

Underrepresentation of Women in New Zealand Departments of Psychology

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As well as being underrepresented in New Zealand Departments of Psychology, women are concentrated at lower levels of appointment. However, this bias is more likely to be the result of attitudinal and motivational factors that have affected performance than overt discrimination in recruitment and promotion within the university system. Women psychologists are no better qualified than men at the same level of appointment; nor do they have higher publication or citation rates.

Wells, Fry and Hesketh (1978) noted that in 1977 women held only 17 percent of full-time appointments in the Psychology Departments of New Zealand universities, even though women had been awarded 43 percent of bachelors degrees, 28 percent of masters and honours degrees, and 20 percent of doctorates awarded in psychology between 1964 and 1974. Further, in 1977 none of the appointments at the level of reader, associate professor, or professor were held by a woman. In considering why women are underrepresented as well as concentrated at lower levels of appointment, Wells et al. claimed that discrimination against women cannot be ruled out.

Academic staff are recruited primarily from the pool of people who complete postgraduate training after graduating with a good honours degree. If there was discriminatory recruitment of men and women into university positions, women gaining appointment might be expected to be better qualified than men. Similarly, if there is discrimination after appointment (for example, in promotion), women academics as a group should show evidence of greater research achievement than men at an equivalent level of appointment.

Twelve women and 61 men were listed in the Commonwealth Universities Yearbook for 1979 as holding full-time appointments at the level of lecturer or above in Psychology Departments of the six New Zealand universities. There were six women at lecturer level and six at senior lecturer level. Although 67 percent of these women held a doctorate compared with 59 percent of all men at lecturer and senior lecturer level, the difference was not significant, Chi Square = 0.86, *d.f.* 5 1, $p > .05$.

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Men and women can be compared in terms of their research productivity and impact by using publication and citation statistics. Social Science Citation Index, which collates measures taken from a range of journals in psychology and related disciplines, was used to establish both the number of papers published by each woman in the sample in 1975-1977 and the number of occasions over this same period that the person's work was cited in papers published by other authors. Book reviews were not credited as publications. Measures obtained for each woman are later compared with the median rates found for all men at the same level of appointment in the same university department. Median rates were used rather than mean rates as the basis for comparison, since a number of those in the sample (men and women) did not publish or attract citations over the period of the survey.

The mean number of papers published by the 12 women between 1975 and 1977 was 0.25 (*SD* 0.59) compared with the mean median of 0.33 (*SD* 0.59) for the matched men. The difference was not significant, $t(11) = 0.34, p > .05$. The women had a mean citation rate of 2.17 (*SD* 4.58) compared with the mean median of 1.79 (*SD* 2.58) for men, but the difference was not significant, $t(11) = 0.18, p > .05$.

The present analysis indicates that women lecturers and senior lecturers in the Psychology Departments of New Zealand universities do not differ from men at the same level of appointment in terms of academic qualifications, publication rate, or research impact. At least on these criteria, women do not have to meet different or more exacting standards than men in order to gain academic appointment or to progress from lecturer to senior lecturer. Thus, on the present evidence New Zealand universities do not seem to have discriminated against women in the manner that North American universities clearly did during the 1960s (Astin, 1972).

The fact remains that only one in six psychologists in New Zealand universities are women, and also that there are no women at a level above senior lecturer. Many factors seem to contribute to the underrepresentation of women in university posts. Zuckerman and Cole (1975) have noted that attitudinal and motivational factors in conjunction with discrimination in the allocation of opportunities and rewards produce a higher cumulative rate of attrition among women and men over successive stages of role selection and attainment. Many qualified women may fail to enter university teaching for the same reasons that more women than men fail to proceed from undergraduate to postgraduate training. The women who have entered university teaching may have failed to reach higher levels of appointment to date not through overt discrimination, but because they have not yet published sufficient

research of high impact. For example, the mean number of citations gained by readers and associate professors in the Psychology Departments of New Zealand universities over 1975-1977 was 20.50 (SD 20.29) and for professors 24.64 (SD 35.82) compared to 2.60 (SD 4.90) for the 12 women psychologists over the same period.

References

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