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History of Women Faculty in Economics

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Author

Olney, Martha

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History of Women Faculty in Economics

Compiled by Martha Olney

In celebration of the 150th anniversary of women being admitted to U.C. Berkeley "on equal terms in all respects with young men," we offer this history of women faculty in the Economics Department.

The Economics Department at U.C. Berkeley was founded in 1903. In its second year, two women were hired: Jessica Peixotto and Lucy Sprague. Professor Peixotto was hired first as a "lecturer in sociology" and then as an Assistant Professor, Associate Professor, and Professor of Social Economics. Dr. Peixotto was the first woman on the Berkeley faculty to be awarded the rank of full professor. [Lucy Sprague](#) served only one year in the Economics department as a "reader in economics" before becoming the Dean of Women and a lecturer in the English department.

Jessica Peixotto was the first but not the only woman faculty member in the department. In the early 20th century, several other women were hired by the Economics department as faculty: Lucy Stebbins, Lillian Matthews, Lucile Eaves, Louise Morrow, Clara Mortenson, Caroline Schleeff, Barbara Grimes Armstrong, Emily Huntington, and others. With the notable exception of Professor

Huntington, however, all these women were faculty of "Social Economics." Indeed by the mid-1930s, 5 of the 29 faculty listed in the course catalog were women.

In 1939 the Department of Social Welfare was created, and the women who had been teaching courses such as "The Control of Poverty," "Studies in Standards of Living," "Economics of Consumption," and "Social Insurance" moved from Economics to Social Welfare. By the end of World War II, only 1 woman remained active on the Economics faculty: Emily Huntington. After her retirement in 1961, the department had no women faculty.

The second wave of women in economics begins in 1974 with the hiring of Clair Brown, followed a few years later by Laura Tyson and Joan Hannon. Irma Adelman joins the department as a full professor in 1980, though her primary appointment was in Agricultural and Resource Economics. With the hiring of Alessandra Casella, Bronwyn Hall, and Christina Romer in 1988 and 1989, the modern era was fully underway.

We have assembled here biographical sketches of some of these women. Our first set of interviews with Clair Brown, Joan Hannon, and Laura Tyson form the basis of those articles. We also interviewed the son of Dr. Margaret Gordon who served as a Lecturer in the Economics department in the late 1960s and early 1970s, banned by anti-nepotism laws from taking a faculty appointment in the same department as her husband, Robert Aaron Gordon. Our second set of interviews were with Alessandra Casella, Hilary Hoynes, Martha Olney, and Christina Romer.

This project was directed by Prof. Martha Olney. All the work was done by teams of undergraduate economics majors who served as RAs: Lindsay Gyeongjin Earhart '21, Caitlin Hartley '20, Carol Lee '20, Nicole Mashoudy '21, Audrey Oas '21, Renee Utter '21, and Jazz van Horn '21.

Jessica Blanche Peixotto (by Caitlin Hartley¹)



Jessica Blanche Peixotto was unquestioningly a trailblazer for women's education during the late 19th and early 20th centuries. In tandem with a time of rapidly changing societal attitude towards formal women's education, she was the second woman to receive a Ph.D. and the first woman to hold a full-time faculty appointment at the University of California. Unwavering in her devotion to social justice and her education, she was aptly portrayed in the citation of her honorary Doctor of Laws degree in 1936: "Chosen counselor of the State in matters concerning the protection of children and the care of the unfortunate; social economist marshaling stubborn facts in the service of mankind; comrade among students, inspiring teacher, true lover of humanity." This is her story.

Jessica Peixotto was born in New York City on October 9th, 1864 to wealthy businessman Raphael Peixotto and his wife Myrtilla Jessica Davis. As the only daughter of five children, the roots of her gentle resistance to gendered norms can likely be attributed to her upbringing.

In pursuit of a more prosperous economy, Raphael Peixotto moved his family to San Francisco, CA in 1870, when Jessica was only six years old. The Peixottos were an influential Jewish family who cultivated an environment of both intellectual and public commitment in their home. Her father, Raphael, was an early employee of Levi Strauss and served as the President of the still-standing Temple Emanu-El synagogue. He was successful in his business ventures and eventually became an executive at *The Emporium* department store, now known as Macy's. Even though Raphael only had an elementary-level education, he strived to excel and self-educate in his work, likely influencing young Jessica in the pursuit of her academic endeavors.

Following Jessica's graduation from San Francisco's Girls' High School in 1880, she desired to continue her education at Berkeley, known then as the University of California. However, despite Raphael's pursuit of knowledge and encouragement for his sons, he did not believe that it was appropriate for her to do so. She acceded to his wishes but still advanced her education during the following decade by studying music, art, writing, and foreign languages with private tutors in her home.

In 1891, Jessica finally convinced her father to let her take classes at Berkeley as a nondegree student. His change of heart was presumably influenced by the swift increase in women's acceptance in higher education at that time; in the 1890s, women's enrollment at the University increased almost ten-fold. At Berkeley, she excelled academically and befriended her brother Ernest's friend, Frank Norris. Norris took to Peixotto and her air of independence and progressiveness quickly, expressing his admiration when she led a movement to shorten skirts to shoe tops – of course, to the scandal of the faculty. Adamant that her talents were being wasted by not obtaining a degree, Norris drastically changed Peixotto's career path when he helped convince her father to allow her to formally enroll as a degree-seeking student. She completed her requirements in only three years and was awarded her Bachelor's degree in 1894.

This was only the beginning for Jessica Peixotto. Driven by intellectual challenge and a desire for meaningful post-college work, she enrolled in graduate studies in 1895 under the renowned political

historian Bernard Moses. His teachings ignited her passion for socialist political economics, and encouragement, she went to study at the Sorbonne in Paris for a year where her brother Ernest was studying art.

As an unmarried young woman in her early 30s, she reflected on her views of patriarchal culture in France in a letter to Millicent Shinn:

Perhaps it is because I am a woman and an unmarried one too, that I am impressed this way about la belle France – The position of woman, mental, rather than anything else, makes your heart ache. To see a French demoiselle is certainly to be translated into the middle ages. These creatures, who are mere puppets being prepared as convention bids, for the matrimonial market, are at least one hundred years behind in the evolution of spirit. (Peixotto, letter to Shinn, page 5)

Conceivably influenced by this experience in France, Peixotto remained unmarried. This likely allowed her later opportunities that were not granted to women who had to contend with beliefs of married women's domestic role.

She returned from Paris and completed her dissertation, *The French Revolution and Modern French Socialism: A comparative study of the principles of the French Revolution and the doctrines of modern French socialism*, in 1900, becoming the second woman to receive a Ph.D. at the University of California after Millicent Shinn in 1898.

In 1904, she became the first woman to hold a full-time faculty appointment at the University of California when President Benjamin Ide Wheeler hired her to teach two courses in the newly founded economics department: "Contemporary Socialism" and "History of Socialism." She was in a unique position for the role, having demonstrated her academic achievements under Moses, garnered respect due to her family's social prominence, and circumvented the limits associated with a marital role – contradicting Wheeler's belief that women's education was in place to make women "more serviceable as wives and mothers."

In 1907 she was promoted to assistant professor of sociology but was averse to the label of sociologist. She employed rigorous analytical methods in her work and believed sociology was too abstract an approach to social matters, and so at her request her title was changed to assistant professor of social economy in 1909. She was subsequently promoted to associate professor of social economy in 1912 and professor of social economy in 1918, becoming the first woman to hold the rank of professorship at the University and remaining in this position until she retired in 1935. Peixotto achieved her appointments despite continuing bias against women as students and faculty members on the campus. Although a reserved woman, she voiced her displeasure at male faculty hired after her who passed her in rank, driving her successive promotions.

Peixotto was keenly interested in immediate social problems and spearheaded the development of social economics at the University, which grew into one of four major components of the economics department. Speaking to her humanitarian nature, she was concerned by poverty and its structural sources, despite being raised in a family that faced few economic constraints. She offered courses that included Contemporary Socialism, Control of Poverty, The Child and the State, the Household as an Economic Agent, and Crime as a Social Problem.

Peixotto was an engaged member of many influential organizations focused on promoting child and

family welfare. These included, but were not limited to, the Berkeley Commission of Public Charities (1910 – 1913), the Committee on Children and the Committee on Research on the State Board of Charities and Corrections (1912-1924), the Council of National Defense as a member of a subcommittee of Women in Industry and the Committee on Child Welfare of the General Medical Board during World War I, and the Committee on Child Welfare in 1918. At the University, one of Peixotto's major accomplishments was the development of the Heller Committee for Research in Social Economics in 1923. She was also Vice President of the American Economic Association in 1928.

Besides advocating for her own merits to be rightfully recognized, Peixotto worked to bring more women into both the student body and faculty. She was successful in hiring Lucy Ward Stebbins in 1911, Barbara Armstrong in 1919, and later Emily Noble, Martha Chickering, and Emily Huntington, all who went on to have notable impacts in the development of economics and at the University. Berkeley was unique in having so many women faculty during this time period, pushing the department towards more socially progressive studies. Following Peixotto's retirement in 1935, no women were hired in the economics department until the mid-1970s.

With her background and drive, Peixotto was at a key point in history to push through glass ceilings in women's education. Echoing the sentiment of many economists today, she believed that policy should not be made until sufficient knowledge was obtained and her work was incredibly important to the field of social investigation to influence practical policy. She unwaveringly devoted her life to the University and the betterment of society, truly embodying her motto of making science serve humanity and winning "her place among that group of remarkable women who have done so much for their country."

