

Reconstructing the Experiences of First Generation Women in Canadian Psychology

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To date, the historiography on women in Canadian psychology has been relatively sparse. This is especially true in relation to the much more extensive literature that documents the history of first and second generation women in American psychology. The aim of this paper is to systematically identify and analyse the personal characteristics, educational experiences, and career trajectories of first generation women psychologists in Canada. We identify this cohort as women who received their PhDs during the period 1922 to 1960. We contextualize their experiences vis-à-vis unique trends in Canadian society, paying particular attention to the common struggles faced by these women within or in reaction to the broader social, cultural, political, and institutional structures they encountered. By locating and distinguishing Canadian women in psychology, we offer an important contribution to the development of a more comprehensive history of Canadian psychology and highlight its gendered dynamics.

Keywords: Canadian psychology, history, women, feminism, gender

But if I am concerned about the lack of awareness of Canadian contributions to psychological knowledge, and a general lack of awareness of the history of our discipline, I am even more concerned about the relative invisibility of our herstory. (Stark, 2000, p. 3)

Written just over a decade ago, this call for increased awareness of the history of Canadian psychology and the role women have played in it is now being heeded. In this paper, we address concerns about the invisibility of our herstory by presenting the results of our systematic search for women in early Canadian psychology. In doing so, we provide a counterweight to the extensive historiography on women in American psychology that began in the 1970s and has since expanded to encompass many important historical studies (e.g., Bernstein & Russo, 1974; Cameron & Hagen, 2005; Johnson & Johnston, 2010; Johnston &

Johnson, 2008; O'Connell & Russo, 1980; Rutherford, Vaughn-Blount, & Ball, 2010; Scarborough & Furumoto, 1987).¹

Although much less is known about Canadian psychology's women's history—particularly the earliest generation of women psychologists—our work does build on a small number of valuable studies (e.g., de la Cour, 1987; Keates & Stam, 2009; M. J. Wright, 1992).² Mary J. Wright (1992) explored the effects of World War II (WWII) and its aftermath on the careers of 10 women who obtained their PhDs between 1936 and 1949 from the University of Toronto. One of the themes she identified was that women did not move into more prestigious administrative and leadership positions as easily as their male counterparts, despite having significantly outperformed them in scholarly productivity and contributions to the discipline. De la Cour (1987) provided a brief overview of the history of women psychologists at the University of Toronto from 1920 to 1945. She argued that the presence of female psychologists in both academic and applied fields in this period was far from marginal. Finally, in their recent paper, Keates and Stam (2009) analysed patterns in the educational experiences of five prominent women who received their PhDs from Canadian institutions prior to 1950: Katharine Banham-Bridges (1897–1995), Magda Arnold (1903–2002), Mary North-

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¹ We use the American historiography as our reference point intentionally. With the possible exception of European women in psychoanalysis, the historiography on women in American psychology is the most extensive and thoroughly developed in terms of a national/regional model. There are signs that this is changing; for a recent volume on pioneer female psychologists in Europe, see Gundlach, Roe, Sinatra, and Tanucci (2010). Of course, there may be other examples in the non-English language historiography to which our access is limited.

² Note that we are not referring here to studies of the history of feminist psychology in Canada. This valuable work chronicles later developments than those covered in this paper (see Austin, Rutherford, & Pyke, 2006; Bergeron, Senn, & Poulin, 2006; Kimball, 1986; Pyke, 2001; Pyke & Stark-Adamec, 1981; Radtke, 2011).

way (1909–1987), Mary S. Ainsworth (1913–1999), and Mary J. Wright (b. 1915). The authors compared the experiences of these women to those of the first generation of American women psychologists, noting however that this cohort of Canadian psychologists entered the field later than their American counterparts due to the later institutionalization of psychology in Canada.

One of the trends that Keates and Stam (2009) identified was that because of this later entry, the Canadian women psychologists did not appear to encounter the same institutional and educational barriers as the earlier American cohort. They suggested that Canadian women's comparably uncontested entrance into psychology likely resulted from the already accomplished shift in the field's orientation from primarily experimental to largely applied. This orientation more closely paralleled what were considered stereotypically feminine interests. They also noted that the Canadian women may have benefitted from the increased cultural acceptability of a college education for women by the 1930s, in contrast to their earlier counterparts in the United States who began to enter psychology in the late 19th century. Finally, the authors conjectured that early Canadian women psychologists may have encountered significant discrimination, but that it was more covert than that experienced by the American first generation. They noted that "there is much left to interpret and understand about women psychologists in Canada" (p. 280).

Our purpose here is to systematically identify and analyse the experiences of the first generation of female psychologists in Canada by contextualizing these experiences vis-à-vis unique trends in Canadian society. We define the first generation of women in Canadian psychology as those who obtained their PhDs between 1922 and 1960. The beginning of this period is just 7 years prior to the success of the "Famous Five" in achieving the federal recognition of women as persons in Canada (see Adelman, 1926). This was also a period punctuated by Canada's involvement in WWII. It was during this time that psychology began to officially separate from philosophy departments in Canadian universities. Finally, this period saw the founding of the Canadian Psychological Association (CPA) in 1938 (Dzinas, 2000; Ferguson, 1992) and the appointment of its first female board member in 1948 (de la Cour, 1987).

