early twentieth century, they formed groups, published widely, and advocated for suffrage and increased rights. Once women became full voting citizens after World War II, they used their political influence to ameliorate the lives and rights of women around the globe. It was a long journey from Paulette Nardal's great-grandmother's walk to liberate herself and her children from the list of human property to Paulette's position as a voting citizen who represented France at the United Nations. Yet their story allows us a glimpse of the courage and dedication that women of African descent in the French empire had in working to secure their freedoms.

Emily Musil Church is a CSW Research Scholar and is currently on research leave from her position as Assistant Professor of History at Lafayette College in Easton, PA. She is working on a book project entitled *From Emancipation Towards Equality: Race, Gender, and the Transformation from "Rights of Man" to Human Rights.*

BY NATHALIE SÉGERAL

Sexing Slavery, the Holocaust, and Madness

Wars, and hence the memories of wars, are owned by the male of the species. And fascism is a decidedly male property, whether you were for or against it. Besides, women have no past, or aren't supposed to have one. A man can have an interesting past, a woman only an indecent one. And my stories aren't even sexy.

–Ruth Klüger, *Still Alive: A Holocaust Girlhood Remembered*, p. 18

[Beloved's] *heroine would represent the unapologetic acceptance of shame and terror; assume the consequences of choosing infanticide; claim her own freedom. The terrain, slavery, was formidable and pathless. To invite readers (and myself) into the repellant landscape (hidden, but not completely; deliberately buried, but not forgotten) was to pitch a tent in a cemetery inhabited by highly vocal ghosts.*

–Toni Morrison, *Beloved*, p. xi

Hôpital ou camp de concentration[1]?

–Leonora Carrington, *En Bas*, p. 35

C'est difficile d'annoncer à quelqu'un, comme ça, tout d'un coup, qu'il est passé de l'autre côté. Qu'à partir de maintenant, il ne sera plus comme les autres. Qu'il portera pour toujours la marque des aliénés comme les esclaves d'antan portaient leur tatouage[2]

–Emma Santos, *L'Itinéraire psychiatrique*, p. 18

HOW DOES a woman writer memorialize her own traumatic history, when it happens to be part of a larger history dominated by male narratives (as far as the Holocaust and slavery go), or when it is altogether silenced (as is the case for madness and psychiatric hospitalization)? My dissertation is an interdisciplinary project that tries to answer these questions by applying comparative memory studies to the gendering of trauma in contemporary historical and (auto)fictional narratives. It is entitled "Reclaimed Experience: Gendering Trauma in Slavery, Holocaust, and Madness Narratives" and includes eight Francophone, Germanophone, and Anglophone women writers.

Following Michael Rothberg's concept of "multidirectional memory,"[3] which demonstrates how marginalized collective memories interact productively instead of competing with one another, I am reading in concert Caribbean and African-American women writing about slavery (Maryse Condé and Toni Morrison), Jewish women writing about the Holocaust (Ruth Klüger, Sarah Kofman, and Cécile Wajsbrot), and (formerly) mad women writing about madness (Leonora Carrington, Emma Santos, and Unica Zürn). The common point among these female authors lies in their double marginalization: as women, they are part of a "minority" within a minority (the mentally ill,

Self-Portrait by Leonora Carrington

the postcolonial/Black subject, the Jew), thus being dominated subjects in history.

So far, the commonality between women's writings of slavery and of the Holocaust has barely been touched upon, and their potential kinship with writings by mad women has not been studied at all. And yet, these authors resort to a set of shared tropes, in order to reclaim their stories, whereby literature becomes a means to moving beyond victimology: a deconstruction of "motherhood" through ghosts, infanticidal mothers, distorted lineages, and the intertextuality of rewritten fairy tales, which are used – albeit in different ways – by all of them, so as to debunk myths held by male narratives about "femininity."

Besides Rothberg's multidirectional memory, the main theoretical framework for my dissertation is Cathy Caruth's trauma theory, black feminist studies, Marianne Hirsch's concept of "postmemory" and the feminine/feminist transgenerational transmission of trauma. A close study of how the memory of the traumatic past becomes literature in these eight texts serves to emphasize the "echo chamber" created by the circulation of recurring tropes among texts dealing with different time periods and different types of traumas, and establishes a conversation among these writers. The literary use of this echo chamber allows for a pivotal shift from passivity to agency and enables these female authors to reclaim[4] their experiences, while giving rise to a

transnational literary voice of the gendering of trauma, in keeping with Rothberg's ideal of a "shared memory." Ultimately, this project's aim is to create a multidirectional feminist trauma theory.

