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SoTL as Women's Work: What Do Existing Data Tell Us?

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Keywords

Faculty/academic staff, Sex/gender, Teaching, Learning, SoTL

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SoTL as Women's Work: What Do Existing Data Tell Us?¹

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Abstract

In this essay on the field of SoTL, we report on an exploratory, descriptive study of the levels of participation of men and women in various types of scholarship of teaching and learning (SoTL) activities. Drawing on 25 national and international sources of existing data on sex and involvement in SoTL, we find the following patterns: women are over-represented, relative to the numbers of men and women faculty/academic staff in higher education, in both 'self-selected' SoTL activities and in 'primarily self-selected with other approval or confirmation' activities. The involvement of women and men was more representative to their numbers for activities in the 'primarily invited, awarded, or selected by others' SoTL category. We discuss possible explanations for and implications of these findings.

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Introduction

Our purpose in writing this essay is two-fold: 1. to share some existing data about the rates of participation by men and women in SoTL activities and 2. to discuss possible explanations and implications of any gendered patterns. For the purposes of this study, we define SoTL as the evidence-informed study of teaching and learning by disciplinary specialists that is made public. Anecdotally, we have both independently noticed what appears to be disproportionate involvement of women in SoTL activities. Both of us have also had other people express to us their curiosity about this apparent fact. Thus, for this exploratory and descriptive study, we decided to look at some existing data and see what they reveal. While we acknowledge that other factors (e.g., discipline, institutional context, and academic rank) also affect participation in SoTL work, we focus in this article on the sex of SoTL participants.

Though there are studies of faculty participation in SoTL (e.g., Cox, Huber, & Hutchings, 2004; Illinois State University, 2007), these studies have been local or unpublished, or have not considered the sex of participants. There has been no published, prior empirical work on the topic of sex and participation, with one exception. Myers (2008) reports on a survey study of 85 faculty members at her institution. She looks at the role of sex and years of experience for participation in four activities: reviewing research on teaching and learning, discussing teaching with peers, consulting local teaching and learning experts, and designing teaching activities informed by assessment data. She found that female faculty

members were more likely than male faculty to report participating in the first three of these four activities. This study, however, is based on data from just one, four-year doctoral university in the United States. In addition, we argue that the four activities measured in this study are scholarly teaching practices, not SoTL (i.e., some have no 'making public' aspect to them; others are not evidence-informed), though they may be described as precursors to SoTL.

A number of possible explanations for any sex differences in participation in SoTL opportunities exist. We very briefly outline three primary reasons here. First, though the socialization of men and women in terms of gender roles and identity has grown more similar over time, there are still differences in this socialization process and outcomes. In many cultures, women are more likely than men to be socialized to focus on and be comfortable with "emotion-work" (Chafetz, 1999) such as interpersonal relationships, empathy, caring about and helping others, interacting with youth, and similar behaviors. Such behaviors have connections to working with students, valuing teaching and learning, and participating in SoTL activities (Bellas, 1999). Researchers acknowledge and find limited support for the role of gender socialization in occupational sex segregation (e.g., Reskin, 1993) which has similarities to sex segregation across fields or jobs within an occupation as we discuss here. It is unclear, however, whether women instructors are drawn to jobs or obtain greater work satisfaction from faculty careers with a heavier teaching (and possibly SoTL) component—a locus of work satisfaction explanation (e.g., Tolbert and Oberfield, 1991).

Second, women are disproportionately found in lower academic ranks and/or working at teaching-focused institutions (e.g., American Association of University Professors, 2009; Association of Universities and Colleges of Canada, 2007; Australian Government Higher Education Statistics, 2008; Digest of Educational Statistics, 2008; West and Curtis, 2006; Universities UK, 2005). These institutions or settings may be more likely to offer opportunities, rewards, encouragement, and even requirements for SoTL-related work.

Finally, due to differences in status and power in many societies, as well as discrimination, men are still found disproportionately in some higher-status and higher-paying occupations (e.g., administrators vs. teachers, highway patrol officers vs. case workers, physicians vs. childcare workers) divided by "glass walls" that create a horizontal segregation across occupations. Men are also disproportionately found in higher-status and higher-paying subfields of the same occupation (e.g., upper management vs. career service employees in state government, directors vs. assistants, certain medical specialties) divided by "glass ceilings" that create a vertical segregation within single occupations (AAC&U, 2009; Guy and Newman 2004, p. 291-2; Reskin, 1993). The same type of sex segregation within the occupation of faculty or academic staff may operate in regard to doing SoTL work, which we believe, based on many conversations, questions, and sessions at SoTL conferences, still lags behind traditional disciplinary research in terms of status, prestige, and rewards in many institutions and disciplinary organizations.