Keates and Stam (2009) identified the first generation of women in Canadian psychology as those who obtained their doctoral degrees prior to 1950. With the lack of a definitive start date, we argue, it is difficult to conduct a group analysis given the considerable changes in context between the time the first woman entered the discipline in Canada, and the 1950s. Prior to 1922 we have been able to identify only one woman who obtained a PhD on a psychological topic in this country: Emma Sophia Baker (1856–1943). Baker earned her PhD at the University of Toronto in 1903 under the supervision of August Kirschmann with a dissertation on colour perception and aesthetics (see Smirle, 2012). We admit that the weak archival record for this period may mean that other women remain unidentified in our search. On a review of the available historical records, we observed that the first documented and identifiable cohort of women obtaining doctoral degrees in psychology in Canada began in 1922 with May Bere (1893–?; see Bredin, 1977).³ In selecting an end date of 1960, we were able to include a number of women not covered by Keates and

Stam's analysis who earned PhDs post-1950: Lila Braine (b. 1926) and Reva Potashin (b. 1921) who earned their PhDs in 1951; Ruth Hoyt-Cameron (1914–2010), Brenda Milner (b. 1918) and Blossom Wigdor (b. 1924) who earned their PhDs in 1952; Mary Laurence (birthdate unknown) and Gabrielle Clerk (1923–2012) who earned their PhDs in 1953; Muriel Stern (b. 1918) who earned her PhD in 1957; and Virginia Douglas (b. 1927), Jane Stewart (birthdate unknown), and Thérèse Gouin Décarie (b. 1923) who earned their PhDs in 1958, 1959, and 1960, respectively.

With 1960 as our end date, we also were able to capture the decade and half after WWII to illustrate its influence on women's experiences. By 1960, 17 Canadian universities had graduate programs in psychology (M. J. Wright, 1969a). But, as de la Cour (1987) noted, this postwar period saw a precipitous decline in women's previously high levels of participation in the field. She reported that at the University of Toronto, for example, female enrollment in undergraduate psychology courses declined from over 80% in 1940 to 48% by 1959. She reported that no women psychologists were appointed to professorships from 1947 to 1961. Thus, this endpoint creates a clear-cut cohort of women in terms of several major transformations in Canadian psychology and society. This endpoint also stops short of the late 1960s surge of feminist activism that has been analysed by others (as noted earlier). It seems reasonable to consider women who earned their doctoral degrees after 1960 as part of a later, distinctive, generation.

Finally, it is important to note that the decision to restrict our analysis to women who obtained their doctorate in the field, although pragmatic, is also highly problematic, especially in the Canadian context. In part, this is because the doctorate has not been adopted as the required degree for licensure as a psychologist uniformly across the country. In fact, even where it has, this has been a relatively recent development. In Ontario, the Ontario Registration Act made the doctorate the required degree for licensure in that province as of 1960 (M. J. Wright, 1969a). Effectively, as de la Cour (1987) demonstrated, this means that especially in the period we are focusing on there were many highly accomplished women who earned a master's as their terminal degree but are excluded from our analysis. For example, Beatrice Wickett-Nesbitt (1907–2012), who earned her MA at Brown University while taking graduate courses at McGill University, went on to become the executive director of the Canadian Mental Health Association and chief psychologist at the Ottawa Board of Education. In 1986 she received the Order of Canada for her work addressing children's mental health needs in the school system (Adam, 2012).

Group Characteristics

Using the oral histories conducted by C. Roger Myers for the CPA (for a description and analysis of the entire collection, see Kalin, 1996), the oral histories of the Society for Research in

³ In her CPA oral history, Grace Bredin estimated that Bere earned her PhD in 1922 (see Myers, 1977, p. 31). A short write-up in the *Canadian Jewish Review* in January 1923 confirms that Bere had recently arrived with her PhD in tow (see "Winnipeg," 1923). Bredin herself was excluded from our analysis as her highest degree was a master's in education.

Child Development, listings of Canadian theses in psychology published in the *Canadian Journal of Psychology*, as well as numerous articles and other sources on the history of psychology in Canada, we identified 38 women who were active in Canadian psychology, and who obtained their PhDs between

1922 and 1960 (see Table 1 for the complete list). We included in our analysis women who spent a considerable portion of their careers in Canada, whether they were born in Canada or not. However, we did not include women whose sole connection to Canadian psychology was that they earned their PhDs here.

