Coming up with bright ideas: Women in academia

The question: "Why so few?" has now been asked for some decades and it has markedly become common knowledge that there are few women in academia. Surprisingly there are still so few despite the debates, the legislation, and the equal opportunity promise.

One should (and could) be more surprised in 1983 than one might have been in 1975. The pool of female undergraduates students has become very much larger now than it ever has been. The female representation at postgraduate work and tertiary employment, if it had only reined at the same percentage as it had been in 1920, would already have resulted in some redressing of the balance, some equity. But it has not done so.

Female academics have largely remained a welcome clientele for the maintenance of large male staffs — without demanding anything further from the system which now support to the tune of roughly 46% of enrolments.

Despite some genuine attempts at change, it is doubtful if at present anything noteworthy is happening that specifically aims at tackling issues of discrimination at the level of everyday life. Such issues of discrimination discussed in this paper concern events that are not quantifiable and easily measurable. They are qualitative in nature, often hidden and indirect, i.e., covert, and minute within the totality of interactions, structures and events in tertiary education, e.g., micro-level events. They may, by themselves, also be mundane and petty, I wish to refer to some of them and then suggest strategies for overruling them.

Associate Professor D.C. Stove notes how the situation in 1955 was that there was no discrimination against women. He claims that philosophers at this time were quite powerless to do anything or even to think about the situation. He attributes this to a lack of awareness of the nature of the problem.

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References

1. The question: "Why so few?" has now been asked for some decades and it has markedly become common knowledge that there are few women in academia. Surprisingly there are still so few despite the debates, the legislation, and the equal opportunity promise.


7. There has been an interesting debate in the pages of the Australian Academy of Science's Newsletter, Jones and Geoff (Lawrence) of the Rivers Institute has also made a contribution to taking advantage of the new collaborative arrangements.

8. Under the Australian Research Grants Scheme, the Commonwealth reserves the option to re-allocate funding of the grants, if possible, to the Commonwealth any resulting inventions. Further, they may also make for sharing of rights with the government, or for royalty free licensing of the grantee's inventions.


to isolate them into positions of political and intellectual invisibility. The result is a new genre of silence, which is often referred to as 'congregational muting' or simply the 'congregational silence'. This form of silence is characterized by a lack of participation in social and political conversations. It is a type of silence that is particularly common in academic and professional settings, where it is often referred to as 'tokenism'.

One student, on an informal count, recorded over 50 such interludes of complete silence in office visits and seminars with a staff member. Out of these encounters, only two were with female colleagues and they were the briefest. All others occurred with male colleagues. The encounters were with various staff members, including concerned students and teachers. Indeed, congregational muting is not exclusive to any particular gender or social group. Even in settings where women are considered to be the majority, they may still experience this form of silence. For example, in many universities, women are often found in the lower positions of the academic hierarchy, yet they still experience congregational muting. This is because the system is designed to silence them, not to engage them. Even when women do speak, their contributions are often not acknowledged or valued. This is a form of silencing that is particularly harmful to women's self-esteem and confidence. It is a form of silencing that is often used to keep women in their place and to prevent them from asserting their rights and claims.

One of the most important ways of seeking public acknowledgment of one's work is to present one's ideas to others. Women, however, often do not have the opportunity to do this. They are often not invited to present their ideas, or if they are, their ideas are often not taken seriously. This is a form of silencing that is particularly harmful to women's self-esteem and confidence. It is a form of silencing that is often used to keep women in their place and to prevent them from asserting their rights and claims.

To avoid being silenced, women often have to engage in congregational muting. This is a form of silencing that is particularly harmful to women's self-esteem and confidence. It is a form of silencing that is often used to keep women in their place and to prevent them from asserting their rights and claims.

The problem that this approach to silence implies is that women, who are often the victims of congregational muting, are not in a position to speak. This is because the system is designed to keep women silent. Even when women do speak, their contributions are often not acknowledged or valued. This is a form of silencing that is particularly harmful to women's self-esteem and confidence. It is a form of silencing that is often used to keep women in their place and to prevent them from asserting their rights and claims.