Based on the ideas outlined above and our anecdotal observations, we expected the existing data to show a pattern of women being disproportionately involved in most SoTL opportunities relative to their actual representation among those who could participate in SoTL. Namely, we believed that disproportionately larger percentages of women than men would be involved in self-selected SoTL activities, as well as in activities that are primarily self-selected but also involve some appointment or confirmation by others. We also believed

the representation of men and women would be closer to proportional for the higher-status or higher-prestige SoTL opportunities that are primarily awarded or invited by others.

Methods

Baseline Data

To describe whether women are disproportionately involved in SoTL opportunities, we needed some baseline data. We offer two categories of such data from multiple nations: the proportion of women earning doctoral or equivalent postgraduate degrees and the proportion of women holding faculty or academic staff positions in higher education. According to the U.S. National Center for Educational Statistics (Digest of Educational Statistics, 2007), over the last 20 years, women received 44 percent of the doctoral degrees and 58 percent of all master's degrees (across disciplines) by U. S. degree-granting institutions, and men received 56 and 42 percent of those degrees, respectively. The Australian Bureau of Statistics reveals that in 1996, 2001, and 2006, women earned 34, 39, and 43 percent, respectively, of postgraduate degrees across disciplines. In Canada, women earned 44 percent of all master's degrees and 27 percent of doctorates in 2001 (Lindsey and Almey, 2006), 44 percent of doctorates in 2004 (Association of Universities and Colleges of Canada, 2007) and 46 percent of doctorates in 2005 (King, 2008). Finally, according to the Global Education Database, women earned an average of 57 percent of all tertiary degrees (including both master's and doctoral) in the UK from 1999 to 2007.²

Additional baseline data establish the proportion of women in various faculty or academic staff positions. In the US, according to the American Association of University Professors, women held 39 percent of full-time faculty positions and 48 percent of part-time positions in 2005-06 (West and Curtis, 2006). In the academic staff employment categories (e.g., Professor, Lecturer) found in the Higher Education Statistics Agency in the UK, women made up 7 to 37 percent, and men made up 63 to 93 percent (depending on the category) in 1994-95; in 2003-04, women made up 15 to 48 percent, and men 52 to 85 percent. Using 2008 data, women made up 42 percent and men 58 percent of the four academic classifications (above senior lecturers, senior lecturers, lecturers, and below senior lecturers) in Australia (Australian Government Higher Education Statistics, 2008). In Canada in 2006, women constituted 20 percent of full professors, 36 percent of associate professors, 41 percent of assistant professors, and 55 percent of lecturers (Association of Universities and Colleges of Canada, 2007).

We acknowledge that these figures do not offer a complete picture of the representation of men and women among those with the opportunity to engage in SoTL in higher education. However, given the data above, and especially that for doctoral degrees, we argue that if women constitute 51 percent or greater of those involved in a given SoTL opportunity, then they are disproportionately represented in that activity.

Type and Coding of Existing Data

We collected a variety of existing data on participation in SoTL activities to allow us to look at representation by sex. We identified the following as activities indicating involvement in SoTL work: membership in a SoTL professional organization, holding leadership positions in SoTL organizations, presenting at a SoTL conference or event, serving on the editorial board for or publishing in a SoTL journal, and winning a SoTL award or being selected as a SoTL fellow or scholar. We gathered a purposive or convenience sample by searching online (journal websites, SoTL program lists, conference programs) and contacting colleagues and

organizational representatives for other sources (membership lists or breakdowns). We then organized each into the three logical, conceptual categories (see the left column in Table 1). Acknowledging our home nation (and, thus, knowledge of certain people or data resources) and international participation in SoTL, we included data sources for US-based (e.g., University of Wisconsin System, Buffalo State University, Southeastern Colloquy) as well as international activities (e.g., ISSOTL, SoTL Commons, Carnegie Scholars, CASTL members, journal authors).

We have a total of 25 data sources with 5 in self-selected opportunities, 13 in the activities that are primarily self-selected with some other confirmation or approval, and 7 in activities that are primarily invited, awarded, or selected by others. We make no claims that these data sources constitute a complete, representative, or random sample of the possible data sources. Rather, we attempted to find a fairly large number of recent and diverse types of existing data in which the sex of those involved was known or could be coded. We also realize that the sources are overlapping to some degree or not completely independent. For the purposes of this exploratory and descriptive essay, we believe we have a sufficient number and variety of data sources to look for our general proposed patterns.