1 Caitlin Hartley is a 2020 graduate from the University of California, Berkeley with a major in Economics.

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Lucy Ward Stebbins

Years active: 1911-1940



For a description of Lucy Ward Stebbins' extraordinary career at Berkeley, see this *In Memoriam* tribute:

<http://texts.cdlib.org/view?docId=hb6r29p0fn&doc.view=frames&chunk.id=div00035&toc.depth=1&toc.id=>



BARBARA NACHTRIEB, *Lambda*
Visiting Delegate, 1915-16

Barbara Grimes Armstrong

Years active: 1919-1927

Barbara Grimes Armstrong's pathbreaking career in Economics and Berkeley Law is described by her colleagues in the *In Memoriam* tribute available through the link below.

<http://texts.cdlib.org/view?docId=hb1199n68c&doc.view=frames&chunk.id=div00003&toc.id=>

Margaret Gordon (by Carol Lee¹)



Margaret S. Gordon's imprint on UC Berkeley is not limited to her role as lecturer for the School of Social Welfare from 1958 to 1971 and the Department of Economics from 1969 to 1978. Her most enduring roles on campus began in 1950 at the Institute of Industrial Relations, currently the Institute for Research on Labor and Employment (IRLE). She was a prolific author and was granted the official title of Research Economist Emeritus at the Institute where she continued to publish until the late 1980s. She reinvested her numerous academic and professional experiences in future economists by serving on several Ph.D. thesis committees.

The history of women in the Department of Economics is complicated and it remains unclear whether Margaret Gordon preferred or pursued greater opportunities within the department. In the same field as her husband, Robert (Aaron) Gordon, she was ineligible for a ladder-faculty position due to former anti-nepotism rules. She prioritized her role at home when many young academics in her position would be establishing their careers. Highly educated and industrious, she remained active through civic leadership and research roles while juggling full-time responsibilities for her two children. Even when her children were young, she dove into party politics and later was elected to the Berkeley City Council from 1965 to 1969. She was a member of multiple federal advisory committees, including appointment by President Lyndon B. Johnson to the Commission of Income Maintenance Programs. To learn more about her personal qualities, we interviewed her eldest son, Robert (Bob) Gordon, a professor of economics at Northwestern University.

Margaret Gordon, née Shaughnessy, was born in 1910 in Wabasha, Minnesota. The daughter of a surgeon and homemaker, she grew up in a house that doubled as the town surgery in Framingham, Massachusetts. The Great Depression unfolded as she completed her undergraduate studies in economics at Bryn Mawr College.

I don't know anything about why she got interested in economics but for anyone going to college between 1928 and 1931 with the world collapsing around you, I would think it's a very natural thing that almost anybody would be interested in economics. After all, she turned eighteen in September 1928 at the peak of the stock market boom and would have been declaring her major just as the economy was collapsing in the fall of 1929 and the spring of 1930. And so what was going on outside in the real world was undoubtedly a major factor behind her choice of economics. (B. Gordon, pp. 2-3.)

Top of her class, she was awarded a scholarship that allowed her to spend the 1933-34 academic year working on her dissertation at the London School of Economics. During her graduate studies at Radcliffe

¹ Carol Lee is a member of the class of 2020 at the University of California, Berkeley where she is majoring in Economics with a special focus on sustainable community development.

College, she took the same courses and exams as her male Harvard counterparts and was socially integrated among a group of young economists including Aaron Gordon. The young couple observed the effects of racial segregation and were brought together by a shared concern for minorities.

I don't think it's unusual that as part of developing a liberal philosophy in the wake of the Great Depression and the enormous number of social problems that it unveiled, that both she and my father would be extremely interested in problems of minorities—both the black unemployment problem in Berkeley that she was concerned about on the city council and the problem of racial injustice in general ... I remember her and my father as much more involved in racial aspects of injustice than in gender equality. I hardly ever heard her express strong feelings about gender issues in the way that she did about racial issues. (B. Gordon, pp. 4-5.)

She obtained her Ph.D. in economics in 1935 and was married the following year. She entered the labor force as a postdoctoral researcher for the Bureau of International Research of Harvard University and Radcliffe College before moving to California.

The Gordons moved to Berkeley in 1938 when Aaron Gordon began his tenure track position at the Department of Economics. She gave birth to their first son, Robert, in 1940 and completed her first book *Barriers to World Trade* in 1941. After the bombing of Pearl Harbor, the Gordons relocated to Washington, D.C. to contribute to the war effort—he worked at the War Production Board and she worked at the Office of Price Administration. After David, their second son, was born in 1944, Margaret Gordon decided to not hold a regular job while her children were young.

She managed the mother aspect of bringing us up pretty much by herself. I do not remember that we had a cleaning woman during the time when I was a child ... I have vivid memories of my mother with the old-fashioned wringer washing machine in the basement of [our] house, of her hanging clothes out on clothes pins on an outdoor line in the era before clothes dryers, so she was very much a housewife. She cooked every meal, every dinner, although my parents seemed to be going out to meetings all the time ... To the extent that they were going out for dinner and leaving the children alone, we were brought up on Swanson chicken pot pies and Hormel chili and other delicious processed foods in the era. (B. Gordon, p. 6.)

The Gordons returned to Berkeley in 1945 and she developed lifelong friendships and connections while she served on the board of directors for the local then state branches of the League of Women Voters. She later resigned to get involved in party politics and was appointed to the Democratic State Central Committee. She was active in the campaigns of 1948 and 1950 and during this time, she got to know civil rights leader Tarea Hall Pittman. Years later in 1953, she helped organize the Berkeley branch of the NAACP where she was elected to the board. During this time, along with the executive secretary of Stiles Hall, she organized one of the first surveys on employment opportunities for minority groups in Berkeley.

Despite holding a Ph.D. in economics from Radcliffe/Harvard, anti-nepotism rules in place during that period disqualified Margaret Gordon from a secure tenure track position at UC Berkeley.

She took the anti-nepotism fate that had cast her into this supporting role as a fait accompli. And she never complained about it and very rarely speculated. I cannot remember if I ever heard her say, "Oh, if only I had been able to join Aaron on the faculty of the Economics Department, here's how my life would have been different." ... At no time that I remember did she ever try to get a faculty position at nearby Mills College which would have been an option for a faculty wife back in that day because it was so close and so nearby. (B. Gordon, p. 5.)

Gordon found her home on campus at the Institute of Industrial Relations. Clark Kerr, the founding director, offered her a part-time research position in 1950. She was reluctant to accept the role because she was not trained as a labor economist, but Kerr assured her any good economist could fill the role. She quit Democratic Party politics to conform with the Institute's non-partisan stance and worked on a half-time basis to have time at home with her children. According to Clair Brown, professor emeritus at the Department of Economics and former director of IRLE, "Everybody I ever talked to said Peg used to run IRLE. Clark was way too busy doing all these other things. He truly did respect her and really let everybody know that." Gordon's first book for the Institute, *Employment Expansion and Population Growth*, was published in 1954. She assumed a full-time role when she was appointed Associate Director (1954-1969) where some of her research tasks continued to be performed from home. She wrote about aspects of unemployment, Social Security and the economic problems of aging. Her largest concern was youth unemployment.

Clark Kerr headed the Carnegie Commission on Higher Education shortly after his dismissal from the University of California system. In 1969, he invited Margaret Gordon to be Associate Director of the Carnegie Commission. Not wanting to seem ungrateful to the Institute which had treated her so well, she worked part-time for both organizations until she realized the demands of the Commission required her full attention. Over the next ten years, she drafted over a dozen reports for the Carnegie Commission and the Carnegie Council on Policy Studies in Higher Education. She was particularly instrumental in drafting a report that led to substantial increases in federal aid for medical and dental education. The report specifically recommended area health education centers to improve access to health care in underserved areas through education and training for healthcare professionals.

She was Clark Kerr's ghost writer. She uses the word 'draft' a report as if it doesn't somehow [mean] she was the author of the reports. That's what it should have said. Clark Kerr would get his name on the cover and then he would say in the acknowledgements, "I am grateful to Margaret Gordon for all her help." Well, Margaret Gordon had written the whole thing and as I remember, they were so good that there was very little Clark Kerr did to change them! (B. Gordon, p.10.)

This was an extremely busy period in her life while she drafted reports for the Commission, lectured for the Department of Economics and cared for Aaron Gordon as his health declined. Margaret Gordon retired in 1979.

Margaret Gordon was a woman aware of her capabilities and opportunity costs. She graciously accepted supporting roles yet distinguished herself as an economist when the field was dominated by men. During the interview with Bob Gordon, he shared stories about her devotion as a parent and shared his thoughts on how she might view the current climate for female academics.

I think she would have been quite concerned and probably surprised that there continues to be so much de facto discrimination against women in academics ... She would have been surprised at the difficulty young women have in getting tenure and arriving on the tenure track and in many cases having lower salaries than men at equivalent positions. She was basically not trying to play the double role of mother of a young child with a tenure-track pressure of trying to get articles published the way young women have to combine life today. So I think she would have had a great deal of sympathy and support for the double role that young women have to play while fully recognizing that she did not go through the same thing herself. (B. Gordon, pp. 10-11.)

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Clair Brown (by Renee Utter¹)



Clair Brown was the first woman to be hired for a tenure track faculty position at the Berkeley Economics Department since the beginning of World War II. A native of Florida, Brown completed her Ph.D. in economics with a focus on Labor Economics at the University of Maryland. She joined the Berkeley economics department in January 1974. Brown was not just witness to but was also instrumental in increasing women's presence in Berkeley's Economics Department.

A math major at Wellesley, Clair wanted to help make the world a better place. It was the 1960s and change was at the forefront of most college students' minds. Ultimately, Clair realized there

wasn't much social reform to be done with mathematical proofs. Armed with her strong background in math, Brown found a research assistant position in an economics think tank. She soon realized that to climb a career ladder, she would need a Ph.D.

I was a budding labor economist...I realized you had to go back to graduate school. ... I was married at the time and living in [Washington] DC. So I looked around and I saw that the University of Maryland had a great faculty and I said, "I'll go there." (Brown, interview with the author, page 1)

At Maryland, Brown got her first taste of sex discrimination, and how government actions can trigger change.

