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What Do Women Want?

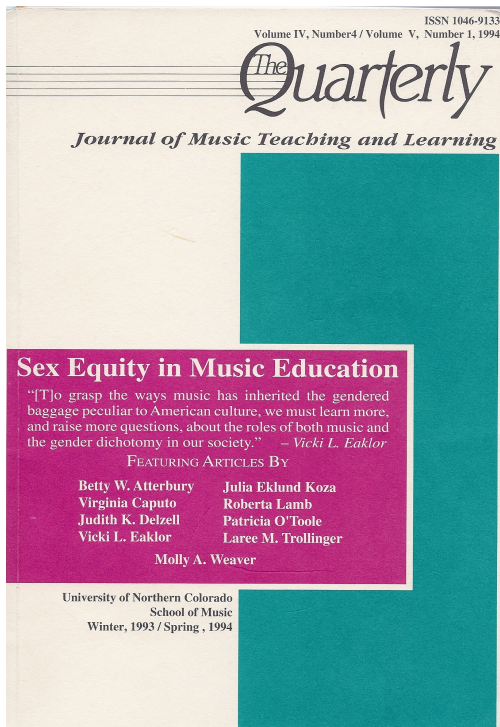
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It is with pleasure that we inaugurate the reprint of the entire seven volumes of The Quarterly Journal of Music Teaching and Learning. The journal began in 1990 as The Quarterly. In 1992, with volume 3, the name changed to The Quarterly Journal of Music Teaching and Learning and continued until 1997. The journal contained articles on issues that were timely when they appeared and are now important for their historical relevance. For many authors, it was their first major publication. Visions of Research in Music Education will publish facsimiles of each issue as it originally appeared. Each article will be a separate pdf file. Jason D. Vodicka has accepted my invitation to serve as guest editor for the reprint project and will compose a new editorial to introduce each volume. Chad Keilman is the production manager. I express deepest thanks to Richard Colwell for granting VRME permission to re-publish The Quarterly in online format. He has graciously prepared an introduction to the reprint series.

BOOK REVIEW

What Do Women Want?

Review By Betty Atterbury

University of Southern Maine

NADYA AISENBERG AND MONA HARRINGTON,
WOMEN OF ACADEME: OUTSIDERS IN THE SACRED GROVE. AMHERST: THE UNIVERSITY OF MASSACHUSETTS PRESS, 1988.

In the ideal world of gender equity, the question which serves as a title of this review would not need to be asked, nor would there be a need for a book discussing some possible causes and suggested cures for the lack of tenured females in higher education. But as we are all aware, we do not live in the ideal world. Unfortunately, there are vast disparities in the numbers of male and female members of the professorate at all levels excepting those of part-time and untenured instructor or lecturer. As described in *The NEA 1993 Almanac of Higher Education*, the average number of women full professors in public and private institutions ranges from 11 to 17 percent of the faculty, depending upon whether the institution grants only a doctorate, a B.A. and advanced degrees, or only a B.A. By contrast, the average proportion of females in the rank of instructor or lecturer is over 50 percent, regardless of the degree-granting status of the institution.

In many fields, including music education, such inequities have long been defended by the assertion there were and still are not adequate numbers of females qualified for upper level positions. The business world used this argument and predicted that after a critical mass of experienced females made their way through the "pipeline," we would see

greater numbers of female executives and CEOs. Academe has used the same reasoning in predicting increasing numbers of female full professors. Neither business nor the academy, however, has experienced the anticipated and predicted equity; the "glass ceiling" really does exist. Increasing numbers of women have earned music and music education doctorates (see the 1988 *College Music Society Report* "Women's Studies/Women's Status"), yet an accompanying increase in the number of female tenured full professors in departments and schools of music is not evident.

The authors of *Women of Academe*, aware of the unequal statistics noted above, sought to determine why so many women seem to fall off the tenure track. They approached this task through an examination of 62 interviews of tenured and untenured female academics and looked for commonalities of experience across disciplines and settings which would serve as generalizations and explanations for gender disparity. They found that there were indeed similar themes recurring in all the experiences of these women, and the two main theses relate to professional marginality and exclusion from the centers of professional authority. The authors claim that "for the academic profession, there is such a thing as *women's* experience" (p. xii). The strength of commonality in the experience of both tenured and untenured subjects presents a compelling argument for acceptance of the findings of this study.