In a few instances (e.g., editorial boards, founding committee), our contacts provided us with the sex distribution based on the self-report of participants or their direct knowledge of participants' sex. In one case, we had access to photos of the participants. For the remaining data sources, we both independently coded sex. To be classified as male or female, either we both had to agree on the sex based on the first and/or middle names, or at least one of us had to have personal knowledge (e.g., know or have seen the person) of the individual's sex. If neither of these conditions could be met, the person was coded as sex unknown. Finally, for data sources in which the same person could appear twice (e.g., conference presenters), we only counted each person once.³

Results

Table 1 contains the percentages of women, men, and sex unknown for each of the 25 data sources.⁴ For the self-selected SoTL activities, women constitute a pattern of 58 to 64 percent of those involved, men 32 to 39 percent, and 1 to 10 percent were sex unknown. In activities that are primarily self-selected with some confirmation or approval, women were from 44 to 65 percent of the participants, men 23 to 45 percent, and sex unknown 0 to 16 percent. Finally, for activities that are primarily invited, awarded, or selected by others, there was a pattern of women ranging from 40 to 55 percent of the participants, men from 34 to 60 percent, and 0 to 22 percent sex unknown.

Table 1. Participation rates for women and men in selected SoTL opportunities

Self-Selected Involvement	Percent Women	Percent Men	Percent Sex Unknown
2009 CASTL Colloquium Participants (N= 118)	62%	32%	6%
ISSOTL Members, July 2008 to June 2009 (N= 305)	60%	39%	<1%
2007 ISSOTL Conference Attendees (N=360)	60%	35%	5%
2008 ISSOTL Conference Attendees (N=543)	64%	32%	4%

2009 ISSOTL Conference Attendees (N= 589)	58%	32%	10%
Primarily Self-Selected Involvement with Other Approval or Confirmation	Percent Women	Percent Men	Percent Sex Unknown
2010 SoTL Commons Conference Review Board (N= 89)	59%	30%	11%
2007 SoTL Commons Presenters (N= 112)	56%	31%	13%
2009 SoTL Commons Presenters (N= 164)	54%	32%	14%
Southeastern SoTL Colloquy Council (N= 92)	50%	37%	13%
2008 ISSOTL Annual Conference Presenters (N=607)	63%	31%	6%
<i>College Teaching</i> Authors 2008 (N= 80)	54%	30%	16%
<i>JECT</i> Authors, 4 issues in 2008-2009 (N=64)	53%	45%	2%
<i>JoSoTL</i> Authors, January and June 2009 (N= 37)	46%	41%	13%
<i>IJ-SoTL</i> Authors, 6 Issues: 2007-2009 (N=302)	56%	31%	13%
Buffalo State University SoTL Fellows (N= 23)	65%	35%	0%
University of Wisconsin System Teaching Scholars, 2001-2010 (N= 125)	53%	45%	2%
University of Wisconsin System Teaching Fellows, 1984-2010 (N= 495)	44%	43%	13%
2009 CASTL National Institute Scholars (N= 31)	64%	23%	13%
Primarily Invited, Awarded, Other-Selected Involvement	Percent Women	Percent Men	Percent Sex Unknown
<i>College Teaching</i> Editorial Board (N= 17)	41%	59%	0%
<i>JECT</i> Editorial Board (N= 10)	40%	60%	0%
<i>IJ-SoTL</i> Editorial Review Board (N= 178)	44%	34%	22%
ISSOTL Founding Committee (N= 68)	47%	50%	3%
ISSOTL Board of Directors (N=11)	55%	45%	0%
National Teaching Fellows & Institutional Award Winners ISSOTL Interest Group Members (N= 55)	51%	49%	0%
1998-2005 Carnegie Scholars (N= 158)	51%	49%	0%

Based on these percentages, we conclude that our anecdotal impressions and theoretically anticipated patterns about representation by sex in SoTL opportunities are supported: women are disproportionately represented in SoTL activities that are self-selected or primarily self-selected, though rates of participation by sex become closer in the latter category. In opportunities that are primarily awarded, invited, or selected by others,

participation is closer to equal and closer to the comparison data for men and women in faculty/academic staff in higher education.

