

# Equal Rites, Unequal Outcomes

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# Equal Rites, Unequal Outcomes

Women in American  
Research Universities

Edited by

Lilli S. Hornig

The Committee for the Equality  
of Women at Harvard

Springer Science+Business Media, LLC

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

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Equal rites, unequal outcomes: women in American research universities/edited by  
Lilli S. Hornig (the Committee for the Equality of Women at Harvard).

p. cm.

Includes bibliographical references and index.

ISBN 978-0-306-47351-7 ISBN 978-94-010-0007-9 (eBook)

DOI 10.1007/978-94-010-0007-9

1. Women in higher education—United States. 2. Universities and colleges—United States—Graduate work—Administration. 3. Research institutes—United States—Administration. I. Hornig, Lilli S. II. Committee for the Equality of Women at Harvard.

LC1567 .E79 2003

378.1'9822—dc21

2002040598

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ISBN 978-0-306-47351-7

©2003 Springer Science+Business Media New York

Originally published by Kluwer Academic/Plenum Publishers, New York in 2003

<http://www.wkap.nl/>

10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

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# Preface

Thirteen years ago, in June 1988, the Radcliffe Class of 1953 celebrated its 35th Reunion. Amidst the festivities, we who participated repeatedly asked ourselves the same two questions: Is Harvard as sexist as it was when we were undergraduates? If not, what is the status of women at Harvard today? To find the answers we formed an *ad hoc* committee and charged the members to report back to the class in five years.

The committee interviewed selected senior and junior Harvard faculty, Harvard and Radcliffe administrators, students, and alumni/ae. We identified and studied Harvard and Radcliffe reports on their institutions and on their student organizations. We contributed to and participated in a 1990 Radcliffe Focus Group, "A Survey of Alumnae and Undergraduate Perceptions." We found that the University was not as sexist in 1988 as it had been in 1953. Yet the status of women, though improved, remained quite unequal to that of men. (Radcliffe College was organizationally separate from Harvard University until 1977, when a "non-merger merger" was implemented. However, Radcliffe had no faculty of its own and employed Harvard faculty to teach its students, in strictly separate classes until World War II. The merger effort was completed in 1999 with the complete integration of the two institutions and the formation of the Radcliffe Institute for Advanced Study, a "tub on its own bottom" like other Harvard graduate and professional schools.)

In 1993 the Class of '53 voted unanimously to form the Committee for the Equality of Women at Harvard (CEWH). Our mandate was to promote gender equity within Harvard's faculty, student body, curriculum, and environment. Our initial focus was to urge a significant increase in the number of tenured women faculty. Gender equity within the faculty is not only a galvanizing issue, but is also both the model for and the source of most of the other steps toward equality for women

undergraduate and graduate students. It is to these students that the work of CEWH is dedicated.

A word about CEWH's committed leadership. To begin with, at the 35th Reunion we were on the cusp of a new life-stage where for most of us, work and/or family responsibilities were diminishing, bringing us *time*. In addition, we were enjoying a new level of caring about the generations following our own. We wanted the very best for the young and we longed to help them, particularly if we saw an opportunity to eliminate an injustice that we had experienced. Finally, it had taken many of us much of our adult lives to become aware of gender discrimination. As college students in the 50s, almost to a woman, we did not see sexism, blatant as it was in that era: so, we were not allowed to eat in the Freshman Union; so, we were forbidden to enter the stacks of Widener Library, having to request books which were brought out to us while our male counterparts browsed among the Library's treasures. It seemed odd, perhaps, but totally acceptable.

As our lives unfolded, however, the veil began to drop. Betty Friedan, William Chafe, Marilyn French loosened some of the threads. Comparisons of our salaries with those of our male peers yanked the cloth lower, particularly in the professions. Workshops and conferences tore holes in the fabric. Other great universities had the same shortfalls in gender equity as Harvard. At one such conference held at Radcliffe, the chair of the English department at Rutgers, Catherine R. Stimpson, led a brilliant panel on Women's Studies. Imagine: Women's Studies. The veil dropped lower. Professor Stimpson was the first presenter in this Conference on Women in Research Universities.

Our gratitude to Lilli S. Hornig (Harvard M.A. '43, Ph.D. '50) for joining our Committee and leading this Conference is unbounded. Her scholarship, experience, and wisdom brought a new level of expertise to our work and culminated in the publication of this book. Our Committee had been able to shine a spotlight on the gender problems that continue to make Harvard, and all the major universities like it, an unequal opportunity for women.

And now, through this volume, along with illustrations of the problems, best practices and concrete solutions are put forward. May they lead to constructive change.

—Margaretta Schmertzler  
Founder and Chair, CEWH,  
1988-1998

# Acknowledgments

A great many people deserve my gratitude for their advice and help on this project. Perhaps I should begin with those who first alerted me to the realities of academic life in the 1940s—the distinguished members of the Harvard Chemistry Department who, however unwillingly, were my mentors in the wartime absence of the male disciples they clearly would have preferred. To them I owe my keen awareness of the struggles of women in research universities.

The conference and this book, which resulted from it, owe a huge debt of thanks to two sets of people: members of the Committee for the Equality of Women at Harvard, and the people who helped generously to fund the enterprise. Among the latter I particularly thank Alison Bernstein and Janice Petrovich of the Ford Foundation, Ted Greenwood of the Alfred P. Sloan Foundation, and Albert F. Gordon, Harvard '59, for their support and encouragement.

Peggy Schmertzler was the founder and long-time chair of CEWH; without her remarkable spirit and energy neither this project nor the Committee's several other important and innovative projects would have happened, and we thank her most particularly. Many members also devoted much time and effort to organizing the conference and making it run smoothly.

I especially thank Acey Welch and Ann Shapiro, currently co-chairs, as well as Joan Baer, Penelope Beye, Cornelia Dimmitt, Elisabeth Hatfield, Millie Marnin, Jane O'Reilly, Eleanor Williams, and Regina Yando. Along with many other contributions of advice and wisdom, Nancy Tobin has shepherded the book through its lengthier-than-usual gestation period resulting from my long illness; without her dedicated effort, this book could not have been completed. Similarly, Acey Welch took over many of the production details. All of them have my profound gratitude.

Special thanks are also due to the CEWH members who served as workshop conveners and rapporteurs during the conference. Sandra Demson, Joanna Hopkins, Millie Marnin, Gabriella Schlesinger, Maria Tymoczko, and the late Bessye W. Bennett led the very lively discussions and reported on them with exemplary clarity.

We are also indebted to Elizabeth Doherty, Assistant Dean for Academic Planning at Harvard College, and to Tamar March, Dean for Academic Programs at (former) Radcliffe College, for their help and cooperation.

I also thank the contributors to this volume for their patience and forbearance with the delays in completion. However, I assume full responsibility for the errors that inevitably seem to creep into every manuscript. Last but by no means least, I thank my husband, Donald Hornig, for his support and his patience.

—Lilli S. Hornig

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