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Wednesday, November 08, 2006

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1. Summers' speech of 1-14-2005 (see copy at www.president.harvard.edu/speeches/2005/nber.html, www.anitaborg.org, www.wiseli.wisc.edu, <http://people.brandeis.edu/~pninaga>), offered three hypotheses intended to explain the under-representation of women in science, listing them, by his own account, in order of decreasing explanatory power, or a) women refuse to work the long hours required in high powered jobs; b) women are innately less able for high achievement (deduced from the lesser flatness of aptitude curves for women at both extremes) c) discrimination (which was further described as derivative of "socialization", or a normal state of affairs)

Why did the debate resulting from Summers' pronouncements have such a *strong public resonance*? ("the debate that won't go away", *NYTimes*, 4/12/05)

Please choose at least 3:

| | Response Percent | Response Total |
|---|------------------|----------------|
| Summers' views shocked the public by their outdated flavor and overt prejudice; | 72.7% | 64 |
| Gender has remained a hot topic since the Women's Movement in the 1970s; | 47.7% | 42 |
| Harvard is a leading institution in higher education by tradition, size, budget; | 86.4% | 76 |
| Science is a key to prosperity, so lack of equal access means no promising future; | 15.9% | 14 |
| The internet (e-mail) enabled fast sharing and spreading of opinions and ideas; | 38.6% | 34 |
| The media was eager to cover a former politician and holder of high offices; | 27.3% | 24 |
| Timing (2005) reinforced <i>The MIT Report</i> on women in science; (1999) | 17% | 15 |
| View Other (please specify) | 15.9% | 14 |

Total Respondents 88
(skipped this question) 0

2. What is *your own view* of the reasons for the under-representation of women in science?

Please choose at least 3:

| | Response Percent | Response Total |
|---|------------------|----------------|
| "Evolution" of covert discrimination in academia, once overt barriers were removed (as reflected in the MIT Report of 1999); | 60.2% | 53 |
| Educational system (K-12) steers girls away from science requirements; | 38.6% | 34 |
| Limited family-friendly work environment in universities and research institutes; | 75% | 66 |
| The prioritizing of family issues, esp. children, by most women; (=Summers hyp. 1) | 21.6% | 19 |
| Lack of innate ability for high achievement; (=Summers' hypothesis no. 2) | 2.3% | 2 |
| Persisting gender bias and inequality in society at large; (=Summers' hyp. 3) | 58% | 51 |
| Lack of policy linkage between funding and performance on gender equality; | 28.4% | 25 |
| Denial of gender bias in science by scientists who believe that science is immune to all forms of bias because of its formal commitment to objectivity and truth; | 58% | 51 |
| <input type="button" value="View"/> Other (please specify) | 19.3% | 17 |
| Total Respondents | 88 | |
| (skipped this question) | 0 | |






3. What are the reasons, in your opinion, for the invisibility of *WGS scholarship* during the 2005-06 public debate on the under-representation of women in science?

Please choose at least 3:







| | Response Percent | Response Total |
|---|------------------|----------------|
| <i>Policy makers tend to limit themselves to input from quantitative social sciences, (especially those with a tradition of informing policy such as econometrics, experimental psychology, quantitative sociology; however, those fields have not been central to scholarship on women and gender in science);</i> | 57% | 49 |
| <i>Historians, who account for the single largest group of WGS scholars, lack a tradition of influencing policy; (but see History for Policy Makers, 1986)</i> | 55.8% | 48 |

| | | | |
|---|---|--------------------------------|-----------|
| Wo/men scientists are not well informed of the scope and pertinence of WGS scholarship because they lack avenues for routine contacts with WGS scholars; |  | 64% | 55 |
| <i>WGS scholars/hip</i> is a recent and marginal field in the university system with many problems of its own; |  | 57% | 49 |
| <input type="button" value="View"/> Other (please specify) |  | 34.9% | 30 |
| | | Total Respondents | 86 |
| | | (skipped this question) | 2 |

4. What are the WGS teaching patterns in your institution? (for examples of syllabi see the History of Science Society's booklet, at www.hssonline.org)

| | | Response Percent | Response Total |
|--|---|--------------------------------|-----------------------|
| WGS courses are not taught at all; |  | 27.3% | 21 |
| WGS courses are taught by tenure-track/ tenured WGS scholars; |  | 46.8% | 36 |
| WGS courses are often taught by non-expert wo/men faculty; |  | 15.6% | 12 |
| WGS courses were taught by Visiting Professors funded by NSF (NSF-VPW) but once the VPW ended, the courses disappeared; |  | 2.6% | 2 |
| <input type="button" value="View"/> Other Relevant Patterns (please include how long your institution has been teaching WGS courses, and how many students habitually enroll in such a course) |  | 40.3% | 31 |
| | | Total Respondents | 77 |
| | | (skipped this question) | 11 |

5. What are the key obstacles to better establishing WGS in academia?

| | | Response Percent | Response Total |
|---|---|--------------------------------|-----------------------|
| Resistance to the paradigm change implied by WGS scholarship; |  | 43% | 34 |
| Tension between WGS's interdisciplinary needs and disciplinary agendas; |  | 63.3% | 50 |
| Tokenism; (the practice of hiring only one woman as a showpiece) |  | 20.3% | 16 |
| Cultural bias; (e.g. racial minority, sexual orientation, age, non-conventional career) |  | 20.3% | 16 |
| Institutional marginalization of women from positions of power; (e.g. Chairs) |  | 40.5% | 32 |
| <input type="button" value="View"/> Other (please specify) |  | 26.6% | 21 |
| | | Total Respondents | 79 |
| | | (skipped this question) | 9 |

6. A considerable chunk of WGS research continues to be done by *independent scholars*, (whether by choice or lack of it) a pattern that is more common with topics on women, as well as with new fields.

