

Deconstructing the Mythology of Engineering: INERTIA IN GENDER DIVERSITY

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AN UNSOLVABLE PROBLEM?

For a field of trained problem-solvers, engineering has a vexing problem. Engineering is the least diversified STEM field. Even after decades of focused effort to recruit & retain women, a lack of gender diversity persists.

- ◆ Engineering workforce is 87% men & 13% women.
- ◆ Attrition rate for women is up to 50%.
- ◆ There is existing valuable research identifying the reasons women leave. Yet there is no significant change.
- ◆ Why are women leaving?

87%
MEN

13%
WOMEN

METHODS

Review & Analysis:

Existing academic & business research

Original Qualitative Research:

Participants:

Women with degrees in engineering who:

- ◆ Left after working a short time
- ◆ Left after working for several years
- ◆ Are current engineers (full & part-time)

Research Methods:

- ◆ Semi-structured interviews using online platform
- ◆ Written responses to case studies & questions

FINDINGS

- ◆ Antiquated myths embedded in its culture obscure engineering's vision of issues women face in engineering education & organizations.
- ◆ Myths are disseminated through engineering's socialization practices in college & the workplace & accepted as facts.
- ◆ Myths' promises are inconsistent with the reality of the engineering workplace. When they see this, disillusioned & frustrated women leave.

CONCLUSIONS

- ◆ Women are saying why they leave. Engineering is not listening.
- ◆ There is no one reason. There are several related to marginalization, workplace ethos & inequitable treatment.
- ◆ For engineering's problem with recruitment & retention to resolve, women need to find their voices. And to understand women's experiences, the field of engineering has to listen.
- ◆ Engineering will then have to let go of outdated myths to address these longstanding issues.

WANT TO KNOW MORE? Contact Leslie Diamond at leslietdiamond@gmail.com

MAJOR LITERATURE CITED

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