Power, Privilege and Leadership in Academia

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My Experience

<u>Research: structure, formation and evolution of galaxies; the Milky Way</u>

- BA in Mathematics, Cambridge University

- PhD in Astronomy, UC Santa Cruz

- Postdoc at the Institute for Advanced Study

- Tenure-track Professor, Wesleyan University

- Professor, Columbia University
  - Department Chair, 2014-2017

I. Introduction: What is Academia?

What does it mean to be faculty at an academic institution?

- Purpose?
- Role?
- Responsibilities?

What does it mean to be
faculty at an
academic institution?

- Purpose: *faculty ARE the institution*

- Role: *to further human knowledge*

- Responsibilities:
  - *research and mentorship*
  - *education and communication*
  - *framework: structure, policies, goals*

What does it mean to be
faculty at an
academic institution?

- <u>??? framework: structure, policies, goals ???</u>
  = space in which research and education/
  communication thrive

thriving members = thriving institution

Are we all "thriving"?

Statistics suggest not: e.g. % women at each stage from survey of "top 100" US departments by Donna Nelson released in November 2007

Department	% BS (2005)	% PhD (96-05)	% assist profs	% all profs
Chemistry	51.7	32.4	21.2	13.7
Math	44.9	28.7	26.8	12.9
Physics	21.1	14.3	16.8	9.1
Astronomy	42.4	22.7	25.3	15.8

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??diversity in leadership roles??

Under-representation of (and associated effects for) other groups in STEM significantly worse

Are we all "thriving"?

Conclusion: No!

Yet:

- No difference in innate abilities *(Spelke 2005 review in American Psychologist).*

- Diversity in perspectives strengthens innovation *(e.g. Phillips in Scientific American, October 2014; Page, 2007).*

=> We are not fully-utilizing our resources

Outline

- Introduction: what is "academia"?

- Barriers to Diversity

- Net effects

- Some thoughts on next steps

** References

** Discussion

II. Barriers to Diversity

Barriers A: Biases

- <u>Everyone</u> has biases, e.g.:
  - Assessment of performance (Deaux & Emswiller 1974, Martell 1991, Goldin & Rouse 2000)
  - Reference letters (Trix & Psenka, 2003)
  - Peer Review (Wenneras & Wold 1997, Budden et al 2008)

- Check
  - your own implicit biases: Project Implicit
  - your (and others') letters: gender bias calculator

- **Conclusion: maintain awareness in reviews, admissions, hiring, promotion**

Barriers B: Comfort Zones

- Imposter syndrome: doubt of accomplishments and fear of being exposed as a "fraud"

- Stereotype threat: minority status in a group suffering from negative stereotypes leads to underperformance
  - Steele & Aaronson 1994; Shih, Pittinsky & Ambady 1999

- Current science "culture": not a productive work environment for all

Conclusion: imposter syndrome heightened for those subject to stereotype threat

Barriers C: Culture Clash

- Diversity is hard (Phillips, 2014)

- "Change" is uncomfortable

- Easier to "just think/talk about science"

- **Conclusion: acknowledgement and teamwork essential to build effective workplaces**

Barriers D: leading on diversity <u>and</u> developing diverse leadership

- Leadership modes evolve with diversity => lack of role models and challenges to innovation

- Authority of diverse leaders is undermined if they talk about diversity (Heckman, Johnson, Foo & Yang 2016)

- **Conclusion: active support for diverse members as they move to leadership positions**

Are you aware of instances of:
- unconscious bias?
- stereotype threat?
- imposter syndrome?
- culture clash?

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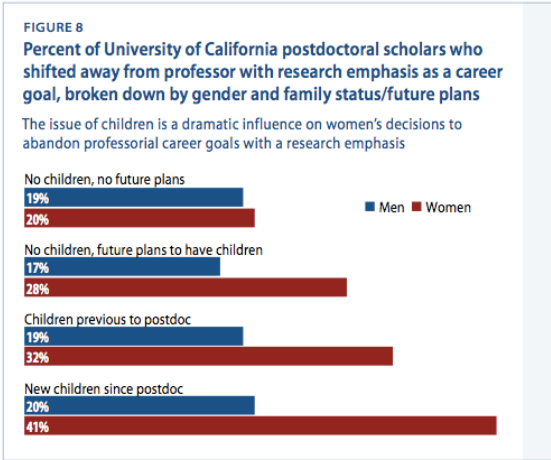stereotype threat
systemic problems
challenge of leading on diversity

III. Net Effects
= consequences for academia

Net Effects A:
the Leaky Pipeline

FIGURE 8

Percent of University of California postdoctoral scholars who shifted away from professor with research emphasis as a career goal, broken down by gender and family status/future plans

The issue of children is a dramatic influence on women's decisions to abandon professorial career goals with a research emphasis

No children, no future plans
19% (Men)
20% (Women)

■ Men ■ Women

No children, future plans to have children
17% (Men)
28% (Women)

Children previous to postdoc
19% (Men)
32% (Women)

New children since postdoc
20% (Men)
41% (Women)

Source: Goulden, Marc, Karie Frasch, and Mary Ann Mason. 2008. "UC Postdoctoral Scholar Career and Life Survey." (http://ucfamilyedge.berkeley.edu/UC%20Postdoctoral%20Survey.html).

Net Effects B:
Glass Ceilings

IV. Next Steps
= directions to explore!

Next Steps A:
change the conversation - "and" not "either/or"

- Differences as
  - additions not replacements
  - growth vs change

- **Recognition of likely: difficult discussion; conflicts; need for help**

Next Steps B:
Combating Threat Triggers

- e.g. In talks and group settings, be aware: **imposter syndrome enhanced by stereotype threat**

- Set appropriate boundaries for "intense scientific exchange"

- Unchallenged, individual "bad behavior" can have significant effects on workplace for all.
  - "The Cost of Bad Behavior" by Christine Pearson (2009)
  - "The No-Asshole Rule" by Robert Sutton (2010)

Don't just tell me about imposter syndrome. <u>Stop</u> making me feel like an imposter!

(appeal from URM graduate student in STEM)

Next Steps C:
Acknowledging Privilege

- **What "worked" for you may not work so easily for others.**
  - Peggy McIntosh: "White Privilege – Unpacking the Invisible Backpack" (1989)

- **Be careful not to send unintended messages of exclusion in mentorship**

Next Steps D:
Using Power for Advocacy

- Making changes
  - Silence is deafening
  - All department members set the environment
  - "bystander training" to learn to be an ally

- Beyond "allyship": creating teams to work on active advocacy

- Beyond departments – your leaders - your institution – your field

Resources

- ADVANCE programs: e..g at University of Michigan, University of Wisconsin, Lehigh University….....

- Outside help for difficult discussions: growing number of coaches and consultants who specialize in academia

- E.g. NSF-funded partnership in engineering fields between Purdue/Washington + Kardia Group Consultants: TECAID

Power, Privilege and Leadership in Academia

Use them to address:

- **combined negative effects of:** imposter syndrome, stereotype threat, privilege, bad behavior

- **unfulfilled promise of diversity:** student, faculty, leadership levels

- **challenge of necessary growth.**

- **shared responsibility.**

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