The Relative Absence of Women in the Political Science Profession

(A Report for the British Political Science Association and the Sociology, Anthropology, Politics – CSAP, Network)

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Section One

Introduction

This report comments on the findings of a research project that was conducted between February and March 2004, the preliminary results of which were presented at the 54th Annual Conference of the Political Studies Association. The research team was headed by Professor David Marsh, whilst the primary research was conducted by four first year PhD students from The University of Birmingham. We would like to thank both the Political Studies Association and the Sociology, Anthropology, Politics (C-SAP) Network for the funding that has made this research project possible and the Universities that participated in the project for contacting students on our behalf and arranging room bookings.

The objective of the research project was to begin to address the question: why are there relatively few women in the political science profession? This research deals with one aspect of that question, focusing on final year undergraduates, with a particular emphasis on the way that this group perceived the accessibility of postgraduate study – we hope to explore further aspects of the issue in future research. In our view, this was the best point to start research in this area because the decision as to whether to proceed onto postgraduate study is an obvious initial determinant of an individual’s access to an academic career.

The research was conducted at three large ‘civic’ universities and one university established in the 1960s. We are aware that this biases the sample, but we needed sites where there were a larger number of students who might be considering graduate work and an academic career. Again, we hope to follow up our research at other sites in future. We asked the host institution to select students who achieved either a high upper second or a first class classification in their penultimate year of study, simply because these students have a more realistic chance of being able to undertake postgraduate study. Students were invited by letter or email to participate in the focus groups. In all but one site, students contacted the administrative Department in the host institution to confirm whether they wished to attend.
At each University, a separate focus group for female and male participants was held. The focus groups lasted between thirty and sixty five minutes, with the average time being forty five minutes. At the end of each of the female focus groups, the respondents were asked whether they would like to participate in an individual interview with one of the female focus group leaders. As a result, eight focus groups were held, one for each gender at each of the Universities. In addition, fifteen women participated in the follow-up interviews. All of the focus groups and individual interviews were carried out at each site over two days. We undertook the male focus groups to assess whether men identified different reasons for undertaking, or particularly not undertaking, graduate work, than women; thus, our aim was to establish whether those factors were gendered or not.

Given the nature of the research project, we were conscious that the sex of the focus group leader or interviewer might inhibit the depth of the discussion. Consequently, the female focus groups were led by the two female interviewers, whilst the male focus groups were led by the two male interviewers. The follow-up interviews with the women were conducted by the same female interviewers who led the focus group discussions. In addition, respondents were assured of confidentiality and the fact that young interviewers were involved also seemed to put participants more at their ease. Certainly, our respondents didn’t appear inhibited in the discussions.

Before we examine the responses of our interviewees, and in order to place this broader discussion in context, we need briefly to consider the general perceptions that the male and female participants had about the role of women in academia.

*General Perceptions about Women in Academia*

Two issues seem particularly important here. First, both the men and the women had, unsurprisingly, noticed the lack of women in the profession. Indeed, on average, each participant had only had contact with two female academics throughout her/his undergraduate study. Second, both the male and, to a slightly lesser extent, the female participants felt that little could be done directly to redress this gender imbalance within the profession. The most common response, regardless of gender, was that it was simply a matter of time before more women
academics would enter the profession. The following two quotes, actually both from men, typify this viewpoint:

Erm, I think it’s just a matter of time [before more women enter the profession]. You know, it takes quite a while to become an academic.

‘Cause the number of, like, in the three years I’ve been here, the number of female lecturers I’ve seen has been vastly disproportional compared to the blokes, it’s just, that, yeah, it’s going to take a while for that to be properly addressed and for that to peter out.