Discussion

Explanations

As noted earlier, there are several possible explanations for these findings. One may be access and opportunity structures. Instructors in primarily teaching positions and/or lower academic ranks with an emphasis on teaching responsibilities may have more opportunity (e.g., many classes and learning issues to study), expectations (e.g., SoTL is connected to teaching), or requirements (e.g., SoTL could be the form of scholarship most desired in this context) to engage in SoTL-related work. In some cases, instructors in these contexts may be required to participate in activities that can lead to SoTL, such as those documented in Myers's (2008) study. Because women are over-represented in such positions, they then become over-represented in such work. In contrast, men are over-represented in the higher-status and higher-paying academic positions, and disciplinary scholarship still holds greater status, prestige, and rewards than teaching-related research in many institutions and disciplinary organizations. Of course, it is not clear whether men are drawn to and, due to subtle discrimination against women, more supported in these higher status areas of academic work than are women, and/or whether areas of academic work dominated by women are seen as and become less prestigious than those dominated by men. In her work on sex segregation across occupations, Reskin (1993) finds support for many factors in her models explaining sex segregation. She argues, however, that demand-side factors including preferences of employers, demand for workers, economic pressures, discrimination, and personnel practices are most important in explaining why men or women dominate some occupations.

Another explanation may be related to the desire to bridge the divide between research and teaching. Perhaps some of the women making up the majority of SoTL participants are seeking the prestige associated with research while still focusing on teaching, also work that women do disproportionately (Wyer, 2009; Bellas and Toutkoushian, 1999). Myers (2008) applies identity theories to faculty, asserting that women identify more strongly than men with their role as teachers because so many of their responsibilities and expectations are related to teaching. In other words, people self-regulate their identities to reflect the situations and roles they see most often for themselves. This argument is related to the ideas, noted earlier, of differences in gender role socialization and comfort with "emotion work." In noting that women tend to work in disciplines that have heavy teaching loads and not much time for research, Umbach (2007) wonders whether women are in fact "attracted" to fields with more teaching responsibilities (p. 188), a suggestion that would follow Myers's hypothesis. We need more research on these ideas, however, given some research that shows women are not, necessarily, drawn to jobs or do not obtain greater work satisfaction compared to men from faculty careers with heavier teaching-related work (e.g., Tolbert and Oberfield, 1991).

Following this line of argument, then, might also suggest that SoTL allows women to conduct research—still "the common currency of academic achievement" (Bok, qtd. in Rau & Baker, 1989, p. 163)—in a way that's more coherent with their identity-related roles as teachers. Along the same lines, according to the 2007 HERI Faculty Survey, fewer female faculty members are satisfied with their scholarly pursuits than their male peers, a divide that increases with academic rank and career stage. We wonder whether part of this

contrast between men and women in satisfaction is related to the higher levels of teaching responsibilities among the women, making their research-teaching divide even wider when their research focus is disciplinary. The satisfaction with scholarly pursuits among those involved in SoTL would be a valuable area of future investigation.

The ideas above help explain why women are over-represented in our first two categories of SoTL work (self-selected SoTL activities and those that are self-selected with some approval or confirmation by others). Representation by sex in the third category (SoTL activities primarily invited or awarded) is closer to parity and mirrors the data in other fields supporting the notion of “glass escalators” (Williams, 1992), or structural advantages (e.g., class or meeting scheduling, preferences in committee assignments, informal networks) that enable men in female-dominated fields to advance through promotion and other opportunities for upward mobility at higher rates than the women in those fields (Wingfield, 2009; Cognard-Black, 2004; Hultin, 2003; Budig, 2002; Maume, 1999; Reskin, 1993). These structural advantages for men are likely the result of both somewhat higher levels of experience and past achievement (given, primarily, years in the profession and ‘reputation’) than women, and subtle, but still functioning, gender-based prejudicial attitudes and discrimination. Research is needed on whether and how these structural advantages for men in relation to SoTL occur.

