



Commentary on “2019 Academic Marketing Climate Survey: motivation, results and recommendations”

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Abstract

This paper reflects on the conclusions of a survey by Galak and Kahn on the climate experienced by faculty of all genders and ethnicities in the marketing departments of US business schools.

Keywords Climate · Gender · Diversity · Marketing departments · Survey

For most of history and across all cultures (with occasional matriarchal exceptions that are quite incidental to the main narrative), men have accumulated cultural and economic capital and kept it, while women have not. One can conduct a nuanced exploration of this claim, as Amanda Foreman (2015) does in *The Ascent of Woman*. She writes a story of women throughout history who have created roles for themselves and other women in male-dominated worlds, temporary interruptions in the dark legacy of gender asymmetry. But the exploration, I contend, shows on balance that when women have won or shared power, it has not long held against the efforts of men to reinstate the patriarchy. A more optimistic view might be that the arc is long and curves toward equality. Sally Armstrong (2014) makes such an argument, and certainly evidence can be mustered. Indeed something structural seemed to have been coalescing in the early decades of the twentieth century when the female sex glimpsed the prospect of bodily autonomy as Margaret Sanger began to open birth control clinics, united political agitation led to the beginnings of the extension of the electoral franchise to women in much of the world, and feminism began to be a political movement. But even this recent history leads me to the conclusion that gender equality was and will always be an insurgent cause.

Does this conclusion rest on some kind of naked gender bias by men who with easily ignored exceptions recognize their common interest in suppressing the insurrection, that uses the same tools as naked racism, incumbents closing ranks against the prospect of loss of superior power? I say yes. Like hostility to

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the prospect of admitting currently less powerful racial groups and strangers or foreigners into the prevailing coalition of the powerful, the historical evidence is that the prospect of assimilating women is seen to be dilutive no matter what the circumstances. That would seem an unduly sad and depressing view, but how else is one to account for the resilience of the male hold on power over time?

This is the context in which I read Galak and Kahn (2021). Is there any reason in the article to hope that this extravagant waste of the talents of half the human population can be ended?

Galak and Kahn (2021) can be read as a case study of how one community holds on to power at a moment when it makes no economic sense. In university marketing departments in the USA, women employed as scholars experience (and presumptively men deploy) more explicit gender discrimination practices, more implicit bias, more social and sexual harassment or assault, and the pervasive general experience of an aversive organizational climate than do males. The same, incidentally, is found for underrepresented minorities.

If there is a context in which we might hope that male assertion of power would be tempered by business incentives, it is surely in the marketing departments of US business schools. The gender of consumers of business school education is evolving in a direction that rewards schools with an environment congenial to female faculty. The US college student population is on a trajectory from 58 percent male fifty years ago to 56 percent women today (Marcus, 2019), and as a result, there are more college-educated women in the workforce than college-educated men (Fry, 2019) and more women alumni donors. Yet the AACSB reports that 75 percent of business school deans and 62 percent of associate deans are male (AACSB, 2020). The AACSB 2014–15 Salary Survey is the most recent analysis of gender by faculty rank. It reports that 31.2 percent of all full-time faculty were female, with 68.8 percent male. The percentage of female faculty decreases as faculty rank increases, so that among full professors, 20.1 percent of full-time faculty were reported as female. In sum, the insurgents are at the gates, but the gates will hold as they always have done.

The conclusion I reach is that pursuing gender equality is not a battle with victory as the goal, but, like maintaining a tidy workplace, a pest-free kitchen, or a safe factory, a matter of perpetual vigilance and perpetual responsibility. We should track organizational climate as one more dimension of workplace hygiene, an insurgent defense against the ineradicable and implacable forces of chauvinism and bigotry. Studies like Galak and Kahn's (2021) cannot be done once and then left to be communicated in marketing department standards and exhortations. They must be repeated whenever resolve flags, as part of a stance of alert watchfulness.

Data availability Not applicable.

Code availability Not applicable.

Declarations

Competing interests The authors declare no competing interests.

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