I was told initially that we [the University] don't give any money to women because you have a husband and he can support you. ... You can't teach because we don't have any women graduate student teachers. But then the draft deferral ended for Vietnam, so all of a sudden, the men were being drafted. ... They didn't have enough male graduate students to do all the [teaching] they needed...Finally I was hired as a TA. (Brown, interview with the author, page 1)

In 1973, she graduated from the University of Maryland with a Ph.D. in Economics. Her first position was as a postdoctoral at Brookings Institute. Gerard Debreu, a professor of Economics at UC Berkeley since 1962, called her in the fall of 1972 to encourage her to apply to an open position in his department. The Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) compelled Berkeley to, at a minimum, interview women for faculty positions.

When Gerard Debreu called me up, I'm thinking "Hmmm, I wonder why Berkeley is reaching out to me?" ... This was the first time I realized how extremely important laws and regulations were that structured markets. The EEOC had said to Berkeley, "There are a lot of women out there. You better go find them and hire them if you want to keep getting government money." ... There wasn't a requirement to actually hire women. The requirement was that they at least interview

¹ Renee Utter is an Economics Major at the University of California, Berkeley, Class of 2021.

women ... because no women were getting interviewed for faculty positions. None! (Brown, interview with the author, pp. 2-3)

Brown became the first female tenure-track faculty member hired by the Economics department since the 1930s.

One colleague, an assistant professor, took me aside [during my onsite interview] and said “I gotta tell you: the men that we’ve brought through here, they’re awful. If you can even just stand up and speak coherently, I think they will have a hard time not hiring you.” ... I guess I was coherent because they gave me a job offer. (Brown, interview with the author, page 4)

Given the history of women in the field, the department, and academia generally, salary negotiations almost always put women at a disadvantage. At Berkeley, Clair saw the excuses for not fairly compensating women. She recalls that a friend, the retired Professor Charles Gulick, advised her:

“Clair, just remember to demand equal pay because I know Emily Huntington was paid horribly. I’d say, “Emily you’ve got to go in there and demand better pay.” But she would say “Oh, I’m just so happy to have my job and I think I don’t want to cause any problems.” (Brown, interview with the author, page 3)

Clair Brown did not leave the Berkeley Economics department the way she found it. Shortly after her arrival, Brown wrote a memo to the EEOC after witnessing discrimination in an economics department hiring decision.

I then watched hiring in my first year in the department. I saw that they brought in women, of course; they now knew they had to interview at least one woman every year. They brought in this really smart woman who is in IO [Industrial Organization] and they brought in some men -- like four or five men. [At a department meeting,] we discussed the candidates to decide who would stay on the shortlist. The first person who got thrown off the list was the woman. They threw her off because she was in IO, and “we didn’t really need any more people in IO”. ... And so, they hired a man. The second year I was there, we did more hiring. We hired a man who happened to be in IO, although the need for fields hadn’t changed. So I decided I should write up this example of discrimination and send it to the EEOC, because my department doesn’t understand how they’re discriminating. (Brown, interview with the author, page 4)

After consulting with Professor Herma Hill Kay of Berkeley’s Law School, a professor and legal scholar on gender inequality, Brown sent her memo to the EEOC. This memo permanently altered some of Brown’s professional relationships.

And then of course all hell broke loose. The department got really upset with me. ‘We’re really nice people and we would never discriminate.’ ... What can I say? After the memo, the next year they hired two women and it totally changed my

life Years later, I still had faculty reminding me what an awful thing I did with that memo. I thought I should have gotten rewarded! ... It never dawned on me to have any regrets about that memo, because it was so great having Joan Hannon and Laura Tyson there. (Brown, interview with the author, pp. 5 and 7)

The two women? Laura Tyson and Joan Hannon. In the faculty meetings, there were now three female voices, and they did not represent the monolith that the men expected.

They could see we had differences of opinion, we had different experiences in different fields and knowledge, just like they did. (Brown, interview with the author, page 6)

The hiring of three women created the appearance of gender diversity, but the inner workings and social environment of the department left Brown at a disadvantage as she tried to advance her career. After all, she released a memo calling out sexism in her colleagues' actions. This resurfaced at Brown's tenure review when the vote was not unanimous and her review was subsequently pushed back a year. Despite the role it may have played, Brown never regretted the memo, because it brought two other women to her workplace. Brown has seen the department's gender diversity improve since 1973, but even today, she points out the need to be vigilant in keeping the department diverse in all ways.

There's definitely a diversity problem, that we definitely need people that are African-American and Latinx. In California especially, there's no reason not to have more faculty from these underrepresented groups. (Brown, interview with the author, page 10)

As Brown advanced in her academic career, she also advanced through life's milestones. There was one large factor that separated the male and female faculty's career paths: family leave. In the late 1970s, UC Berkeley's new maternity leave policy was based on 6-week disability laws. The chair of the department, Bent Hansen, a Danish Economist, was familiar with Europe's more progressive maternity leave, and gave her an entire 15-week semester.

I go in to see Chair Hansen, and I say, "I'm pregnant." He says, "We have this new law where you actually get six weeks of paybut of course we are on a semester system. Don't you worry. I'm from Sweden. I know how to do this. We'll figure it out because clearly you've got to have a semester off." I was the first person in Economics -- actually, I was one of the first women on campus -- to get paid maternity leave. A lot of women wouldn't even ask for it, because they were afraid it might hurt their careers. But I've got to say I was really lucky to have a Social Democrat as my chair. (Brown, interview with the author, page 11)

Later, Brown was part of a group of female faculty and administrators who realized that many department chairs discouraged women from taking any leave after childbirth. The group worked for change on campus. Department chairs were told they could not discourage women from taking maternity leave, and should encourage men to take leave, as well. Rather than making faculty opt-in to a leave policy, they had to *opt-out*. Chairs had to write letters explaining why a faculty member was *not* taking their leave. Behavior changed, and both women and men faculty started taking their leave and feeling supported as parents.

Over four decades in Berkeley's economics department, Brown has witnessed a lot of change in both the department and the profession. Bringing more women into the field changes economics.

One of the reasons it's been so important to bring women into the field is that we actually change the way that economics is practiced. One of the things I'm very proud about is Berkeley now has a history of distinguished female faculty. Everybody's always looked at Berkeley as having female professors, at least more than any other major top 5 University. ... Women change the field. They present the field in a way that's not just about people caring only for themselves, that people have other-regarding and altruistic ways of behaving, which every other field thinks is true. It's just economics has this way of thinking, "Oh I maximize for myself. I'm selfish. That's how human nature is." Women are much more able to think about economics in a broader holistic way and really move the field along in a way that makes it much more relevant to how people and countries think about well-being, how we think about social welfare, and how we think about economic policies, and even how we interpret economic history. (Brown, interview with the author, pp. 12-13)

Brown's own work follows this with her teaching an undergraduate seminar based on her book *Buddhist Economics: An enlightened approach to the dismal science* (Bloomsbury Press). She integrates global sustainability, shared prosperity and care for the human spirit in an economic framework that assumes interdependence of people with each other and the planet. People are viewed as both self-caring and altruistic. Then economic performance depends on the well-being of all people and of the environment, and not only on market output (GDP). Brown continues to encourage all economists to be focused on how to solve our most critical problems—the climate emergency, racial injustice, and inequality.

Read about Clair in *Eminent Economists II: Their Life and Work Philosophies* (Cambridge), see <https://buddhisteconomics.net/about/>

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Joan Hannon (by Martha Olney¹) August 2020



Joan Underhill Hannon joined the Berkeley Economics department in 1977, upon completion of her Ph.D. at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. Raised in Long Beach, CA and a graduate of UC Santa Cruz, Hannon is an economic historian whose research focuses on 19th century U.S. immigration and poverty.

At Berkeley, Hannon taught graduate and undergraduate courses in economic history. Hannon was denied tenure in 1985. She subsequently moved to and was tenured at St. Mary's College of California in nearby Moraga, from where she retired in the 2010s. Hannon's experience and ultimate departure from Berkeley is an important part of the fabric of women faculty's experience.

Hannon's politics and intellectual lens always put her more in what is now termed the "heterodox"

camp of economics, and what was in the 1970s and 1980s termed the "Marxist" or "leftist" camp. At a time when mathematical modeling was the dominant paradigm in economics, when the school of rational expectations was on the rise, when "homo economicus" and the "representative agent" were rarely-questioned approaches, Hannon brought a world view and research agenda decidedly at odds with the accepted mainstream of economics.

Her intellectual journey started at childhood.

I grew up in a middle class lily-white suburb, went to lily-white suburban schools. But I always had this kind of interest in and sympathy with the poor When I was 12 years old in 1962, my family took a trip around the country in our Chevy station wagon. It was a three-month trip . . . and included a lot of time in the South where I saw extreme poverty and racism and institutional discrimination like I had never seen or imagined. My eyes were just popping out. And then when I was in college, I got interested in leftist politics. At Santa Cruz you had to take, in your freshman year, a core course. My core course was something like 'Comparing Revolutionary and Evolutionary Social Change.' In the context of the Vietnam War and the Civil Rights Movement . . . [and] the Black Power movement, that course really politicized me. (Hannon, interview with the author, pp. 2 and 4.)

At Santa Cruz, the Economics Department had no women faculty. Hannon was the only female student in the economics major.

¹ *Martha Olney is Teaching Professor of Economics at the University of California, Berkeley. She did her graduate work at Berkeley 1978-1984. Joan Hannon was a member of her dissertation committee. Olney was a student of Joan Hannon's in Economics 210A, and a GSI for Hannon in Economics 113.*

I was the only woman and they all sort of laughed at me and made me feel like a complete outcastBut I did have supporters. There was the person we took Econ 1 from and there were two other leftist professors. (Hannon, interview with the author, p. 3.)

