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Book Review

Jean Haar

***WOMEN IN HIGHER EDUCATION AN ENCYCLOPEDIA.* Ana M. Martinez Aleman and Kristen A. Renn, Editors. Santa Barbara, CA. 2002. 637 pages**

Women have constituted a majority of students in American colleges and universities since 1979. Women earned more than half of all associates, bachelors and masters degrees and more than one-third of all doctorates (Touchton & Davis, 1991). Even with these numbers, the study of women in higher education has often been overlooked (Glazer, Bensimon, & Townsend, 1993). *Women in Higher Education: An Encyclopedia* atones for overlooking “almost entirely women’s role as shapers and interpreters of the academy” (Glazer et al., p. ix). The editors have created a comprehensive source of information and resources related to women in higher education in the United States.

In *Women in Higher Education: An Encyclopedia*, Aleman and Renn viewed the concept of an encyclopedia as “broad enough to provide entry to a subject through a wide variety of topics yet deep enough to provide detailed information on those topics” (2002, p. xxiii). They also indicated that an encyclopedia should provide resources for further exploration.

Acknowledging Aleman and Renn’s efforts, Tidball stated,

The diversity of definitions, intentions, and agendas, now obvious for women, has become so great that it is increasingly difficult to make generalizations that can bring insight to those who are not seeking it or to convince those whose minds are closed. Yet the attempt must be made, lest we miss the interrelated totality, the integrated whole that we know to be the essence, the sine qua non, of what works for women. We do this, being thoroughly aware that the knowledge gained from a half-century of intensive research relating to women in higher education and recorded in this encyclopedia is at best, a work in progress. These, then, are more than sufficient reasons to pause, collect, take stock, and offer this latest snapshot of where we are—of where we have come from and where we would go. (pp. xv-xvi)

Those interested in careers in higher education or those whose research interests focus on women in higher education should find the encyclopedia a valuable resource. If viewed as an entry point or a resource for further study, the encyclopedia provides a compilation of topics that have been and will continue to be important issues related to women in higher education. Aleman and Renn noted, “. . . this encyclopedia endeavors to serve as both a historical marker and foundation for further study” (p. xxiv).

Overview

The contents of the encyclopedia are organized into nine main categories. The categories include Historical and Cultural Contexts, Gender Theory and the Academy, Feminism in the Academy, Women in the Curriculum, Women and Higher Education Policy, Women Students,

Women Faculty, Women Administrators, and Women Employees. Each category is preceded by an overview designed to provide a broad introduction to the topic. The overview is followed by as few as one to as many as thirty related entries of varying length and substance. Categories accompanied by a greater number of entries include: Historical and Cultural Contexts, Women Students, Faculty, and Administrators (Furniss & Graham, 1974; Tidball, Smith, Tidball, & Wolf-Wendel, 1999). The categories accompanied by fewer entries include: Gender Theory and Academy, Feminism in the Academy, Women in Curriculum, and Women and Higher Education Policy (Gmelch, 1998). Readers may find the length of some of the entries short, however, the breadth of topics as well as the references and resources shared in each of the entries compensates for the shortness. The encyclopedia concludes with an appendix of Women's Studies Research Resources and a bibliography of all the sources noted in individual entries.

Categories

Each of the categories provides the reader with a general understanding of the topic as well as specific facts and issues relevant to the topic. The categories document the experiences of groups of women who are a part of the higher education system.

Historical and Cultural Contexts

"Historical and Cultural Contexts" provides an introduction to the historical and sociological study of women and gender issues in higher education in the United States. The overview addresses American higher education as a male-dominated institution and the issue of equality of access to higher education for women. Subtopics primarily focus on students, however, women in other roles such as faculty, administrators, trustees and alumnae are included. Various types of colleges are also presented such as black female colleges, Hispanic-serving institutions, and military colleges.

Gender Theory and the Academy

"Gender Theory and the Academy" addresses the areas of philosophy, psychology, sociology and pedagogy. Subtopics include feminist assessment, psychological research on sex differences, gender and race, sexism, and sexual harassment.

Feminism in the Academy

"Feminism in the Academy" includes black feminism and womanism, feminist epistemology, feminist ethics, feminist pedagogy and feminist research methodology. The data tables presented in the overview will be particularly useful to researchers.

Women in the Curriculum

"Women in Curriculum" begins with an overview of how women have influenced and been influenced by higher education curricula. Topics include academic caucuses and committees, distance education, ecofeminism, family and consumer sciences, gender and technology,

internet-based distance education, medical education, physical education, teacher education, transformation of the curriculum and women's studies.

Women and Higher Education Policy

“Women and Higher Education Policy” addresses policy developments, legal issues, students' rights, and gender inequality. Topics include affirmative action and employment, class, Title IX, and women with disabilities.

Women Students

“Women Students” addresses students' participation and status in higher education, developmental issues, and diversity. The subtopics include information about what women do as students (athletics, co-curricular activities, sororities), their academic experiences (classroom climate, graduate and professional education), their development (identity, sociocultural, cognitive and epistemological development) and the unique experiences of women from different backgrounds (African American, American Indian).

Women Faculty

“Women Faculty” addresses topics that are specifically gendered (e.g., campus climate, sex discrimination, women of color at predominantly white institutions) and those that are common to faculty life yet experienced in gendered terms (e.g., disciplinary socialization, evaluation, hiring, research, salaries, teaching, tenure and promotion, unionization). Racial and ethnic diversity among women faculty as well as the history and status of lesbian and bisexual faculty are also addressed.

Women Administrators

“Women Administrators” introduces several topics involving women and leadership. Subtopics describe the experiences and status of racially and ethnically diverse women administrators, including American Indian and Hispanic Administrators, as well as issues of concern in postsecondary administration. “Leadership in Catholic Institutions” highlights an often overlooked area of study.

Women Employees

“Women Employees” focuses on individuals who work in support positions on campus such as clerical, technical, police, security, and maintenance. “Unionization” summarizes what is known about women's experience and status as employees.

Conclusion

The encyclopedia offers a broad perspective on issues relevant to women in higher education. Aleman and Renn include women's experiences and analyses without “exploit[ing] women's experiences and stories as ‘data’” (Bannerji, Carty, Dehli, Heald, & McKenna, 1992, p. 5). The

volume presents a large amount of information in a manner that addresses both the factual and the emotional aspects of issues concerning gender and higher education—issues that continue to persist in society (Herber, 2002). Roper-Huilman (2003) observed that “[a]lthough gender in itself is important, the intersection of gender with other identities and situations creates unique challenges and opportunities for understanding” (p. 5). Studying the gendered nature of higher education and acting to improve the opportunities for women in higher education provides its own unique challenges and opportunities. Aleman and Renn have addressed some of those challenges through *Women in Higher Education: An Encyclopedia*.

Higher education is one of the primary institutions that shape culture. Those interested in shaping culture for women will find *Women in Higher Education: An Encyclopedia* to be a resource for continued research and reflection.

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