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# From Shadow to Light? Women Sports Historians in France

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## Résumé

In 2021, the French 74th section of the National Council of Universities (CNU) - that for Sports Science (in French *Sciences et techniques des activités physiques et sportives* (STAPS) - recorded 15 women sports historians are engaged in teaching and research activities in various university departments. They represent only 19.7% of the group of historians concerned: does the history of sport have a gender and how can this under-representation be explained? Statistics on the place of women in research and higher education in Europe and France (CORDIS, MESR, Ollangnier & Solar, 2006) allow us to make four closely related observations: women are in the minority in the research workforce in Europe; the proportion of female researchers varies according to scientific discipline and country; the ‘glass ceiling’ (Marry, 2008), which can be observed in female employment, is particularly prevalent in higher education and research. Finally, while the proportion of women and men is the same in the first year of university (around 50%), in subsequent years, the ‘leaky pipeline’ phenomenon (Bernardis, 2013) phenomenon comes into play and is compounded by a ‘scissor effect’: the proportion of men in university studies gradually increases, while that of women decreases (for STAPS: Erard & Guégnard, 2018). How does the group of STAPS historians (N=76) reflect this situation? Rooted in contemporary history, this work draws on a questionnaire survey and interviews conducted with the group concerned and the company, using a thematic and criteria-based analysis grid, to reveal three personal stories produced by these “behind-the-scenes professionals”, the evolution of their place and role within the group in question, as well as the obstacles they perceive and encounter in their professional careers.

**Mots-Clés:** Historians, sport, ego stories, obstacles, France

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