University of Wisconsin was little different.

At Wisconsin there were no women in the department. We had one [woman faculty] visitor and that was it. (Hannon, interview with the author, p. 6.)

Hannon found her way to economic history, where she worked with her advisor Jeffrey Williamson and his colleague and co-author Peter Lindert.

Jeff and Peter were just fantastic mentors in so many different ways that it would take me hours to talk about them all..... First of all, let me say that they never shared my view of history, or my politics. But they respected my right to have that view and they left me alone in that and they never tried to talk me out of it or anything like that. They supported and guided me as a student and throughout my career. (Hannon, interview with the author, p. 4.)

Assigned to teach a required graduate course in economic history at Berkeley – a requirement that many students resented – Hannon challenged students to view our capitalist economic system through an historian’s eyes. Being expected to learn and critique feudalism made some students angry. Not content to suffer in silence, they made her teaching life miserable.

I was young, I was female, and I was teaching a course they really didn’t want to take and they just unloaded. Because I was young and female, they felt that they could unload all of their anger about the course on me. I don’t think they would have done that to a male faculty member..... It was pretty awful. It was the women graduate students who explained that to me. “You know, here’s what’s going on. Here’s why the male graduate students are being so antagonistic towards you: It’s because they’re so angry about taking this course.” (Brown and Hannon, interview with the author, p. 5.)

The culture of the department also did not create a welcoming or encouraging atmosphere. Barrows Hall, where the Economics Department was housed, is an eight-story rectangular building easily five times as long as it is wide. Women were offered a daily reminder that Barrows was not designed for them: only the teaching floors had been constructed with both male and female bathrooms. Floors 2 through 7 had initially housed only men’s bathrooms. By the mid-1970s, the bathrooms on odd-numbered floors had been converted to women’s rooms, but the urinals remained as an ever-present reminder of women’s status in the academic hierarchy.

Faculty in economics, to the extent they worked in Barrows, kept their doors closed. This was not wholly unreasonable as the noise travelled unimpeded from one end of the hallway to the other, from the click-click of someone’s heels to office hour conversations.

Barrows was just so cold. . . I even had a friend who visited me from Wisconsin and she walked into the fifth floor of Barrows and just said "Oh my god! Is this a prison?" . . . You know there was nobody in the hall, all the doors were closed. It just vibrated cold. (Brown and Hannon, interview with the author, p. 8.)

The impact of the closed door policy was to eliminate easy conversations among colleagues. Knocking on doors was almost a violation of some unspoken rule, unless it was office hours. The easy conversations Hannon had been accustomed to at University of Wisconsin were entirely absent in Barrows.

The whole thing was awkward. I came from Santa Cruz where the whole faculty was so available to students. And then Madison, where everybody kept their doors open. . . If you ran into any kind of a problem or glitch, or had an interesting result, you could go down the hall and talk to somebody. People were always running up and down the halls talking to each other. And then I come to Barrows with these long halls and all the doors are shut and nobody ever knocks on them..... I mentioned this once to a [departmental] colleague, and how different it was from Madison where you can go talk to somebody any time you ran into a problem with your research. And he said to me, "Well, you know, if you need help with your research, maybe you don't belong at Berkeley." (Hannon, interview with the author, p. 7.)

Moreover, about one-third of the department – the faculty more oriented toward mathematics and statistics – had decamped to Evans Hall in the years before Hannon's arrival. There was a parallel department infrastructure in Evans making travel to Barrows unnecessary except for the occasional department faculty meeting. The upshot: one-third of the faculty had little way of knowing the other two-thirds.

Regular department meetings could address the geographic divide. However, for women faculty, the department meetings were hardly safe spaces, rife as they were with sexist "jokes" and comments. For Hannon, the easier solution was to simply avoid the meetings.

I think I've forgotten a lot of those memories. But I do, now that you mention it, I do remember that there were explicitly sexist jokes that would be told. But there again, you know, I went to faculty meetings my first year. I couldn't stand them and I stopped going It was too much old boy stuff that I just couldn't handle..... I didn't expose myself to that stuff very much. I stayed in my own little lonely corner. (Hannon, interview with the author, p. 9.)

While doing so may have been a helpful short-run strategy, it was a long-run strategy that further harmed her chances at tenure. Upon reflection thirty-plus years later, Hannon included attending faculty meetings as something she would do differently. More so, she would be much more deliberate at creating networks of support through getting to know senior faculty.

The male junior faculty had much easier access, informal access, to the senior faculty than the women, than I did anyway.....I was young and I was shy. And I just gave up. If I had it to do over again with the knowledge and stuff that I have now, I would do it very differently..... I would just push myself on people. I would knock on doors. I would pick some people that I was interested in what they were writing and I would start reading what they were writing and sending them comments. . . . I would try to make myself valuable to them..... I would start taking the initiative. (Hannon, interview with the author, p. 8.)

Was gender at the heart of her tenure decision? The question is nearly impossible to answer. Gender runs as a thread through everything.

Gender influenced everything that happened to me the whole time I was going through Berkeley. So in that sense, it affected my tenure review because it affected everything I brought to the tenure review. . . . Your teaching evaluations are affected by gender..... If you took maternity leave (without pay, as I remember), it was supposed to be “time off the clock.” But in my tenure review, . . . they were treating it as time on the clock..... I bore the overwhelming majority of the day-to-day childcare responsibilities, whereas most of the men in the department had a child care provider. (Hannon, interview with the author, pp. 9, 12, 13.)

How has the profession changed over the last four or more decades?

I do think things are different – better – now. Look at the Economic History Association. There used to be three of us women, and we used to meet as the women’s lunch at one table. We didn’t even need one table; there were just the three of us.Now sometimes there are 40 women at those lunches..... That’s really changed. And the same with the AEA. There’s definitely changes. It’s definitely getting better. More women are coming into the field. Whether it’s getting easier for them, I don’t know, but more women are coming in. It’s still the minority, no question, but more women are coming in. (Hannon, interview with the author, p. 12.)

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Laura Tyson (by Caitlin Hartley¹)

September 2020



Laura D’Andrea Tyson joined the UC Berkeley Economics department in 1977 and acquired tenure in 1982. Born and raised in New Jersey, Tyson obtained her economics B.A. from Smith College in 1969 and her Ph.D. from Massachusetts Institute of Technology in 1974. She was an assistant professor in the Economics department at Princeton before coming to Berkeley, where she began her academic appointment in the Economics department before transferring to the Haas Business School in 1990. A prominent economist in the political, business, and academic worlds, Tyson’s story provides key insights into the dynamics and history of gender roles in academia at UC Berkeley.²

Professor Tyson was born in Bayonne, New Jersey in 1947. Growing up during a period of rising economic prosperity, a growing middle class, emerging civil rights and gender equality movements, and cold war geopolitical conflict, Tyson found herself drawn to public policy. Her father received his college education through the GI Bill, and she grew up in a home where college education was highly valued as the foundation of a middle class life.

Tyson attended a small co-ed Catholic high school, where Catholic ‘do good’ ideals aligned with the potential for positive impact through policy. Here, she also discovered her talent for math. She was encouraged by consistent support from her teachers who were mostly nuns, including a tough-minded, demanding math teacher – a contrast to the ‘girls aren’t good at math’ narrative that persists in high school classrooms today.

What drew me to economics really started in high school. I went to a Catholic school. There was one particular nun. She was very clear that I was very good at math and that I should stick with it. (Tyson, interview with the author, p. 2.)

Tyson attended Smith College, a women’s liberal art college and the largest institution of the Seven Sisters, intending to pursue a math degree. Once there, however, she realized that a math major was not the right preparation for a future career focusing on public policy and social change. Just as she was beginning to question whether to major in math, she discovered economics which provided a happy balance between her mathematical skills and her policy interests. Even though economics was widely viewed as a “male” discipline with degree numbers to match, this bias did not exist at a women’s college.

¹ Caitlin Hartley is a 2020 graduate from the University of California, Berkeley with a major in Economics.

² As we all grappled with the bumpy transition from in-person to online worlds, technical difficulties were experienced. Unfortunately, Professor Olney forgot to press the record button and the first 40 minutes of this interview was not recorded. Due to this, we relied on the transcript as well as after-the-fact edits and written communication with Laura Tyson to compose this document.

Smith College was a women's college with many gifted students. Nobody thought of economics as a male discipline. It was, when I was there, the second most popular major at Smith. (Tyson, interview with the author, p. 3.)

Gender differences in economics became more apparent when Tyson went on to pursue her Ph.D. at MIT, where women accounted for less than 10% of her doctoral program. Still, Tyson encountered few barriers from gender discrimination and was supported and mentored by several male professors who were committed to her success. She was also inspired by the rise of feminism and the women's liberation movement's message that women must recognize and challenge gender discrimination.

There was a way in which my failure to recognize that economics was a male-dominated discipline for a long time really helped me. At Smith I simply didn't think about it! I applied to MIT, but when I realized that there were likely to be very few women in my program and that there were very few well-known women in economics, I started to have my doubts. I actually wrote a letter to MIT saying I was not coming, and it was my parents, particularly my father, who said "Tear the letter up and go try. Just go try. It might be fine." Once I got there, it was very important that several faculty members really seemed to care about me. They were more than just mentors--they became sponsors and offered me research and fellowship opportunities. . (Tyson, interview with the author, p. 1.)

Emphasizing the power of networking, her MIT advisors recommended Tyson for a job at Princeton, even before she began her job market pursuit. She interviewed and accepted a job as an Assistant Professor in economics at Princeton. She proved to be a gifted and popular teacher and continued her research, but over time she questioned whether the Princeton Economics department was the right place for her given her interdisciplinary, comparative and policy interests. At the time, the Economics department at Berkeley had two very powerful senior professors in the field of comparative economics, Ben Ward and Gregory Grossman, who encouraged her to apply for a job there.

