

Women in the Profession, 2000

MLA COMMITTEE ON THE STATUS OF WOMEN IN THE PROFESSION

The MLA Committee on the Status of Women in the Profession (CSWP) was established in 1969, in part to advocate for the hiring and promotion of women scholars in English and the foreign languages (Howe).¹ The thirtieth anniversary of the publication of its first report—"The Status of Women in Modern Language Departments" (Howe, Morlock, and Berk)²—is fast approaching, and the new millennium is already upon us. The present CSWP thus finds this an appropriate moment to revisit the terrain of the 1971 report, to consider changes in the status of women in English and the foreign languages that have occurred over the past three decades.

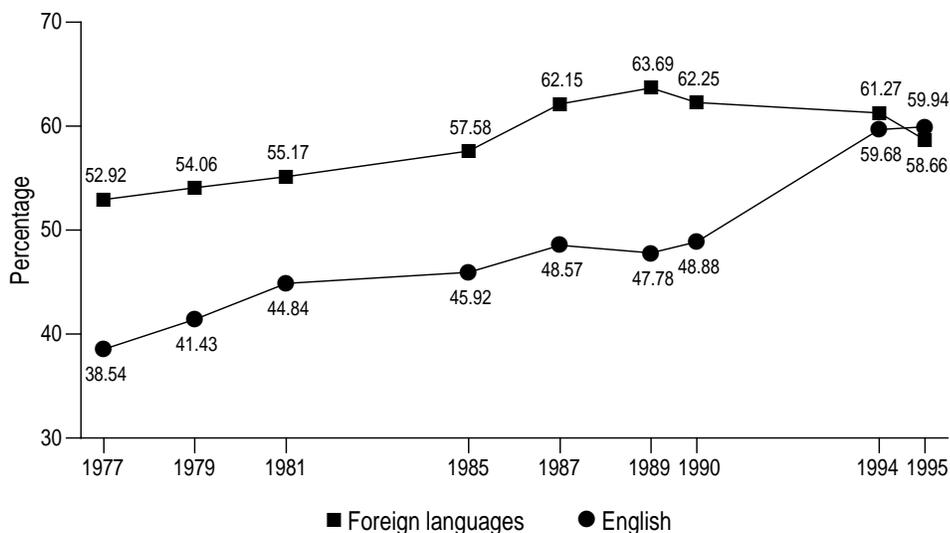
Our return to the earlier report is motivated in large part by the concerns that have preoccupied the CSWP during the past decade. First, for many years we have been developing a picture of women of color in the profession, culminating in the broad "CSWP Draft Statement on People of Color in the Modern Languages," and we wanted more precise information about the experience of this group.³ Second, following the MLA Committee on Professional Employment's 1997 report (*Final Report*), which did not use gender as a category of analysis, we wanted to raise the question of how the decline in tenure-track jobs and the rise in the number of adjunct teaching positions that this report considered have affected white women and women of color. Finally, we wished to assess the status of women in English and the foreign languages in the light of the significant changes in women's lives and the social and intellectual changes in the disciplines since the 1970s.

Our questions and categories of analysis overlap considerably with those of the original committee. We have considered women's representation

relative to men in English and the foreign languages at every level, from undergraduate to PhD programs, as well as through the different categories and ranks of professional employment. We have also attempted to track women's advancement and salaries relative to those of men within the profession. We wanted, however, to achieve a clearer picture of the racial compositions of different professional categories than those provided by the original report on the status of women in modern languages or by more recent surveys such as Bettina Huber's 1990 report on women in the modern languages. Our concerns, moreover, are somewhat different from those of the first members of the CSWP. Even in 1971, the CSWP noted that women were disproportionately represented in the ranks of part-time and non-tenure-track positions: although women constituted only a third of the full-time faculty in the institutions surveyed, they held 54% of those institutions' part-time faculty positions (Howe, Morlock, and Berk 461). It might have been reasonable to presume that this disparity would be resolved as opportunities opened up for women. Obviously, the 1971 CSWP report could not have foreseen the shifts in the structure of academic employment that have occurred over the past thirty years. In the five-year period from 1965 to 1969, women constituted 29% of PhD recipients in English and 33% of PhD recipients in foreign languages (460). Since then, these percentages have roughly doubled (fig. 1).⁴ Other gains for women of various races and ranks have occurred in terms of their representation among full-time, tenure-track faculty, even though, when the actual numbers of participants surveyed are taken into account, some pools of women continue to be underrepresented. These proportional gains, however, occurred at a time when the number of white men entering these fields shrank considerably; the same years have seen a severe contraction in the numbers of full-time, tenure-track academic positions and an increasing institutional reliance on part-time, non-tenure-track faculty members.

Even our preliminary look at statistics collected by the MLA suggested a disturbing picture of women moving into English and the foreign languages in greater numbers at a point when employment opportunities are contracting and, in English, when fewer white men are entering the field. It is no news that the employment opportunities (working conditions, salaries, and status) of jobs that are identified primarily with women are inferior to the employment opportunities (working conditions, salaries, and status) of "men's work." Are white men in particular not choosing literary study because of concerns about employment opportunities? Or are employment opportunities in literary study declining (even relative to those in other disciplines) in relation to the declining presence of white men, that

FIGURE 1
WOMEN AMONG DOCTORATE RECIPIENTS, 1977-95



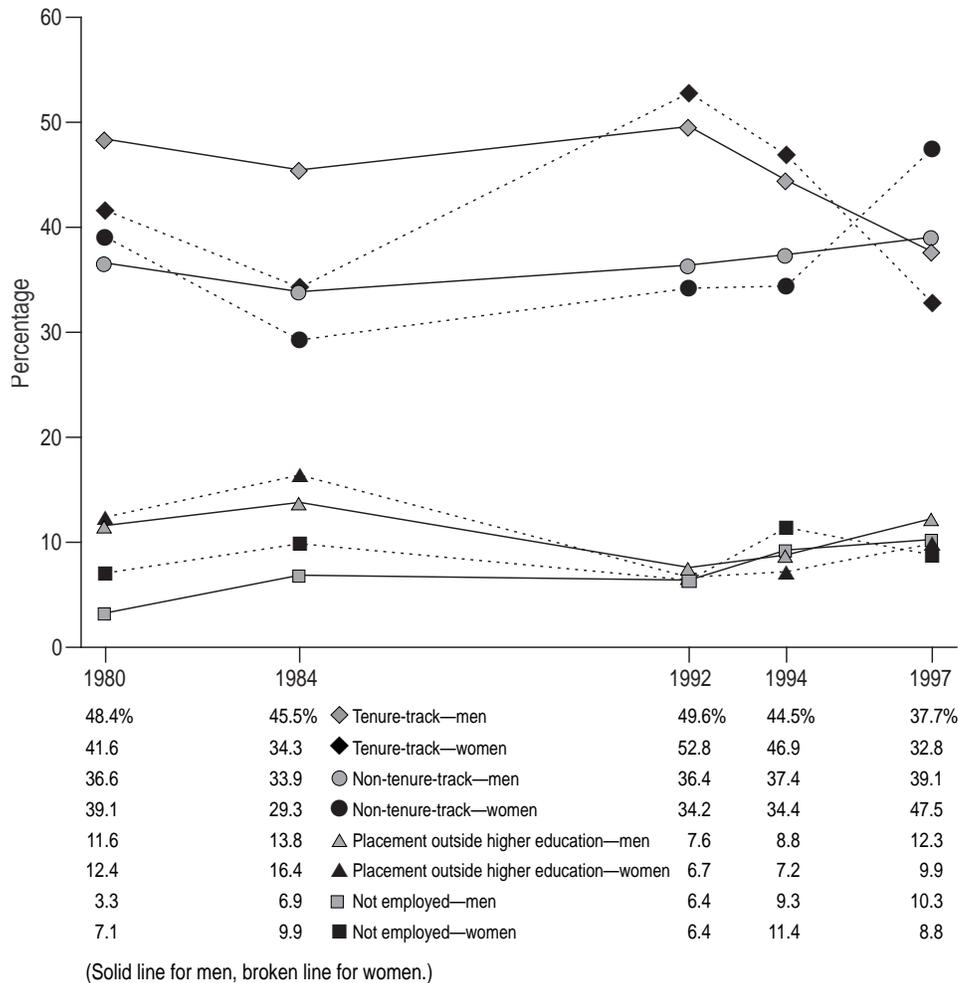
Source: US Dept. of Educ., Natl. Center for Educ. Statistics, various pubs., 1977-95.

is, to the degree to which white women and women of color have begun to take up positions that reflect their contributions to the profession?