In our democratic society, it is disturbing to read, much less accept, the premise that different realities exist for males and females. We would rather continue to believe that equal opportunity exists in every field of endeavor. As the authors of *Women of Aca-*

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deme explain in their initial chapter, however, in the public sphere and in the professions, the historical roles of women have been subordinated to the roles of men (i.e., male doctors but female nurses, or male administrators but female teachers). Furthermore, such role expectations stem from the outdated but long-standing perception that females properly belonged not in the professions or the public sphere but within a marriage, supporting the male. Indeed, we find obvious evidence that female influence in the history of music education has been largely unrecognized. For example, only one female music educator, Julia Ettie Crane, is mentioned in Birge's *History of Public School Music in the United States* as being active during the entire period of 1865 and 1900. All others cited are male.¹

In the initial chapter of *Women in Academe*, the authors explain the relationship between what they call "old norms" and the stereotypes concerning women's role within marriage. This role expectation suggests that women should be patient, accommodating, nurturing and supportive, but certainly not authoritative or intellectual. This expectation of how women should act is one cause of conflict in professional settings. When females adopt the rules or behaviors of the male practitioners of their profession, for example by taking initiative or competing and acting aggressively, females are often seen as offensive. But if females behave according to the "old norms" and are patient, deferential, and accommodating, they are seen as "weak." As the authors explain in the second chapter, if women are to succeed in academia, they must undergo a transformation — almost a change of identity — from "a passive to an active persona" (p. 20).

In addition, women in graduate school lack many of the support systems which are

taken for granted by their male peers. Foremost is what is described by Aisenberg and Harrington as "undercapitalization," a lack of equitable financial support. While the reasons for women's financial disadvantage at this level vary, the authors suggest that they are traceable to the perception of women's education as unnecessary and a frill.

In fact, inequity in financial support exists for girls even earlier than graduate school. A recent study² of the Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT) indicates that its expressed purpose is to predict first-year college grades. Yet, al-

though the female average SAT scores are consistently lower than those of males, females achieve higher first-year college grades than do males. So what is the test's purpose, since it is not a valid predictor of success in college for both genders? Lower scores on this type of test mean a great deal to females who take the Preliminary Scholastic Aptitude Test (PSAT) as high school juniors, because these test scores are used solely to award National Merit Scholarships. Rosser, the author of this study, finds that due to test bias in the PSAT, only 36 percent of the National Merit Semifinalists in 1987-88 were female; the previous year, the percentage

was 34 percent. In states such as New York, where PSAT scores are considered along with grades and class rank in awarding state merit scholarships, girls receive more awards than they do in states that use only the PSAT scores to award the scholarships. When PSAT scores alone are used, boys do much better than girls.

Another important support system found lacking in the lives of subjects interviewed by the authors of *Women of Academe* was professional counseling and mentoring, leading to a lack of political knowledge and a lack of clarity about how to plan a professional life.

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Aisenberg and Harrington found that the women interviewed believed that people advance in academia through merit and that true merit would “somehow be evident and recognized by professional authorities without self-advertisement” (p. 52) although, as the authors point out, merit is only one of several factors that influence an individual’s advancement in academe. The authors note that women can successfully play the full academic game by learning and using political rules (assume opposition, be persistent, learn to say no, use contacts, choose your fights); but for many women, following these and other rules is “always a matter of strain, of overcoming a contrary impulse to rely on the standard of merit alone” (p. 59).

Females may learn to rely almost exclusively on merit because their voices are usually ignored as they progress through elementary, secondary, and tertiary educational settings. Thus, women experience more difficulty in learning to speak with an authoritative voice. Numerous researchers have documented the unfortunate reality that males receive more attention and are asked more questions than females in classrooms at all levels and in all specialties (see Baker, 1986, for a description of secondary science classes; Becker, 1981, for a description of what happens in mathematics; or Jones, 1989, for a discussion of college-level interactions).³ Cultural expectations suggest that women should not speak with an air of command, because they should not be in positions of authority. A senior faculty member who perceived important differences in graduate students stated situation clearly: “Men are much quicker to take an authoritative stand, and the women are still being deferential and apologetic. The women are still doing nods and smiles” (p. 68).

The importance of cultural context was found by the authors to be the most general characteristic of the intellectual work of the interviewed females. They postulate that women may be attracted to the fields of fine and applied arts, history, and English, because these are subjects through which there is the possibility for the “shaping of individual identity for themselves and for their students” (p. 90). They also found a second

pattern, that of resistance to scholarship which “seeks certainty through abstract theory” (p. 97) and note that in some academic areas it is almost a cliché that few women are great theoreticians. It may be, of course, that the absence of women from theory development is the result of their realization that such development often has been predicated on the experience of only half of the human race.

According to Elizabeth Minnich,⁴ theories in education and in many other fields, including music education, have been based on faulty generalizations and faulty abstractions that result when theorists decide that humans of a particular kind are the only ones who are significant or who can set the standard for all human beings. (Note the current debate in the health field regarding the application of research findings on male heart disease and, amazingly, male breast cancer to women.) Minnich describes a second error of thinking, circular reasoning, also applicable to music and music education, which is seen when standards of “good” work “are derived from the study of a particular kind of works by a particular group but are then used as if they were generally, even universally, appropriate” (p. 51). The index of any current music history text provides ample proof of this erroneous thinking.