Section Two

Common Factors Affecting the Decisions of Men and Women

From the research we identified eight key factors that had impacted upon our respondents’ decisions to undertake further study. The first four can be somewhat loosely categorised as: money; making a difference; lack of information; and self confidence. These were issues that both our male and our female respondents regarded as important when considering graduate work and an academic career, although we must stress that there were subtle, yet important, differences in how the women spoke about these issues. Here, we start with a consideration of these four factors, before turning to the four specifically gendered issues our results highlight.

i) Financial Considerations.
One of the commonly perceived barriers to entering postgraduate study was the financial commitment that this entailed. However, probably unsurprisingly, such issues were more important for the female respondents, than for the male ones. Indeed, no male respondents indicated that financial considerations would be the most important factor affecting his decision about whether, or not, to go into academia.
In our view, men were less concerned about the financial issues, both because they had more information about the financial package available to ESRC students and because they were more confident that they would get a job at the end of their PhDs.

So, the male respondents seemed much more aware than the female respondents of the funding opportunities available – particularly, the Research Council’s 1+3 studentships – and, consequently, were less likely to think of this as a barrier. Hence, one man comments that:

Yeah, I’m going to do that [the ESRC’s 1+3 Programme] next year and that seems, that seems, pretty reasonable, the funding like is…
…It’s higher than the average graduate salary…
Yeah. It shouldn’t be a problem living off that. That shouldn’t really be a bar I don’t think.

As such, information was clearly a key issue and this discussed at more length below.

At the same time, the vast majority of male respondents closely related their financial concerns to the time commitment involved in postgraduate study and the chances of finding a job upon completion of a PhD. So, rather than talking about each of these issues independently of one another, male participants particularly saw them as co-constitutive.

Hence, one man commented that:

And, when I’ve got mounting debt levels and I’m pretty sick of the student lifestyle and, you know, I more or less want to enjoy being young while I am, erm, I think, to go on for another three years and to increase the debt that I have [pause] to potentially get a job in the future in academia, I think it’s asking a lot for people, even for people who are interested in the subjects.

Whilst another man argued:
But if you, well, I don’t think the same happens with people doing PhDs, I think there isn’t like, there isn’t an element of chance there, I think people have to be absolutely certain that, you know, I actually do want to go into academia and that’s what I want to do because it’s not massively transferable to other areas of the economy perhaps…But if you do a PhD you can’t just do it for a couple of years and get experience and go onto something else because it kind of channels you into becoming an academic.

These two quotes demonstrate that the participants clearly saw finance, the time commitment involved in postgraduate study and the job opportunities available to them upon completion of a PhD as linked. Participants were particular concerned with: the duration and the ‘fixed time’ commitment that PhD study involves; the transferability (or lack of transferability) of skills developed during the PhD into other sectors of the job market; and the competitiveness of the academic job market upon completion of postgraduate study. A number of respondents focused on these last two issues combined. For example, many of the participants felt that the specificity of the skills developed during a PhD channelled you into the academic profession, but within that profession there was still no guarantee of employment upon completion of the postgraduate stage of education. In effect, it was quite possible that there might be no tangible advantage gained from an additional four years of study.

The women we interviewed were particularly concerned with the issue of debt, in terms both of their existing debt (student and bank loans) and the cost of further study; they appeared more risk adverse. As one women argued: ‘Unless I get funding, I probably wouldn’t do it because I will come out of University in a fair amount of debt.’

This again links in with both ‘lack of awareness’, as the women were less likely to be aware of the financial assistance that is available, and ‘self-confidence’, as some of the women did not consider themselves eligible for such financial support. Both of these issues are discussed in more detail below.

It is also interesting that the women were more likely than the men to see a subject-specific MA opening up job opportunities, particular opportunities which might allow them to have an impact
upon the ‘real world’, as a much better option than the 1+3 route to a PhD (for example, there a number of the women who were considering an MA in International Development because they felt that this was a necessary qualification to work for an NGO). Here, it seems that the respondents can see tangible benefits from further study, but only up to the Masters level. The following response is typical of how the women differentiated between the value of an MA and a PhD:

   "Doing an MA, for me, is an investment in my future, but I wouldn’t consider doing a PhD, because that would be too much of an investment of time and money for what I want to achieve."