White women as well as women of color are clearly playing larger roles in the profession than they ever have before. Nevertheless, the advances women have made since the first CSWP report on the status of women in the profession are not commensurate with the fact that women have been earning the majority of doctorates in English for the past decade and in the foreign languages for considerably longer. At the same time, women are also suffering from the decline in employment opportunities in English and the foreign languages and the simultaneous decline in the quality of the jobs available (in which the fulfillment of increasing demands is rewarded by decreasing salaries and status). *Is the profession becoming feminized?* Although our report cannot fully answer this question, because the question involves much more than numerical gender proportions, we hope our report will provoke others to explore and address this issue.

In the meantime, men continue to occupy tenure-track positions at a rate that is disproportionate to their actual numbers among new PhDs (fig. 2).⁵ A profession can become identified with women long before there is actual gender parity. It may even be that more departments are implicitly or explicitly taking gender parity into consideration in their hiring

FIGURE 2
EMPLOYMENT STATUS OF RECENT ENGLISH PHDs BY GENDER



Source: MLA Census of PhD Placement, 1979–80—1996–97.

decisions. But given the current makeup of the profession, even hiring equal numbers of men and women into both tenure-track and non-tenure-track positions disadvantages women. *We may have reached a point at which gender parity and equal opportunity are conflicting goals.* We wish to raise not only the question of the impact on women in the profession of ongoing changes in the structure of academic employment but also the question of the impact on the profession of the change in gender within its ranks.

A second important concern as we designed this report was to understand how these changes in the structure of academic employment affect different groups of women. Our committee's research over the past several

years has shown that women of color are not moving into English and to some extent into the foreign languages at the rate of white women. *Indeed, women of color are alarmingly underrepresented in PhD programs in English.* For both women and men of color in the foreign languages, the picture is more complicated. The share of PhDs among women of color in the foreign languages, for example, has grown since the 1971 report. Another major motive for undertaking this larger study, then, is to obtain a clearer sense of the broad contexts within which women of color and white women have been making decisions about pursuing academic careers and of the ways in which their paths through the stages of an academic career may diverge.

SOURCES

Our methods of gathering information differ from those of the original committee. Whereas that group produced a questionnaire and surveyed a random sampling of 991 MLA member departments (from a total of 5,037) for the 1969–70 academic year, we worked with a sociologist, Gerhard Sonnert of Harvard University,⁶ who drew on the resources of the numerous data-gathering and data-tabulating institutions and agencies that now track professional employment and survey humanities doctorates.⁷

It should be emphasized that the data of the Survey of Humanities Doctorates originate from a sample rather than from a poll of the whole doctorate population. The reported numbers are thus estimates and must be treated with some caution, especially for small groups, such as women and men of color.

Because we have relied on data compiled by prior studies under the auspices of these various organizations, the pools or cohorts of respondents surveyed on different topics vary. Some of the data is self-reported, specifically that from the 1995 NEH Survey of Humanities Doctorates.

Finally, and most significant, the statistical data on men and women of color typically reflect very small numbers in comparison with the numbers on which the statements about white men and women are based (we specify the composition of respondent pools and very small numbers as often as possible). All the comparisons of hiring, salaries, advancement through the ranks, and professional engagement for white men and women and men and women of color must be considered in the light of the disproportionate numbers involved. The numbers are especially disproportionate in English. Because of the data-gathering methods of the studies on which we relied, the terms “women of color” and “men of color” in the figures may encompass a variety of races and ethnicities. We have typically been unable to distinguish among the different kinds of academic institutions

under discussion (i.e., public, private, two-year, four-year, historically white, historically black), although wherever possible we note the specific kinds of institutions surveyed.

We have gathered information on who is earning degrees in English and the foreign languages, on who is being hired and into what kinds of positions, on how members of different groups are advancing through the ranks, on their working life (from service loads to publication rates), and on their personal life (who marries, who does not, and who lives with children). We conclude this report with many additional questions about the particulars of life in English and the foreign languages today, and we offer a series of recommendations based on our concerns and our findings.

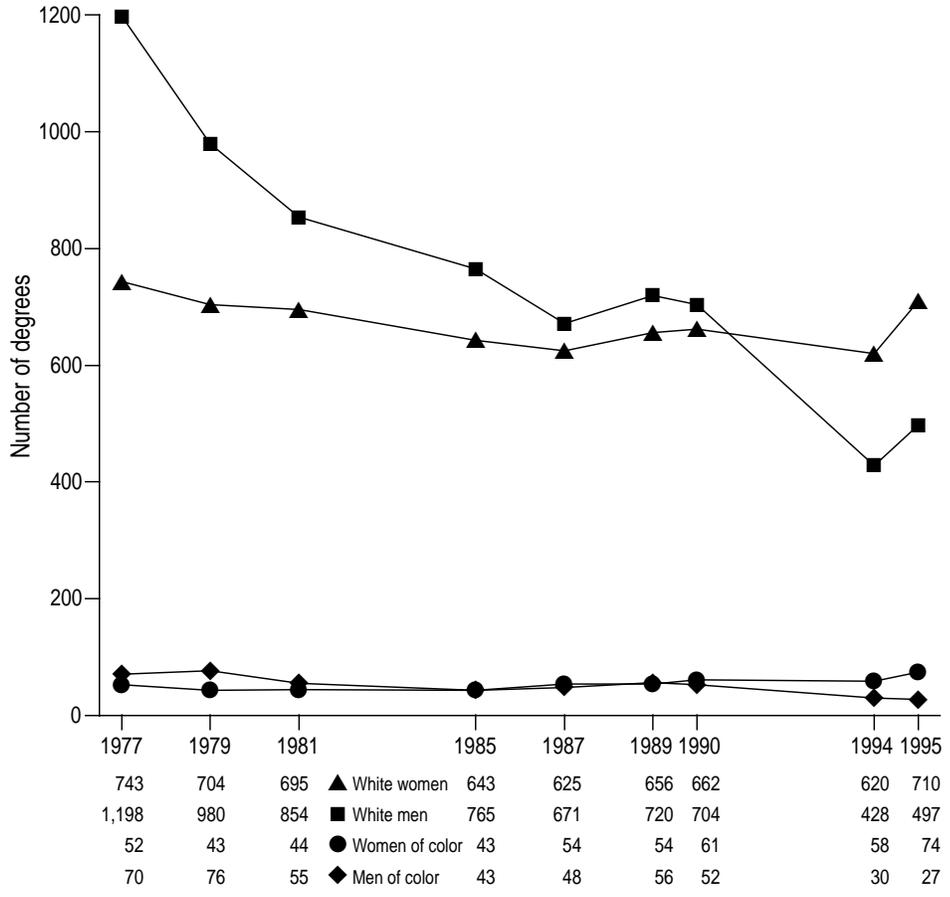
DEGREES

At every level students earning degrees in English and the foreign languages are predominantly white and female. While the number of women and men of color earning BAs in English grew, the number of degrees earned by white women also increased. At the same time, the numbers of white men majoring in English fell about as much as the women's numbers rose. This, in effect, increased considerably the percentage of white women among all BA recipients. In the foreign languages the domination of white women, so pronounced in the late 1970s, had decreased somewhat by the mid-1990s, as numbers of women of color in particular but also white men and men of color gaining BAs increased. But white women still represent more than double the number of the next largest group, white men. Recipients of MA degrees in English and foreign languages follow very similar patterns to those for the BA.

The most dramatic change since the CSWP's 1971 report has been in the gender of the population earning PhDs in English (fig. 3). A drastic gender reversal resulted from a precipitous decline in the number of white men earning doctorates in English, while at the same time the number of white women earning such doctorates remained fairly stable. The total for people of color earning PhDs in English over the same period remained stagnant. However, a similar gender reversal, albeit at much lower numbers, could be observed in that population as well. Figure 4 shows that in the foreign languages, white women have outnumbered white men among earners of PhDs since the late 1970s, and both have followed a parallel contraction-and-recovery pattern.

