From National to International Collaborations

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Goals of WiCS

Dedicated to advancing the status of women in cognitive psychology and cognitive neuroscience

• Improve the visibility of women: inclusion on editorial boards, influential committees, officers in societies, etc.

• Create an environment that encourages young women to join the field of cognitive psychology/science

• Provide support and training in dealing with home administrations

• Assist with professional development in the field

• Provide contacts with other women in the US and abroad
WiCS History

- Founded in 2001
- Judith Kroll (Penn State U.)
- Suparna Rajaram (State University at Stony Brook)
- Randi Martin (Rice University)
Precipitating influences

- Women underrepresented as editors and on editorial boards of major journals
- Low rate of promotion of women to tenured faculty
- Not a pipeline issue: Around 50% female Ph.D.’s in cognitive psychology from 1990 - present

Documentation

1) A Study on the Status of Women Faculty in Science at MIT (Molly Potter, Psychology Dept., MIT, committee member, 1997-1999)
Funding

• Shoestring support in the beginning
  • Initially affiliated with the Psychonomic Society (leading US Experimental Psychology organization; decidedly apolitical)
    • Small amount of funding provided for initial meetings
  • Donations from senior women in the field

• Grant from the ADVANCE Program at the National Science Foundation (2004 - 2007)
  • Leadership Award (Kroll, Rajaram, Martin)

• No membership dues
Funding since 2008

- Conference grants from Perception, Action, and Cognition Program at the National Science Foundation (Janet Van Hell, Laurie Feldman, Natasha Tokowicz, Judith Kroll, Suparna Rajaram)
- Continued support from the Psychonomic Society; additional support American Psychological Association
- Current renewal of NSF conference grant (2019-2021) (Rajaram, Kroll, Feldman, Tokowicz)
Growth of WiCS Organization

• Membership
  • 2001 - about 100 members
  • 2018 - over 1000 members (women & men)
  • All levels - graduate students, post-docs, faculty
Activities: Annual Programs

Programs at professional meetings (day before associated conference begins - e.g., Psychonomic Society Meeting)

- Lectures, panel discussions on professional development (2001 - present)
  - e.g., Grant writing, work/family balance, parental leave, increasing visibility, training in negotiation
- Question and answer period
- ~120 attendees
- Faculty awards for mentoring women scientists
Annual programs (continued)

• Speed mentoring (since 2016)
  • Following the workshop/panel discussion
  • Pairing junior scientists with senior mentors
  • 20 minute maximum session
  • Questions raised by mentees
  • Popular program
Expansion of Annual Programs

• Meetings in conjunction with
  • Psychonomic Society, Cognitive Science Society, Association for Psychological Science, European Society for Cognitive Psychology, International Convention of Psychological Science

• New branches
  • WiCS Europe (since 2016) - Teresa Bajo, Universidad de Granada, Cristine Cacciari, University of Modena and Reggio Emilia
  • WiCS Canada (since 2016) - Penny Pexman, U. of Calgary, Debra Titone, McGill U.

• New organizations formed by members of WiCS Advisory Board
  • FOVEA (Females of Vision) as part of Vision Science Society
  • Women in Math Psychology allied with Society for Mathematical Psychology
Research (funded by NSF Leadership award)

- Letter of recommendation study (Madera, Hebl, & Martin, *J. of Applied Psychology*, 2009)
  - Letters for psychology faculty applicants
  - Greater agentic terms for men than women (e.g., assertive, independent)
  - Greater communal terms for women than men (e.g., helpful, dependable, supportive)
  - Communal terms have negative relation with hiring decisions
- Doubt raisers in letters of recommendation (Madera, Hebl, Valian, Dial, & Martin, *J. of Business & Psychology*, in press)
  - Damning with faint praise; hedging (“may become an excellent researcher”; negative (“while not one of the best teachers”)
  - More for women than men
  - Experiment: even one doubt raiser amidst longer letter lowers evaluation of candidate
- For both studies, results were the same for letters written by women and men
Activities: Fostering collaboration for junior scientists (from 2004- present)

• Travel and networking awards (formerly just from WiCS, now partnering with Psychonomic Society)
  • Award to travel to Psychonomic Society Meeting
  • Must submit networking plan
    • Plan to meet with 1-2 senior scientists to get feedback on junior scientist’s research
      • Justification for choice of mentor
      • Agreement from mentor(s)
  • Outcomes: post-doctoral opportunities, research and grant writing collaborations
Activities: Fostering international collaborations for junior scientists

Across fields, women less likely to participate in international collaborations

Freehill & Zippel, 2011
NSF data
Planned activities (2019-2021): International collaboration

• Workshops/panels addressing barriers to international collaboration, sources of funding, carrying out research in different cultures
  • Speakers: senior and junior scientists with successful collaborations

• Travel awards to initiate an international collaboration
  • Up to three awards per year of $2200 to travel to begin collaboration
  • Evidence of preparation for research, agreement from sponsor
  • Preference for data collection at international site
(Informal) Activities: Nominations for positions and awards

- Communications among WiCS advisory board in advance of nominations or voting deadlines:
  - Member of Governing Board
  - Keynote speakers for conferences
  - Research or career awards

- Advisory board members’ contact their informal networks to encourage voting, discussing options

- Some success?
  - e.g., Psychonomic Society Governing Board historically highly male dominated 16% female board at most until 1995. Now 36%; incoming chair female
  - Keynote speakers 33% female since inception in 2001
Activites: Plans for the future

• Live streaming of workshops
  • Accessible to those around the world unable to attend meetings

• Leadership awards for senior scientists
  • Not just for mentoring, but all activities promoting status of women in cognitive science

• Consideration of leadership training for mid-career women scientists
Continuing need for organization

• Positives
  • Interest in meetings
  • Expansion of organization

• Continuing issues:
  • Setbacks in visibility
    Special issue of *Cognition, February 2015*
    “The Changing Face of Cognition”
    12 articles, 19 authors, 18 were male
  • Climate/harassment issues
    • “me too” movement, academia not immune

• Ongoing need for keeping issues in focus, taking action
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