

Are UK Universities Only for Women Now?

1/7/14

In 2012 the number of women gaining a first or upper second class degree in England & Wales exceeded the number of men by 40% (140,155 women cf 99,875 men). Even in the physical sciences and the mathematical sciences, where there are more men students, women still account for 42% and 41% of students respectively. (Only in engineering and computer science is men's dominance emphatic). In most subject areas there is a clear dominance by women, as follows,

Numbers of higher education qualifications in 2012 by subject area (includes degree and post-graduated attainments)

	females	males	% female	% male
Medicine & dentistry	10650	7555	58.5	41.5
Subjects allied to medicine	68470	17280	79.8	20.2
Biological sciences	34450	20970	62.2	37.8
Veterinary science	875	255	77.1	22.5
Agriculture & related subjects	3635	2255	61.8	38.3
All Science subject areas	155585	151440	50.7	49.3
Social studies	46255	27485	62.7	37.3
Law	19585	13480	59.2	40.8
Mass communications	11815	8090	59.4	40.6
Languages	25345	11495	68.8	31.2
Creative arts & design	37755	23535	61.6	38.4
Education	61430	18915	76.5	23.5

So you might expect, given the enormous angst about women in STEM subjects, that there should be even greater angst about the disappearing male from all the above areas. Well....on 1/7/14 two things came through my door. One was a Guardian supplement "*Parents Guide to University 2014*" and the other was a product of the University of South Wales entitled "*Parent Space: Guide for Parents*". My observation relates to the pictures. The first of these documents was as follows,

- Page 1: Picture of a women student (or intending student);
- Page 2: Two pictures of women students (one sitting with her mother, the other with both parents in the background);
- Page 3: Picture of women student sitting with her mother;
- Page 4: Small picture of six women students;
- Page 5: Picture with two women students (and one man, but seeing the back of his head only);
- Page 6: Picture of woman student with her mother;
- Page 7: Advert for specific university course: one picture with two women and one man; and a picture with two women and three men (shock! but then this one was advertising a degree in football!)
- Pages 8,9: no pictures
- Page 10: Picture of woman student. (Also picture with many people of mixed sex, but figures too small to count for much).

- Back Page: Small pictures with both sexes, women outnumbering men.

The University of South Wales document was as follows,

- Front Page: Large glossy picture of woman student with her mother;
- Page 1: Large glossy picture of woman student with her mother. (I'm not going to count pictures of the former Archbishop of Canterbury);
- Page 2: Picture of woman student contemplating her future;
- Page 3: Small photos, the first being of scientist types looking down microscopes, those in focus in the foreground being women. Two small photos of mixed sex.
- Page 4: Large glossy picture of woman student with her mother;
- Page 5: no photos
- Page 6: Small photo - thought it was of male students at first, but no - it was a visiting South African rugby squad.
- Pages 7-10: no photos
- Page 11: Large glossy picture of woman student with her Dad. Well, at least this one has her Dad in it, that's something.
- Page 12: no photos
- Page 13: Small photos, one of a woman student and one with two smiling blokes with the caption, "we love going to UCAS fairs to meet prospective students". Are they students or staff? Not sure. And another photo of the visiting South African rugby squad.
- Back Page: Large glossy photo of woman student.

So, there we are. The message? Universities are just for women, I guess.

For how many decades have we been hearing that the omission of women from pictures, such as those relating to university entry, for example, is one of the mechanisms of discrimination against women. So, now that women are the emphatic majority of university students, what do we get? We get the very treatment of men, as a minority, which these women have so decried themselves. This is not only discrimination, pursued with cold blooded deliberation, it is also towering hypocrisy.