This quote indicates the conflicting attitudes women particularly have towards postgraduate study. An MA is considered a viable investment, while a PhD is rejected because of both the expense of study and the delay earning ‘real’ money. This view is illustrated by one woman:

   "I do want to do a Masters, but if I did a PhD as well, the thought of not starting to earn money until I was 26, when you’ve got to get a house and stuff […] is scary."

2. ‘Making a Difference.’
The desire to ‘make a difference’ within society was shared by both the men and women and this was often linked to a belief that this would not be possible within the academic profession. Sometimes, this belief derived from direct conversations with academics. One girl said:

   "Yeah, ‘cause I was talking to my tutor and he was very much of the opinion that you’re here as an intellectual, you’re just here to study for the sake of it."

However, more often, it reflected a general perception as reported by one man:

   “…you tend not to have too much practical impact, or that’s at least the impression I get from academics and they do tend to live in their own little world sat in their office, or
ivory towers…But, I think if I wasn’t going to have a practical influence then I would be very reluctant to go into academia.

It was very clear from the male focus groups that they felt that they would be able to have a ‘real effect’ on the world in whatever career the participants chose.

The respondents’ view that they would be unable to make a difference as an academic links with a wider perception about the academic community in general. When reflecting on individual lecturers, or the academics within a Department, the comments were, on the whole, complementary. However, when reflecting on the University as an institution, the view of the majority of respondents is reflected in comments, the first from a man and the second from a woman:

There’s something about academia I think, that you know er, you view it from outside as quite insular in itself. You are centred around a University and the university community in a city is quite a small environment anyway and then it’s a department within a University community … they live their lives within a set circle really and I just, that doesn’t appeal to me, it just seems to be a little world that they live in, academics, and, I don’t know, they read the same things and something. I’d like to be, feel that you were out, you know, making something more of a difference in the real world maybe.

… a lot of people, from my own point of view, who seem to be academically able, just wouldn’t consider going into academia because maybe they see it as quite elitist. I mean that you have the top 5% of University graduates go into academia … perhaps if it was shown to people that you don’t have to be getting starred first to go on to become a University lecture, then perhaps some people might consider it. But, I think at the moment, people think that you have to be academically superb to be able to earn a crust in academia.

So, the university is often seen as insular, elitist and confining both socially and professionally.
Most of our women respondents wanted to make a difference in a practical, everyday, way. In this vein, some of the women spoke about wanting to be involved in a hands-on way in a job in which you were able to make a difference, and they contrasted this favourably with being in a university miles away; evoking the idea of the University as an ivory tower, although not using the term. One of the women discussed the difference between the impact made by people working for NGOs and that made by academics:

I mean, if you look at people behind programmes, behind co-ordination, they need to have the education, they need to have the knowledge [...] and they will still be able to write papers, and they will still be able to write in a political way, but they won’t be stuck in a university miles away; they’ll be involved in an organisation that can, potentially, make a difference.

As such, there were clear links between the desire to make a difference and the perceived remit of the academic. Given their perceptions of the profession (which are discussed in more detail below), a number of the women were not convinced that academics could have an impact upon the real world. The participants indicated that they felt that a more practical (where practical means hands-on and involved) career would give them a greater potential to make a difference:

I think maybe women want kind of more practical careers or to make some kind of difference in politics because I know that is what I want to work in the Charity sector, because I want to make a difference.

However, a small minority of respondents argued that, done in a particular way, academic study could make a difference to the real world and this brings us to our next issue, information about the profession.

3. Lack of Awareness/Information.
Within this broad heading, the participants identified two clear areas where they thought that there was a lack of information:
1. the funding opportunities that are available to assist postgraduate study;
2. the day-to-day role of an academic – his or her job description for want of a better phrase - and the academic career structure

In fact, this second factor seemed to be one of the key differences between the men and the women when they were making their decision as to whether to continue into postgraduate study.