Thus, the guiding thread of this study is two-fold: on the one hand, I am exploring the similarities among literary depictions of the concentrationary space, the space of the planta-tion, and the space of the psychiatric hospital. Namely, these narratives bear striking resem-blance in relation to metaphors of imprison-ment, alienation, and dis-possession of one's story. Carrington, Santos, and Zürn all use re-curring allusions to concentration camps when writing about their experience in the psychiatric hospital.

On the other hand, my work investigates the sexed subjectivity of these trauma narratives through a set of recurring tropes pertaining to the blurring of gender boundaries. One of these pervasive tropes is the literary figure of the "bad" mother—be it the infanticidal mother or the childless woman—both as an embodiment of trauma and as the means to overcoming it. In the process of re-appropriating the traumatic history they have inherited or experienced first-hand, these writers all feel the need to decon-struct the notion of "motherhood," as well as to subvert traditional gender roles and boundaries, and traditional lineages, thanks to the *mise en*

Institut mémoires de l'édition contemporaine, Abbaye d'Ardenne, Caen, Normandy

abyme of rewritten fairy tales and to the centrality of ghosts and of various spectral metaphors.

Thus, following Rothberg's conception of multidirectional memory as an echo chamber, where histories are understood as related to each other, my goal is to demonstrate that a comparative study of texts dealing with different types of traumas (slavery, the Holocaust, madness, and psychiatric institutionalization) and written by women, allows for new insights into the literary devices used by these authors so as to re-embody their story, which they feel has been silenced or erased from history books. If multidirectional memory emphasizes trauma as a link between cultures, it can consequently be furthered by being applied to gender and feminist studies, and extended to a realm of literature located outside of history, and yet, anchored in it: the writing of madness.

My current research interests are the result of a thinking process that started several years before entering the doctoral program. After completing undergraduate studies in philosophy and English literature in France, I was given the opportunity to teach French for a year in Christchurch, New Zealand, in a public boys' high school and in a private girls' high school. My choice of going there sprang from an interest in Janet Frame, a New Zealand writer who was wrongly diagnosed with schizophrenia and subsequently spent eight years in a psychiatric hospital in the 1960s. I was given access to some of her personal papers—in-

Listening to these Holocaust survivors was an extremely moving experience, and this is when I began to notice differences between male and female narratives of experienced trauma, as well as common points and recurring issues in narratives of Holocaust, slavery, and madness by women.

cluding letters in which she discusses her mental issues—that have not been published—and was also able to read some of her correspondence and papers at the Frame Literary Trust.

After coming back from New Zealand, I attended the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee as an exchange student from the Université Paris III-Sorbonne Nouvelle. I ended up staying for a second year at UWM, where I received an M.A. in Comparative Literature, during the course of which I started drawing some comparisons between women's writings of madness and women's writings of slavery. I then went on to enter the doctoral program in French and Francophone Studies at UCLA and, simultaneously, started to take part in a program called "Bearing Witness," which collects Holocaust survivors' testimonies for a database. For several weeks, I went to the UCLA Hillel Center once a week and had lunch with a Holocaust survivor who told me his story of struggle and survival from the Lodz ghetto to Auschwitz to Los Angeles. Listening to these Holocaust survivors was an extremely moving experience, and it was during these sessions that I began to notice differences between male and female narratives of experienced trauma, as well as common points and recurring issues in women's narratives of the Holocaust, slavery, and madness.

Over the course of my graduate studies at UCLA, I have been very lucky to receive various fellowships, which have enabled me to conduct archival research both in France (at the Institut Mémoires de l'Édition Contemporaine in Caen and at the Bibliothèque Nationale de France in Paris) and in Berlin (at the Jüdisches Museum and at the Staatsbibliothek). Thanks to a UCLA/Mellon Fellowship on Holocaust Studies in American and World Cultures and to a Mellon Pre-Dissertation Fellowship, I was able to spend two summers in Berlin, where I accessed Holocaust archives at the Jewish Museum, as well as Unica Zürn's personal papers at the Potsdamer Straße branch of the Staatsbibliothek.[5] The Staatsbibliothek also happens to hold the most important resources on Jewish literature in Europe. In the meantime, I also took classes at the Berlin Goethe Institut, so as to improve my German language skills and become better able to read the German authors included in my dissertation in the original version. This research proved essential to the second and third parts of my dissertation, which respectively deal with the gendering of Holocaust trauma and tropes of "female madness."