The 1971 CSWP report on the status of women measured only the percentages of women PhDs, not the amount of time it took women to earn

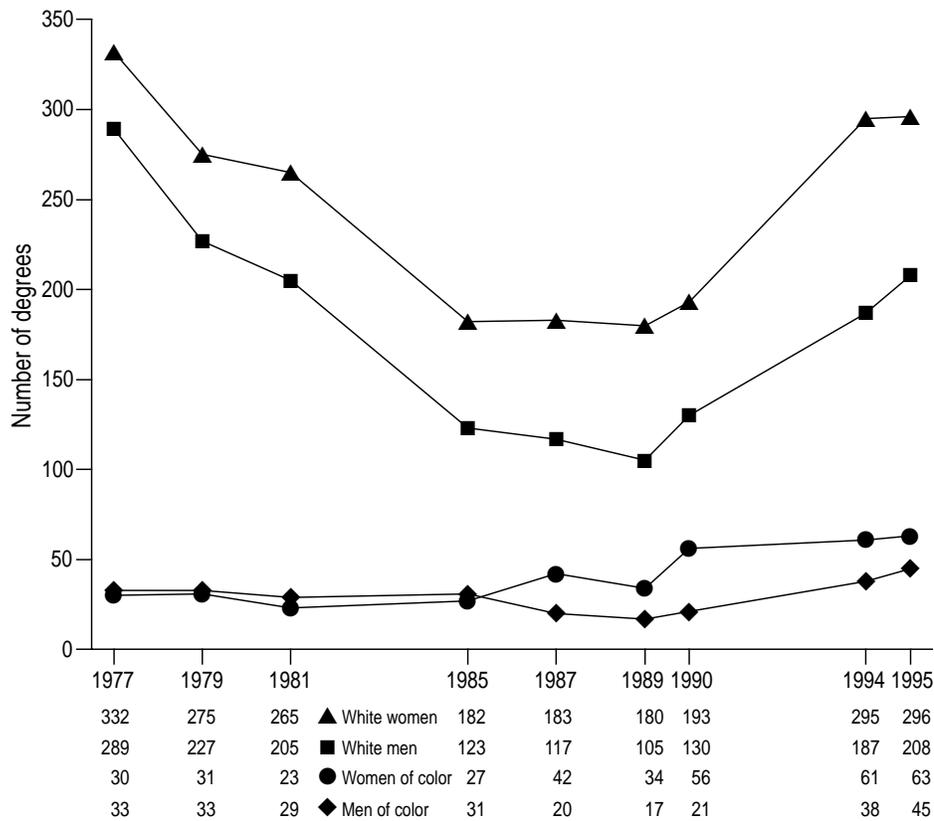
FIGURE 3
PHD DEGREES IN ENGLISH BY GENDER AND MINORITY STATUS, 1977-95



Source: US Dept. of Educ., Natl. Center for Educ. Statistics, various pubs., 1977-95.

their degrees. According to the 1995-97 Survey of Earned Doctorates, white women in both English and the foreign languages took longer than white men to earn their PhDs (resp., 12 years as opposed to 11, as medians, 11.3 years as opposed to 10.8, as medians). Women of color also took more time to the degree than men of color in the foreign languages (12.8 years as opposed to 11.9). Only women of color in English earned their degrees more quickly than their male peers (11.9 years as opposed to 13). White men overall received their degrees most quickly. Yet, when one looks at the time a person is registered as a graduate student rather than at the total time elapsed, the differences between the groups become smaller. This suggests that white men, on average, had a smoother course to the PhD,

FIGURE 4
PHD DEGREES IN FOREIGN LANGUAGES BY GENDER AND MINORITY STATUS, 1977-95



Source: US Dept. of Educ., Natl. Center for Educ. Statistics, various pubs., 1977-95.

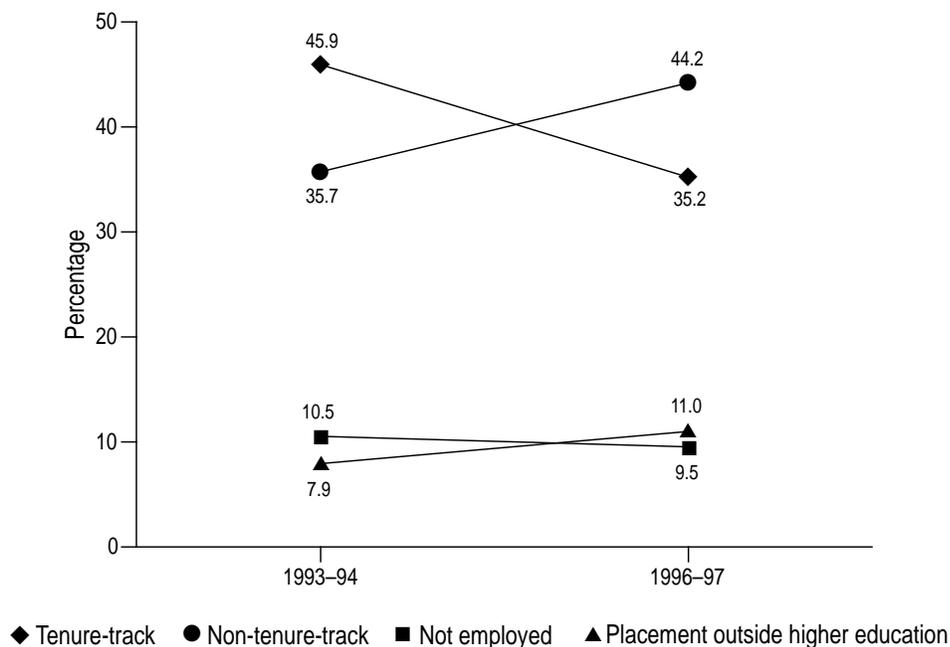
whereas extraneous obstacles and interruptions were more prevalent among the other groups.

EMPLOYMENT PATTERNS

The 1971 CSWP study concluded, "Women in our profession find themselves, for the most part, in less prestigious, less privileged institutions, teaching mainly freshmen and sophomores, and earning less money than their male counterparts" (Howe, Morlock, and Berk 465). Today differences remain in the proportion of men and women faculty at each level of institution.

As reported in the 1995 NEH Survey of Humanities Doctorates, among the English doctorate holders employed at educational institutions, the group of white men had the lowest proportion of those working in two-

FIGURE 5
TRENDS IN PLACEMENT OF ENGLISH PHDs



Source: MLA Census of PhD Placement, 1993-94—1996-97.

year colleges (6.8%). At the same time, women of color were by far the highest proportion of English PhDs working in two-year colleges (25.5%). In contrast, 85.4% of white male doctorate holders in English occupied positions in four-year colleges or universities. In the foreign languages, somewhat more homogeneity was apparent: over 80% of doctorate holders in all categories reported employment at four-year colleges and universities, ranging from 87.8% of white men to 81.2% of men of color. The percentage of two-year college employees who hold doctorates ranges from 8.7% (women of color) to 2.6% (white men).

MLA data on the employment of new doctorates in English and the foreign languages from 1994 to 1997 demonstrate the decline of the tenure-track position, once the typical career stage after receiving a doctorate (fig. 5). This shift from 1994 to 1997 especially affected white women in English. White men's options fluctuated less. In the foreign languages, white women also experienced the most significant decline in tenure-track and rise in non-tenure-track positions, and women of color were the other group with the most significant fluctuation in employment prospects. The data also reveal significant developments among women and men of color

in tenure-track positions, especially in English. As the number of tenure-track positions in English and the foreign languages diminishes, slightly higher proportions of women and men of color with the PhD obtain these jobs relative to white men and women—especially women of color in English and men of color in the foreign languages.⁸

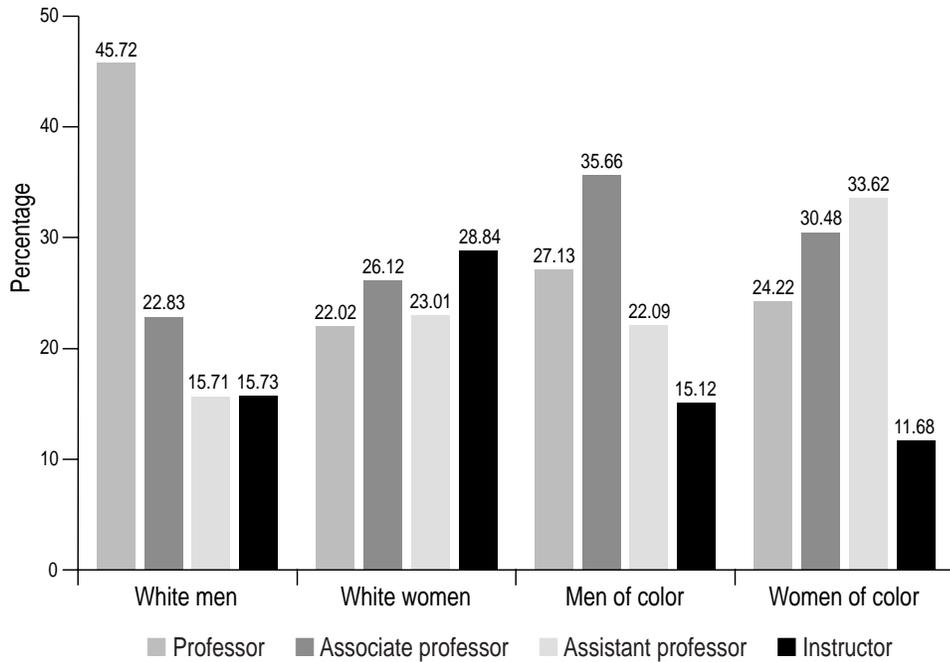
According to the NEH survey, in 1995 a much larger proportion of people of color with English PhDs (81.6% of men, 92% of women) worked in jobs they considered closely related to their degrees, compared to only two-thirds of the white recipients who did so (65.9% of men, 62.4% of women). The proportions of whites and people of color employed in jobs related to their doctoral training are once again more balanced and consistent among the foreign languages. Here about three-quarters of the men (white men 73.6%, men of color 75.6%) and somewhat fewer of the women (white women 63.8%, women of color 70.8%) worked in jobs they regarded as closely related to their degrees.