Implications

Our findings have possible implications for the status and value of SoTL work, for women’s careers in the academy, for the likelihood and ways of engaging student voices in SoTL, and for the SoTL work itself. First, as work done primarily by women, does SoTL suffer the consequences of traditional sex-segregated or “pink-collar” work? One consequence of work disproportionately done by women is lower wages (Ambwani and Dyke, 2007; Guy and Newman 2004; Toutkoushian and Bellas, 2003) and, sometimes, lower wages for both women and men in female-dominated occupations (e.g., England, Farkas, Kilbourne, and Dou, 1988). In fact, in 1999, female faculty in the United States earned an average of 21 percent or \$18,000 less annually than their male peers—or 6.8 percent or \$5,400, when controlling for experience, seniority, research productivity, teaching, education, the disciplinary labor market, and structural effects (Umbach, 2007, p. 187). In 2007-2008, women earned an average of 18 percent or \$13,103 less than their male counterparts across rank and institutional type (Digest of Education Statistics 2008, Table 257). It remains to be seen, however, whether faculty and staff who are major participants in SoTL have lower salaries, but related implications for this work are worth exploring.

Guy and Newman (2004) argue that work done primarily by women results in lower pay not simply because it’s women doing the work but because of the historical designation of “emotional labor” or “relational work” as unpaid labor (p. 289-290). Tasks with the hidden need for “*caritas*” (a combination of “caring, negotiating, empathizing, soothing troubled relationships, and working behind the scenes to enable cooperation” [p. 289], as well as the ability to “respond to [others’ emotions] in such a way that the relationship achieves the intended goal” [p. 295]) don’t make their way into the tangible duties of job descriptions, so they fall short of what’s considered “real work” worth real pay (p. 290). Further, because those tasks are directly related to traits seen as essential or inherent in women, the work itself is conflated with those who are thought to be natural at it, so it appears to be less than rigorous and less than work.

Bellas (1999) has articulated how teaching is both emotional labor and work that is gendered feminine. She notes that, more than their male counterparts, women tend to

participate more frequently in the emotional labor of the classroom such as being “more concerned than men with student learning,” creating an interactive classroom in which student voice is important, relating personal experiences, and demonstrating behaviors that are described as “friendly, caring,” “warm, [and] reinforcing” (p. 99). In addition, students expect female faculty not only to exhibit these behaviors but also to be more prepared and more available outside of class than male faculty. Bellas concludes by pointing to a “gendered reward structure in academia” that poorly rewards the work done most by women involving emotional labor that’s culturally coded as feminine (teaching and service), compared to the higher rewards for work done mostly by men and associated with traits culturally gendered male (research and administration) (p. 107). Umbach (2007) confirms that women in academic fields marked by heavier teaching loads, less time for research, and higher proportions of women are “doing the ‘women’s work’ that is devalued in the academy and earning less as a result” (p. 188).

This analysis of sex-typed work, including teaching, may lead to a fuller understanding of why SoTL lacks the privileged status of disciplinary research, a hierarchy most often justified by SoTL being less related to the goals of the discipline. As SoTL assumes a level of caring about students (or at least their learning), the empathetic act of looking at learning from their perspectives, some negotiation of the affective layers of learning, and other facets of *caritas*, it may also be quietly seen as relational work that is considered more natural for women and thus less work and less worthy than other types of scholarly activities. Future research is needed to validate such ideas.

Next, if SoTL reflects other work done disproportionately by women and is thus valued and compensated at a lower level than disciplinary research and other traditional duties, there are other implications to consider. If devalued in tenure and promotion processes, fewer people—women as well as men—may be willing to do SoTL work. Also, if the current budgetary climates in higher education continue and travel budgets shrink, then professional development funding will be even further prioritized for disciplinary research. SoTL will become unpaid work, even an out-of-pocket expense for many—an extra burden for those teaching at institutions already with fewer resources, such as those serving primarily students of color (Liddell, 2008), and for those with non-tenure-track faculty and staff positions (Toutkoushian and Bellas, 2003; Harper, et al., 2001).

In short, if those who engage in SoTL are already compensated less (a hypothesis that needs verification), then the current tendencies toward funding primarily disciplinary research place an enormous financial constraint on faculty interested in SoTL. Compounded with the possibility of fewer institutional recognitions and rewards in tenure and promotion structures, we begin to recognize just how vulnerable and precarious is participation in SoTL. Guy and Newman (2004) note that success in emotional labor requires intrinsic motivation, in part because of the lack of external motivators such as higher wages, occupational rewards, and the like, and the same would appear to be true for SoTL. Significantly, though, the SoTL work with more extrinsic motivation—our third category of activities that are primarily invited, awarded, or selected by others—is the one with the highest proportion of men. However, as feminized fields carry the above disadvantages, as well as what England et al. (2007) call the “nonpecuniary stigma” of being “too female” (p. 38), they can become less attractive to men and, to a lesser extent, women (DiFuccia, Pelton, & Sica, 2007), pointing to potentially greater marginalization and decreasing participation in SoTL.

