Qeios

Peer Review

Review of: "A Blueprint for Gender-Equitable Conferences"

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This is a useful guide that suggests that some fields are decades behind others in gender equity rules for conferences. In History, my major area, such rules have existed for decades, supplemented by sexual harassment regulations. Nonetheless, at a time when women's presence/rights, gender justice, and LGBTQ+ rights and presence are under assault and even being erased, this blueprint is a useful reminder. A couple of further thoughts:

We need rules for male and male-identified hegemonic behavior. The problem is not always women and women-identified people.

Networks matter. Who is connected to whom says much about the composition of panels at conferences and invitations to keynote. To the extent that women are not connected or have not gone to school with organizers (or their advisors are not part of the group), that obviously impacts inclusion unless organizers make an effort to reach out to those networks in which women predominate or have developed. For example, when putting together panels, we reach out to people we know, or who belong to the same grad school cohorts, or whose work we've encountered (if we are brave and email out of the blue). If you are not part of a network, it is harder to be known and to be asked.

Structural constraints include funding, teaching load, and other institutional inequalities, as well as the care work and household responsibilities that disproportionately fall on cisgender women.

We might consider the analysis of some disability justice activists who speak of universal accessibility when we think of standards of inclusion, so in accommodating for care or other gendered/women constraints, we also account for the needs of other genders who face similar hurdles and create inclusive rules in our organizational frameworks/decisions. Such platforms can move toward greater inclusivity and add to the kind of special treatment of women needed for equal treatment that other parts of the blueprint suggest. In one sense, the question is who is advantaged by their class/social

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standing (Ivy League, top Research I public, networks, advisors, cohorts), as well as how care responsibilities impede some people, and how male dominance and misogyny persist among some men in their responses to women during conferences (discounting comments, belittling research--in 50 years, I experienced that twice since 2000, both times male economists to my feminist labor history!). Bad male behavior at conferences is not talking to women, ignoring their comments, and treating women like the other, like sex objects or assistants.

In short, being reminded to look out for women--and other underrepresented groups--is always welcome, but the status of women is embedded in larger hierarchies in which class, race, field, ethnicity, age, prestige of institution and working group, and other factors intervene.

I think you have offered useful solutions. I would add to send the call for papers to as many outlets as possible and to feminist websites. Contact feminist leaders for suggestions for more junior scholars. Ignore boorish men at conferences.

Declarations

Potential competing interests: No potential competing interests to declare.