

THE STORIES OF WOMEN IN AUSTRALIAN UNDERGRADUATE SCIENCE DEGREES

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KEYWORDS: gender equity, science education, higher education, gender bias

ABSTRACT

In Australia, the number of female graduates in some science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) disciplines is as low as 15%. With the Australian Government recently announcing a decadal plan for women in STEM, efforts to close this gender gap are a priority for policy makers and researchers. Yet, in Australia little research exists on the gendered experiences of undergraduate STEM students. As a female STEM graduate, my experiences have driven my passion for my current PhD research on gender diversity in science. In this talk, I will discuss the stories of undergraduate women in STEM through three lenses: previous Australian research, experiences of females in the 'gender-balanced' STEM disciplines and my own experience as a woman in STEM. A systematic review exploring the gender issues for undergraduate science students was undertaken in 2018, followed by a pilot study on biology and chemistry students at Monash University, Australia. Findings showed that females still experienced discrimination, regardless of increased gender representation in the classroom, but paradoxically believed that issues of gender were restricted to other science disciplines. Australian science educators must be aware of the gendered experience of their undergraduate science students to help improve female retention in this pipeline.

Proceedings of the Australian Conference on Science and Mathematics Education, The University of Sydney and University of Technology Sydney, 2 - 4 October 2019, page 36, ISBN Number 978-0-9871834-8-4