Table 1
First Generation Women in Canadian Psychology

Name	Birth–Death	PhD	Field	Sources
Ainsworth, Mary D. Salter	1913–1999	1939, University of Toronto	Developmental, psychoanalysis	CPA, MJW
Arnold, Magda B.	1903–2002	1942, University of Toronto	Emotion, personality	CPA, MJW, PFV
Banham (Bridges), Katharine May	1897–1995	1934, Université de Montréal	Developmental	MJW2
Bere, May	1893–?	1922, Teacher's College, Columbia University		CJR, CPA-Bredin
Bloomingtondale, Eileen Crutchlow	1917–2000	1952, Radcliffe College	Clinical, forensic	BL
Braine, Lila Ghent	b. 1926	1951, McGill University	Perception, cognition, developmental	PFV
Cartwright, Rosalind Falk-Dymond	b. 1922	1949, Cornell University	Clinical, social	RC
Clerk, Gabrielle de Merlis, Doris Sutherland	1923–2012	1953, Université de Montréal	Psychoanalysis	MJW GC
Décarie, Thérèse Gouin	b. 1923	1959, University of Ottawa	Education	
Douglas, Virginia	b. 1927	1960, Université de Montréal	Developmental	PFV, CPA, CH, SRCD
Dunlop, Florence S.	1896–1963	1958, University of Michigan	Clinical, child	
Frankel, Esther Brina	1922–1992	1935, Columbia University	School psychology	MJW2
Gerstein, Reva Appleby	b. 1917	1953, University of Michigan	Sociometry	
Grant, Marion Elder	1900–1989	1945, University of Toronto	Education, mental health	MJW
Hedman, Hattie Batty Hoyt-Cameron, Ruth Jones, Molly Mason King, Marjery Little Rean	1914–2010	1931, University of Toronto (D. Pedagogy)	Education, clinical	CP, GP
Laurence, Mary W. Long, Eleanor R. McQuade, Mary Margaret	1913–2010	1937, University of Toronto		MJW
Milner, Brenda	b. 1918	1952, McGill University	Clinical	CPA, RH
Milner, Esther	1918–2003	1952, McGill University	Child psychology	MJW
Neal, Leola	1911–1995	1940, University of Toronto		
Northway, Mary Louise	1909–1987	1950, University of Toronto	Gerontology	ML
Palter, Elsie Kaplan	1910–2000	1953, University of Toronto	Applied, child psychology	MJW
Pilcher, Jennie Wyman	1886–?	1938, University of Toronto		
Potashin, Reva	b. 1921	1952, University of Toronto		
Sidlauskas, Agatha Elisabeth	1914–?	1943, Catholic University of the Sacred Heart (Milan)		
Snodgrass, Florence	1902–1997	1949, Yale University	Teaching, measurement, testing, child, educational	CPA, PFV
Stern, Muriel	1918–?	1957, McGill University	Experimental, comparative	CPA, MS
Stewart, Jane	1930s	1956, University College London	Psychopharmacology	CPA
Thompson Welch, Louise	1916–2004	1944, Yale University	Educational, philosophy, clinical, health	CPA, PFV
Wand, Barbara		1958, University of Toronto	Professional psychology, ethics	K
Weckler, Nora Loeb	1915–?	1941, University of Toronto	Clinical	CPA, MJW
Wigdor, Blossom	b. 1924	1952, McGill University	Developmental, gerontology	CPA, PFV, BE
Wright, Mary Jean	b. 1915	1949, University of Toronto	Child development	CPA, MJW, PFV

Note. Source indicates where information on a psychologist's life and work may be found. In cases where no source is listed, information was gathered solely from the listing of the psychologists' PhD thesis in the *Canadian Journal of Psychology*. AA = "About Alumni" (2003); BL = Bloomingtondale (2000); BE = Beaveridge (1990); BM = Milner (1998); CH = Cameron & Hagen (2005); CJR = "Winnipeg" (1923); CP = Wickett (1991); CPA = Canadian Psychological Association Oral History; CPA-Bredin = Myers (1977); GC = "Gabrielle Clerk" (2012); GP = Morton (2010); K = King (1993); MJW = Wright (1992); MJW2 = Wright (2002); ML = "First study" (1959); MMW = Kesslering (1953); MS = Stern (1954); PFV = Psychology's Feminist Voices Digital Archive (www.feministvoices.com); PR = Murchison (1932); RC = Fleischer (n.d.); RH = Hoyt (1952); SRCD = Lassonde (1994); T = Tremblay (2012).

Notably, this excludes a number of interesting women who earned their PhDs at McGill in the 1950s.⁴

The first generation of women in Canadian psychology can be described in general terms as a group of White women primarily from small, rural towns in Canada, although at least seven were born abroad: Ainsworth in Ohio; Hoyt-Cameron in Massachusetts; B. Milner in Manchester, England; Arnold in Moravia (now the Czech Republic); Stern in New York; Agatha E. Sidlauskas in Lithuania; and Jenny W. Pilcher in New Zealand. Their known birth years range from 1886 to 1927. They are a mix of women from older and newer immigrant families, and they come from a variety of religious backgrounds. Of the 38 women we analysed, 16 earned their doctorates from the University of Toronto, five from McGill, three from Université de Montréal, two from the University of Ottawa, 10 from American institutions, one from a British university, and one from an Italian university. The majority of women in this cohort were from families who were financially stable ("middle class"). For example, Potashin (C. R. Myers, 1970a) described her family as moderately orthodox Jewish and comfortable economically.

As noted by Keates and Stam (2009), the first generation women psychologists were born and grew up during a time when women in Canadian society were making significant gains in access to higher education as well as applied professions. Regardless of class differences, a common theme in the oral histories of this generation of women was frequent mention of family support for higher education for women and childhood environments that encouraged reading and learning. Hoyt-Cameron (C. R. Myers, 1976d) mentioned that her family's fervent support of higher education was accompanied by a strong presence of books and music in the family home. She noted that "In fact, they insisted when many others were leaving school that we go, and no way were we allowed to leave before we finished high school" (C. R. Myers, 1976d, p. 4). In a similar fashion, Potashin (C. R. Myers, 1970a) noted that despite growing up in Toronto during the Great Depression, her parents encouraged her love of reading and gave her money to purchase books. Douglas (C. R. Myers, 1976c), in response to a question about her mother's attitude toward education, replied "Education was everything, and she pushed me very hard. Anything short of an 'A' on a report was a failure" (p. 4). Bell, Snodgrass, Hoyt-Cameron, Douglas, and Welch also reported that although education was highly valued, they were either explicitly or implicitly encouraged to pursue gender-typical careers such as teaching and nursing (see C. R. Myers, 1969d, 1970b, 1970d, 1976c, 1976d).