The first of these factors has, implicitly at least, already been discussed. For all of the participants who had considered postgraduate study, the key determinant as to whether they sought further information about the funding opportunities available was the personal contact of an academic. This difference is highlighted in the following two quotes, both from men:

They said that I put across my ideas well and that was why really. And so, I sort of looked at it quite heavily after that. So, yeah, but no, I don’t think they really revealed too much about what academias really like…I was quite interested in it from a teaching aspect, rather than a writing and producing works, and I was surprised later when I learned later how much of that come into it and the quotas for Departments and stuff like that.

the idea of doing an MA was put to me by one of my Professors. If more people had that done for them, I think there would probably be a bigger take up.

Despite the fact that the last respondent had considered continuing after his degree, it was not until it was suggested to him that he consider postgraduate study that this latent thought actually led to serious consideration of this possibility.

Nevertheless, the key point here is the lack of knowledge amongst the focus group participants about the role of, and work carried out by, academics. This can be seen in at least two ways. First, there is a lack of understanding of how to chart your own academic career as is clear from one quote again from a Man: ‘Well I think it’s easy to get started, with the 1 +3, or whatever,
you’re well on the way to getting started on your PhD …. But, then you know, to then go onto the next step, which is to get a career … I’m not sure how it works.’

Even participants who may have felt well informed about how to apply for postgraduate funding, still felt uninformed when it came to questions of career development. This is particularly important given the strong link that the participants perceived between postgraduate study – particularly a PhD - and an eventual academic career. The second area which the participants felt uninformed of was the general day to day role of an academic, including: the day-to-day activities of an academic; the general career structure and way in which one progresses within the academic profession; and the wider practical effects that academics have.

Those who had been encouraged to consider postgraduate study were more informed about the process and financial assistance available, as well as seeing that it was possible for academics to make a difference. One participant we interviewed had spoken to a number of academics about her concern that it wasn’t possible to make a difference and had thereby been reassured about the impact that the discipline could have. However, it became evident as the research progressed that a lot of the women did not know what a PhD involves or what PhD students do. One argued:

You don’t know what the everyday life, or what the everyday week of a PhD student. or whatever. It just seems sort of this kind of surreal thing that people do, but you don’t really know what it’s about in real terms.

They are also unclear about who is capable of postgraduate study and would not put themselves forward for fear of not being good enough. One response from a woman clearly illustrates that point:

I’d like to study more, but, like what I was saying yesterday, about not being really sure if I was capable, because, like there aren’t projected grades as such or anything and you could
only find out so much about it on your own, but, I do think that there must be a lot of people who are interested in doing a Masters, but aren’t sure if they’d be capable of doing it or not.

Women were also generally unaware of what financial assistance is available.

I hear how difficult it is to get financial assistance, although in all honesty, I haven’t actually looked into this.

In terms of awareness it seems that tutors and supervisors approaching students and suggesting further study is crucial as regards the amount of knowledge they have about their potential and the funding available. There was a clear difference between the awareness of those who had been approached and asked if they had considered postgraduate study (who felt more comfortable with, and knowledgeable about, what it actually entailed), and those who had not been approached (who either had not considered it or, those that had, felt that they weren’t good enough). This underlines the pivotal role that academics can play in encouraging potential students into the discipline.

The findings indicate that uncertainty over ability is quite strongly related to self-confidence. An interesting debate occurred between the women in a number of the focus groups about how, if you wanted to do postgraduate study, you could – some argued the information is out there, you just have to find it. However, the response to this argument from the majority of the women who we spoke to was that they did not know where to begin in looking for such information. More significantly, they did not feel comfortable in finding out whether they had the potential for postgraduate study as this would involve a certain amount of self-promotion. This leads us on to the fourth general theme that emerged from the research: self-confidence.

4. **Self Confidence.**

Although few respondents commented on their own self confidence in direct terms, a number of participants, overwhelmingly women, did argue that they were just not clever enough to proceed into either postgraduate study or the academic profession. As one woman argued: ‘You don’t
really know if you're gonna be good enough, but someone actually saying to you ‘you could do this’, I think does make that difference.’