As for working outside one's field, again in 1995, the main reason for such employment reported by white women with doctorates in English (74.3%) was that there were no jobs available inside the profession. Only 57% of their white male peers working outside their fields offered that explanation. White men most frequently cited higher pay or promotion (64%; white women 65.8%). The number of people of color working outside their field responding to the survey was too small to analyze. In the foreign languages, white women again cited the unavailability of jobs most frequently (77.9%; white men 61.4%). White men most often referred to career changes (65.4%; white women 63%). The main reason men of color were working outside of their field was lack of jobs (93.7%; women of color 37.2%). Women of color most frequently cited a career change (62.8%; men of color 19.5%). On the whole, white men who no longer worked in their original field were on average somewhat more likely to switch fields because they chose to pursue other career opportunities, whereas the members of other groups were more likely to be forced out of their field by a tight labor market.

ADVANCEMENT THROUGH THE RANKS

The 1971 CSWP report found “fewer and fewer” white women occupying each rung of the professional ladder (Howe, Morlock, and Berk 467): although they constituted 55% of graduate students and 31% of recent PhDs (five years out or less), they constituted 32% of full-time assistant professors, 28% of full-time associate professors, and 18% of full-time full professors in English and the foreign languages. There are no longer such

FIGURE 6
FACULTY RANK IN ENGLISH BY GENDER AND MINORITY STATUS



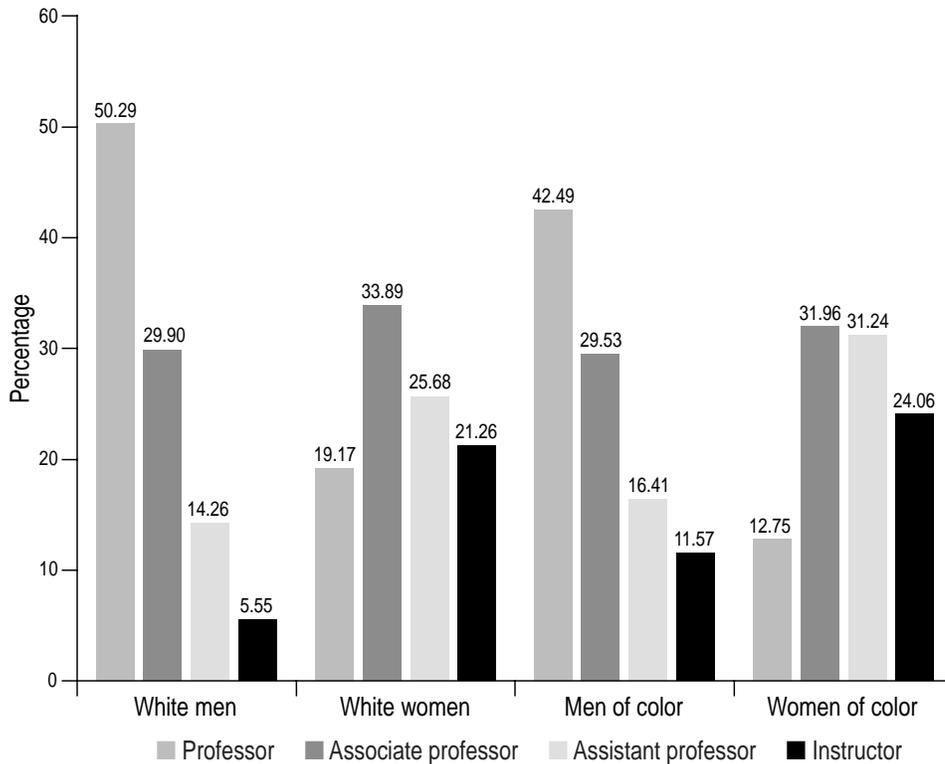
Source: Natl. Endowment for the Humanities, 1995 Survey of Humanities Doctorates; special tabulation by Natl. Opinion Research Center.

dramatic disparities in the ranks of male and female faculty members. However, persistent disparities remain between men and women in terms of percentages at most ranks and the rate at which individuals move through the ranks. Race as well as gender plays a significant role in this pattern.

From the 1995 NEH survey, figure 6 indicates that overall, in English, the largest group of white men were full professors; the largest group of men of color were associate professors; the largest group of women of color were assistant professors; and the largest group of white women were instructors, adjuncts, or of similar rank. In the foreign languages, again the largest group of white men were still full professors, as were the largest group of men of color. As figure 7 shows, the largest proportion of white women and women of color were associate professors, although it is notable that more white women and women of color were instructors than were full professors.

Figures 8 and 9, based on the 1995 NEH survey, also illustrate patterns of advancement through the ranks for white men, white women, men of color, and women of color for three different cohorts. In the youngest group, who

FIGURE 7
FACULTY RANK IN FOREIGN LANGUAGES BY GENDER AND MINORITY STATUS

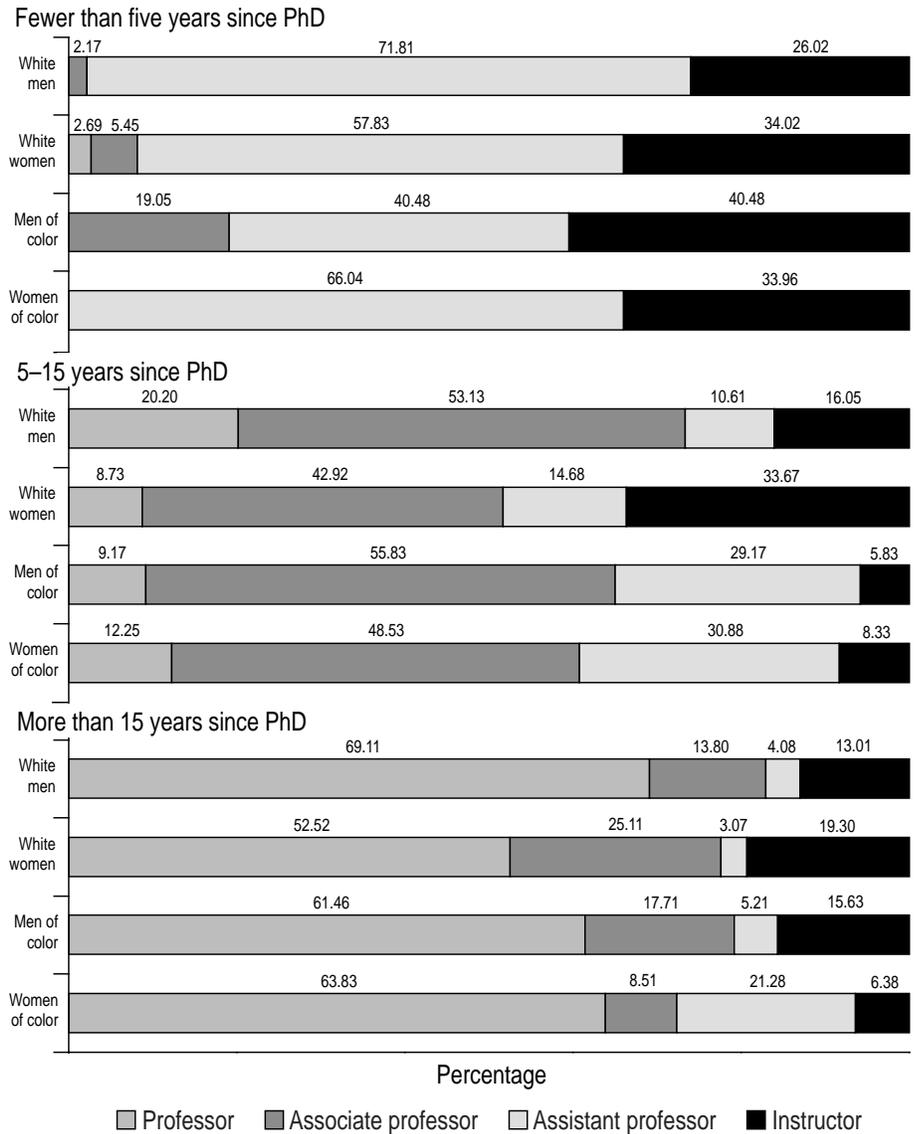


Source: Natl. Endowment for the Humanities, 1995 Survey of Humanities Doctorates; special tabulation by Natl. Opinion Research Center.

had received their PhDs in English and the foreign languages from 1990 to 1995, in terms of absolute numbers there were more white female than white male respondents at every rank. In English, however, the white men's careers were much more evenly paced than the white women's. A small percentage of white women were already full professors; but a higher proportion of white men than white women were assistant professors, and a higher proportion of white women than white men were instructors, lecturers, or held adjunct positions. Men of color were well represented at the associate level, but no women of color had reached that rank.