Prior to entering psychology or while working on their degrees, several of the first generation either worked in allied medical fields or set out with the intention of working in these fields. Arnold (C. R. Myers, 1976a), for instance, worked at the psychiatric hospital in Hamilton, Ontario after she obtained her master's degree because she was interested in studying schizophrenia. However, she was eventually discouraged from pursuing research with this group during her doctoral studies and was instead offered funding for animal research, an offer she could not refuse for financial reasons (C. R. Myers, 1976a). Blossom Wigdor (C. R. Myers, 1969c) wanted to become a physician, but was rejected from McGill's medical school because, as a woman engaged to be married, she was seen as a less reliable prospect than the returning male veterans who were vying for admission. Wigdor (C. R.

Myers, 1969c) did work in the medical field for a time, turning to nursing during the war years prior to a career move into psychology.

Others turned to psychology after discovering an interest that diverted them from their pursuit of medicine. Mary J. Wright (C. R. Myers, 1969e), for instance, described that: "Medicine was the thing I was going to go into. I went into psychology because as a clinical psychologist I could do all the things that I really wanted to do in medicine" (p. 15). Likewise, Stern (C. R. Myers, 1969c) dreamt of becoming a doctor, something she had envisioned from the age of 16. Yet Stern's career path changed after beginning her undergraduate studies at McGill and discovering that "what I really would find much more fulfilling was psychology" (C. R. Myers, 1969c, p. 4).

The first part of our cohort entered psychology in the 1920s and 1930s, a time of significant financial investment in applied areas of research, especially those areas having to do with children and families (M. J. Wright & Myers, 1982d). Certainly, these applied fields mirrored women's traditional interests at the time. The majority of first generation Canadian women psychologists taught and did research in child study, education, school psychology, vocational counselling, and clinical psychology fields, though there are some exceptions. Stern and Stewart, for example, did psychopharmacological research, and Brenda Milner conducted world-renowned research in neuropsychology.

Among the first generation of Canadian women psychologists working in academe, there were a number who attained full professorships. The first woman psychologist to be appointed full professor was Louise Thompson Welch in 1944 at the University of New Brunswick (UNB; see C. R. Myers, 1970b, p. 19). In 1950, Florence Snodgrass was brought to UNB as full professor and head of the department to replace Thompson Welch who had taken a position at Dalhousie (C. R. Myers, 1969b). Arnold became a full professor in 1952 at Loyola University in Chicago (Held, 2010; M. J. Wright, 1992). Both Nora Leob Weckler and Mary J. Wright were made full professors in 1962, Weckler at the California State College at Northridge (M. J. Wright, 1992) and Wright at the University of Western Ontario (M. J. Wright, 1992). Ainsworth attained the rank of full professor in 1963 at Johns Hopkins University (M. J. Wright, 1992), and in the same year Leola Neal became a full professor at the University of Western Ontario (M. J. Wright, 1992). Molly Mason Jones became a professor in 1967 at Mary B. Eyre Nursery School at Scripps College in Claremont, California (M. J. Wright, 1992). In 1970 Milner joined the Department of Neurology and Neurosurgery at McGill University as a full professor ("Brenda Milner," 2009), and Douglas became a full professor at McGill in 1971 (personal communication, February 4, 2013). In 1979 Wigdor became a full professor as well as

⁴ For example, Vera Doby Hunton came to McGill from Howard University where she had worked with Francis Cecil Sumner, the first African American to be awarded a PhD in psychology. She earned her PhD in 1951 and then returned to Howard to take an assistant professor position. Helen Mahut (1920–2010) earned her PhD at McGill in 1955 after immigrating to Montreal from Eastern Europe where she had served as a member of the Polish resistance during WWII. She spent most of her career as a neuroscientist at Northeastern University in Boston (Benjamin, n.d.). Others in this category include Annette Ehrlich (PhD, McGill, 1960); Anne Christake (PhD, McGill, 1958), and Georgina Jünemann (PhD, Université de Montréal, 1954).

founding director of the program in Gerontology at the University of Toronto (Mercer-Lynn, 2011). Finally, Décarie at Université de Montréal also attained full professor status (date unknown).

To construct a more thorough history it is necessary not only to describe this group of women, but also to situate them contextually. Next, we describe the broader academic, social, and political landscapes in which early Canadian women were pursuing university education and careers in psychology. That is, we highlight the development of higher education in Canada and the institutionalization of academic psychology, the impact of WWII, and the legacy of Canada's early women's movement. We discuss several patterns and common struggles in this group in relation to these contextual factors. To conclude, we discuss the implications of this research for the historiography of Canadian psychology.

Higher Education and Psychology in Canada: Situating First Generation Women

The first group of prominent women in Canadian psychology obtained their doctoral degrees during the 1930s and 1940s, whereas female psychologists in the United States were receiving their PhDs in the 1890s and early 1900s. As Keates and Stam (2009) noted, this difference reflects the later institutionalization of psychology in Canada relative to that of the United States. This institutionalization was related to larger patterns in the development of higher education (see M. J. Wright & Myers, 1982c).

Following a progression that was similar to the United States, Canadian universities developed geographically from east to west (see M. J. Wright & Myers, 1982d). Eastern universities were established during the 19th century, at the time when psychology was regarded as a subfield of philosophy, as opposed to its later status as an independent scientific discipline. The first course to integrate distinct elements of psychological thought was taught at Dalhousie University in 1838, though it was at the University of Toronto and McGill University that prescientific psychology was first taught on a continuous basis (M. J. Wright & Myers, 1982d). The first distinct department of psychology in Canada was established at McGill in 1922, followed in 1926 by the University of Toronto (C. R. Myers, 1982) and Acadia University (M. J. Wright & Myers, 1982b). Psychology courses continued to be offered within philosophy departments in many western universities and parts of the Maritimes up to 1960.