Do you think that the WGS's public profile could be strengthened if independent scholars were better integrated by:

| | Response Percent | Response Total |
|---|------------------|----------------|
| Affiliation with Research Centers in Women's Studies; (e.g. IRWG at Stanford which exists since 1977; or the more recent WSRC at Brandeis) | 74.4% | 58 |
| Designation as scholars of their respective professional societies; | 50% | 39 |
| Special grants for independent scholars (incl. collaboration with them); | 50% | 39 |
| <input type="button" value="View"/> Other means: (please specify) | 23.1% | 18 |
| Total Respondents | | 78 |
| (skipped this question) | | 10 |

7. Do you think that the invisibility of WGS scholars/hip in the 2005 debate may have reflected a *leadership crisis*?

(E.g. pioneering WGSers of the 1970 & 1980s shifted to other professional agendas, often due to institutional / disciplinary indifference, yet without having created a WGS school; a new generation of WGSers in tenure track slots has not acquired, as yet, "leading" status; leading intellectual WGSers are independent scholars who do not have the institutional resources required to better position WGS in the public arena)

| | |
|--|-----------|
| <input type="button" value="View"/> Total Respondents | 55 |
| (skipped this question) | 33 |

8. How can WGS's visibility be improved? What are the top 3 most effective means:

| | Response Percent | Response Total |
|---|------------------|----------------|
| Establishing a special website that combines scholarly studies with the policy relevance of WGS; if so, how would you improve this project's current website (http://people.brandeis.edu/~pninaga/sqer), please use the comment box below; | 27.7% | 23 |
| Monitoring the advancement of WGS scholars so as to ensure that professional recognition translates into positions of power and authority; | 39.8% | 33 |
| Greater communication with women scientists via joint AAAS/ HSS sessions; | 68.7% | 57 |
| Creating liaison committees of WGS scholars with policy makers; | 57.8% | 48 |
| Plays; (such as "W;t", "Proof", "Better Genes", "Immaculate Misconception") | 13.3% | 11 |
| TV Series; (such as PBS's NOVA, "Photo 51") | 41% | 34 |

View







Other/ Comments 

27.7% 23

Total Respondents 83
(skipped this question) 5

9. Some argued (e.g. SWE Newsletter, summer 2005) that the last decade was a *decade of neglect* in retaining women in science as an issue of national priority. (per its peak in the early 1990s)

Which of the following factors played a major role in this neglect?

| | Response Percent | Response Total |
|---|------------------|----------------|
| Complacency, as once overt barriers gave way to less visible forms of discrimination;  | 83.3% | 70 |
| Fragmentation of gender politics by other issues, e.g. race, sexual orientation;  | 50% | 42 |
| The science-wars in the mid-1990s;  | 29.8% | 25 |
| The dot com boom in the late 1990s;  | 1.2% | 1 |
| The post-9-11-01 shift toward homeland security and military solutions overseas;  | 21.4% | 18 |
| View Other reasons (please specify)  | 26.2% | 22 |
| Total Respondents | 84 | |
| (skipped this question) | 4 | |

10. What is your acquaintance with WGS scholarship? (please provide year of publication per title/ or author's last name, e.g. Rossiter 1982, 1997)

Also, please include the following in the comment box below: (optional)

Name (& website)

Main field/s of Expertise






Affiliation & Rank (Institution & Department)









E-mail / Phone for clarifications

Your most pertinent publication/s (e-mail to me as pdf or sent as reprints to be included on the project's website)

Thank you again for your gracious cooperation.

Dr. Pnina G. Abir-Am, Principal Investigator (PI), NSF-SGER (The Debate on Women in Science, 2005-06) Research Associate-HBI/ Brandeis University Mailing address: 249 Orchard Street, Belmont, MA. 02478, USA Tel: 617-283-7464; Fax: 617-484-2709 E-mail: pninaga@brandeis.edu, Websites: people.brandeis.edu/~pninaga, pga.silg.org

| | Response Percent | Response Total |
|--|------------------|----------------|
| Wrote a book/s:  | 29.8% | 25 |
| Edited or co-edited a collection of essays:  | 21.4% | 18 |
| Published essays in peer review journals; please provide details/ attachments;  | 39.3% | 33 |
| Reviewed WGS books;  | 41.7% | 35 |
| Collaborated with WGS scholars; (as author/ editor)  | 31% | 26 |

| | | | |
|--|---|--------------------------------|-----------|
| My work was influenced by WGS scholar/s/hip: |  | 57.1% | 48 |
| Sat on prize committees for WGS scholarship/ Wrote letters of recommendation for WGS scholars; |  | 26.2% | 22 |
| Attended lectures of WGS scholars at professional meetings; |  | 66.7% | 56 |
| Interfaced with WGS scholar/s as Chair of Department/ Chair of search committee/ member of my Department/ other; |  | 28.6% | 24 |
| Was instrumental in hiring a WGS scholar; |  | 11.9% | 10 |
| Witnessed no hires when WGS scholar/s were candidates; |  | 9.5% | 8 |
| Am not well acquainted with WGS scholarship; |  | 11.9% | 10 |
| <input type="button" value="View"/> Comments/ Other |  | 51.2% | 43 |
| | | Total Respondents | 84 |
| | | (skipped this question) | 4 |

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