

Women in Science: Call for personal experience essays
“Surviving the Sexodus: Practical advice from women in science”
Edited book
Rutgers University Press, 2016 (tentative)

Many young women dream of a life in science, inspired by the opportunity for a meaningful and rewarding career involving curiosity, passion, mentorship and discovery. Indeed, a desire to reap such rewards can help explain the representation of women in the early stages of some scientific careers (e.g. graduate enrollment), especially in biological and life sciences. Women are, however, very underrepresented in senior research positions. It is fair to say that the proportion of women employed at the senior research level does not nearly reflect the numbers of women who initially express interest in science career.

The reasons behind women staying in science, progressing through the academic/corporate hierarchy or leaving science entirely are complex, but we likely can all point to pivotal moments and challenges that we faced over the course of our experience with the scientific lifestyle. For some of us, these are singular standout moments, for others it is the accumulation of small aggressions that wear us down. Whether it be low pay, long work hours, the pressures of publish or perish, loss of potential retirement fund years, new career interests, spousal career conflict, change in family arrangements or responsibilities, difficult job searches, bullying, harassment or exclusion, there are a myriad of reasons that women are not proportionally represented in science jobs. Those of us that have worked in science have, however, found one way or another to deal with these challenges and have something valuable to share with our peers and those who are coming up behind us.

The aim of this book is to present the shared wisdom of women who have worked in science to girls and women contemplating or actively pursuing scientific careers. We are collecting personal essays describing the challenges, large and small, experienced by women over the course of education and career development and the strategies they developed to cope and move forward, including finding other avenues for their scientific passions. The overall goal is to provide a collection of relatable stories that can offer support and hope to those at all stages of pursuing a career in science.

If you are interested in participating, please send an email with a provisional subject/title by **September 10th, 2014** to Jessica Brinkworth and Marie-Claire Shanahan at jfbrinkworth@gmail.com and mcshanah@ucalgary.ca. Draft abstracts (250-500 words) are due to us by **September 30th, 2014**. Essays will be approximately 1500-5000 words long and can include images if desired. The suggested topics below are a guideline only. We are willing to consider any essay that describes challenges and negative experiences and specific strategies and coping mechanisms that you used, even if it changed the direction of your work or life.

We are sensitive to concerns about privacy and will work with authors to ensure that their stories can be conveyed fairly while preserving their personal and professional security.

Please forward this call for essays to anyone you think might be interested in participating in such a project. We are seeking authors from a broad variety of fields and backgrounds. The publication timeline is as follows:

September 10th 2014 – subject/title due
September 30th 2014 – abstract due
June 10th 2015– essays for review due
September 10th, 2015 – revised essays due

Hope to hear from you,

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Potential starting areas for essay topics include, but are not limited to:

Real life

Starting a family early or late career
Real life interruptions of science career
On being an adult student in grad school
Finding work life balance
Mixing family and field work
Mental or physical illness

My friends are buying apartments and I'm pipetting for my dissertation at 3 am

The wrong mentor
Poorly funded grad programs
The wrong program
Being interested in another life completely
When your advisor doesn't make tenure, or leaves

Underrepresented

Being an ethnic minority in science
Being LGBTIA in science
Being alternatively abled in science

Pocketbooks and suitcases

Personal financial challenges during study/career
Life of the scientific spouse
Working in a place where you do not speak the language
Working in another country/culture

Thievery, loss and recourse

Not making tenure/losing tenure

Failed job searches

Loss of funding

On getting scooped

Over the line

Bullying

Infantilization

Harassment

Racism

Sexism

Wrongful dismissal

When a mentor can't seem to keep their nose out of your personal life

When we quit and where we go

The decision to leave academia

The decision to leave science

Adjuncting for life

Returning to academia