Gathering a Community of Researchers around the History of Science and Gender in France Today: A Challenge?

Dalia Deias – Valérie Burgos – Juliette Lancel – Isabelle Lémonon
EHESS – Centre Alexandre-Koyré - GDR 3398 Histoire des mathématiques
Outline

• Introduction
• Purpose
• Audience
• Assessment
• Perspectives
1. Introduction

- **What?** Seminar about women and knowledge

- **When?** Nov 2014 to June 2015 (9 meetings)

- **Who?** 4 female PhD students (history of knowledge / different periods / different subjects)
1. Introduction

- Program

  - History of knowledge and gender
  - Sources
  - Productions
  - Circulations
  - Institutions of knowledge
  - Representations
2. Purpose

- Personal questioning (PhD / Curiosity / different subjects)
- No seminar about this field (except in Sociology/ Philosophy/ Political Sciences…)
- Intellectual and institutional legitimacy of history of women not ensured in France (Françoise Thébaud, 2007)
- Personal remarks:

  « No need to look for women in this institution, there are none! »
  « Tell me you are not writing a PhD thesis about gender! »
  « You want to study women, you are a feminist? »

Paternalism

French context about gender
Legalization of same-sex marriage: May 2013
« ABCD de l'égalité »: 2014
First congress of gender studies in France: September 2014
3. Audience

- 56 different participants in 8 meetings: average of 16 per meeting
  87% of women (48-14i)                      13% of men (8-3i)

- Positions of participants:

Dalia Deias – Valérie Burgos – Juliette Lancel – Isabelle Lémonon
EHESS – Centre Alexandre-Koyré - GDR 3398 Histoire des mathématiques
3. Audience

- Institutions represented

- 1/5 of the participants came to at least 4 meetings (out of 8)
4. Assessment

- The main questions of the seminar « cross » the long time period of study we chose (17th-20th c) and the different spaces evoked in the seminar.

- Wherever you look for women in knowledge production or circulation, you find them! They are just next to men producing knowledge!

- Women's sources about knowledge production are fainter than men's (production/ego-documents)

- Importance of social rules on visibility/invisibility of women (salons / pen-name, « anonymat », « disguise »…)

- Importance of education (or lack of !)

- Female special areas of skills : sex segregation (M.Rossiter, Women scientists in America, vol 1, p.51)

- Value of female knowledge production?
4. Assessment

- Need for such reflections / for such an « interaction space »
- Ask for podcasts or communications
- Female audience!
- Interdisciplinary audience
- Reflection on science / knowledge (initially gendered defined: music/sewing/birthing/beauty/…)
- Bias of our study as women
- Bias of our study as historians in the 20th c
- Deconstruction of image of the « pionnières » women
- Institutional support (CAK / GDR 3398)
5. Perspectives

- Consistent Community
- Seminar 2015 /2016: *Spaces, frontiers, margins*
- Publication project (3 years)
- Contacted by Universcience
- Analysis on the way of producing knowledge in the seminar?
- What kind of knowledge produced there?
- Bias?