The majority of women that we identified as forming the first generation in Canadian psychology obtained their PhDs from the University of Toronto and McGill. The University of Toronto was the major producer of PhDs for women during our period of study; 16 of the 38 women in our cohort earned their PhDs at Toronto. As Mary J. Wright (1969a) reported, before 1929 Toronto and McGill were the only two universities in Canada to have graduate programs in psychology.

In 1929, Edward A. Bott assumed the position of chair of the newly formed Department of Psychology at the University of Toronto. At this time, the faculty was quite small. By the time he relinquished his post in 1956, Bott had developed a strong applied psychology program at the university and was regarded as a key architect in the establishment of the discipline on a national level. Looking back on this time, Northway (Shatzker, 1975) recalled psychology as being "a youthful department and a department that hoped to accomplish things . . . Not just build a great department,

but if we teach people psychology, if we could get psychology and human understanding in the community" (p. 34).

Bott's mandate as chair of the University of Toronto psychology department was to build a first-rate applied program. His vision not only set the course of the department at the University of Toronto, but also became a model for other programs across Canada. One of his first acts, before he even assumed the role of chair, was to secure funding for a child study laboratory. He oversaw the hiring of William Blatz as director of the child study program, and allowed him some degree of autonomy over his staffing choices. To develop his interest in security theory, Blatz turned largely to female graduate students to work as assistants and later as staff (Pols, 2002).⁵ This is evident in the sheer number of women whose academic histories are tied to the institute, a list which includes Ainsworth, Northway, Neal, Mary J. Wright, Weckler, Potashin, Betty Flint (b. 1920), and Dorothy (Dore) Millichamp (1908–2001), among other noteworthy psychologists.⁶ For many of these women, their experiences with Blatz helped to define their careers (Millichamp & Northway, 1977; Northway, Bernhardt, Fletcher, Johnson, & Millichamp, 1951; Volpe, 2010).

Blatz's influence can particularly be seen in the work of two of his students: Ainsworth and Mary J. Wright. As Ainsworth (C. R. Myers, 1971) mentioned, the inspiration for her mother-child attachment research came from her work with Blatz:

There was one concept, for example, which I have used and it is very focal to the work I am doing now. It is this business of a child using his parents as a secure base from which to explore the world. This, among other aspects of his theories, captured my imagination then. (p. 11)

Likewise, when asked who had been the biggest influence on her career, Mary J. Wright (C. R. Myers, 1969e) responded that it had been Blatz. "Of course I was influenced by Blatz in terms of his ideas and excitement" (p. 54). Like Ainsworth, Blatz's ideas provided the inspiration for much of her own work. At the University of Western Ontario, Mary J. Wright established a child study laboratory based on her own understanding of Blatz's security theory and its application to preschool education. Today, both

⁵ It is interesting that in his oral history with Marion MacDonald Wright, C. R. Myers referred to the gendered hierarchy at the University of Toronto Institute of Child Study as "that harem kind of situation" (C. R. Myers, 1970c, p. 23). Marion Wright earned an MA at the University of British Columbia in the mid-1940s and later enrolled at the University of Toronto on a fellowship. After she became pregnant, she was unable to complete her PhD at the latter institution. Consequently, she is not included in our analysis (Jenkins, 2012).

⁶ Although both Flint and Millichamp were on the faculty of the Institute of Child Study for decades, and Millichamp eventually became assistant director, they are not included in our analysis as neither pursued a PhD in psychology. Both Millichamp and Flint earned master's degrees from University of Toronto, in 1932 and 1948, respectively (see Flint, n.d.; Prochner & Howe, 2001). At least 75 master's degrees in psychology were awarded to women at the Institute of Child Study, through the Department of Psychology, during the period under analysis. Copies of their theses are located at the newly renamed Eric Jackman Institute of Child Study, University of Toronto.

Blatz's Institute of Child Study and Wright's University Laboratory Preschool remain active sites of education and research.⁷

World Wars and Organizing Psychology: Gendered Impacts

Following WWI, a demand for psychology to solve practical problems diverted the nascent field's focus from experimental laboratory science to an applied science of human behaviour (M. J. Wright & Myers, 1982d). Women were very involved in psychology as an applied field in the interwar years (de la Cour, 1987). Interestingly, however, historians of women in higher education have suggested that despite making significant gains in university enrollment post-WWI, there was actually an overall decline in the percentage of women enrolled in many fields between 1920 and 1940 (see Millar, 2011; Strong-Boag, 1988). It is worthwhile to consider how psychology may have served as an exception to this trend.

The lead-up to WWII provided an opportunity for Canadian psychology to expand its role and establish its voice. In 1938, the British Columbia Psychological Association (BCPA) was formed. As the country's first psychological association, the BCPA was a concrete indicator of the progress being made toward the professionalization of psychology in Canada. Later that year, during the annual meeting of the American Association for the Advancement of Science in Ottawa, a group of concerned psychologists gathered to discuss the need for a "unified and coherent voice in guiding psychology's contributions to the anticipated war" (Ferguson, 1992, p. 697; but see Dzinis, 2000, for an account that complicates this origin story). These psychologists founded the Canadian Psychological Association (CPA). Women psychologists made up a significant, although not overwhelming, proportion of the membership of CPA from the very beginning. Seventeen percent of the CPA's founding members were women who over the years served as both members and administrators. The CPA appointed Northway one of its six board members in 1948, a concrete demonstration of the leadership opportunities possible for women at that time (de la Cour, 1987).

