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FORKED PATHS

A NEW SURVEY CONFIRMS THE GENDER GAP
AMONG PROFESSIONALS

By Joan Iverson Nassauer

HOW WOMEN FIT INTO PROFESSIONS formerly seen as male domains has been a controversial and troublesome issue for both male and female professionals. The expectations and experiences of women in architecture, planning, medicine and law have been widely discussed. But their experience in landscape architecture, which has undergone a remarkable influx of women practitioners during the last decade, has received relatively little attention.

Beliefs vary widely as to whether, indeed, women have any special experience within the profession. Some people think women make a unique contribution, while others point to special problems posed for them. Still others see women's experience and contribution as undifferentiated from those of their male colleagues.

How women landscape architects perceive their own career development was the focus of a national survey conducted in September 1982.* The choices women make for a professional life, the nature of their work and work environments, and their per-

* The survey was funded by the American Society of Landscape Architects Committee on Women, the University of Illinois, and the University of Minnesota. Survey results, however, as reported here, are independent of any of these organizations. A comprehensive report on the survey will be published by the ASLA in the near future.

ceptions of career opportunities are reported here.

Generally, a large proportion of women landscape architects are young, unmarried and still in the early stages of their careers. They entered practice when many women already had established themselves within the profession to a great degree. Their perspective is somewhat different from those who are older and who began their careers when social attitudes toward women professionals were less flexible than today's. Typically, the women of this smaller, older group are married and have children.

Despite the variations in their individual careers, some common threads appear in the responses of these diverse women. Concerns about discrimination, professional advancement, and the integration of work and family are widely shared among them.

Research Design and Analysis

Questionnaires addressing professional, educational and family experiences as they relate to career development, were mailed to 716 women in landscape architecture. Containing more than 400 items, the questionnaire was developed after reviewing the 1972 American Society of Landscape Architects' (ASLA) survey of women in landscape architecture (Neal, 1973); a pilot survey made at the national 1980 ASLA Annual Meeting (Nas-

sauer, 1981); and the questionnaire for the 1982 ASLA national salary survey (ASLA, 1982).

The sample was designed to gather information from the greatest possible number of women who have experienced long landscape architectural careers. All full members of ASLA who were identified as women (June 1982) were surveyed. Associate ASLA members identified as women were sampled at a rate of 5%, and potential ASLA members identified as women were sampled at a rate of 12.5%. (Potential members were sampled at a higher rate because they were considered less likely than associate members to respond.) The survey also was mailed to all women students in eleven geographically dispersed landscape architecture programs, and to those women identified by program heads as educated in landscape architecture but not practicing.

Of the 308 women who responded, 162 were working full time and 34 were working part-time. The others were employed in non-landscape architectural positions, were unemployed, or were students. Nearly 54% had practiced fewer than seven years.

Excluding students, two-thirds of the respondents were younger than age 35; a little more than half were married, and most had no children. More part-time workers than full-time workers were over 35 (46.7% vs. 24.8%), and more were parents (58.8% vs. 27.8%).

Work Choices

The great majority of women landscape architects seem to have chosen their work situations for reasons that are highly career oriented: the type of work performed and geographic location were significant job-choice factors for both full- and part-time workers. After these, however, the two groups of working women expressed different priorities.

As might be expected, part-time workers considered flexible hours, personal leaves, and the availability of part-time work to be important reasons for taking their current positions. These factors were important to a much smaller proportion of full-time workers.

Yet beyond this seemingly obvious disparity, full-time workers, more than part-time workers, consistently gave higher priority to advancement potential, salary and an organization's reputation when selecting a position.

Survey results indicate that part-

time work is more common among women landscape architects than it is among men. While 96% of employed practitioners, men and women, responding to the 1982 ASLA national salary survey were working full time, only 82.7% of the employed women practitioners responding here were working full time.

Practice Type

Educational practice has been the area of greatest change for women in landscape architecture during the last decade. While no women were landscape architecture educators in 1972,* 15% of the practitioners responding in 1982 were faculty members. However, only four of these 29 women were tenured.