Such self-confidence was linked with a wider sense of ambition amongst the students and is evident in the following two quotes, both from women:

Well if I was clever enough, then I’d like to go and write my own theory or something inspirational, or study something in depth, but I just don’t think that I could do it.

…‘cause I think in order to make a significant contribution…you just have to be extremely clever and erm, as well as extremely hard working, and, if I had to be honest with myself, I just don’t think I’m bright enough to be able to make a significant difference.

It is clear in both of these cases that the women had an interest in the academic profession, but only to the extent that they feel they would be able to make a significant contribution and they think that they would be unable to make this significant contribution because they are not intelligent enough.

Some of the women were also uncomfortable with the confrontational nature of academia; writing pieces that criticise others and then being criticised in turn. One of the participants discussed how this had discouraged her from postgraduate study:

There is also the confidence. [...] For example, I wouldn’t consider going into academia because I couldn’t imagine writing something and then saying: ‘This is how it is’ and then everyone writing responses, responding articles saying: ‘No it isn’t, no it isn’t, no it isn’t! You’re completely wrong and inaccurate.’ [...] I don’t know if I’d do all that, somebody who could deal with that and cope with the confrontations about their work and their opinions.
Section 3

Differential Factors Between the Male and Female Focus Groups and Interview

Here, we deal with four factors that influenced the women’s, but not the men’s, views about graduate work and the profession: stereotyping; role models; family commitments; and time constraints.

1. Stereotyping.
Stereotypes about who academics were meant to be and role models of who academics actually were emerged as important themes in the research findings. To most female respondents, academics were ‘really clever’, ‘knew a great deal’, ‘theory orientated’ and ‘suppliers of knowledge’. In the minds of many of the interviewees, academics had reached a level of knowledge which they felt they could not attain. There appeared to be a threshold of excellence which ‘academics’, as separate entities, had reached; but which they, as undergraduates and prospective Masters students, could not. So for example, one woman explains:

Some of them are so intelligent that I really aspire to like…you know, it’s one if those things, you just know you’re never going to…like, how can you be so clever and know so much?

As well as a feeling a sense of awe towards academics, some of the women interviewed used the stereotypes to fabricate a distinct boundary between ‘them’ the academic, the provider of knowledge; and ‘us’, the students, the receiver of knowledge. This consumerist analogy was particularly interesting because of the contemporary debates over tuition fees; a theme which reoccurred in many of the interviews. The stereotype of a typical academic was someone who
had extensive knowledge of their particular field and from whom the students were able to learn. The picture reflected a top down balance of power, as one woman put it:

Um...it seems like quite a...quite elitist thing, it’s very...I don’t know if it means difficult to get into, but it seems quite an elitist thing. Kind of ‘them’; they’re the teachers. They’re the people, the suppliers of knowledge, you’re the person who gets...gets the knowledge from the...

Many of the interviewees expressed a level of admiration of academics and a deferential respect for their knowledge and work. At the same time however, as already indicated, there was a feeling that academics were far removed from real world experiences. The interviewees wanted to make a difference to the world; this was a world which academics that studied and understood theoretically, but from which they were quite distant in real life. As already suggested the image of the academic in his ivory tower peering down at the world from his window was, in many ways, embedded in the minds of the interviewees. As one female respondent explained:

I suppose I always had a traditional view of academic studies as being you know very theory orientated, you know facts and figures, and very complicated, and I was concerned that if I carried on, in academic study that it would be over my head and it would be too complicated for me

2. **Role Models.**

The academic as male was also another stereotype which clearly emerged from the research. The vast majority of the academics the interviewees came into contact with were male. It became clear that, where there were female academics, they were in specific spheres of the discipline; in gender studies, feminism and international development. There was a sense in which women were on the margins of the discipline, as token feminists, or in softer areas, such as international development. The interviewees pointed out that none of their female lecturers were at the heart of the discipline; they did not, for example, teach the core courses in Politics or International Studies. In addition, the respondents thought that this was something which was mirrored outside academia in the wider sphere of politics. As one woman explains:
There are a lot of women in politics, but they don’t hold the top positions. When they do, I really do feel that, to be honest, they might as well be a man, in which case it’s just numbers, or just gender, it’s like saying well we’ve got 5 women in the Cabinet, or we’ve got a female Prime Minister, but effectively we don’t.

