

Summary of Discussion
“Women’s Professional Development Issues”
ISA Midwest Roundtable (11/9/2013)
Sponsored by ISA’s Professional Development Committee

Participants:

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We discussed a variety of topics related to women’s professional development issues. This document summarizes the discussions involving the panelists and audience members.

The RT began with a summary of various gendered patterns in ISA and academia including:

- The leaky pipeline: women are lost at every stage of academia; APSA 2009 survey data shows 42% of women as assistant professors versus 29% of full professors, while men constitute 26% of assistant professors and 44% of full professors; similar data shown in Hancock, Baum, and Breuning (forthcoming, ISP) for the ISA.
- Women publish fewer articles than men (Hesli and Lee 2011)
- The total number of publications is an insignificant predictor for whether women are associate professors versus assistant professors, while the coefficient is positive and statistically significant for men (Hesli, Lee, and Mitchell 2012).
- Women make less money than men at the same academic rank.
- Women do more academic service than men but it is typically less prestigious service (Mitchell and Hesli 2013).
- Women’s work is cited less often than the work of their male peers even when controlling for a wide variety of other factors (Maliniak, Powers, and Walter 2013; Mitchell, Lange, and Brus 2013).

Next, we discussed some issues that occur when women transition from life as a graduate student to life as a faculty member. We first talked about general strategies for improving success on the job market including practicing the job talk multiple times, giving the talk in nearby schools to obtain advice from different scholars, and engaging the whole department while on the interview. We then discussed some issues and strategies for dealing with this transition including:

- Recognizing that it can be difficult for your spouse or partner to move and trying to be cognizant of this situation.
- Socializing with other new faculty members on campus to broaden the support base and find others going through what you are going through. You can also use this group to establish writing partners to help you set aside time for writing.
- Keeping up with graduate school friends and trading research papers with them.
- Dealing with challenges to authority in the classroom; recognize that you are the authority in the classroom and exude confidence.

- Dealing with inappropriate labels (e.g. Miss or Mrs.) by letting students know this is not okay.
- Being available during office hours but not overly accessible
- Prioritizing service so that you choose things that help your career
- Learning department politics and the lay of the land; the advice was to not take sides too early before you are aware of the situation.

The next topic involved working at a smaller school with more intensive teaching expectations and balancing family and career. Panelists talked about actively choosing a teaching school (much to the chagrin of their graduate advisor). The first message was that this is a great career for having it all; easier than other careers such as working for NGOs abroad. The advice on teaching load was to minimize the total number of course preps (e.g. 4 preps for 6 courses). Having an academic spouse can sometimes be beneficial because it gives you the flexibility to deal with the family/career balance. Being competent in academic service positions leads to more service, so again be careful with what you agree to do. We discussed how it can be taxing as a female to be the manager of a household. Seek out help where appropriate.

We then discussed women in administrative positions. Women administrators may have the advantage of being open to hearing about family and personal situations and serving as department peacemakers. One negative issue is getting respect from all colleagues, the potential for gender devaluation of authority positions when they are held by women. Women are not automatically given respect but have to work to earn it from their colleagues. This sometimes manifests itself as challenges to female leadership, such as male colleagues questioning things that previous chairs used to do unilaterally (e.g. hiring adjuncts). We advised finding mentors to help you and also forming coalitions of women scholars to push back against gender discrimination. We emphasized the benefits of having a supportive spouse or partner.

The roundtable then moved to discussions of gender issues in publishing. The first question was whether women are disadvantaged in top journals if they have preferences for qualitative research (in general). The advice was to ask the journal editors if the type of work you are doing is something the journal would be interested in. Don't hold back work because you think it doesn't fit the journals well; this is hurting women overall because they tend to submit manuscripts less frequently than men. Everyone gets multiple rejections so you need to learn how to deal with them and view the reviewers' suggestions in a positive light. Volunteer to be a journal reviewer because this will help you see the reviewing process for other scholars' work (including the decision letter & other reviews) and it will give you a baseline for judging the quality of your own research. We also discussed how men tend to share their forthcoming or working papers with scholars and we recommended that women do this more often. This was linked back to the citation issue noting that women are less likely to cite their own work and this was one possible strategy for increasing citations.

Next we discussed some advantages and disadvantages of being a female academic. Sometimes you are sought out for your characteristics as a woman (e.g. if you had children as a graduate student, other graduate students with children might come to you for advice). Gender factors can work in your favor but beware of situations where you are selected for token reasons on

committees or blogs. Be sure that you will benefit by participating in the activity you are recruited for.

Audience members asked several questions including 1) When does being assertive become problematic? 2) Are women too self-critical? 3) How do you know if students are challenging your authority or just being challenging in general? 4) How can we make decisions up front about the particular career paths we want to pursue (e.g. a teaching school)?

We discussed the increasing push-back that senior women often experience as they become more successful (also described in the 1999 MIT Report on Women in STEM fields). We noted that women need to work together to support each other and also that we need to make male scholars aware of these gender issues to help address them more clearly. We discussed how blogging and other social media could be useful tools for women to promote their interests and research.