I came to Berkeley [from Princeton] on leave, to write up my dissertation as a short book. I realized while I was at Princeton that I really preferred a more interdisciplinary environment than the Princeton Economics department was likely to offer me. Berkeley had two very powerful senior professors in my research and teaching field, and they really encouraged me to apply for a job. And they were very supportive of me once I accepted the position. (Tyson, interview with the author, p. 3.)

Once at Berkeley with their help she established a community both in and outside of her department. Berkeley has a rich history of interdisciplinary research and a "number of interdisciplinary centers outside of departments that can provide homes – intellectual homes, resource homes, and networks to [the] outside world for young scholars." Tyson became actively involved with the Center for Soviet and East European Studies where she worked with many senior Berkeley faculty members, including two women, from a variety of departments. In addition, she played a leadership role in the development of the interdisciplinary PEIS (Political Economy of Industrial Societies) major which became one of the

largest major programs at Berkeley. Several female faculty members were active in the PEIS curriculum and many female undergraduates became PEIS majors. In her work inside and outside of the Economics department, Tyson felt a sense of sisterhood with her female colleagues and was especially close with Professor Clair Brown in economics and Professor Vicky Bonnell in sociology. These support networks created an environment in which Tyson could excel as a woman.

Although Tyson didn't recall experiencing any sort of sexual harassment personally, she knew it was something that was very common during this time for women academics. She was an invited participant in a 1970s conference organized by the American Association of University Women for women who had recently received doctoral degrees in scientific disciplines. About 2/3s of the conference attendees reported experiencing sexual harassment and advances from male classmates and professors! As a graduate student in the economics department in the late 1970s and early 1980s, Martha Olney recalls an incident involving Tyson that she found shocking at the time. A senior colleague told the not-yet-tenured Tyson, "You better not wear those tight jeans when you teach Econ 1. You'll make all the boys crazy!" As Olney recalls, Tyson and the men in the room laughed it off. Tyson often used humor or as a way to deflect sexist remarks.

Before the transition to Evans Hall in 1989, the Economics department was located in Barrows Hall, and riding up the typically somber elevator in Barrows one day, Tyson sparked conversation with John Zysman, a professor of political science and comparative political economy whom she had met while they were both graduate students at MIT. He suggested co-teaching a course together. She agreed and the course became a turning point in her research and teaching interests which gradually shifted from a focus on planned economies to a focus on advanced industrial market economies. After the course she continued to work with John on several articles and book projects on global competitiveness, a topic of growing significance among policy makers. Based on her work in this field, she was invited to be a visiting professor at Harvard Business School and upon returning to Berkeley, she requested to move her appointment from the Economics Department to the Haas School. She had already received tenure, was advanced in her career, and saw the direction of her work shifting – it made sense to switch. Comparable to her experience in the economics department, Tyson felt great support and little gender bias at Haas.

New laws established by the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) in the 1970s pushed academic institutions and companies to diversify, also creating a *de jure* system to hold them accountable. Tyson believes that combined with her qualifications and accomplishments the fact that she is a woman created an advantage at various points in her career, including her admission to MIT, her appointment as assistant professor at Princeton, her promotion to a tenured professorship at Berkeley, the offer of a tenured appointment at the Harvard Business School and President Clinton's decision to appoint her as the first woman to serve as Chairman of the President's Council of Economic Advisers (CEA) in 1993. At the time he chose her for this position, there were no women on the 'short list' of top economists identified as contenders.

I didn't think I was going to get the job, okay, I did not. I wasn't even vying for it, I didn't even think it was possible. There were lists around the country of the 20 top economists who people thought could get this job. They were all men. I wasn't on the list. No one thought I was going to get this job. (Tyson, interview with the author, p. 4.)

President Clinton knew of Tyson's work on competitiveness and agreed with her policy positions on manufacturing and trade. He was also committed to gender diversity in his cabinet appointments.

The fact that I was a woman was a positive, not a negative. The fact that I got [the job as chair of the CEA] strikes me as ... a plus there that comes from the decision of that administration to value diversity in its appointments. (Tyson, interview with the author, p. 4.)

When Tyson acquired this top position she endured derogatory comments via the media from some of the men who had been on the 'short list' and who thought they were more qualified. Their criticism did not deter her from carrying out her responsibilities and from pressing for inclusion in all top leadership and cabinet meetings. At the time, men routinely insisted on inclusion which was granted, while women did so less frequently and thus were generally included less. Alice Rivlin was in President Clinton's cabinet at the same time as Tyson and was familiar with this battle for inclusion - she pushed Laura to start asking for inclusion in all White House meetings. This is exactly what she did, and as a result of her insistence, she created a weekly economic briefing with the President, played a role in all major Administration economic decisions, and was appointed as the Chair of the National Economic Council when Robert Rubin left that position to become Secretary of the Treasury. "I think you do have to be willing, you have to be bold to ask... you can't wait for things to come your way because you're just really good at doing them." This remains true in many realms today.

After she announced her intention to leave the Clinton Administration at the end of its first term (1996), Tyson's reputation and visibility as a top economist along with the business community's emerging interest in gender diversity led to her appointment to several corporate boards. Even today, however, despite progress women remain underrepresented on corporate boards, holding only about 20% of board positions in the S&P 500 companies.

With her family, Tyson decided to return to Berkeley and resume her role as a professor at the Haas School. After 2 years of teaching and research, she was named as its first female Dean, and after a 5-year term there she was chosen as the first female Dean of the London Business School. At the time of her appointments to these roles, there were no other female Deans at major global business schools. Today, there are several.

For many women, it can be difficult to strike a balance between motherhood, family and career. Coined the "motherhood penalty," women generally experience systematic compensation and promotion disadvantages in the workplace when choosing to have children. Tyson, however, was guided and supported well in terms of familial life. At MIT, Tyson's professors advised her to wait to have children

until after acquiring tenure. This is what she did. Furthermore, Tyson has an extremely supportive spouse, Erik, who as a freelance writer worked from home and was willing and able to share childcare responsibilities. This allowed her to focus on her research and career, but decisions and successes were still about the family unit and not just about the individual. When President Clinton asked her to take another cabinet position during his second term, the family decided that it was time to return home to Berkeley.

Tyson sees several threads that run through her experiences and those of many other women: the role of supportive partners, the importance of sponsors, both male and female, and confidence and a willingness to put yourself out there.

My personal story underscores the importance of having active sponsors in your career at certain points. There are pivotal moments when there's a position, an opportunity, which a sponsor can help bring to your attention and help support you to be the person who gets that opportunity. Faculty leaders, university leaders, top business executives and political leaders, they absolutely have to own that responsibility. (Tyson, interview with the author, pp. 5 and 6.)

At the same time,

I think for women . . . you can't wait for things to come your way because [you think] you're just really goodThat's just not how the world works. You have to be good... but often to be in the running, you have to put yourself out there You have to be willing to go and either ask, or insist, or say, "You know, this is what we should be doing here. We deserve to be here. We need to be here." (Tyson, interview with the author, p. 6.)

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Alessandra Casella (by Lindsay Gyeongjin Earhart¹) June 2021



Born and raised in Milano, Italy, Alessandra Casella's academic journey in the United States started in 1982 when, as a junior at Bocconi University, she spent one semester as an exchange student at NYU. Casella instantly fell in love with New York. The freedom and diversity of New York were liberating.

Everybody was different. Everybody was doing different things. They were completely crazy. It was absolutely wonderful. So, during that semester, I really thought this has got to continue and I have to do this again. (Casella, interview with the author, p. 3.)

Casella's intellectual curiosity was heavily influenced by her family, the majority of whom had been academics for several generations. That, and a healthy dose of sibling competition, led her to pursue a Ph.D. at MIT after receiving her bachelor's degree from Bocconi University *summa cum laude* in Economics and Social Sciences in 1983.

You have to keep in mind the competition within the family. My brother had done a master's at Harvard, so I had to do a PhD at MIT because of the obvious reason. (Casella, interview with the author, p. 3 and 4.)

Lack of good doctorate programs in Italy also made her decision to pursue an academic career in the United States easier. Further, when thinking of different PhD programs, her first contact with the MIT faculty was with Franco Modigliani who supported and motivated her intellectual curiosity.

Yet it was life in Italy, a country of precarious political culture, that led Casella to an emphasis in public economics and political economy.

If you grew up in Italy—and I think it's true for many other countries, Argentina is another obvious one—you really cannot study economics without asking yourself questions about politics. I mean, they are so clearly interrelated that the idea of being technical economists who ignore everything about how policies are decided just doesn't seem to make sense. So, I think it's really the environment in which we grew up that pushed us towards political economy in general. ... These (Italy and Argentina) are remarkably badly governed countries historically.

There must be a reason there. (Casella, interview with the author, p. 3.)

As a woman coming from MIT with its strong curriculum, Casella recalls the moment of entering the academic job market in 1987 as a high point.

¹ Lindsay Gyeongjin Earhart is a 2021 graduate of the University of California, Berkeley, with a major in economics.

The academic job market was certainly my moment, my apex of glory. With the exception of Harvard, I had offers from every school I could dream of. I had offers from Yale, Princeton, Stanford, Columbia, Northwestern, NYU, Brown. (Casella, interview with the author, p. 4.)

Her craving for freedom and concerns that the stress of publishing as an assistant professor would lead Casella toward more conventional work than she wanted to do made Berkeley—with its reputation as a free-spirit place—the best choice.

Casella came up for tenure six years later, and her case was denied. Looking back, she remembers being caught unawares.

