

Where Are the Women?

Andrea Seritan

Received: 23 September 2014 / Accepted: 25 September 2014 / Published online: 18 October 2014
© Academic Psychiatry 2014

To the Editor:

I read with great interest Dr. Roberts' recent *Academic Psychiatry* editorial "Where Are the Women Editors?" [1]. Indeed, I thought to myself, where are the women? Ten years ago, when I interviewed for my first faculty position, I had asked the same question. After training in a medical school with 90 % women (in Europe), a residency with a female program director, in a class of 90 % women, and a geriatric fellowship at a premier research-based institution (with less women, yet highly visible), it seemed surprising to me that the only woman on my interview panel that day was the department administrator. I took the job, and quickly realized that the interview was a cross-section of life in the department. In my 10 years, I have witnessed quite a bit of junior faculty turnover, especially among women [2]. This reality is hard to notice at the Association for Academic Psychiatry, where five of the past ten presidents are highly accomplished women. Yet, I was saddened to hear at this year's meeting (in Portland, Oregon, September 17–20, 2014) that several women we know and respect have left academia. What an incredible loss. I know how hard they fought to stay: they taught and mentored, developed innovative curricula, completed and contributed to faculty development courses, published in *Academic Medicine*, won teaching awards. They worked hard and gave of themselves wholeheartedly. Somehow, that was not enough.

At the national level, half of newly minted full-time assistant professors leave their institution after 8 years on average, and that is equally true for men and women, according to a recent AAMC Analysis in Brief [3]. Newly appointed associate professors seem to fare better, with a 10-year average time

to 50 % attrition. M.D.s and faculty in clinical departments leave sooner than Ph.D.s and those in basic science departments. A previous Analysis in Brief [4] tracked faculty over 17 years (1981 to 1997) and showed that almost half of first-time assistant professors left academia, not just their institutions, with a slight gender difference: 43 % for men, 45 % for women.

Many of us struggle to stay in academia. We put up a courageous fight and make it one more year, to the next annual meeting, where we receive a much-needed infusion of mentorship. We go home energized and revitalized and inspire others to pursue academic careers. We love what we do, and do what we love. Let us just hope that will be enough.

References

1. Roberts LW. Where are the women editors? *Acad Psychiatry*. 2014;38(4):391–3.
2. Seritan AL, Bhargava R, Garma S, DuBé J, Park JH, Hales R. Society for women in academic psychiatry: a peer mentoring approach. *Acad Psychiatry*. 2007;31(5):363–6.
3. Qi Liu C, Morrison E. U.S. Medical School Full-time Faculty Attrition. Association of American Medical Colleges: AAMC Analysis in Brief. 2014;14(2):1–2. Available at <https://www.aamc.org/download/369006/data/faculty-attrition.pdf>. Accessed 23 Sept 2014.
4. Alexander H, Lang J. The long-term retention and attrition of U.S. Medical School Faculty. Association of American Medical Colleges: AAMC Analysis in Brief. 2008;8(4):1–2. Available at <https://www.aamc.org/download/67968/data/aibvol8no4.pdf>. Accessed 23 Sept 2014.

A. Seritan (✉)
University of California, Davis, Sacramento, CA, USA
e-mail: andrea.seritan@ucdmc.ucdavis.edu