The interviewees felt that women were marginalised in academic politics as well as in the wider realm. Furthermore, it was suggested that, where women ‘made it’, when they had broken the mould of male-dominated academia and governance, they had taken on specific male characteristics to do so. In this sense, the interviewees believed that there were essential and innately male characteristics which were perquisite of success in the political field, both academically and more widely.

Interestingly however, even when women had to take on specifically male characteristics to succeed in politics, their visible presence in the discipline was a source of inspiration to the female interviewees. Female role models were viewed extremely positively, as one woman explains:

you see women in those positions, and I think it does make a huge difference, because it gradually becomes more and more acceptable until my subconscious slight discrimination will disappear. And then you think, ‘Why not? I can do it.’ So you want other things, so I think eventually, all the role models you see in really great jobs and you realise, ‘If they can do it, I can do it.’ It’s as simple as that.

The visible existence of women in the political sphere was clearly something to encourage other females into the area. At the same time however, there were specifically gender issues which were viewed as a restraint on going into academia: family responsibilities; and time constrains. It is to these we know turn.

3. Family Responsibility.
Family responsibility was as the forefront of the debate for our female respondents on academia as a possible future career. A job as a researcher and lecturer was seen as unstable and insecure, especially if women were to take time out to have children. In addition, amongst the interviewees, there was both the idea that academia provided less opportunity to climb the career and pay ladders, and the view that this was almost impossible if the women wanted a family. As one respondent put it:

I think that just worries me, that…I’d want, you know, to have a family, and that if…to me being a secondary school teacher would be a lot more secure, and more money in being a secondary school and primary school teaching than there is in academia; you do get paid more. I think there’s more prospects for career development: I think you’d be a Head of Department a lot sooner than you become, sort of, you know, higher up, a professor or whatever. And I think it’d be a lot easier to take time out to have a family and then get back into it again, whereas I don’t think you can do that in academia.

Many of the interviewees suggested that an academic career did not seem to be compatible with having a family. Their view was that, as an academic in the social sciences, the aim was to produce knowledge. The fact that knowledge was constantly changing and being updated meant that, if women took time out to have a family, by the time they re-entered the academic field they would find a completely changed discipline. In the end, having a family appeared to be more important to the interviewees. At the same time, they believed that other careers were more family friendly:

I think I am very ambitious in terms of my career, but I also place quite a high value on being, like, erm, doing, being a family…My auntie is a journalist and that is a job that allows you to have that amount of, er, kind of, its quite flexible in terms of being freelance and in terms of doing that and I think that, probably, consciously or otherwise, has kind of yeah, probably has effected it really. And it allows you to pursue your own venues, where there’s quite a commitment to doing a PhD.
4. **Time Constraints**

Linked to the theme of family responsibility was a time constraint factor; the idea that, compared to many other professions, academics begin to earn much later. This has implications for many other areas of life. As one woman explains:

> also, the idea of, you know…because I do want to do a Masters, but if I did a PhD as well, the thought of not starting to earn any money until I was 26 – 25, 26 – when you’ve got to get a house and stuff, you know, the housing market and things like that…the thought of not earning any real money until I was in my mid-twenties is scary.

Once again we see the perceived instability of an academic career. The thought that academics do not have paid contracts until they are in their mid to late twenties was of concern to the respondents. The point was essentially that, by the time academics started on a basic salary people of similar age would already have the stability of a steady income, with all the security this confers. As we said having a family was of central importance to the lives of many of the female interviewees. At the same time, they felt that a family and an academic career were not necessarily compatible, as one female respondent put it:

> I might have to do further studying, that’s not something I personally feel is the right thing for me to do, if I were to get married lets say in four or six years time, things are changing but some people get married early so they have to think about all that aspect before continuing post-graduate study.