In the foreign languages, the white men and white women of the youngest cohort had more similar collective career outcomes; more than three-quarters were assistant professors. The men of color had the most successful career outcomes, as a group. By contrast, none of the women of color had

FIGURE 8
FACULTY RANK IN ENGLISH BY ACADEMIC AGE, GENDER, AND
MINORITY STATUS

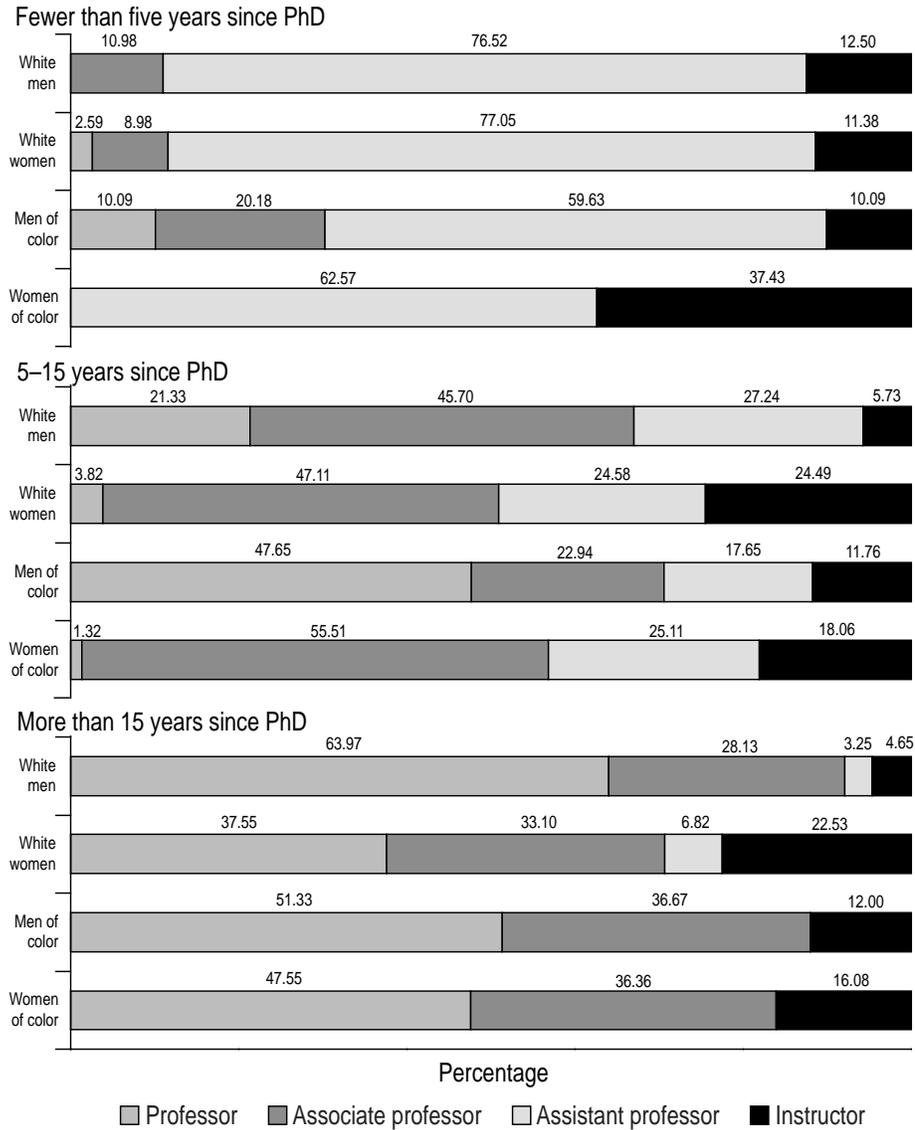


Source: Natl. Endowment for the Humanities, 1995 Survey of Humanities Doctorates; special tabulation by Natl. Opinion Research Center.

arrived at the top two ranks, and women of color were the largest group at the bottom rank.

For those who had earned their PhDs in English between 1980 and 1990, there were striking differences in distribution among the ranks. A

FIGURE 9
FACULTY RANK IN FOREIGN LANGUAGES BY ACADEMIC AGE, GENDER, AND MINORITY STATUS



Source: Natl. Endowment for the Humanities, 1995 Survey of Humanities Doctorates; special tabulation by Natl. Opinion Research Center.

fifth of white men had risen to full professor, compared to approximately a tenth for other groups. The largest proportion of all groups had reached the associate professor level, although this proportion was smaller among the white women than among the other groups. However, much larger

proportions of men and women of color than white men and women were still assistant professors. Moreover, almost a third of white women were still adjunct instructors or lecturers.

In the foreign languages, in this cohort, almost half the men of color were full professors, but only very small percentages of women of color or white women had reached this position. Otherwise, the largest proportion of all other groups was at the associate level, although a significant number of white women and to a lesser degree women of color remained at the instructor level.

Of those who had earned their PhDs in English before 1980, the largest proportion of scholars in each category occupied the full professor rank. However, the numbers were highest for white men and lowest for white women. The percentage of white women who were associate professors and the percentage of white women who were instructors or adjuncts both exceeded the corresponding percentages of any other group. Overall, the percentages of women and men of color with full professorships were almost identical. More men than women of color remained at the associate professor and instructor levels, while most women of color not holding the rank of full professor were assistant professors.

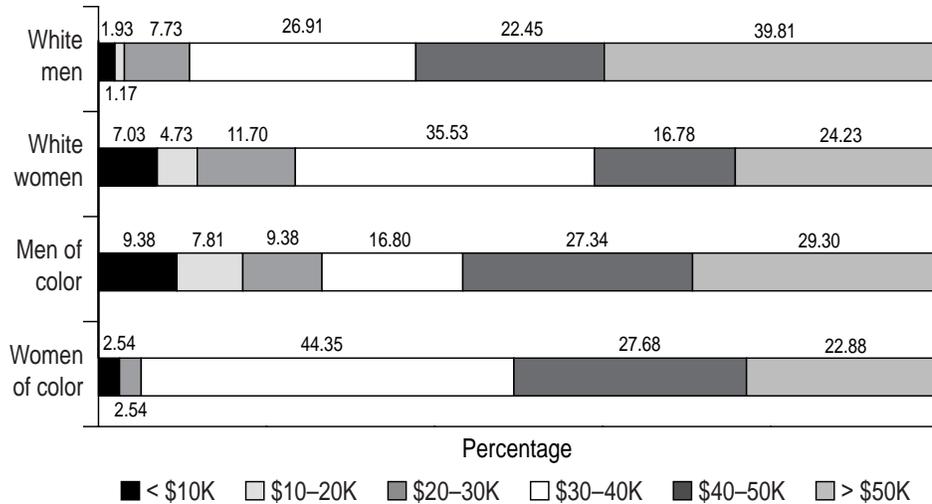
In the foreign languages, again, white men had the highest percentage and white women the lowest percentage of full professors. The white women had the largest proportion of individuals at the instructor rank.⁹

SALARIES

The CSWP's 1971 report observed "substantial" salary differences between women and men full-time faculty members "at all ranks." This inequity was observed within as well as across ranks, although the report also noted that women's employment overall was "highest in those categories which are lowest paid" (Howe, Morlock, and Berk 464). Women were also disproportionately represented among those with part-time employment. The data in that report were not broken down for English as distinct from the foreign languages, nor by race, and Huber's 1990 follow-up report did not consider salary at all. In our data, self-reported by the participants in the 1995 NEH Survey of Humanities Doctorates, significant salary inequities remain, even though women are no longer so concentrated in the lower ranks or lower-status institutions.