Tenure reviews are of course, stressful moments. [When] I started my tenure... I was completely unprepared in terms of administrative affairs. I was totally unprepared, I don't remember even writing a statement. I thought this review was actually going to happen the following year. This tells you how unprepared I was. Well, then it turns out that no, it didn't happen the following year. It happened this year, and in fact, it was negative. That took me completely by surprise. (Casella, interview with the author, p. 7.)

In Casella's opinion, clear-cut tenure cases – both positive and negative – are a minority. She believes that a majority could typically go either way and that a crucial ingredient is a senior person on the faculty who makes your tenure case their mission and passion.

The other thing about tenure is that to get someone through tenure takes work, not from the person, but from the Committee or whoever wants to promote the person. There has to be someone, one person or more, who decides "I'm going to make this my mission. I really want this person." And you have to evoke strong passions in a sense to have an advocate. I think [in my case] people thought "Oh, sure, she's fine." (Casella, interview with the author, pp. 9 and 10.)

Still, today, nearly 30 years later, Casella points to the Berkeley Economics Department as a leading academic institution that has been unbelievably successful in putting women in positions of power.

From Laura Tyson to Christina Romer and of course to Janet [Yellen]. It's just extraordinary, really extraordinary They're doing something really right. The university must be supporting women. You don't come into those positions if you don't have an institution behind you that is supporting you. (Casella, interview with the author, p. 2 and 3.)

After leaving Berkeley, Casella accepted a position as an Associate Professor at Columbia University where she later became tenured. She now serves as a professor of Economics and Political Science at Columbia University and a fellow of the National Bureau of Economic Research (Cambridge), and the Center for Economic Policy Research (London).

Following her early work in international monetary economics, Casella moved to public economics and voting theory. Here, she offered new proposals on how decisions are made in the electoral field. The absence of data led Casella to what was still a non-mainstream technique in Economics at the time: studying decision-making in the laboratory.

This is how I discovered research work in the lab and developed a passion for experimental economics. This approach was very stimulating because you are the person generating the data that's needed to test your theory. (Allegra Gallizia, Alessandra Casella: Experimentation and Voting Theory, Bocconi University)

During her academic career, Casella has witnessed many challenges concerning women in economics in both the United States and Europe.

The social behaviors are very different. From the point of view of the presence of women in economics, I think Europe until very recently was behind the U.S. Whenever I went to a conference in Europe, I very often found myself the only woman in the room when this wasn't true any longer in the US. ... For example, I was having breakfast [at a conference in Europe] and this guy came up to me, one of the people at the conference and he said, "Oh, you know, it was fun, your talk yesterday; it was so refreshing." Refreshing? What do you mean refreshing? I wasn't giving a refreshing talk. I was very serious. It was shocking. This is not the kind of comment I had ever received in the US. I was "refreshing"? Refreshing? I think that Europe had a longer way to go. Now, there are a lot of initiatives. (Casella, interview with the author, p. 9.)

In particular, Casella suggests a disproportionate sample size between men and women in the economics field as a possible explanation for the gender inequality and male-dominance issues in the economics profession.

Numbers. I think it's just numbers. Let's say there is this woman. She is fantastic. She is everything you want: great publications, a lot of students, very active, and very interesting topics. So, you go to the senior hiring committee and make your pitch and they say, "Alright, splendid, she's wonderful. She is fantastic, absolutely." But then there is this guy, John, and he is even better because John is the best of the very large sample of men. And she might be the best of a smaller sample of women. Any basic statistics will tell you that the highest order statistics of a bigger sample is going to be higher than the highest order statistics when the sample is smaller. If you're judging on quality, whenever you have a group that is very underrepresented, and you compare the very best to the very best of a group that is much larger, the larger group is favored. And there is no discrimination at all. The underlying talent distribution can be

absolutely identical. It's only that the sample is small. So, you end up hiring John just because he is the best from the bigger sample. This is the kind of problem I have experienced that holds minorities back. So, I think the big issue here is just numbers and I hope it's changing. (Casella, interview with the author, p. 10.)

To overcome this disproportionate male dominance in academia, Casella advocates educating both men and women to overcome both gender inequality issues.

You really have to educate the men. You have to educate the women to take less care of their house and their children, and the men to take more care of their house and their children. I have no idea how you're going to do that. It's really difficult. It's really difficult. I was listening to a talk by Claudia Goldin who was saying it's a responsibility of the workplaces, to not require a type of commitment that cannot be given by a mother with a small child. Maybe, but in research, you are the person who requires that type of commitment, who gives yourself the commitments. So, I'm not sure. I think that's extremely difficult. (Casella, interview with the author. p. 11)

As the mother of a daughter who is herself a Ph.D. candidate, Casella offers this advice to young women:

I don't think it's terribly productive to focus on being a woman. ... You have to try to be free. You have to be daring, you have to understand that you're taking risks. Somewhere, you have to be aware that if you're a minority, you're going to be in a slightly more difficult position. On the other hand, there are good sides, too; you will be noticed more, people will remember you more. It's not always negative. In fact, I think it can be positive many times, but don't overdo it. It doesn't matter so much and it shouldn't matter. Don't fall into self-victimization, that's extremely dangerous. (Casella, interview with the author, p. 11.)

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Christina Romer (by Nicole Mashoudy¹) June 2021



Growing up, Christina Romer found a natural interest in public policy questions. With a grandfather who was a newspaper editor and a mother who listened to the news all the time, Romer's formative years were surrounded by discussions on topics such as the 1970s gasoline shortages, inflation, and high unemployment.

Romer entered The College of William and Mary for her undergraduate career in 1977 believing that she was going to study political science and become a lawyer. Upon taking a required year of economics classes, Romer decided to switch majors to economics and recalls thinking to herself, *Oh my goodness, there's this field where you can figure out the answers to all the questions I am interested in ... I had a really influential introductory economics professor... [who]*

made economics come alive ... It makes me as an instructor realize how important ... that first taste of economics [is] for some people. It's like a light ... And I certainly found it just incredibly exciting. (Romer, interview with the author, pp. 3 and 4.)

She also recalls the importance of mentorship, especially from female role models, in her early life and education. Romer was inspired by the teaching and research of her political science professor Miss Hamilton and remembers being introduced to Miss Hamilton's life in a personal way.

She brought me somewhat into ... her life. She'd have a group of students over for dinner. How about this for a random thing? I was so taken with Miss Hamilton's china that when we got married, I said, "I know what I want." [My dishes are] just like hers. These crazy little things ... You got ... a vision of somebody's life right down to what they eat off of. (Romer, interview with the author, p. 4.)

After receiving a PhD in economics from MIT in 1985 and serving as an Assistant Professor of Economics and Public Affairs at Princeton University from 1985-1988, Romer began her career at the University of California, Berkeley. At the time, it was refreshing for Romer to see other women faculty and senior women in the Berkeley Economics Department. She quickly found support and friendship in George Akerlof and Janet Yellen, and she viewed Yellen as a role model for how she conducted research and managed having children.

Romer had entered the department with her husband, David Romer, whom she met and married in graduate school. Not many years before, the Romers would have been prohibited from being hired together owing to anti-nepotism rules of the university that were eventually repealed. When asked

¹ Nicole Mashoudy is a 2021 graduate of the University of California, Berkeley, with a major in economics and a minor in data science.

about the dynamics of being a couple in the same department, Romer says that Berkeley was unique in that she didn't feel as though the department or the students treated the two of them differently.

[At Princeton], it was definitely an issue ... "We need to put Christy in the Public Policy School and David in the Economics Department because it would be so weird to have them ... in the same department" ... David loves to tell people that he was the affirmative action hire [at Berkeley] in the sense that they had one slot. They hired me ... and they said if we're going to get her, we need to get him a slot ... [Berkeley] didn't treat me like I was, you know, the "follow along." (Romer, interview with the author, p. 7.)

In fact, Romer believes that once Berkeley got rid of the anti-nepotism rules, it saw a profit opportunity and invested heavily in couples such as George Akerlof and Janet Yellen as well as Joe Farrell and Suzanne Scotchmer. Gradually, Romer found enjoyment and fun in teaching and researching with her husband even though they began in two completely different fields, economic history and macroeconomics, respectively. When told that many undergraduates who have taken Econ 2, which is jointly taught by David and Christina Romer, see the Romers as the ultimate power couple and love them both equally, Romer responded

We're now getting old enough [that] I think ... [students] find it kind of cute that we're married. So, we just embrace it. (Romer, interview with the author, p.9.)

While Romer doesn't remember much organized support among women faculty when she first came to Berkeley in the late 1980s, she sees a strong sense of responsibility for the young faculty, a characteristic that is special to Berkeley. Upon considering a job offer from the Kennedy School and visiting Harvard, she realized that this special attention towards junior faculty was not universal.

[At Berkeley], the first thing we ask the assistant professors is what they'd like to teach. And it's the full professors that fill in the other things ... I think Berkeley is kind of unique in ... mentoring and supporting young faculty. (Romer, interview with the author, p. 9.)

Another instance of support that Romer recalls was when she was pregnant with her first son. Experiencing morning sickness and feeling unwell in general, Romer went to then-department-chair Bob Anderson for guidance.

I said, "I'm in a mess here." And he said, "You know, why don't we just cut one of your classes?" ... It was kind of an ad hoc thing. But boy was that unbelievably important to my development, my career ... There [were] ... various times when we've thought of leaving Berkeley. I was drawn back because they had really supported me in those times when I wasn't all that productive because I was having children. I kind of felt like they really built loyalty. More employers ought to think that way about ... how they treat their women faculty. (Romer, interview with the author, p. 10.)

Unfortunately, there were also times in Romer's career when prejudice against women in economics was explicit. While serving with Janet Yellen (Berkeley), Suzanne Scotchmer (Berkeley), and Bob Shiller (Yale) on a visiting committee tasked with evaluating the Economics Department at Harvard, Romer remembers a comment made by a male faculty member there.

