The Future of Women in Psychological Science

Gender gaps for women in psychological science are closing, yet some remain.

The good news
Women:
• are a large portion of psychological scientists
• are well represented in early career positions
• have more visibility in leadership roles
• are mentoring the next generations

Where work is needed
Areas include:
• perceived research “eminence”: women hold fewer grants; men publish more papers & a citation gap persists
• wage gaps: women make 68-99% of men’s salaries
• gender gap in senior faculty roles

Lifestyle roles & family/work conflicts
Women are often expected to be primary caregivers of children & family members. This could affect research productivity & contribute to high rates of service.

Agency, self-esteem, & self-promotion
All affect career success & can be influenced by stereotypes. Women are less likely to self-promote.

Gender biases
Can shape behaviors & attitudes about self & others. i.e. associating men with brilliance & seeing women as communal.

Why do these gaps persist? They can be affected by:

Intersectionality
Women with other marginalized identities are underrepresented in academia & face compound barriers to entry & retention.

The Path Forward
We have made progress in our field, but there is more work to do. Consider the following actions to address gaps:

Collect data & track impact of changes
Benchmark administrative & self-reported data on above areas & track progress:
• job climate & satisfaction
• career goals
• perceived bias
• financial renumeration

Redesign & educate committees
Redesign procedures for hiring & awards. Acknowledge how biases affect outcomes. Establish clear criteria & evaluate a range of factors. Appoint an equity advocate on committees without tokenizing.

Be transparent about money
Gender pay gaps are smaller when candidates know the compensation. Offer negotiation training & share ways to get funding (e.g. outside offers).

Support families
Provide:
• early-career domestic/childcare stipends
• sufficient on-site childcare
• paid family/partner leave
Hold meetings at family-friendly hours.

Mentor early & often
Role models have a positive impact on women & their careers. Formalize & document expectations for mentorship to prevent inequitable burdens.

Support underrepresented women
Speaking & collaboration opportunities tend to come up informally. Invite underrepresented peers to social events, & invite them to bring a colleague.

Provide gender bias training
Provide workshops (more than one) to increase understanding of bias, & programs that teach how to confront bias & lessen impact on decision-making.

Define academic “service”
Women’s service is often unaccounted; formalize service roles as part of the promotion process & evaluate with clear criteria.
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References


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