If salaries are considered for all ranks combined, then figure 10 indicates that in English white men are clearly clustered at the top of the scale, men of color across the top two levels, and white women and women of color in the middle of the scale. The greatest salary spread is found among white

FIGURE 10
SALARY IN ENGLISH BY GENDER AND MINORITY STATUS

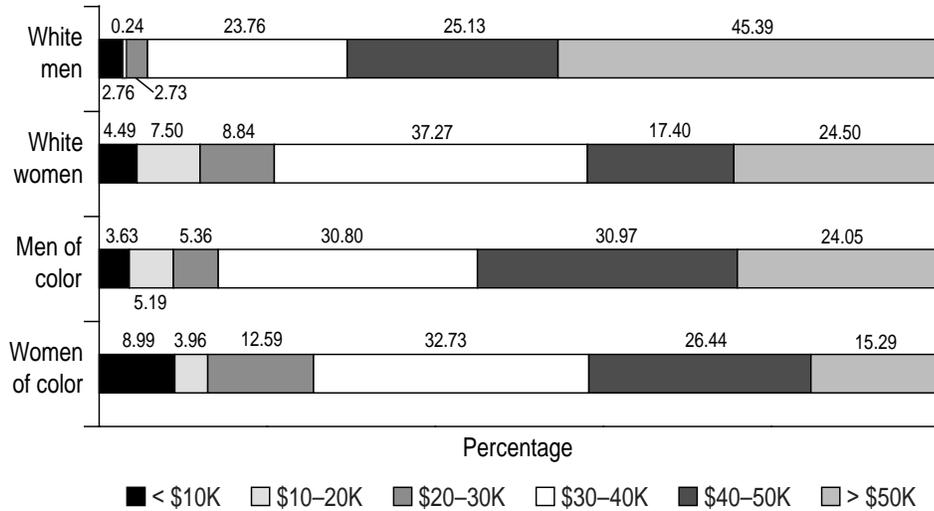


Source: Natl. Endowment for the Humanities, 1995 Survey of Humanities Doctorates; special tabulation by Natl. Opinion Research Center.

women and men of color. (Keep in mind the great differential here in actual numbers.) In the foreign languages, regardless of rank, white men are even more dramatically grouped at the highest level (fig. 11). Men of color are clustered at the middle level and just above, while white women and women of color remain clearly in the middle ranges.

Because of the recent influx of white women and of men and women of color into faculty positions, the white men's average academic age is higher than that of other groups. Hence, the relatively larger proportions of white men with high salaries may to some degree reflect their higher average seniority. When rank is taken into consideration, some inequalities persist. In English the only approximations to equity are at the top of the full professor scale and the middle of the assistant professor scale. At the top of the scale, nevertheless, two-thirds of the white male full professors in English reported earning more than \$50,000, as compared with slightly more than half of their colleagues among men of color. The percentages for white women (62%) and women of color (60.5%) show near parity at the full professor level, although obviously both remain below that of white men. In contrast, in the foreign languages there seems to be least equity at the level of full professor: 71.5% of white men and 62.4% of white women full professors, but only 47% of men of color and 32.5% of women of color at this rank, reported earning in the top category.

FIGURE 11
SALARY IN FOREIGN LANGUAGES BY GENDER AND MINORITY STATUS



Source: Natl. Endowment for the Humanities, 1995 Survey of Humanities Doctorates; special tabulation by Natl. Opinion Research Center.

Among the associate professors in English, more than a third of men of color reported earning more than \$50,000, whereas only 12.4% of the white men did so. But 21.6% of men of color reported earnings in the lowest category (\$10,001–\$20,000), which included only 2.4% of the white women and no white men or women of color. In the foreign languages almost half the white men reported earning between \$40,001 and \$50,000, and the largest group of women of color (39.1%) were also in this group. Most of the white women (43.2%) were in the lower bracket of \$30,001–\$40,000, whereas the bulk of men of color was evenly split between these two brackets.

The most homogeneous salary distribution seems to be at the assistant professor rank. Among the assistant professors in English, the majority in all groups, ranging from 70.9% of women of color to 61.3% of men of color, reported earning between \$30,001 and \$40,000. Similarly, a large majority of all groups among assistant professors in the foreign languages, ranging from 80.7% of men of color to 66.7% of white women, reported receiving a salary between \$30,001 and \$40,000.

Among the instructors in English, 61.7% of men of color reported being paid less than \$10,000. Of the white women, 24.4% were in this category. By contrast, most white male instructors (38.4%) reported earning over \$50,000. The largest group of women of color reported earnings of \$40,001–\$50,000. By contrast, white men in the foreign languages reported

earnings at both the highest and lowest extremes of the pay scale for instructors. Whereas 33.5% of them earned less than \$10,000, 20.8% earned more than \$50,000. The most frequent salary bracket among instructors in the foreign languages was \$10,001–\$20,000 for white women (32.8%) and men of color (45%). For women of color, it was \$20,001–\$30,000.

WORKING LIFE

Although the original CSWP report did not address the question of the conditions of academic life, we were interested in gaining a sense of the working life of members of the different groups under discussion—insofar as the differences in employment conditions (hiring, advancement, and salary) that persist are usually explained as the result of different contributions to the profession. Where men and women of color are advancing in the profession, our data bear out that argument. However, our data do not explain why white women are still disadvantaged in comparison to white men. Nor do they explain the continuing advantage of white men. Our findings in various parameters of work characteristics certainly do not indicate any lack of participation or contribution of the other groups compared with the participation or contribution of white men.

According to the 1995 NEH survey, women are fairly equal with men in the hours they reportedly log per week. Perhaps predictably, many assistant professors in English in all groups reported working more than 55 hours per week. Nevertheless, a higher proportion of white women (42.3%) and women of color (38.8%) at this rank worked these long hours. There were no men of color at the assistant professor level who worked fewer than 40 hours per week. Similarly, significant majorities of all groups of assistant professors in the foreign languages worked more than 40 hours per week, except for the largest group among men of color (34.7%), who worked more than 55 hours. At the other end of the scale, white women full professors in both English and the foreign languages report the longest work weeks for their ranks. This pattern is particularly marked in the foreign languages, where 31.5% of women full professors report working over 55 hours each week, compared to 23.7% of white male full professors. None of the women of color who were full professors in the foreign languages reported working more than 55 hours, compared with 7.1% of women of color full professors in English. Men of color full professors in English and the foreign languages logged in at similar percentages for this bracket, with 23.5% and 21.6%, respectively, reporting work weeks longer than 55 hours.

In English the highest rates of service on a scholarly committee were found among full professors (this time women of color at 70.7%) and assis-

tant professors (this time men of color at 63.1%), and the lowest rates of service among white men at every rank. At the assistant professor level, the percentages of white men (44.3%) and white women (44.5%) were almost identical. But white women had clearly the highest percentage of committee participants at the associate level (58.5%). In the foreign languages, white men again had the lowest committee participation rates among full and associate professors. Of those who served on scholarly committees in the profession, higher proportions of people of color than others were committee chairs: for example, 68.4% of men of color full professors in English, 84.5% of women of color associate professors in English, 58.1% of women of color full professors in the foreign languages. In both fields, deviations occur at the associate professor level, with white men, for example, having the highest proportion of committee chairs (52.5%) in the foreign languages.

The data further suggest that, with the exception of assistant professors, a higher proportion of white women and women of color in English attended professional meetings than men. At the full professor level, women of color topped attendance with 92.6% reporting this activity, compared with 89% of white women and men of color and 79.4% of white men. A similar pattern was found for associate professors, ranging from 100% among women of color to 77.3% among white men. A startling reversal occurs at the assistant professor level, where women of color record the lowest participation rate at 77.7%. Similar high conference attendance rates of women and men of color are reported in the foreign languages. For example, all men of color full professors attended professional meetings, compared with 80.3% of their white male colleagues, and all women of color associate and assistant professors went to meetings. A reversal similar to the one in English occurred in the assistant professor bracket, only this time for men of color instead of their female counterparts: men of color in this category reported the lowest proportion of meeting attendance (88.2%).

