

Bias and Gender in Astronomy

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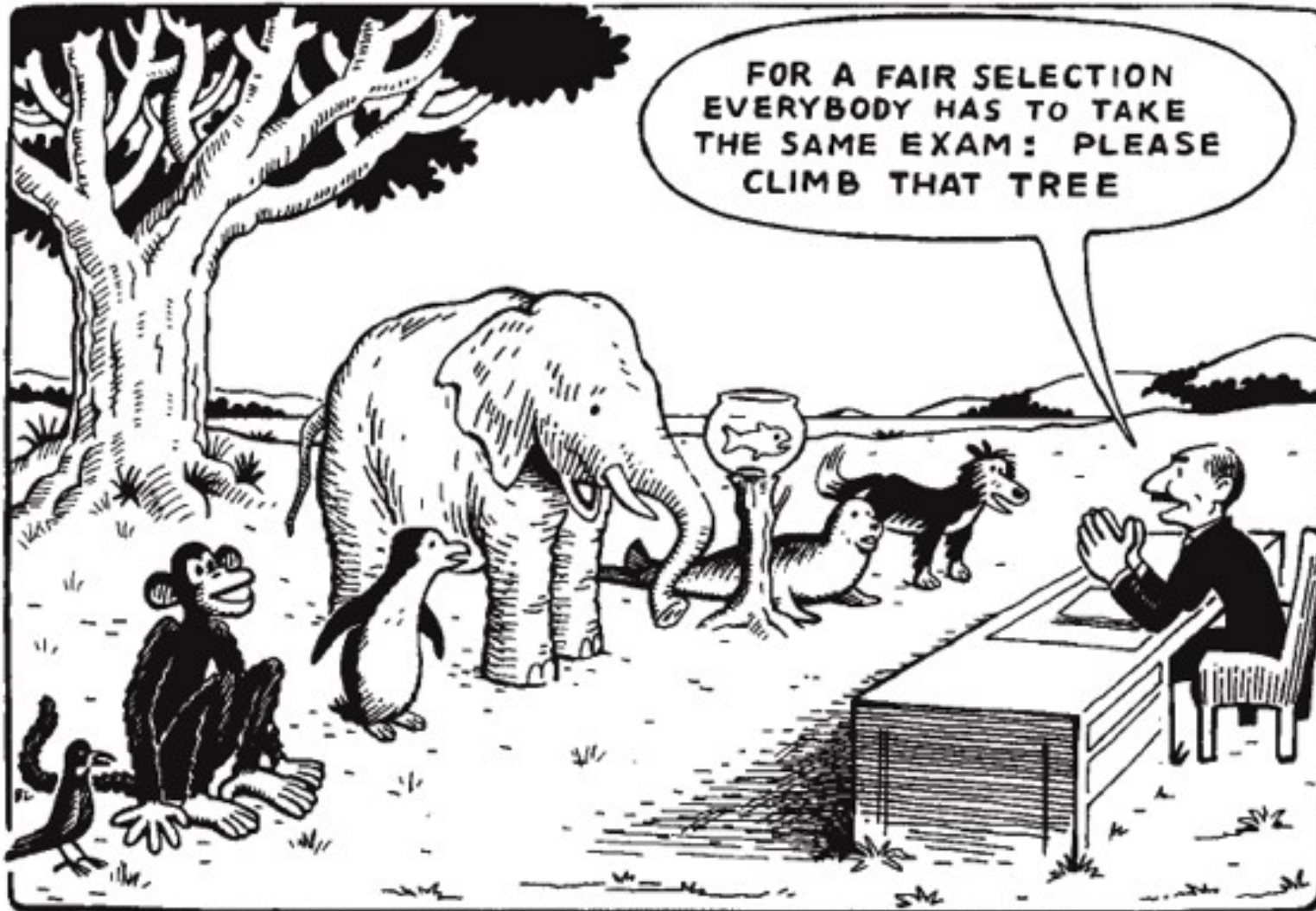
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& Sarah Brough for borrowed material)*





CAASTRO
ARC CENTRE OF EXCELLENCE
FOR ALL-SKY ASTROPHYSICS

Gender Neutral ≠ Gender Equitable



What is CAASTRO Doing?

- › CAASTRO policy: all positions must be offered w part-time option
 - “CAASTRO supports a flexible working environment; this opportunity is available as either a full-time or part-time position”
 - 35% of CAASTRO staff are part-time
- › Demand that core meetings take place 10am-2pm
- › Welcome kids in the workplace, especially during school holidays
- › Discourage working from home (except in special cases), since creates expectation that staff should always be available
- › Discourage irrelevant personal information in reference letters, introductions and press coverage
- › Reject culture that “real research happens over a beer after work”
- › Actively encourage staff to draw on carer's leave when needed
- › Vigorously oppose events during school vacation periods
- › Speak openly about “imposter syndrome”



What Can Women Do?

- › Speak up! Make a vocal contribution of substance in order to be noticed, heard, acknowledged and appreciated
- › Ask! If you want something, you will not get it without asking
- › Find suitable mentors! Seek out senior members who can be your cheer squad (both men and women)
- › Be a mentor! Your experience & support is valuable to others
- › Know when to say no – goal is to be respected, not liked
- › Recognise when you are being handed a task that will not benefit your career – **PINK** tasks
- › Be aware of personal biases
- › Stay informed - mailing lists, policies, studies & papers, workshops
 - AASWOMEN, WiSeNet, sciencewomen & scienceprofessor blogs

“What Can Men Do To Help Women Succeed in Astronomy?”

(<http://www.aas.org/cswa/Jan11/townhall.html>)

- › Try not to cut other people off when they are speaking
- › Scrutinise gender balance at all conferences / committees / events
- › Check adjectives used in reference letters before sending
 - Madera (2009): “women described as more communal & less agentic than men ... [This has] a negative relationship w hiring decisions in academia”
 - Communal: kind, warm, tactful, nurturing, agreeable, caring, helpful
 - Agentic: assertive, confident, ambitious, independent, outspoken, daring
- › Downweight reference letters that provide extraneous info
 - Stewart (2011): “it’s amazing how much she’s accomplished”; “it appears her health is stable”; “she is close to my wife”

What Can Men Do? (II)

- › Use first or last names in consistent way for both women & men
- › Welcome kids in the workplace if feasible, espec. in school holidays
- › If a woman makes a good point during a discussion, acknowledge it! If a woman is not being allowed to speak, tell others to shut up & listen
- › Accept & insist that diversity on scientific staff and in speaker lists is a key contribution to scientific excellence, not social engineering
- › Train to be repulsed by male/female ratio >2 in departments/meetings
- › Ensure all search committees are following good hiring procedures
- › Make sure family friendly policies are in place in your institution, even if you are single and have no children
- › Become aware of your own biases. Attend training sessions on diversity & bias even if you think you, your group, and your department has no problem(s)

What Can Men Do? (III)

- › Never comment on a woman's appearance in a professional context
- › Never refer to women as 'girls'
- › Don't refer to a woman scientist/student as 'the woman'? Would you refer to a foreign national as 'the foreigner'?
- › Don't tell jokes about women (is it still funny w an ethnic punchline?)
- › If going out for a drink, ensure your female colleagues are invited
- › At conferences, introduce your female postdoc/student to your colleagues by telling them what project she is working on
- › Do not single out the one woman in your group to organise telecons, take minutes or make the calendar for meetings. Woman ≠ secretary!