WWII was perhaps the most influential factor in directing the first generation's education, choices of subfields in psychology, job opportunities, and career trajectories. Canadian universities were profoundly affected by the large number of faculty and students who either enlisted or became involved in the war efforts. Potashin (C. R. Myers, 1970a), for example, reported that during WWII very few students remained in the universities and class sizes decreased. Many professors would come and go with short notice due to their military-related work. Likewise, Mary J. Wright (C. R. Myers, 1969e) reported that classes were very small and the limited number of professors in the department of psychology meant that those who remained were forced to teach heavier course loads. She further recalled that, "The University of Toronto Department just went right down the drain because you [C. R. Myers] went away, Bott went away, everybody went away—to the War" (p. 28).

This involvement of psychologists in the war effort led to insufficient numbers of professors and lecturers, and meant that recent graduates were invited to teach courses. At the University of Toronto, for example, only two male professors remained, which led Northway—at the time only a recent graduate—to teach a

heavy load of courses including clinical and experimental psychology. Northway recounted that she and other graduates felt responsible for keeping the psychology department in existence and considered that to be their contribution to the war effort (Shatzker, 1975). Opportunities within psychology did not end for some Canadian women psychologists with the end of the war. For instance, Northway (Shatzker, 1975) described how the postwar era meant the expansion of her earlier research: "The other side opened up all kinds of interesting things, fascinating because we got into the legislation that became a day nursery act. We were giving courses, morning, noon and night" (p. 41).

Although it was more common for male psychologists to participate directly in the war effort, some opportunities for war service also opened up for women. Ainsworth, for example, joined the Canadian Women's Army Corps in 1942. Recalling this time in her life, she stated, "One of the reasons I was really looking forward to the Army was the opportunity to put some theory into practice and to gain some experience" (C. R. Myers, 1971, p. 22). Her army work, like that of many other women's, was of a clinical nature: administering tests, interviewing, taking histories, and counselling. Esther Milner worked in the Canadian civil service during WWII as an MA-level psychologist before earning her PhD in 1949 at the University of Chicago. Eileen Bloomingdale was a psychologist for Canadian Veterans Affairs, becoming chief psychologist for St. Anne's De Bellevue Veterans Hospital in Montreal before earning her PhD in 1952 at Harvard University's Radcliffe College. Others, such as Blatz's team of women instructors from the University of Toronto, worked overseas helping to educate children in the United Kingdom. From 1942 to 1944, instructors from the Institute of Child Study at the University of Toronto went to Birmingham under the auspices of the Canadian Children's Overseas Service to lead a nursery school that operated on Blatzian principles. These women included Margaret (Margie) Fletcher, Anne Harris (Blatz), Margaret McFarland (Smith), Millichamp, and Mary J. Wright (Northway, 1973).

The overall phenomenon of increasing job opportunities for women in Canadian psychology during WWII stands in contrast to the American scene. Whereas women in Canadian psychology experienced, by and large, expanded job and educational opportunities during the war years, American women did not. Surveys by the Office of Psychological Personnel in the United States showed higher rates of unemployment for female psychologists in 1944 than in 1940 and at one point during this period, 14% of women with doctorates in psychology were unemployed (Napoli, 1981). Although male psychologists were recruited into the war effort and given tasks tailored to their research specializations, there was no such demand for female psychologists. In fact, in response to this exclusion, the first organisation in the United States to represent women psychologists, the National Council of Women Psychologists, was founded in 1941 (Capshew & Laszlo, 1986; Johnson & Johnston, 2010).

The situation for female psychologists in the United States did not greatly improve after the war either. In the postwar years there

⁷ However, both have been renamed. Blatz's Institute of Child Study is now the Eric Jackman Institute of Child Study, and Wright's preschool is the Mary J. Wright University Laboratory School at the newly rebranded Western University.

was a return to traditional roles and activities; women were expected to be homemakers rather than career women, and many teaching positions in psychology were filled by men. The newly prestigious field of clinical psychology, supported by federal funding, attracted men to its ranks as well. In Canada, the war's end also led to an overall decline in women's presence in psychology compared to their prominence during the war years, with veterans returning and replacing women in both academic and applied positions. For example, at the University of Toronto the number of women in graduate programs decreased, and the female faculty in the Department of Psychology declined from 30% in 1930 to 11% by 1950 (de la Cour, 1987).

Finding Their Place: Struggles for Equality

The first generation of women in Canadian psychology benefited enormously from the gains made by their foremothers who took part in the activism of first wave feminism. Canadian women, like other women in the Western world, organized and fought to be granted access to higher education. Even when they finally gained access in the late 19th century, it was, as Gillett (1995) noted, only "gradually and rather grudgingly [that women were] allowed to enter the traditional male sanctum" (p. 15) of the university. Kinnear (1995) also observed that despite these hard won victories, "women's access did not necessarily result in more than meager participation" (p. 20).

Whereas the suffrage movement was not as long, as radical, or as actively contested in Canada as it was in Britain or the United States, suffrage and other "women questions" were hotly debated at the turn of the 20th century and women's suffrage by no means "fit seamlessly into [the] cultural imaginary" (Kulba & Lamont, 2006, p. 266). Canadian women were granted the vote only gradually, at first on a provincial level, and then in 1918, with the Federal Women's Franchise Act, women who were British subjects over the age of 21 gained the right to vote in federal elections (Cleverdon, 1950). In 1929, after more than a decade of petitioning by individual women and women's groups, the Privy Council in Britain (responsible for the British North American Act) declared Canadian women to be persons under the law. This meant that women could own and make decisions about property, run for parliament, and occupy a seat in the Senate (Kulba & Lamont, 2006).