The majority of all gender and race groups at all academic ranks in English reported publishing in the year prior to the 1995 NEH survey. In every group at the associate professor level, the proportion of publishing faculty was close to 85%. At the other ranks, men and women of color were more likely to publish than the other groups were. Among full professors, women of color (100%) were followed by men of color (93%). Among assistant professors, men of color (94.7%) slightly outpublished the other three groups. Likewise, in the foreign languages men and women of color had the highest proportions of scholars through the ranks who published, with the exception of women of color, who accounted for the lowest proportion of full professors (66%) who published in the year prior to the survey.

PART-TIME EMPLOYMENT

In 1971, the CSWP reported that “women in the profession are disproportionately located in part-time and often temporary positions” (Howe, Morlock, and Berk 466). In the 1995 NEH Survey of Humanities Doctorates, in English and the foreign languages a higher proportion of women than men (and also a large proportion of men of color in English) still reported working part-time. Social and family obligations seem to have been important factors affecting decisions, especially white women’s decisions, to pursue part-time employment, but in English and in the foreign languages larger actual numbers of women part-timers also reported that they worked part-time because an appropriate, presumably full-time, job was not available.

One-fourth of white women with doctorates in English working part-time gave family reasons for doing so. None of the white male part-timers or any of the men and women of color part-timers surveyed gave family considerations as a reason for their employment status. Among part-timers in the foreign languages, the response was similar: 18.1% of the white women part-timers surveyed gave family reasons, while none of the white men or men of color did. However, 31.1% of the women of color cited family reasons.

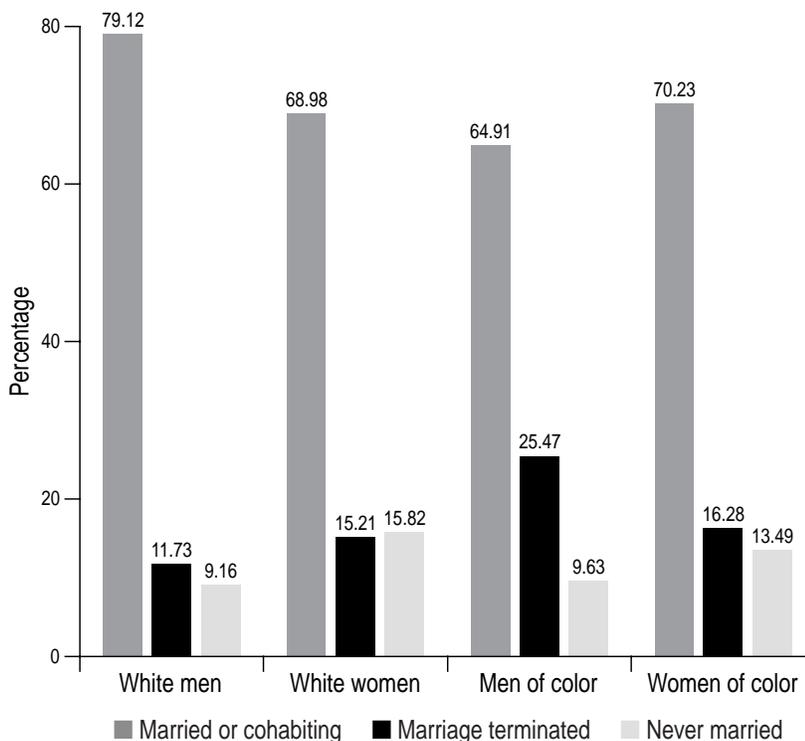
In English, 42.7% of the white women part-timers surveyed reported lack of jobs as affecting their choice of employment, compared with 50% of the white men, 89.2% of the men of color, and none of the women of color respondents. In the foreign languages, over half (57%) of the white women and over half (52%) of the women of color part-timers in the survey cited the lack of a job as their reason for working in a part-time position, whereas less than a third (30.8%) of white male respondents and 36% of the men of color cited that reason.

A large number of male part-timers cited retirement status as a reason for working part-time: 35.6% of white men in English and a similar 30.6% of white men in foreign languages, along with 64% of men of color in the foreign languages. A much smaller proportion (17.1%) of white women respondents in English cited retirement as a reason, compared with an even smaller 8.5% of white women in the foreign languages and 9.7% of women of color in the foreign languages.

PERSONAL LIFE

The CSWP’s original report did not deal with the question of personal life. However, we, the current committee, felt that information about the shapes of the lives of white men and women and men and women of color

FIGURE 12
MARITAL STATUS IN ENGLISH BY GENDER AND MINORITY STATUS



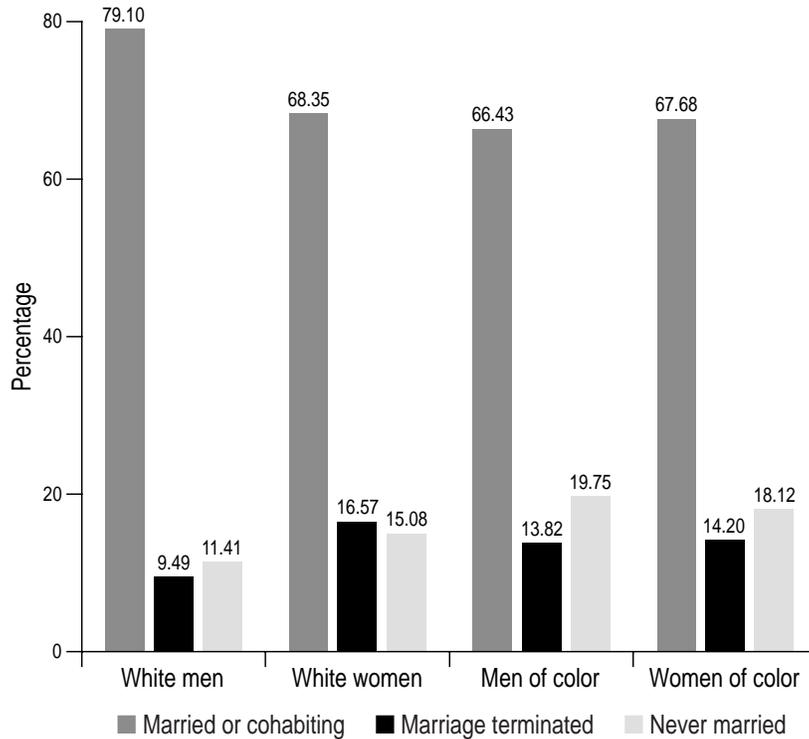
Source: Natl. Endowment for the Humanities, 1995 Survey of Humanities Doctorates; special tabulation by Natl. Opinion Research Center.

in the profession might complement (and complicate) our data. The 1995 NEH Survey of Humanities Doctorates indicates overall that in both English and the foreign languages white men have been significantly more likely to be married or partnered and to have children than any of the other groups under discussion, and least likely to be divorced (figs. 12 and 13). Insofar as they outnumber all the other groups, white men also set the dominant pattern for the profession. What is particularly striking is the degree of difference in the pattern of life among these groups.

ISSUES FOR FURTHER CONSIDERATION

While these statistics do not provide a comprehensive picture, they are intended to indicate patterns and subjects for consideration. *In sum, substantial disparities in the appointments, careers, and salaries of women and men in English and the foreign languages still exist.*

FIGURE 13
MARITAL STATUS IN FOREIGN LANGUAGES BY GENDER AND MINORITY STATUS



Source: Natl. Endowment for the Humanities, 1995 Survey of Humanities Doctorates; special tabulation by Natl. Opinion Research Center.

There may be a covert, lingering bias against female faculty members in many quarters, as one prestigious school (MIT) acknowledged when it issued an “unusually candid report [responding] to complaints by women on salaries, office size, committee assignments, and awards” (Miller and Wilson). The MIT report found “discrimination as a pattern of powerful but unrecognized assumptions and attitudes that work systematically against women faculty even in the light of obvious good will.”

The gender disparity in type of appointment has increased, as Ernst Benjamin concluded in his report entitled “Disparities in the Salaries and Appointments of Academic Women and Men.” Despite the increasing relative participation of white women and women of color, Benjamin found that white women and then women of color remain more likely than white men in particular to obtain jobs in lower-paying institutions in both English and the foreign languages, and they tend to linger in part-time and

adjunct instructor positions with little or no opportunity for advancement. Surely, then, as our data indicate, the very unqualified and general statement that “the ‘gender gap’ [. . .] had closed entirely in some [fields], such as English” (Bowen and Rudenstine) is misleading.

The pattern we found in English and the foreign languages was somewhat more positive especially for women and men of color. Data about the employment of recent PhDs show that women and men of color do disproportionately well in obtaining tenure-track positions. Among the youngest cohort in English, white women as a group have outdone white men in obtaining associate and full professorships, but at the same time a larger proportion of white women than white men occupies the lowest academic rank. In other words, there is an overproportional variability in career outcomes within this group of younger white women: some are very successful, but a disproportionately large number remain at the bottom of the rank hierarchy. Does this variability indicate an emerging trend of differentiation within the group of white women?

