

# WOMEN IN SCIENCE AND ACADEMIA

March 2021

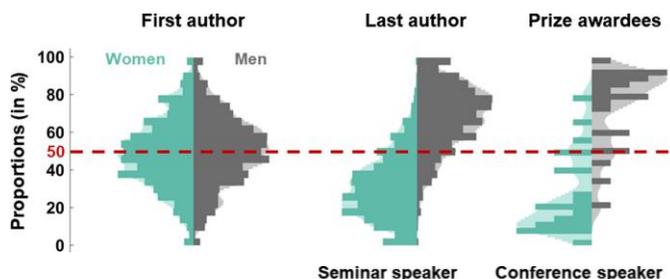


## WELCOME TO THE MONTHLY NGSO DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION NEWSLETTER

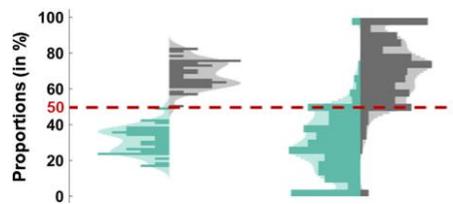
Each month the NGSO Diversity and Inclusion Committee will create a newsletter on a topic addressing inclusivity in STEM and Higher Education. We invite you to open yourself and your mind to the new educational opportunities and perspectives presented below. This month the focus is on **women in science and academia**.

## MISOGYNY IS DISLIKE OF, CONTEMPT FOR, OR PREJUDICE AGAINST WOMEN.

Strides have been made for gender equality in academia. However, while more women are entering academia, patriarchal attitudes have not disappeared. The manifestation of these attitudes has become more subtle and ambiguous, making it harder to detect and hold individuals accountable.



**Figure:** Histogram of proportions (in percentage) of women (green) and men (gray) in different aspects of neuroscientific academic life.



From "Gender bias in (neuro)science: Facts, consequences, and solutions." 2019. *European Journal of Neuroscience*. [ONLINE] Available at: <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/full/10.1111/ejn.14397> [Accessed 3/26/2021].

## LITERATURE REVIEW

Please refer to the following articles for some context on the concepts of sexism and misogyny.

**Drawing everyday sexism in academia: observations and analysis of a community-based initiative.** Dr. Marie Bocher, Dr. Martina Ulvrova, Dr.



Alva 27.01

Did this really happen?!. 2018. *Did this really happen?!*. [ONLINE] Available at: <https://didthisreallyhappen.net/>. [Accessed 3/25/21].

*Maëlis Arnould, Dr. Nicolas Coltice, Dr. Claire Mallard, Dr. Mélanie G rault, and Dr. Alice Adenis*

This article from April 2020 discusses findings from an initiative titled *Did this really happen?!*, which served to bring examples of everyday sexism in academia to life through visualization with comics. Authors collected over 100 testimonies and identified six recurrent patterns of sexism in the academic workplace that are discussed in detail.

**The Queen Bee phenomenon in Academia**  
**15 years after: Does it still exist, and if so, why?**

*Dr. Klea Faniko, Dr. Naomi Ellemers, Dr. Belle Derks*

This study from July 2020 investigates the continued prevalence of The Queen Bee Phenomenon (QBP), which occurs when advanced career female academics are more likely than their male colleagues to express stereotyped views of early career women and underestimate their commitment. The authors find that this phenomenon still persists and occurs as a result of a behavioral strategy called self-group distancing.

**“I have the impression that my female doctoral students are spoiled. They are not available to work on evenings and the weekend. They are busy with their boyfriend. For my male doctoral students, the career is everything.”**

**– Female professor**

(Faniko et al., 2020)

**The Academic Conference as a Chilly Climate for Women: Effects of Gender Representation on Experiences of Sexism, Coping Responses, and Career Intentions.** *Dr. Jacklyn Biggs, Dr. Patricia H. Hawley, and Dr. Monica Biernat*

This study from March 2018 examined the role that perceptions of sexism may play in the setting of a scientific conference. The authors argue that sexist experiences at conferences could contribute to the “leaky pipeline” of women leaving academia after receiving their PhDs and discuss methods that conference organizers could employ to reduce sexist climates at conferences.