Mary J. Wright (1992) credited these earlier struggles and victories with ensuring the equality she and other women psychologists enjoyed. However, a closer examination of these struggles, particularly those related to access to higher education, suggests that women from our cohort likely did not experience complete equality with their male counterparts. In her examination of academic women's biographies, Pickles (2001) observed that competing with male students on equal terms and rising to the top by virtue of "merit" was a major misconception about the actual institutional and work climates that early academic women encountered. The reality was that women were required to be better than men to be treated equally. She noted that "appointing women to the top of the hierarchy was rare and contentious" (p. 277), a pattern that Mary J. Wright (1992) noted for women in psychology at the University of Toronto even through the 1950s and 1960s.

Early women academics also struggled with the belief that "marriage was out of bounds for academic women" (Pickles, 2001,

p. 279). Pickles (2001) observed that none of the women she followed during the interwar period in Anglo-Canada, New Zealand, or Australia were appointed as married women. Although early women academics were expected to be spinsters, they also were frequently cast in the role of surrogate mother to students as deans of women, "a position greatly in demand as increasing numbers of female students sought female role models" (Pickles, 2001, p. 281). On the one hand, these women were official insiders of the university, "devoted to the pursuit of knowledge, subject to the same expectations as male colleagues," yet on the other hand women's difference "was evoked through [their] gendered place as caregivers of women students" (Pickles, 2001, p. 281). With respect to our group of women, Neal became the Dean of Women at the University of Western Ontario after the completion of her PhD and she continued in this role for over 20 years (Gul & Young, 2011).

The careers of the women academics studied by Pickles (2001) preceded those of the women we followed in this study, so it might be tempting to assume that these attitudes and practices did not affect our cohort. An examination of the work of the Canadian Federation of University Women (CFUW) throughout the 1920s, 30s, and 40s suggests, however, that many of these practices and attitudes continued to prevail, and thus can help frame our understanding of their experiences. Formed in the early 1920s, the CFUW was dedicated to improving the position of women in universities. In the 1920s and 30s, the CFUW was especially concerned with creating a change in attitude toward academic women and marriage and in establishing scholarships for women to facilitate their postgraduate work. Throughout the 1930s, the CFUW successfully protested the dismissal of married women from the University of Toronto (Pickles, 2001).

It seems likely that the first generation of women psychologists faced some of the challenges identified by the CFUW, though perhaps to varying extents. For instance, in 1953 Thompson Welch became the first pregnant faculty member in the history of Dalhousie University. She countered established conventions by refusing to resign her post during her pregnancy and insisting that she reclaim her position following the birth of her son (Todorow, 2012). It is notable that in terms of research topics women rarely transgressed the boundaries of what fit comfortably within the realm of traditional women's interests. It is possible that these women may have adhered to self-imposed boundaries by adopting nonthreatening academic and professional roles to protect their position as insiders.

Given Canadian psychology's later institutional start compared to the United States, the majority of the pioneering women did not encounter complete lack of access to university and/or graduate school due to their sex. Instead, some of the challenges they encountered were more similar to those of their contemporaries in the second generation of women in American psychology who overlapped with them chronologically. Johnston and Johnson (2008) document several types of discrimination that this cohort of American women faced, including being funneled into less prestigious applied work, encountering male professors who refused to advise them or permit women to use their laboratories, and shortages of full-time academic work as a result of antinepotism rules that complicated the lives and careers of married couples.

Multiple women in our cohort did divulge both overt and covert sex discrimination in their oral history interviews, particularly

during their graduate training. Several of these stories are clustered around the end of WWII when returning veterans were in abundance and there remained considerable skepticism about women's motivations in pursuing doctoral-level training. Wigdor (C. R. Myers, 1969c), for instance, recounted why she did not study psychiatry at McGill:

The dean took a look at my left hand, he saw that I was engaged and he said: "We can't afford to risk taking a woman who is about to get married and we have all these men who want to make a career in medicine and you will probably drop out after a while. (pp. 10–11)

Likewise Stern (C. R. Myers, 1969c) recalled,

I got the psychology prize in first class honours, but I was told that I couldn't go into graduate work, for a number of reasons. One was that I was a married woman of 34 and what could my motivations be. Hebb suggested that I wanted some status and I told him that in my circle a mink coat would buy me more status. (p. 9)

This story about Hebb is echoed in Hoyt-Cameron's (C. R. Myers, 1976d) account of her difficulties being accepted into McGill for graduate school:

I only survived because he [Hebb] said "I'm not going to take you for PhD work" one afternoon. So I said, "You're not?" He said "No." And I said "Why not?" And he said, "I have never had a woman in my laboratory." So I said "So?" and he said "And besides, I don't know what I'd do with you when you finished." He said "There's no place at present for women in psychology in Canada." And so I said, "That's none of your business. I don't consider that is your problem, that is my problem" . . . And this went on for a full afternoon; a whole afternoon Hebb and I argued back and forth, until he finally said (shouting), "You're accepted!" (p. 28)

On the other hand, Braine (Ball, Rutherford, & Karera, 2009), when asked about her experiences with discrimination at around the same time, recalled: "When I was a graduate student I think that Don Hebb was very good on these issues. Some of his best students were women. He had an investment in women" (p. 10). However, she also recalled that the reason she later switched her research area from perception to developmental psychology was due to sexism. When she approached her department head to allow her to teach a course in perception, she was asked to teach developmental. When she protested that she had never even taken a course in the area, he replied, "that's all right, you'll learn, you're a woman." As she noted, "there really was a lot of sexism in my move into developmental" (Ball et al., 2009, p.13).