Government practice, on the other hand, showed the weakest reported advancement since 1972; women today hold government positions in about the same proportions as they did a decade ago.

Women in private practice were far less likely to be self-employed than they were ten years ago (42.5% in 1982 compared with 70% in 1972). Being self-employed was also more common among part-time workers than among full-time workers (58.8% vs. 26.5%), and more part-time workers were likely to be in private practice (70.6% vs. 59.2%). By comparison, 59.2% of all ASLA members who work full time were in private practice, and 21.8% of these were self-employed (ASLA, 1982).

Work Activities

Only 11.7% of women full-time practitioners were principals or section heads of their offices. Half of the full-time practitioners supervised no other professionals, and only 11.7% supervised more than three. Part-time workers had even less managerial responsibility: three-quarters supervised no other professionals, and no one supervised more than three.

Most women practitioners performed standard landscape architectural activities, such as design, drafting, planning, client contact and project management. Fewer, however, were involved with report writing, research, public presentations, financial or personnel management, or business travel.

Career advancement is implicit in those activities which practitioners

* 1972 figures based on survey of women in landscape architecture (Neal, 1973).

Income from Landscape Architecture and Years of Experience

INCOME	YEARS OF PRACTICE				
	3 or less	4-6	7-12	13-18	19+
1982 Salary Survey*					
Men	\$16,729	\$22,259	\$28,073	\$36,151	\$39,730
Women	\$15,587	\$19,655	\$25,874	\$25,234	\$29,890
1982 Survey of Women*	(n=32)	(n=48)	(n=27)	(n=7)	(n=12)
less than \$10,000	6.3%	6.3%	3.7%	14.3%	0
\$10,000-15,000	15.6%	2.1%	0	14.3%	8.3%
\$15,001-20,000	46.9%	37.5%	7.4%	28.6%	25.0%
\$20,001-25,000	21.9%	35.4%	33.3%	0	25.0%
\$25,001-30,000	9.4%	8.3%	37.0%	14.3%	8.3%
\$30,001-40,000	0	8.3%	14.8%	28.6%	16.7%
\$40,001-50,000	0	2.1%	3.7%	0	16.7%
more than \$50,000	0	0	0	0	0
	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

*ASLA members in full-time practice.

indicated they would like to do more often, as in business travel, construction inspection, financial management, public presentations and project management. Respondents also wished to perform more research, design, college teaching and planning. The one activity they wished to do less was drafting.

Income

Income of women landscape architects is lower than that of men at every experience level, and the disparity between women's and men's incomes grows with experience. This conclusion was suggested by the ASLA's 1982 *National Salary Survey of Landscape Architects* and is supported by data reported here. The fact is particularly disturbing when considering that nearly half (48.4%) of full-time women practitioners are the sole support of themselves or their families, and many of the other women's earnings may be essential to a two-income family.

To compare data from the national salary survey with data reported here, it is necessary to understand their differences. First, the two surveys report on income for different years: the national salary survey on 1981 income; this survey on annual income as of September 1982. Consequently, income reported for this survey could be expected to be somewhat higher than that reported in

the national salary survey. Second, income data from the national salary survey were reported in exact dollar increments, making them more precise than this survey's data, which were reported in aggregated categories. Finally, because women with longer career experience (and theoretically, with higher incomes) were sampled more heavily in this survey, aggregated data on these women are likely to be more reliable.

The national salary survey reports on income of full-time practitioners who are ASLA members. For a valid comparison, then, only income data on those women who are both full-time practitioners and ASLA members are used here.