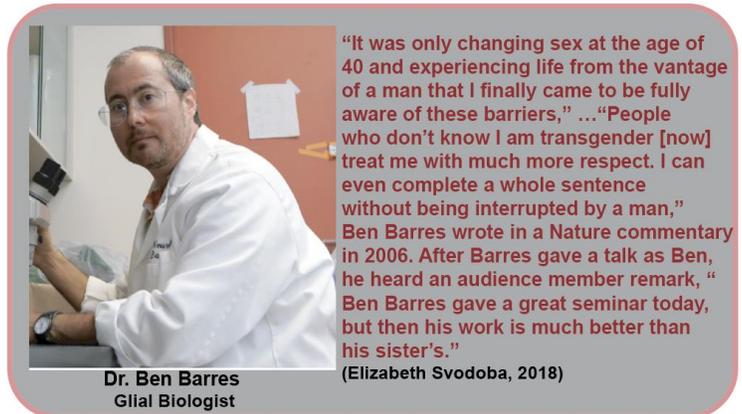
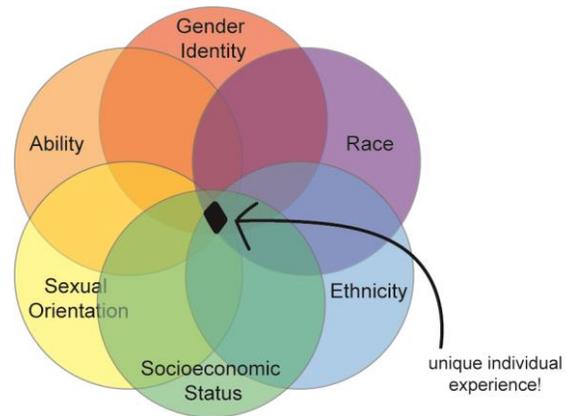
**Everyday sexism and racism in the ivory tower: The experiences of early career researchers on the intersection of gender and ethnicity in the academic workplace.**  
*Dr. Dounia Bourabain*

This article examines sexist and racist experiences of PhD and postdoctoral researchers from an intersectional perspective. Four processes are discovered and described: smokescreen of equality, everyday cloning, patronization, and paternalism.

## INTERSECTIONALITY

The majority of women in academia are cisgendered white women, and their experiences may be different from women of color and transgendered or nonbinary individuals. We will touch on these topics here, but please note that we will focus on gender identity and the gender spectrum in a future newsletter.

Academia has played a unique role in upholding both racism and sexism. According to Dr. Bourabain, “from the 19th century, pseudo-science contributed to the construction of modernity (Harwood & Banton, 1975; Heleta, 2016; Molefe, 2016). It offered European nation-states legitimization for colonialism and slavery by categorizing people into a racial hierarchy in which the superior races were the developed, rational, intelligent race. Concerning sexism, universities' historical aim of training clerics and political leaders maintained the gender divide of the public and private space. Furthermore, the male white body was and is still considered the “knowledge holder” (Puwar, 2004), the ideal academic who is a rational worker immersing himself into his work only. **Consequently, women and ethnic minorities experience a role incongruity between their gender identity and professional identity** resulting in a biased assessment of their abilities and contribution to knowledge production.” (Bourabain, 2020)



## ANECDOTES

In this section trainees and established academics share their experiences with misogyny. We have removed identifying information as many accounts come from individuals associated with the Ohio State University. Some anecdotes have been modified for clarity.

“The research scientist in my lab and I have a similar experience. Neither of us dress super feminine and know that if we did [dress feminine] or come in with a full face of makeup we wouldn't be taken seriously, or some comment would be made about ‘why do you look so nice today?’ [When my research scientist] was in school, **she would never wear a dress or skirt if she was giving a presentation because she knew she wouldn't be respected...** I feel like ideas coming from my mouth aren't taken as seriously or respected versus if they came from a male peer. I have seen that a lot of the classroom setting, especially in group work... I am pretty vocal and normally don't take \*#&! from people, but there have been times where I just bite my tongue because it's not

worth starting something over and [the situation] won't change... [I] just wish I didn't have to think or worry about those things day to day."