Conclusion

As we have read repeatedly in popular literature, women who try to “do it all” or who are “superwomen” with full-time careers and families often become “burned out” or experience both facets of their lives as tired, stressed-out human beings. Many males believe that this apparent inability to successfully combine an academic existence and a family proves that women are inadequate to participate in both professional and family life, an assumption that neglects the possibility — even necessity — of changes in the traditional role of the male within a marriage partnership. The authors of *Women of Academe*, noting that equality in family responsibilities rarely occurs, found that their subjects often compromised accordingly and took part-time positions in order to have more time with their children. Unfortunately, these choices were made without the women’s full

The authors of *Women of Academe*, noting that equality in family responsibilities rarely occurs, found that their subjects often compromised accordingly and took part-time positions in order to have more time with their children. Unfortunately, these choices were made without the women's full realization of how such decisions would negatively influence their future careers.

realization of how such decisions would negatively influence their future careers. Part-time college teaching, for instance, is often a road to nowhere in the land of tenure and promotion. The authors conclude that the "number of women who can integrate their private and work lives well is minuscule" (p. 133). This is not an optimistic statement, and all in academia should consider it with deep concern.

In their concluding chapter, Aisenberg and Harrington describe yet another force, the presence of female staff who support males in the academy, which may partially explain strong male resistance to change in the prevailing social mores of academe. "For many men, the implications of professional equality for women are indeed revolutionary because their professional productivity more commonly depends upon a private support group... wife, secretary, researcher, junior female staff, many of the women who, under a changed system, would no longer be available for such support roles" (p. 140). Each of these "female categories" represents a generalization about accepted roles for females which is woven into our culture from early childhood. Certainly thinking of females only in terms of these categories is an easier way to view the world than to consider females as equal.

The lack of tenured female faculty members may also be related to the power of group membership and social categorization, a social phenomenon found even among pre-school children. "For social categories, individuals tend to view themselves in relation to each group. The gender group to which one belongs is the in-group. People tend to evaluate the in-group members positively and the out-group members negatively" (p. 79).⁵ As noted in *Women of Academe*, comments such as "women aren't seri-

ous" or "women don't want to put in the hours" are often used as justifications of exclusionary practices by the current in-group in academia.

What do women want? Aisenberg and Harrington suggest that women want "a radically different system of professional organization — indeed of social organization — from the one that prevails" (p. 136). This changed order would rely more on cooperation than on hierarchical authority and would recognize that individuals have personal lives in addition to professional ones.

Readers of this essay know, however, that such a change in the social order will be a long time coming. So women in academia must consider some intermediate steps while awaiting real equity. Female academics who wish to press for tenured positions are offered standard advice: publish, find a mentor, and participate in professional associations. In addition, the authors suggest ideas less often discussed, such as developing the habit of persistence and not allowing oneself to be defeated by criticism or indifference. In addition, Aisenberg and Harrington suggest that women join or organize female groups appropriate to their particular place or activity, since their study showed that these continual contacts with other women provided the "necessary medium for recognizing the play of gender in problems that seem to be only personal" (p. 148). It is too easy for women in academia, who have been socialized throughout their lives to be submissive, to accept the denial of tenure or promotion as a personal problem, one resulting from a situation they themselves created. It is time for all people in academia to consider where the problem really lies and realize that women are not to blame for the fact that so few tenured full professors are female. There are much deeper and more

complicated forces at work which must see the light of day before the ideal world of equality for female professors will ever exist.

Notes


1. Volk, T. M. 1993. Factors influencing music educators in the "rote-note" controversy, 1865-1900. *The Bulletin of Historical Research in Music Education*, XV, (1), p. 35.
2. Rosser, P. 1989. *The SAT Gender Gap, Identifying the Causes*. Washington, D.C.: Center for Women Policy Studies.
3. Baker, D. 1986. Sex Differences in Classroom Interactions in Secondary Science. *Journal*

of Classroom Interaction, 22 (2), 212-218.

Becker, J. R. 1981. Differential treatment of females and males in mathematics classes. *Journal for Research in Mathematics Education*, 12 (1), 40-53.

Jones, M. G. 1989. Gender issues in teacher education. *Journal of Teacher Education*, 49 (1), 33-38.

4. Minnich, E. K. 1990. *Transforming Knowledge*, Philadelphia: Temple University Press.

5. Martin, C. L. 1993. Commentary - Theory of sex typing: Moving toward multiple perspectives. *Society for Research in Child Development*, Serial No. 232 (University of Chicago Press), 58 (1) 75-85. 

Advice to Contributors

The Quarterly

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The Quarterly, the music journal devoted to the consideration of issues that concern all who are involved with the teaching and learning of music, invites the submission of scholarly manuscripts for review by the National Board of Editors and possible publication. *The Quarterly* welcomes manuscripts on diverse topics of interest to music specialists - performers, researchers, musicologists, philosophers, music educators, and others. By unifying the concerns of music specialists, TQ is fast becoming the most dynamic, sophisticated, and provocative publication in the field.

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