For the past two academic years, I have also been receiving a fellowship (*bourse d'accueil*) from the École Normale Supérieure-Ulm, in Paris (through a partnership with my home department), which provides me with lodgings while carrying out research at the Bibliothèque Nationale de France. I would also like to thank the

Photo credits: Photo on page 16 shows the Holocaust Memorial in Berlin. All photos are courtesy of the author.

NOTES

1. "A hospital or a concentration camp?" (my translation).
2. "It's hard to suddenly break the news to somebody that, all of a sudden, they have gone through the other side. That, from now on, he/she will never be like other people. That he/she will always wear the mark of madness, just like slaves used to be tattooed" (my translation).
3. Michael Rothberg, *Multidirectional Memory: Remembering the Holocaust in the Age of Decolonization*, Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 2009.
4. By using the phrase "to reclaim one's experience," I am paraphrasing trauma theorist Cathy Caruth's article "Unclaimed Experience: Trauma and the Possibility of History," *Yale French Studies* 79 (1991): 181-192.
5. Unica Zürn was a German surrealist painter and writer, who suffered from schizophrenia, spent time at Berlin-Wittenau – Berlin's main psychiatric hospital, and committed suicide in 1970 in Paris.

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CSWupdate

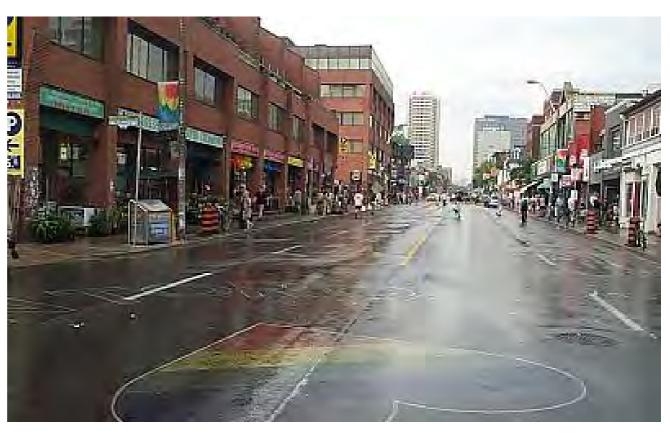# The Sexual Field
A NEW THEORY FOR CLASSIC QUESTIONS

Adam Isaiah Green

At a talk, entitled "Outline of a Theory of Sexual Practice: Bringing Bourdieu to the Sexual Field," which was organized by the Center for the Study of Women and cosponsored by the Department of Sociology's Gender Working Group, Adam Isaiah Green, a University of Toronto sociologist, offered the audience an exciting glimpse into the broad and ambitious theoretical framework he is developing to explain the intimate connection between the social world and sexuality. He was only able to present a small slice of this expansive project during the talk but demonstrated the compelling potential this framework has not only to generate novel approaches to the classic sociological questions of sexual behavior and identity but also, and more importantly he suggests, to better understand the elusive grey area of sexual desire.

Green's recent articles, "The Social Organization of Desire: The Sexual Fields Approach" (2008a) and "Erotic Habitus: Toward a Sociology of Desire" (2008b), published respectively in *Sociological Theory* and *Theory and Society,* represent somewhat of a paradigm shift in the field which has heretofore been dominated by scripting theory. For those who are not familiar with it, Gagnon and Simon's (1974) concept of "sexual scripts" explains how individuals learn, internalize, reproduce, and sometimes change the social rules and expectations regarding sexuality, romance, and love. They argue, along with those who later operationalized and expanded their idea (see for example: Brekhus 2003; Hammack 2009; Laumann 1994; Plante 2006) that sexual scripts are (in order from macro to micro): 1) cultural, 2) subcultural, 3) interpersonal, and 4)

intrapsychic. Our culture, on the broadest level, sets up the major social outlines about the rules of sexuality but those expectations are tempered, modified, or contradicted by membership in a smaller community, whether racial/ethnic, sexual, or local/regional. We learn about these scripts in interaction with individuals and institutions and then play them out with others. Finally, we even integrate them into our fantasy lives where they shape our desires and perceptions.