Two patterns are discernible when comparing income of full-time practitioners with their experience. First, during the initial twelve years of experience, women's incomes rise steadily and at a rate comparable to that of men. But women's incomes, on the average, are also somewhat lower than are men's. Second, income bears almost no relationship with experience for that small group of women which has practiced more than twelve years. And mean income figures, such as those reported in the national salary survey, do not provide an authentic image of women's earnings at these experience levels. In fact, women with more than twelve years of experience have annual incomes which are almost

Work Activities

ACTIVITY	HIGH FREQUENCY		SATISFACTION	
	Full-time (n=162)	Part-time (n=34)	Full-time (n=162)	Part-time (n=34)
Design	61.2%	72.7%	*M-34.9%	M-18.8%
Drafting	50.0%	66.7%	**L-24.7%	L-28.1%
Planning	48.8%	58.1%	M-28.0%	M-14.7%
Report Writing	33.1%	28.1%	M-16.3%	M-14.7%
College Teaching	12.3%	19.4%	M-30.8%	M-17.6%
Research	12.7%	18.8%	M-43.0%	M-20.6%
Public Presentation	24.1%	13.3%	M-27.5%	M-26.5%
Client Contact	56.9%	66.7%	M-22.2%	M-14.7%
Business Travel	18.2%	12.5%	M-41.5%	M-10.3%
Construction Inspection	39.4%	54.5%	M-34.9%	M-22.6%
Financial Management	27.7%	24.2%	M-35.3%	M-26.9%
Personnel Management	19.0%	6.1%	M-29.7%	M-25.0%
Project Management	55.6%	51.5%	M-25.3%	M-25.8%

*The greatest proportion of dissatisfied respondents thought there should be more (M) of this activity.

**The greatest proportion of dissatisfied respondents thought there should be less (L) of this activity.

evenly dispersed from a low of less than \$10,000 to a high of up to \$50,000.

Work Environment and Career Opportunities

Discrimination in the work environment was something nearly all women full-time practitioners (94.4%) believed to be a problem. They consistently reported being in the minority in their offices, where nearly half (45.5%) were working with no other women professionals and another third (32.1%) with only one or two other women.

More than a third of the respondents had experienced harassment in the form of unwanted or embarrassing comments or behaviors from their employers, clients, professional colleagues or contractors. Nearly half of the full-time practitioners responded that employers had discriminated against them in the degree of job responsibilities assigned and in career advancement; about one-fourth said they had been discriminated against in hiring.

When respondents reported on their current work situations rather than on their work histories, they described less discriminatory situations. Over half (59%) of the full-time practitioners believed that all profes-

sionals in their present office have equal opportunity for advancement; one-fifth, however, strongly disagreed with that statement. Half also believed that all professionals in their office receive equal pay for equal work, but nearly a quarter strongly disagreed with this. Thus, while the majority of women landscape architects seems satisfied with the equality of opportunity and income offered in their current positions, a substantial minority remains very dissatisfied.

Conclusions

The study suggests that women landscape architects do have different career experiences from men. On the average, they have lower incomes at every level of professional practice. A larger proportion works part-time, most work where there is little opportunity for collegial support from other women, and they widely report being discriminated against in their careers.

However, among women themselves, career experiences also vary greatly. Part-time practitioners, for example, are likely to take their jobs for different reasons than do those who work full time. They are far more likely to be self-employed; they are less likely to manage professional staff.

They are, on the average, older, more likely to be married and have children. And when *individual* differences among women are considered, instead of collective variations, the gamut of their experiences is more clear.

The obvious question precipitated by the data is "why" — why a difference between the incomes of men and women; why do more women choose part-time work? One answer lies in social attitudes which once blatantly discriminated against women in landscape architecture. Those who began careers in this aversive social climate still may be feeling its effects. And the study suggests that more subtle forms of discrimination, especially harassment, may continue.

Where outright discrimination isn't apparent, the structure of an organization and its schedules may create less recognizable barriers. Leaders' mentorship may operate within a quasi-social group of men, making it difficult for women to get the training and visibility they need for advancement. Inflexible schedules or benefit plans which preclude time for personal commitments may prevent primary parents, women or men, from pursuing their careers uninterrupted. And, finally, the politics of family life may affect women's work choices. Whose career, for example, determines where the two-income family lives? When do they move? How will parenting responsibilities be divided?

Any conclusions about the career differences of men and women landscape architects must recognize that the differences seem to be converging. Social attitudes toward women professionals *have* changed, likewise have attitudes toward men's participation in the balancing of work and family commitments. But skepticism about the continuity of social trends must prevail: we cannot assume the future will improve upon the past without our efforts to help it do so.

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