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**Section Four**

**Conclusion**
Here, we shall first summarise our conclusions, before suggesting what can be done both by the PSA and by individual Departments and, finally, highlighting areas where further research might be useful.

i) **Our Findings**

Our research identified four main factors which influenced both men and women in deciding whether they would continue with postgraduate studies: financial considerations; the desire to make a difference; information/awareness; and self confidence. These four themes emerged as key dynamics in the decision making process for both sets of students. However, there were important differences in how they were experienced by men and women. At the same time, four further factors were very clearly gendered, only being identified by women: stereotypes; role models; family responsibilities; and time constraints.

We are aware of the limitations of the research, in particular the small number of cases and the fact that our sample is drawn from a small sub-set of Universities. However, some points seem to us to be clear. A constellation of factors affects the decisions of both men and women to undertake graduate work: all are concerned with financial issues and want a job which makes a difference. However, students’ views on these issues are significantly affected by their access to information about both the finances of being a graduate student and the nature of the job of an academic and the student’s own self confidence about their ability. In relation to both these factors women appear disadvantaged. They generally know less about the academia, largely because staff (in most cases of course male staff) appear less likely to approach them to undertake graduate work. At the same time, they are less self-confident.

Consequently, even the factors which affect the decisions of men and women have an important gendered aspect. However, any consideration of the relative absence of women in the political science profession should also take into account the nature of the stereotypes of academics, the number of women role models already existent in the profession, as well as the area of the discipline which they occupy, and the flexibility of academia with regards to the family issues. These were the particular concerns of the women interviewed and they played a role in
discouraging women from continuing into postgraduate study and eventually entering the profession.

\textit{ii) The Way Forward}

Obviously, the PSA and individual Department cannot change the nature of the world, reducing patriarchy and empowering women. However, our research does clearly suggest ways forward. What surprised us most was how little these students, who were of course the best in their Departments, knew about being an academic and, more specifically about the financial aspects of graduate work. Of course, this affected men and women, but there is no doubt from our interviews that it affected women more.

Three of the four Departments we studied ran a special session about graduate work, but, if our students are to be believed, they had little effect. The absolute crucial factor was whether a student had been approached directly by a member of staff. In all the Departments studied students claimed that this only happened to a limited extent and men were approached more often than women. Of course, some may claim this reflects sexism, but none of our students saw ‘their’ Department as sexist. In our view, the problem is that few people of either sex are approached and women are less likely than men to take the initiative and find out. We would recommend that this message from our research is spread widely through the profession; at least here PSA could circulate our Report and run a session to discuss the Report at its Heads of Department’s meeting.

However, it seems to us that the main thing PSA can do is to produce a booklet which deals with: how to become a PhD student; what is involved in being a PhD student; what are the job prospects for a PhD student; what is involved in being an academic; and the extent to, and way in which, academic can ‘make a difference’.

\textit{iii) Future Research}

It seems to us clear that more research needs to be done in the area. Women make up over 50% of both the population and the number of Politics undergraduates; yet they are very significantly
under-represented in the profession. We would suggest that the PSA thinks about the following areas:

- We haven’t examined a representative sample of third year undergraduates, rather we have concentrated on prestigious Departments; that weakness could clearly be remedied.
- It would be interesting to study the experience of women (and men) as graduate students to see how that affects their decisions about a career in the profession.
- There is clearly a problem with gender inequality in recruitment to the profession, but is also true that men are more likely than women to be promoted once in the profession. This issue also needs examination, most obviously by analyzing the experience of women in the profession.
- The proportion of women in Social Science professions varies very significantly. There are very few in Economics, but a majority in Sociology. A comparative study of these three professions would be interesting and informative. Of course, the PSA might be able the interest its sister bodies in such research.