There was one faculty member ... kind of asking questions and he said, "Well, it's understood that women are systematically placed one or two ranks above what they actually deserve because of affirmative action." ... The three Berkeley women -- we were outraged. And Bob Shiller said, "Oh, that's just Barro being Barro." And it really made me realize that no, it's not just women who have to fight for themselves. The guys also can't give other guys a pass. (Romer, interview with the author, p. 11.)

In 2008, then-President-elect Obama's transition team contacted Romer for the position of Chair of the Council of Economic Advisers (CEA) given her knowledge and research of the Great Depression. She describes the experience as surreal. After receiving an email from the transition team and immediately catching a plane to Chicago, Romer soon found herself making policy recommendations to President Obama regarding an economic stimulus.

I'm very glad that I did it. I can't honestly say that I enjoyed it, but the world was falling apart, and I wanted to try to help fix things." (Romer, interview with the author, p. 12.)

When Romer joined the CEA, discussions revolved around implementing a \$500-\$600 billion stimulus. By the end of one meeting, Romer was able to increase the stimulus package to \$800 billion. And while Romer thought that it would have been better if the package was bigger, today she views it as one of her greatest triumphs.

Washington, however, felt like a "boys club." And Romer recalls moments when women had to band together to feel a sense of solidarity.

We started having dinners with ten of us who were in the executive branch ... I felt like there was a lot of support ... [W]omen would make sure that other women got into meetings or got credit for the things they accomplished. (Romer, interview with the author, p. 14.)

When asked how women could replicate this support in the field of economics, Romer says that women helping one another can be extremely valuable, but it should not be solely the responsibility of women to do so.

[At the National Bureau of Economic Research meetings], I'd have to go around [to young women] and say, "Ok, you're sitting around the edge of the room, come up to the table. I'm tired of being the only woman sitting at the table." ... [But], it can't just be us helping one another ...

The good guys need to step up ... There are terrific women to put on your conference program or to hire for senior positions or whatever. Someone has to exert that small amount of effort to say, "Gee, are we forgetting any female possibilities?" (Romer, interview with the author, p. 15.)

At the end of our interview, Romer explains that the biggest barrier for women in economics today, in her opinion, is maintaining a balance between academic and personal life.

The conflict ... [is that] the time when you're an assistant professor is often the time people want to be starting their families. And balancing those two things is really hard. And it's just still incredibly unequal ... child care duties are almost never equally shared. And so, coming up with mechanisms to help women with this is incredibly important. (Romer, interview with the author, p. 13.)

Furthermore, the degree of child care duties are felt differently across socioeconomic and racial strata. Making economics accessible to all women is imperative, says Romer.

We need to get more women in graduate school, and we need to have our assistant faculty and then going right up the whole ladder be more reflective of the talent that there is in the country that is not all male, and not all white. We need to have a profession that is open to everybody. (Romer, interview with the author, p. 14.)

Romer's advice to women currently studying or considering economics is to "take the leap." Making economics friendlier to women will help bring energy and improvement to the field. While current barriers seem immense and insurmountable, it will take the persistent effort of both women and men to diversify economics for the better.

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Hilary Hoynes (by Audrey Oas¹) June 2021



Had she been born 70 years earlier, Hilary Hoynes would have been Jessica Peixotto's ideal colleague.² Hoynes's research agenda mirrors that of Peixotto, with work in poverty, inequality, food and nutrition programs, and the impacts of government tax and transfer programs on low income families. But where the women in the Economics Department who studied these topics in the 1920s and 1930s were relocated to the new School of Social Work in 1939, by 2013 Hoynes had found a permanent home in the Economics Department and the Goldman School of Public Policy where she serves as the Haas Distinguished Chair in Economic Disparities.

At 18, Hilary Hoynes had not intended to be an economics major. She discovered her passion for economics while she was an undergraduate at Colby College in Maine. Originally a math major, as her classes became more abstract, Hoynes found herself increasingly drawn to economics which ultimately became her primary major, with an economics/math combined major as a second major.

I liked how in economics I could see problems, just like in math, problems with solutions. The connection was made there for me and it seemed more satisfying. (Hoynes, interview with the author, p. 1.)

She is the daughter and granddaughter of economics professors, neither of whom pushed her to study economics. But they both loved economics and teaching. Growing up in Madison, Wisconsin, Hoynes says about her dad Jeff Williamson,

This is a guy who just lives and breathes economics. He loves it...[he] very clearly role-modeled someone who loved what they were doing, but not in a way that was forced. (Hoynes, interview with the author, p. 2.)

Hoynes headed to Stanford University for her Ph.D. in Economics. Looking back, she acknowledges her assertiveness as a grad student. She was accepted to Stanford with zero funding, but after the first quarter's classes, Hoynes recognized her ability and demanded funding.

No one gets into Stanford [today]...without full funding, but at that time, that happened. And interestingly, after the first quarter, ... two people in my program dropped out. ... I had aced my three classes in the fall and I walked into the grad director's office and said, -- I mean, no one told me to do this. I don't know what made me do this, but I walked in and said -- 'Those two

¹ Audrey Oas is a 2021 graduate of the University of California, Berkeley where she majored in Economics.

² <https://www.econ.berkeley.edu/sites/default/files/Peixotto.pdf>

guys left and I have no funding and they had full fellowships. Could I get their fellowship?' And I did. And so I actually only had to pay out of pocket for one quarter. I don't know what or why I did that, but I did and it worked out. So it was kind of a strange thing. (Hoynes, interview with the author, p. 4.)

After graduating in 1992 from Stanford, she had a great job market with lots of offers and accepted an offer to join UC Berkeley's Economics Department as an assistant professor. At the time, Berkeley had the largest number of tenured women of any top department in the country. Yet, it felt like every other woman in the department was doing something different from her. When Hoynes decided to have children, she became acutely aware of this difference.

...[being a young professional with children] was not a part of your life that you showed anyone. Because to me that somehow risked the view that you somehow weren't serious and weren't in this for the successful trajectory. And that's kind of sad really. It's hard to know how much of that you're putting on yourself versus the environment putting on you. But the long and short of it is: I didn't feel like I had a community that was going through the same thing. (Hoynes, interview with the author, p. 5.)

A main struggle for women in the academic world is that the tenure clock and the biological clock tend to overlap; therefore, putting pressure on women to feel like they have to choose between their career and starting a family. Although the University of California was one of the first university systems to add years to the tenure clock for both female and male faculty to accommodate the reality of having children, its "progressive" gender-neutral policy did not benefit men and women equally.

When you have these [gender-neutral] clock extensions for tenure...what happens in the data, is that men continue to work at the same level of productivity and women don't. And then in equilibrium, the standards go up and the men get tenure and the women don't. (Hoynes, interview with the author, p. 6.)

In contrast to the assertiveness she expressed as a grad student, Hoynes reflects that as an assistant professor

I never asked for anything. I kinda got what was standard...I obviously had some assertive empowerment, but somehow it didn't translate into that setting. (Hoynes, interview with the author, p. 12.)

In 2000 Hoynes was denied tenure at Berkeley. She was completely caught off guard by the decision. Looking back at the decision, Hoynes states that

I think basically one explanation of what happened in my tenure decision is that Berkeley was getting better...and the field that I'm in -- sort of labor and public -- was really rising. You could

say that the standards were kind of rising over time. Somehow I sort of got caught in that. (Hoynes, interview with the author, p. 6.)

However, another crucial aspect of her experience was the lack of mentorship provided by the department.

I definitely wasn't mentored. My biggest criticism of the department is that no one should ever be surprised when they don't get tenure. I just think that's a failure of the system. I was really surprised. And it was awful. I think, you know, I bear some responsibility for that...there are people who are very solicitous of mentoring. And I wasn't that [person], but I think that there needs to be a department structure that formalizes mentoring. Because otherwise, I think there's just things that can happen that shouldn't happen. (Hoynes, interview with the author, p. 6.)

In 2014 Hoynes received the Carolyn Shaw Bell award from CSWEP, the American Economic Association's Committee on the Status of Women in the Economics Profession, an award given to an individual who has furthered the status of women in the economics profession. Hoynes was praised especially for her mentoring of others. Hoynes discusses how she believes it's her duty to make up for what the system failed to do for her and to make change in these institutions in order to mitigate what she experienced for future young academics.

You need to mentor people and you can't wait for them to ask. You need to just do it. You need to be there for people. You need to offer it and see what people need. I think that's the most important thing that I got out of my own experience was feeling very motivated to try to do better institutionally, to help people along. Like we all need mentoring and not everybody knows it. I didn't know it and I didn't know what I didn't know. There was so much I didn't know. I think that really the most important thing for me that's come out of [being denied tenure] in terms of who I am and what I like to do with my time [is] just wanting to do what I can on a retail level. And also think about changing the institutions that I'm part of in order to facilitate a structure for everybody. (Hoynes, interview with the author, p. 7.)

After she was denied tenure at Berkeley, Hoynes went back on the market and was flooded with offers. Hoynes decided to move to UC Davis where she was a tenured professor. When she returned to Berkeley 13 years later, the Economics Department was in some ways unchanged.

When I [first] came to Berkeley in 1992, we had the largest number of women of any top department. ... And when I came back to Berkeley in 2013, there were no more women in the Economics Department than there were when I left in 2000. (Hoynes, interview with the author, p. 10.)

Although Berkeley is a very progressive community, Hoynes believes that this “department has never put hiring women as a priority...It is a place where people are very meritocratic.” Hoynes admits that it

wasn't until the last ten years that she realized what type of environment she has been working in all these years.

I think you arrive at a point where you just kind of have a confidence of where you're at and what you're doing in life and for me that seemed to sort of coincide with the #MeToo movement. It all seemed to sort of happen at this time. And suddenly I really had a sort of awakening about what I was included in, what I was excluded from, and how I had just so internalized that as being the norm that I hadn't even realized what it was. (Hoynes, interview with the author, p. 14.)