"During one of my rotations, I felt directionless. I reached out to the PI expressing this need so I could receive guidance. It was stressful sending that email because I did not want to sound whiney or entitled. From my perspective, everything turned out great! The PI acknowledged my need and intervened. Later, I heard from a friend in a different lab that they heard about the email. It turns out the entire lab heard about it and said I was entitled, but my friend reassured me that I am just confident and assertive. The situation made me feel ashamed to have spoken up when I deemed it necessary. I do feel part of the reason my communication was interpreted this way is because I am female. Men are encouraged to be confident and assertive in academia, but a woman is 'entitled' when she does. I've read and heard about other women facing the same issue. **The 'bossy woman' trope and misogynist language largely contribute to this stereotype, in my opinion, and instances such as mine would not be as common if we discouraged them at every turn.**"

"My last rotation ended after only a week. The male tech made inappropriate comments to me. The comments did not target me, and the tech did not mean to make me feel unsafe, but I did [feel unsafe]. I confided in my mother and friends and asked what they made of the situation. Everyone informed me I was experiencing harassment. My immediate response was denial because the tech did not appear to have malicious intent with his comments; he was just ignorant of how his words affected a new, young woman in the lab. **Another part of my brain told me that my mother and friends (all women) were being overly emotional and could not grasp the situation for what it was because they were women.** On the fourth day, I was so shaken that I brought the matter to a trusted male mentor, and it wasn't until he encouraged me to leave the situation that I accepted how serious it was. The following day I informed the PI that I could not stay. **I couldn't believe my situation was unacceptable until a man confirmed it.** Not only did I miss out on a lab rotation I was excited for and techniques I inevitably need to master due to my gender, but my internalized misogyny also ran so deep that I tried convincing myself to stay in an environment I did not feel safe in. To end on a happy note, my current PI (male) admits he does not understand the barricades women face in academia and strongly encouraged me to make close connections with female PIs to get the support I cannot get from him.... I do not know how to otherwise best address this problem in academia. Mandatory training is helpful, but not everyone pays attention to it. Perhaps awareness is the best way forward so we can shed light on these issues and make them harder for everyone to overlook."

"Our current program has a number of strong female role model neuroscientists that have taken personal time to meet me, simply to discuss being a female in academia. They willfully give advice and time and **have made me feel welcomed and understood.**"

“In one of my training labs, a new lab member became problematic. He would yell angrily at himself when experiments didn’t go the way he wanted. This was frightening to many of the women in the lab in particular, especially if you were working late while this man was yelling at his bench. This new lab member would also tell stories about his old lab where they would attempt to drug each other by putting anesthetics (meant for the animals) in the communal coffee filters. It was unclear if these stories were true, but he told them as funny anecdotes, as if such a thing would be acceptable mischief. Five women in the lab banded together and told our PI. **He made us feel unsafe at work and we wanted him dismissed from the lab.** There were also some scientific integrity issues based on things we saw him do but the biggest issue for us was safety. The PI suggested that we talk to him ourselves about how he makes us feel unsafe at work. This response made me acutely aware that I was female, and my PI was male. I don’t think this PI knew what it was like to feel your safety threatened at work. He certainly didn’t understand why saying we should confront the aggressor was wildly inappropriate. **The end result was the aggressive lab mate stayed and we just had to feel unsafe until he left of his own accord about a year later.** I tried to work late less frequently so I would not have to deal with him alone.”

## WHAT CAN WE DO?

1. Enforce equity: promote fairness by treating people differently based upon need ([Social change UK](#)).
2. Implement gender mainstreaming: assess implications of any planned actions, policies, programs, or events for individuals of all genders ([UN Women](#)).
3. Ensure individuals of all genders are active in all planning and policy discussions.
4. Implement double-masked reviewing when relevant.
5. Submit recommendations or nominations for women or nonbinary scientists.
6. Refer to this article for more inspiration: [Schrouff et al., 2019](#)  
Get feedback from colleagues and trainees. Ask “Have I made you feel good or bad about your gender at any point?”

## ADDITIONAL RESOURCES & INITIATIVES

### [AAAS IF/THEN Ambassadors Program](#)

Initiative designed to further women in STEM by funding, highlighting and empowering talented professionals.

### [The Women’s Place](#)

Initiative for expanding opportunities for women’s growth, leadership and power in the university community



[\*Delusions of Gender: How our Minds, Society, and Neurosexism Create Difference\*](#)

Cordelia Fine, PhD; book

[Women in Academia](#)

Anna Göttsche and Dr. Louisa Söllner; website compiling recent research

[“Housework is an academic issue. How to keep talented women scientists in the lab, where they belong”](#)

Drs. Londa Schiebinger and Shannon K. Gilmartin; American Association of University Professors blog

**CONTACT US**

If you want to get involved with future initiatives, have any feedback, suggestions for topics, or anecdotes please contact us.

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