

Notes taken by students

International Symposium

Education and Gender Equality

Wellesley College, October 20 & 21, 2017

Panel Discussion – Friday, 4:45 p.m. – 6:15 p.m. – From academic to professional success

Speakers:

- **Anne Boring**, Assistant Professor at the Department of Economics at Erasmus University Rotterdam, Research Affiliate at the Laboratory for Interdisciplinary Evaluation of Public Policies (LIEPP) at Sciences Po, Paris
- **Arnaud Saint-Orens**, Vice President Coated Abrasives at Saint-Gobain Abrasives
- **Bobbie Carlton**, Founder of Carlton PR & Marketing, Innovation Nights and Innovation Women
- **Soo Hong**, Associate Professor of Education at Wellesley College
- **Clément Michel**, President and CEO at Keolis North-America

Moderator:

- **Sophie Koenig-Rodriguez**, Pro-Bono Chair & Founder – FACCNE's Women in Business Network, Founder - TransAtlantique Marketing & Communications

Main points:

1) The Gender Gap:

- Even though the GPAs, graduation rates, and test scores for high-achieving women are the same as their male counterparts, fewer of them are choosing entrepreneurship/STEM careers. It is in part because they do not have the same exposure outside the classroom to these fields.
- The gender gap in wages is primarily due to motherhood: women who have children are more likely to work part time or for smaller companies because they value flexibility.

2) Women and Entrepreneurship:

- Women entrepreneurs are limiting themselves to less capital-intensive companies because they know women are getting less than 5% of venture capital.
- An important barrier is gender stereotypes: women are seen as less competitive, and therefore they may unconsciously identify with these preconceived ideas.
- Difference in training: women are trained to answer cautionary questions (will your business fail?) unlike men, who are asked positive questions (how is your startup going to be the next big winner?).
- Business incubators, programs sponsored by public/private entities which help create and grow young businesses by providing financial support, technical services, and necessary training, often require uprooting one's life.

3) Women in STEM/Innovation:

- Women earn only 20% of degrees in STEM fields although their exposure to these fields starts in high school with access to science and math classes, and although the teaching force is more than 90% female: teachers' biases about what girls are good at can have an effect on how they run the classroom.

4) Organizational change and changing attitudes towards women's work:

- The most effective policy for increasing the proportion of women in the workplace is changing institutional settings.
- We need to make work environments more welcoming for women – improve working conditions and address sexism from male employees.
- If one wants a diverse workforce, one must have a diverse interviewing panel. Affirmative action is crucial. Invest in training for employees to address sexism/other unconscious biases.

5) Training for women:

- We need to invest in helping women develop public speaking skills.
- Companies must invest in training for their women to help them move up the ladder.
- Policies that teach women “how to negotiate” might backfire (women can be seen as aggressive in some cases, which is counterproductive).

6) Changing attitudes towards men stepping into caretaker roles:

- Men need to have the ability to talk about family responsibilities at work.
- Men in caretaker roles must be accepted.

7) Why is there a lack of women in mentoring?

- Create a healthy organization. If you don't have a diverse panel of interviewers and managers then you don't have diverse workers.
- Fix the system, not the women.

8) How to deal with being working parents?

- Get rid of the “mum guilt” for “not being there,” as well as societal expectations for dads (e.g. when dad is the one at home, strange to have a man in feminine activities – at the park, PTO, etc.)
- When both parents working, in heterosexual couples it seems to be the woman's responsibility to deal with children, but responsibility really needs to be split.

Best practices evoked regarding public policies, corporate actions, civil society or academic initiatives:

- Expose more young women to entrepreneurship/STEM career networks and to experiences in the field (internships, service experiences) beginning in high school.
- In college, encourage women to take classes that put an emphasis on public speaking.
- Combine academics with experience: experiential learning may help reduce differences between students who can afford unpaid internships and those who cannot.
- Implement policies aimed at institutional changes, not at “fixing women.” These include blind auditions, negotiable salaries, nondisclosure of previous salaries, making firms provide more information on salaries so women have the knowledge to negotiate, etc.
- Maternity leave: we should also encourage paternity leave and normalize these practices.
- Government-subsidized childcare?
- Prepare women for reentry into the workforce after having a child: offer more job training, educational resources, etc.
- Create a work environment that is accepting of diversity. This could be achieved through unconscious bias training. Promote work-life balance by encouraging job sharing, offering flexible hours, and utilizing technology so people can work from home.