Hoynes is now in a position in which she is motivated to create change in the university and their priorities.

Folks who are wanting to get insight into women at Berkeley, I would say that we could have done better. And we could do better, if somebody made it a priority. I don't think that's ever happened. I've had some arm twisting to try to get me to be [Economics Department] chair. Perhaps the only thing that makes me excited about the possibility is to try to make some movement with this. (Hoynes, interview with the author, p. 11.)

Mentoring is also a key focus. Hoynes believes there needs to be much more of women supporting women and speaking out when you see inequities, injustice, and discrimination happening. Hoynes final advice to current female undergraduates is

You need to find the passion of what it is that you're interested in and take those classes and network with other people. And if being around other women feels good to you, then find those communities. I think it's kind of that simple. Ask for advice. Get advice from people on how you can achieve whatever it is that you want to do next. [It] may be economics, it may not be economics, but ask for help in guiding what steps you should take to get where it is that you want to go. (Hoynes, interview with the author, p. 10.)

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Martha Olney

By Lindsay Earhart, Caitlin Hartley, Nicole Mashoudy, and Audrey Oas

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Martha Olney was born in Oakland, CA and grew up in the Bay Area. She very much stumbled into studying economics. It was 1975, the beginning of her sophomore year at the University of Redlands. Class registration was in the sweltering hot gym, with tables lined up around the edges in alphabetical order. The English department did not have the class Olney needed, and so another option was needed.

I backed into the middle of the room. [The tables were] English, then Engineering, and then Economics. I didn't want to take engineering. There was no line at the economics table. So I went to the economics table and because it was 106 degrees, I was inside a gym, it was hotter than spit, and there was no air conditioning, I said "Do you have anything that's a

Tuesday/Thursday morning class?" They had something called Intro to Micro. I said "Good, I'll take it" and signed up. That's it. That's how well thought out this was. (Olney, interview with the authors, p. 1.)

Back then, economics was not taught in high school, so Olney had almost no knowledge of the subject. However, she quickly fell in love with how economics married her interest in math with issues that touched on real people's lives. She ultimately double majored in math and economics.

During Olney's high school years, she was co-president of her school's women's liberation organization, Women on the Move. Coming from a progressive high school, it was tough for Olney to be in a more traditional and somewhat conservative college.

I went from this environment where I was voted most feminist in my high school ... to a college that was about 15 years behind in terms of social issues. That was very challenging. (Olney, interview with the authors, p. 4.)

After graduating from Redlands in 1978, Olney immediately started grad school at Berkeley. She wasn't yet convinced that she wanted to be a professor. As a young girl, Olney had been socialized into thinking she had three career options: nurse, secretary, or teacher. She didn't want to be a nurse because she did not like needles and blood; she decided against being a secretary because her peers told her she was too smart; and lastly she didn't want to be a teacher because she resented being told she only had three options. However, once Olney got her first role as a GSI in Fall 1979 her perspective changed,

But then I started teaching. And God, I liked it, and I was good at it. It made me feel fulfilled, and I made a difference in people's lives. I could explain things in a way that helped people to understand them. I could see the light bulb go on and it was just, it was fabulous. I got a number of different teaching experiences, and every one of them was a pretty positive experience. (Olney, interview with the authors, p. 6.)

Olney taught at the College of San Mateo, a community college, while in her last two years at Berkeley. Upon finishing graduate school, she got her first job in 1984 at UMass Amherst, at which she later received tenure. In 1990—shortly before her tenure decision—her wife, Rev. Esther Hargis, got a job as the pastor at First Baptist Church of Berkeley and moved back to California. Although Olney managed to work it out by going back and forth for 5 long years, she finally resigned from UMass and relocated permanently to Berkeley to be with her wife. Her appointment at Berkeley was first as a Visiting Professor, then an Adjunct Professor, and finally in 2017 as a Teaching Professor of Economics.

In comparison with today's demographics of the students who study economics, Olney recalls that the student body when she first started teaching was quite different. A rapid surge of immigrants after the Immigration Act of 1965 played a key role in explaining gradual changes in the student body over the years, Olney remarked.

[T]he Immigration Act of 1965 is what begins the tremendous change in the demographic of the country. ...The classroom in 1979 was more ... like a 1950s kind of classroom in the sense of [being] mostly white. Not very international. Probably a lot of first-gen students because in 1979 you're still getting a lot of people from families where [the parents had not attended college]. ...Then, just sort of gradually over time you see ... the student body changing in reflection of the [1965] immigration law. (Olney, interview with the authors, p. 9.)

Both from her years as a graduate student at Berkeley and the last 30 years on the faculty, Olney recalls some unfavorable memories of being treated differently due to her gender. In seminars, for example, questions from women are either ignored or given a quick perfunctory answer, while the exact same question is called a “good question” when raised by a man.

In a way, you just kind of get used to it, and then you stop seeing it. One of the things that I appreciate about the economic history seminar, which is the one I most often attend, is that Barry Eichengreen in particular is really good about calling it out. ... I really appreciate that he calls it out. And I think that's important. (Olney, interview with the authors, p. 10.)

Having earned her stripes as a women's libber in her teenage years and having been a strong feminist her whole life, she talks about how she feels about the MeToo movement that was founded in 2016. Olney notes that for some women, the MeToo movement opened their eyes to these sorts of gender dynamics.

I'm grateful that there are other people who see it now. I'm sorry it took the MeToo movement for them to see it. ... What [the MeToo movement] did was remind me of the stuff I've always seen. We are still dealing with the same stuff that we dealt with when I was in Women on the Move in high school. ... Almost 45 years later, we're still dealing with the same bullshit. ... “Consciousness raising” is what we called it at the time. Now there are new terms for it, but it's the same battles we were fighting in the 70s. (Olney, interview with the authors, p. 11.)

A major strain for women in academia is that the tenure clock and the biological clock tend to overlap. Olney was not an exception; she postponed family planning while on the tenure track at UMass. By the time she tried conceiving, early menopause made it impossible. In 1999, Olney adopted her son. Because her appointment at the time was as a Visiting Professor, combining work and family was extra challenging for Olney compared to the other professor moms.

Well, first of all, I didn't have any maternity leave. So, that was a problem. ... I went [to Russia to bring] him home. ... I left on the first Saturday morning of spring break, and I got back home the next Saturday. I was teaching Econ 1. I had the head GSI teach for me on Monday, and I was back in the classroom on Wednesday. So, I took a day. So that was crazy. (Olney, interview with the authors, p. 13.)

A consistent theme in her teaching is the role of assumptions in any economic argument. A willingness to challenge assumptions, Olney believes, can be attributed to “nonstandard” lived experiences, including those of women, people of color, and first-generation students. When she first started doing work on 1920s and 1930s debt-financed purchases of consumer durables, Olney recalls being confronted with the classic economics argument of “that’s not rational.”

I feel like the willingness to let the data tell me how people behave instead of insisting that the theory tell me how people behave is, not entirely, but is somewhat gendered.....[People would ask,] “Why would somebody borrow at an effective interest rate of 35% when they could just save up the money over the same period of time, and then they would be able to buy the good for cash?” ... I've got the data, they did it. ... I think that we have gone down so many bad paths by not being willing to challenge assumptions. And we don't challenge the assumptions because we don't have enough diversity of lived experience in the room. (Olney, interview with the authors, pp. 15 and 19.)

Olney says that her perspective in economics comes from her own lived experience as a woman and a queer person with long-standing, humble familial ties to Oakland. Her maternal grandmother worked as a maid at Berkeley’s Durant Hotel (now renamed the Graduate Berkeley hotel), and her paternal grandmother was a caterer in nearby Piedmont.

Both of my parents were raised by single moms in Oakland. ... We weren't from money at all. ... We were the families that service the people who had the money. ... My grandma made up the beds for the people, and my other grandma served the food. That perspective has always influenced what I think about when I think about families and borrowing and debt. (Olney, interview with the authors, p. 16.)

As a member of the LGBTQ community, Olney says there’s no reason to hold on to the assumption that every couple is a male-female couple.

What if you think about same-sex couples? How does your analysis work then? ... Even in same-sex couples, there's specialization and trade. ... We're getting the kitchen remodeled ... and we were talking to the contractor on Friday, and we were talking about "my" stove and "Esther's" sink because I cook and she cleans. ... Couples specialize and trade and that's independent of gender. (Olney, interview with the authors, p. 17.)

When asked about how women can support each other in economics and what men can do, Olney says that people have to stand up for one another. Furthermore, Olney states that it's important to validate people's experiences and identity.

I get very frustrated when others will say, "I wouldn't want to suggest such-and-such a program that's for black women because then the student will know that I see them as a black woman." We know they're a black woman. She knows she's a black woman. It's not like it's a secret. ... I feel like that's white privilege and racism. ... The same is true for gender. I think that pretending you don't see gender is a statement of privilege and not a statement of fact. (Olney, interview with the authors, pp. 17 and 18.)

Olney also says that faculty need to be transparent with their students and mentees about what their lives are like. She strives to be honest about her lived experiences with her students and tries to use her network to introduce people to resources that could help them progress on their paths.

[M]any graduate students say, "Oh, I have imposter syndrome," and they think no faculty do. Are you kidding? We all have it. I think being willing to be honest and share those kinds of struggles [is] really important. (Olney, interview with the authors, p. 18.)

This is Professor Olney's advice for female undergraduates currently studying economics:

Believe in yourself. Don't let people push you off your path. You can do this. Find your community, or create your community if you can't find it. And find or create a community of people who support you and support you becoming whoever it is you're going to become. When you run into an asshole, know that it's them and not you. (Olney, interview with the authors, p. 19.)

Olney taught her final undergraduate class in Spring 2021, completing over 40 years of bringing students into her life and inspiring them along the way.

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