He suggests that while scripting theory allows us to study the processes through which individuals transform social norms into ideas and practices, it does not allow us to answer the question such analysis begs: "Why do individuals differentially select sexual scripts and what is the process of differential acquisition?" (Green 2008b). What is essentially missing from scripting theory, Green argues, are the social structures and power relations that shape how and why people find things erotic. His theory of the sexual field proposes to overcome this limitation by conceptualizing erotic life as a series of historically, culturally, and geographically bounded terrains. During his talk, Green described how we can think of a sexual field as both a force-field, orienting subconscious and conscious desires, and a battlefield, in which actors compete to gain access to the object of desire. The logic of competition thus necessarily ungirds Green's approach.

Church and Wellesley, Toronto. *Photo courtesy of Wikimedia Commons*

Green's theoretical approach allows us to ask these and other questions that require us to consider sexuality in new and fruitful ways even if not everyone will be persuaded to use this theory. His talk sparked a lively and thought provoking discussion that proved just how productive this new line of work will be for the study of sexuality. He has given us something to hang our hats on and offered us ways to contribute to a new research agenda that should animate the field for years to come.

Green is using Pierre Bourdieu's (1977; 2002) theory of the field that the French sociologist originally developed to explain why members of different social classes have different kinds of tastes in food, clothing, or entertainment, and the effects those habits have on social stratification. Actors acquire and use economic, social, and cultural capital, to navigate the hierarchies that structure the field. Green sees erotic worlds, such as gay leather-bars or college fraternity parties, as sexual fields that are structured by their own particular hierarchies in which actors mobilize a fourth and embodied resource: erotic capital. Defined as the "quality and quantity of attributes that an individual possesses [that] elicit an erotic response in another," erotic capital can include "physical traits (e.g., the size of breasts, height, hair color), affective presentations (e.g., butch, nebbishy, animalistic), and eroticized sociocultural styles (e.g., the blue-collar construction worker, the Catholic schoolgirl)" (2008a: 29). The value of erotic capital's components, like other forms of capital, will vary according to the hierarchies, such as those based on race, class, and gender, that traverse a specific erotic world. Finally, the sexual field of a given erotic world produces "tiers of desirability" into which actors fit according to how much desired erotic capital they possess (2008a: 32).

At the talk, Green illustrated how the sexual field operates by analyzing the visual mediascape

along the main strip of Church and Wellesley, Toronto's gay district. Taking a look at all the advertisements and posters that vie for attention along the street, Green points out that images of thin, muscular, young, and well-groomed white men dominate. From the posters to the night-clubs, bars, and bathhouses, the tier of desirability is such that young middle-class white gay men possess the most erotic capital and can easily find partners. Individuals who have less erotic capital, because they are not white or young for example, will have a harder time finding partners. Those low in erotical capital have several options for dealing with their situation. They could gain more erotic capital by modifying what can be changed, by say lifting weights or dieting; they could compensate by using other kinds of capital, like using money to purchase sex; or they could go to another sexual field in which the erotic capital they do possess is more highly valued. This last option, Green suggests, is one of the hallmarks of our digital online era, in which ever more specialized groups can form around highly specific sexual tastes and practices.

Because Green places competition and power at the center of his theory, sexual fields are better able than sexual scripts to address the inequalities that sexual desires produce. People are not simply socialized into using sexual scripts onto which already existing social hierarchies are written in a static way. On the contrary, in competing

for sexual and romantic partners in given erotic worlds, actors are constantly defining what counts as erotic and, in so doing, inscribe inequalities into desirability. Green suggests that his approach is thus able to use feminist insights to shed light on how power and the erotic are intimately linked but warns that if we collapse erotic inequalities into other larger systems of stratification, we lose sight of what is unique about the sexual. The sexual field is "organized by a system of relations that draws from but is irreducible to alternative fields"(2008a: 35). This is not to suggest that patriarchy or racism do not matter in the sexual field but that they play out in ways that are specific to erotic worlds and function according to the logical of the sexual field.