Drawing firm conclusions about widespread discrimination based only on oral history data is difficult. Was sex discrimination a common experience, but only volunteered by some women in their interviews? Or do these few recollections of sexism obscure our view of a time when women were generally supported and provided with opportunities equal to their male peers? It seems clear from the oral histories of the first generation of women psychologists in Canada that these women expected and/or perceived a sort of rational fairness and equality in their academic and professional spaces. As Keates and Stam (2009) suggested, the women of this first generation may not have had an awareness of the extent of discrimination faced by a great majority of women in academia, nor were they part of a collective large enough to fight for equity of treatment. Instead, these women appear to have

self-enforced certain boundaries consistent with traditional female interests, middle- and upper-class womanhood, and a rhetoric of rational equality and moderation that characterised Canadian politics more generally (Bacchi, 1983). One thing is certain however: those male psychologists with paternalistic concerns such as Hebb who believed that there was "no place at present for women in psychology in Canada" were proved wrong.

Conclusions

Canadian women's entry into psychology and their professional trajectories were affected by a host of factors unique to their locations within a newly professionalizing and institutionalizing discipline, in which applied psychology played a prominent role. Our ability to understand the careers of first generation women in Canadian psychology and to contrast their experiences with those of their American counterparts relies on an understanding of their unique contexts. Women who obtained their PhDs between 1922 and 1960 witnessed the modernization of higher education, the increased enrollment of women in universities as well as the paid labour force, and increased consciousness of women's status in society. They also participated in a formative period in the institutionalization and professionalization of Canadian psychology. Accounts provided by the numerous women in our first generation helped us identify several common themes that can be understood better by contextualizing them within these larger trends.

Our intentions for this paper were to systematically identify and then analyse the cohort of women in Canadian psychology who can be said to comprise the first generation, and to produce a group portrait of their experiences. In doing so, it is apparent that these experiences both converge and diverge in important ways from the experiences of their American counterparts, identified as the "second generation" of women in American psychology because of the earlier institutional establishment of psychology in the United States. Whereas Johnston and Johnson (2008) noted the increasing racial and ethnic diversity of their second generation women, it was not possible for us to analyse potential patterns given the lack of an earlier Canadian cohort for comparison. Still, it was recognised that all women in our cohort were White, illustrating a lack of visible minorities at this time among women in psychology in Canada. The women in Johnston and Johnson's (2008) analysis included those who were Jewish and Catholic, as well as women from families of low education and income. Our cohort similarly includes some women with Jewish and Catholic religious backgrounds; however there appears to be less diversity financially. The majority of women in our sample were from financially stable households.

As with many of the women profiled by Johnston and Johnson (2008), the women in our analysis often downplayed the sexism they experienced, choosing instead to focus on support and opportunities. Pickles (2001) observed that women seemed to have devised (likely unconscious) strategies to maintain their positions of importance in the academic and professional realms. Gender-based decisions were evidently made, especially in terms of which areas of psychology to pursue, yet only a small handful of women directly mentioned sexism as the reasons for these decisions. Still, many women appeared to have been influenced toward applied areas of psychology, especially those involving children or developmental issues. Mary J. Wright (C. R. Myers, 1969e) recalled that

most of her professors encouraged their female students to pursue applied positions in hospitals and other health related institutes.

Unlike the generation of American women described by Johnston and Johnson (2008) our cohort appeared, for the most part, to have benefitted from WWII in terms of job opportunities and career trajectories. Due to war efforts, many staff and students left the universities to assist in the war overseas. The resulting shortage of teachers and students meant that recent graduates were invited to teach courses, and this included many of the women in our cohort. Some of the first generation women served overseas or worked domestically in veterans' hospitals.

Our analysis, which relied heavily on the oral histories available to us in the C. R. Myers Oral History Collection, highlights the importance of the availability of archival sources for the reconstruction of Canadian psychology's "women's history." The fact that over half of the psychologists we identified have left few or no archival traces meant that it was difficult for us to include details about their lives and professional experiences. The oral histories we do have provide direct insight into each woman's life and career trajectory as told in her own words (albeit influenced by the intersubjective nature of the interview process, to which C. R. Myers amply contributed). By providing us with first-person accounts of their experiences during a critical period in Canadian psychology's development, these women have made an invaluable contribution to our understanding of the history of Canadian psychology and its gendered dynamics.

Résumé

Jusqu'à maintenant, l'historiographie des femmes en psychologie au Canada est plutôt éparsée. Cela est d'autant plus vrai si on la compare à l'abondante documentation sur l'histoire de la première et de la deuxième génération de femmes dans l'univers de la psychologie aux États-Unis. Le but de cet article est de déterminer et d'analyser systématiquement les caractéristiques personnelles, les expériences éducationnelles et les cheminements professionnels de la première génération de femmes psychologues au Canada. Cette cohorte comprend les femmes qui ont obtenu leur doctorat de 1922 à 1960. Leurs expériences sont présentées dans le contexte des tendances uniques au sein de la société canadienne, en portant une attention particulière aux luttes communes livrées par ces femmes dans certaines structures sociales, culturelles, politiques et institutionnelles, ou en réaction à ces structures. En cernant ainsi l'apport des femmes à la psychologie au Canada, nous contribuons à l'établissement d'une histoire plus approfondie de l'histoire de la psychologie au pays et mettons en relief sa dynamique selon les genres.

Mots-clés : psychologie au Canada, histoire, femmes, féminisme, genre.

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