The statistics on women and men of color are particularly problematic, because the numbers involved are so small and so hugely disproportionate to the numbers of white men and women. Moreover, the small numbers of nonwhite women and men also forced us to put the different ethnic and racial groups together in one category (of color) in our statistics. This combining of groups may, of course, conceal important internal differences among them. *Thus, the patterns concerning people of color in the profession raise more questions than they resolve.* Are women and men of color in English and the foreign languages more likely than their white colleagues to train in emerging and expanding areas, such as African American, postcolonial, and multicultural American literature or cultural studies? As more women of color enter tenure-track positions, will they stay and obtain tenure? And as more white women, women of color, and men of color enter English and the modern languages, will fewer white men do so?

The committee had a number of other questions that could not be answered either in statistical terms or by the statistics it was able to collect:

1. About graduate education and its immediate outcomes

Is there any correlation between forms of funding (e.g., research assistantships as opposed to teaching) and groups of students' advancement through the professional ranks? Are white women and women of color taking more or less time than men to obtain jobs? Are there any patterns as to who among these groups is more likely to obtain a job without having completed the dissertation? Are there any patterns as to who is receiving

postdoctoral research funding, and what are the effects of that kind of funding on advancement?

2. On the job

Is there a relation between increased numbers of white women and women of color and longer work weeks? Are requirements for tenure increasing? What proportion of white women and women of color relative to white men and men of color hold joint appointments, and how do such appointments affect attaining tenure? What proportions of white men and women and men and women of color are denied tenure? How many of those who gain tenure and how many of those denied tenure in these various groups remain in the profession?

3. About families

How do assumptions and perceptions of age and marital or partnered status factor into hiring decisions? Are there any patterns as to who is more likely to be part of a two-career couple, who is more likely to be involved in a spousal hire, who is more likely to be engaged in a commuting relationship? Who is primarily responsible for child-care and elder-care responsibilities? What are the effects of such responsibilities on patterns of employment and advancement?

4. On department life

Are there any differences overall among the teaching loads and assignments of white men, white women, and men and women of color? Who teaches composition and language courses? How many white women and women of color relative to white men and men of color hold department chairs, hold deanships, direct study-abroad programs, direct composition programs, serve as language supervisors, or occupy other administrative posts? Who is more mobile in terms of job changes at mid career?

5. About scholarship

Are certain areas of scholarship, such as research on women, race, and sexuality, more risky for women to undertake? To what extent are particular research areas, such as literary theory and ethnic studies, gendered or raced? How frequently are white women and women of color publishing scholarly articles and books relative to white men and men of color? Are there correlations between publication rates and teaching and service loads across the different groups under consideration? Is there a gender politics of citation? If so, what effect does this practice have on productivity assessment? Are white women and women of color professors working mostly with women

(mentoring women students, working on women's tenure committees) and male faculty members—white men and men of color—working mostly with men, thus creating separate spheres within the profession?

It is imperative that we begin adding a broad conversation about the increasing feminization of the profession to the ongoing discussion of the changing conditions of employment in English and the foreign languages. While there are many reasons for changes in the profession, we believe that this feminization is a crucial factor that has influenced everything in the past thirty years. We recommend that English and foreign language departments, in collaboration with their administrations, respond to the findings of this report by:

- regularly reviewing the patterns of hiring and promotion within their departments, in terms of the positions of white men and women and women and men of color
- regularly reviewing the patterns in salary differentials within their departments, in relation to white men and women and women and men of color
- reassessing the relation of teaching, research, and service to tenure, promotion, and salary considerations
- resisting the decline in the number of tenure-track positions and the increased use of adjunct labor
- addressing inequities in salary and benefits, workload, and opportunities for advancement among the growing numbers of those serving the profession as part-time employees and adjunct instructors
- initiating further studies, on such issues as personal life and details of work life, to address the questions we have raised but that available data cannot answer

Let us enter a new century where equal opportunity for qualified women is no longer an “open question” (Howe, Morlock, and Berk 467) but a done deed.

Barbara McCaskill, University of Georgia, cochair
Julie Abraham, Emory University
Barbara Becker-Cantarino, Ohio State University, Columbus
Kimberly Blockett, University of Wisconsin, Madison
Dana Dragunoiu, University of Toronto
Rosemary Feal, State University of New York, Buffalo, cochair
Jane Moss, Colby College
Karen Shimakawa, University of California, Davis
Gerhard Sonnert, Harvard University
Karen Swann, Williams College, past member
Kimberly Wallace Sanders, Emory University, past cochair
Monika Žagar, University of Minnesota, Twin Cities

NOTES

¹Appointees to the first CSWP were Howard P. Anderson (Michigan State Univ.), Charles Blinderman (Clark Univ.), Dorrit C. Cohn (Indiana Univ.), Katherine Ellis (Columbia Univ.), Florence Howe (Goucher Coll.), Roberta Salper (Univ. of Pittsburgh), and Catherine Savage (Newcomb Coll. of Tulane Univ.). See also the description of CSWP history, committee charge, membership information, publications, and current activities at the MLA Web site: www.mla.org.

²In April 1970 the CSWP sent a questionnaire about the position of women in the profession to a representative sample of 1,000 (later reduced to 991) of the over 5,000 English and foreign language departments. The results of this survey became the basis for the report. See also "Commission".

³This statement, appearing in the Winter 1997 *MLA Newsletter*, recommended more attention to recruitment, retention, and mentoring of people of color in English and the foreign languages; it was based on statistics about attrition and advancement through the ranks.

⁴The line graphs and tables in this and subsequent figures represent data compiled by Gerhard Sonnert from the 1995 NEH Survey of Humanities Doctorates, the 1995–97 National Research Council (NRC) Survey of Earned Doctorates, the Department of Education, and surveys of PhD placement of the Association of Departments of English from 1976 to 1999.

⁵Exceptions to this statement occurred in 1994, when white women outpaced white men, and in 1994 and 1997, when women and men of color outpaced white men.

⁶Sonnert is a sociologist of science who has worked in the Harvard physics department since 1988. Together with Gerald Holton, he conducted a large-scale empirical study, called Project Access, about women in science. The results were presented chiefly in two books, *Gender Differences in Science Careers: The Project Access Study* and *Who Succeeds in Science? The Gender Dimension*. Sonnert is currently finishing a book on science policy and has started a project on American scholars who emigrated from Central Europe in their youth during the 1930s and 1940s.

⁷Specifically, Sonnert's sources were the MLA, the Department of Education, the Survey of Earned Doctorates, and the 1995 NEH Survey of Humanities Doctorates (the most recent successor of the Survey of Doctorate Recipients for the Humanities). The last two mentioned surveys are now under the administration of the National Opinion Research Center (NORC) at the University of Chicago. Because the publications did not present the data by the groups and fields needed for this report, on our request NORC performed special statistical analyses. The statistics identify naturalized United States citizens and permanent residents only: while we acknowledge that Canadian citizens and temporary United States residents are important groups as teachers of English and foreign languages, we were not able to compile data on these constituencies for this report. We wish to thank Lance Selfa and the other involved staff members of NORC for carrying out the special analyses. We gratefully acknowledge that the NEH—the sponsor of the 1995 Survey of Humanities Doctorates—subsidized part of the cost of the NORC analyses: Jeffrey Thomas of the NEH has our special gratitude for making this possible. We also wish to thank David Laurence of the MLA staff for providing data from the MLA surveys. The Department of Education data used in this report were compiled from various issues of *Degrees and Other Awards Conferred by Institutions of Higher Education*, published by the National Center

for Education Statistics, Office of Educational Research and Improvement, of the Department of Education.

⁸In English in 1997, only 44 women of color and 34 men of color obtained tenure-track positions, in comparison with 167 white women and 153 white men; in the foreign languages, 53 women of color and 53 men of color obtained tenure-track positions, in comparison with 86 white women and 77 white men.

⁹In English, 60.5% of the 3,751 white men who responded to the 1995 NEH Survey of Humanities Doctorates were tenured, 33.8% of the 2,099 white women, 2.3% of the 142 men of color, and 3.4% of the 212 women of color. White men were the most highly tenured group, women of color the least. In the foreign languages, 53.3% of the 2,371 white men who responded were tenured, 32% of the 1,421 white women, 9% of the 396 men of color, and 5.8% of the 258 women of color. White men were the most highly tenured group, women of color the least.

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