This novel approach brings up questions about what the theory of fields is able to teach us, how we might carry out work in this vein empirically, and what its limitations might be. As Green has studied them in his own work, sexual fields are bounded geographically and correspond, more or less, to urban erotic subcultures. How then can we use the idea of sexual fields as the size and scope of analysis increases to encompass, say, groups in an entire city or country? In other words, are sexual fields necessarily bounded by geographical limits? Green would suggest that although sexuality is informed by cultural factors produced in larger cultural structures, like the mass media, individuals always enact their

sexuality in specific local contexts that are situated in some kind of sexual field. If the sexual field approach is most useful in explaining what people desire and how their desires produce systems of stratification that structure their ability to get sexual partners, does the sexual field approach apply when sexual partners are not the goal? Sexual identity – the meaning and importance a person attaches to her sexual behaviors or desires – is an aspect of sexuality that is not about acquiring sexual experiences. We might then need other field dynamics outside the sexual field to explain when, how, and why a person mobilizes—or not—parts of her sexual identity.

Green's theoretical approach allows us to ask these and other questions that require us to consider sexuality in new and fruitful ways even if not everyone will be persuaded to use this theory. His talk sparked a lively and thought provoking discussion that proved just how productive this new line of work will be for the study of sexuality. He has given us something to hang our hats on and offered us ways to contribute to a new research agenda that should animate the field for years to come.

Michael Stambolis is a graduate student in the Department of Sociology at UCLA.

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CSW update

APRIL 2012

TRAVEL CHILDCARE AWARDS AVAILABLE

SEVERAL YEAR AGO, when my daughter was small, I had an opportunity to attend a conference in New Orleans. Unfortunately, my husband had just started a new job. I was afraid I wouldn't be able to attend—until, miracle of miracles!, I discovered that the conference organization was offering onsite childcare! It was unusual and so welcome. I was able to balance parenthood and my professional career easily for once.

CSW is pleased to report an awards program initiated by the UCLA Office for Faculty Diversity and Development that addresses this problem for junior faculty and postdocs at UCLA. Sponsored by a New Scholars program grant from the Elsevier Foundation, the Travel Childcare Awards are meant to help defray the cost of travel and childcare while attending professional conferences, meetings, symposia,

or workshops related to academic disciplines iin science, heath, and technology.

The UCLA Office of Faculty Diversity & Development understands that the pre-tenure years are exceedingly important for exposure and recognition of young scholars research and networking for faculty positions while at the same time being the prime childbearing years for women. This can create stress and conflict for women who seek to both pursue an academic career and have a family. This award was created to help reduce the difficulty of managing parenting responsibilities and an academic career.

Marissa Lopez, an Assistant Professor in the Department of English,who recently received an award, says, "I have an older child in school and an eighteen-month-old, whose care I split with my husband. Our work time

depends on each other, so traveling to conferences is always tricky. This award paid for a sitter who could be with my baby the days I was gone (thus allowing my husband to keep working), and it paid for one day of childcare before the conference so that I could get some work done before leaving. It was such a big financial and emotional help. I probably would not have gone to this conference without the grant. (And, I found our sitter using Sittercity, the new benefit that UCLA provided in 2012 — it was great!) As CSW Director Kathleen McHugh notes, "This award shows that a small investment can result in big rewards for scholars who are juggling careers and family."

These awards are open to postdoctoral scholars and assistant professors in the following divisions: Engineering, Life Sciences, Physical Sciences, Public Health, Dentistry, Medicine, Nursing, and Social Sciences. Applications for Travel Childcare Awards are accepted twice a year, in Fall and Spring quarters. Awards are made based on need, importance of the meeting to the applicant's career, and the funding available. Approximately 25 awards are available each year in the amount of $500 each. For more information or to apply, visit: https://faculty.diversity.ucla.edu/news-1/funding-opportunities-n/family-friendly-grants.

This program has become a model for additional efforts by Chris Littleon, Vice Provost for Faculty Diversity and Development and the Deans of the Law School, Humanities, and the Social Sciences. These efforts are extending support to male faculty as well.

—*Brenda Johnson-Grau*

Note: Photo © Julie Fairman, istockphoto.com

CSW *update*
APRIL 2012

PLEDGE A GREEN ACT!

FOR THIS EARTH DAY, April 22, the Earth Day Network has launched a campaign called Billion Acts of Green that asks people and organizations to pledge and act of green to support green initiatives. The Earth Day Networks goal is to have over one billion acts pledged before the Earth Summit taking place this June. The acts can be as simple as pledging to eat more local food or turning off and unplugging electronics when they are not in use. Over 900,000,000 pledges have already been made and you can make your pledge by visiting www.earthday.org.

–Lindsey McLean

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CSWupdate

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