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In other words, women began to develop a feeling of solidarity and began to act consciously in support of each other. From this emerged the Women's Movement. When women began to act as a group, the old image of them as being passive or as being in any way inferior to men, was taken on a new dimension. The emergence of women in debates in both formal as well as informal situations is furthermore, helped considerably in breaking down sex-divisions. "Men, as well as women, were sharing more explicitly their ideas with others. In other words, women began to organise women's groups at colleges and universities, and this was a conscious step towards the style of debate of male speakers.

Too many women still see themselves wrongly as victims without recourse for change. Admittedly, covert forms of discrimination are less tangible and are therefore more difficult to tackle than overt discrimination which, moreover, can be objectified and can be discussed fairly abstractly. At the same time, I agree with the number of writers over the past decade who have also thought that some patterns of discourse are cross-cuttingly widespread, and that they can be applied in situations in which traditions are strong and the roots of the discrimination appear masked. And they must be applied and considered now in order to work towards the equity which, theoretically, should be implementable at that time. Women's entry into academia one hundred years ago has broken a tradition of women not being allowed to participate in higher education. Therefore, there is no need for women in ANZAAS Congresses to have worked hard to achieve that milestone, which was, in fact, far more remarkable than the list of statistical data alone.

References/Notes
2. Beatrice C. and David Dawson, Diana Temple, Betty Wills, and Anne Stacey. "Women's Participation in WRTW Seq FWEV, esp. Table 7.2, pp. 160-161. Remy, "Women and the University." In The University of Sydney, 1940-1990, p. 135. However, on an overall average, such patterns have remained essentially unaltered.
4. In one study, Australian students have confined themselves to areas of science because of lack of discrimination.
5. The meaning of "real" is a point of interpretation. At the moment, it is far to say that noting organisational cornerstone of the participation patterns of women (by number). Therefore, there is no need to succumb to that tradition since the most important step in breaking it has already been taken.

A study of staffing patterns in faculties and departments of education in Australian universities

Introduction

Staffing patterns and recruitment patterns in Australian universities have been the subject of considerable research during the past 25 years. This is because the topic of women's academic positions first emerged during the 1950s when it was noted that the absence of women from the universities, faced with a shortage of adequately qualified people to fill the growing number of academic positions throughout the country, began to rely more and more heavily on recruitment processes. Traditionally, recruitment is a major factor in the establishment of the nature and scope of the academic patterns from overseas. This is a significant problem in terms of the analysis of educational staff in a sample of ten universities across Australia. In his 1968 study of Sydney University, he found that 24 per cent of his sample of academic staff were from overseas, and he concluded that the recruitment of overseas staff is a significant factor in the academic structure of the university.

The technique of analysis of qualifications was used in this study, which takes account of the origins of academic staff who have been used in previous studies and is considered to be a legitimate procedure. In the study, the qualifications of lecturers were obtained from staff listings in the universities' handbooks and books of the institutions chosen.

A study of staffing patterns in faculties and departments of education in Australian universities

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The sample of ten universities was selected because it includes all of the universities from which staff lists were available indicating the total number of staff in the universities. The sample was chosen by a random selection of the universities from which the sample was drawn. The total number of staff in the universities was 9,060. The sample included 516 staff members, which was determined from the universities included in the study. When the sample was chosen, the qualifications of staff members were recorded and used to generate the tables which follow.

Findings of the study

1. What types of qualifications are held by Education staff in Australian universities?

Table 1 lists the number of Education staff at each of the universities studied and the total number of their qualifications. In this study, the total number of staff was found to be 9,060. The total number of staff at the universities varied between 100 and 400, with the median number of staff at each university being 250. The number of staff at each university varied between 50 and 200, with the median number of staff at each university being 150.

2. What are the qualifications of the staff employed in the departments of Education at Australian universities?

Table 2 shows the breakdown of the qualifications of the staff employed in the departments of Education at Australian universities.

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