The over-representation of women faculty and academic staff in SoTL may also have implications for involving students in this work beyond research subjects. That is, assuming that women faculty members are more aligned with relationship-building as part of “emotion work,” then the over-representation of women in SoTL could reasonably influence dimensions of including student voices in SoTL (Werder and Otis, 2010). For example, does this over-representation of women doing SoTL influence how often students are involved, the sex of the students involved, or the role students play in this work (e.g., research assistant, co-author)? Does the over-representation of women in SoTL influence the types of SoTL questions posed with student collaborators or the extent to which we share our SoTL results directly with students as one of our audiences? These are all empirical questions that deserve attention.

Our findings also raise implications about the nature of the SoTL work itself, including the types of projects that are undertaken, the types of institutions that support the work, the disciplinary makeup of SoTL, and networking and collaboration opportunities. For example, might the disproportionate participation in SoTL by women affect—given likely sex differences in socialization, intrinsic interest, ways of teaching, and so on—the types of SoTL projects conducted? Would certain types of teaching and learning problems, research and reflective methodologies, or ways of making the work public be more likely? It is worth asking whether women’s higher participation in SoTL means there is a high presence of feminist and feminized areas of scholarship, or whether more traditional methods and areas are more common. If the former were true, we might expect there would be plenty of SoTL by those in fields dominated by women, and feminist practices and female-oriented (or at least gender-focused) content areas would be widely studied in SoTL work. We don’t have the data to look at these issues; however, at a 2009 ISSOTL Conference roundtable on the theory in humanities SoTL, several participants noted the relative lack of SoTL that engages feminist theories. One could argue, though, that the frequency of SoTL projects on collaborative activities, service learning, and other activities point to a prevalence of work on feminist pedagogy (Shrewsbury, 1993). Given these projects are not explicitly connected to feminist practices or even sex/gender, however, such an argument is tenuous. In sum, we’re reminded that the presence of more women doesn’t necessarily mean attention to issues of sex, gender, equity, and the like.

We also wonder whether gender might interact with institutional type in terms of value and reward for SoTL work. That is, are faculty and academic staff at institutions with a primary focus on teaching more active in SoTL regardless of gender? At the same time, it is interesting that some large research institutions have been very visible in the SoTL movement and recipients of major SoTL recognition. Is most of the SoTL work at these latter types of schools done by women, and if so, with what effects? Particular schools vary in the extent to which they are “greedy institutions” (Coser, 1974) in regard to demands for faculty work related to traditional research, teaching, and service (McMillin and Berberet, 2002; Wright, Nandini, Kain, Kramer, Howery, McKinney, Glass, Atkinson, 2004). This institutional variation may have implications for the role of gender in SoTL activities. Again, these are all interesting empirical questions for the field of SoTL.

When considering the implications for the disciplinary makeup of SoTL, we look briefly at some recent trends in example disciplines and offer some preliminary observations, but more research is needed. With the increasing numbers of women in sociology, DiFuccia, Pelton, and Sica (2007) wonder whether the scope, interests, and areas studied in the field will trend toward more feminist scholarship, studies of sex and gender, and other research areas traditionally done by women. One such area is teaching and learning, but although

membership in the American Sociological Association (ASA) is 52 percent men, 46 percent women, and 2 percent unknown (de los Rios, 2009), membership in the ASA Section on Teaching and Learning is 69 percent female, and membership in the ISSOTL Sociology Interest Group is 87 percent female. On the other hand, DiFuccia, Pelton, and Sica note that the subject sections in the ASA organized around traditionally male research areas (sociology and politics, science, technology, economics, medicine, etc.) are drawing increasing numbers of female students, while the section with traditionally the largest female membership (sex and gender) is shrinking in student interest, a pattern that may shape the field in the future.

Next, it's interesting to consider whether fields dominated by women, such as humanities and arts-based disciplines (with the exceptions of history and philosophy, both of which are dominated by men), are also over-represented in SoTL. An analysis of all six ISSOTL conference programs (Chick, 2009) revealed that an average of just 10 percent of presentations, posters, or meetings were about arts and humanities work, defined very broadly—with history representing the largest proportion of these sessions—suggesting that the disproportionate presence of women both in SoTL and in the humanities hasn't translated into an abundance of humanities SoTL, at least as represented in the history of this major annual conference. This finding, while it needs further study,⁵ raises some questions. How does the apparent under-representation of humanities-based disciplines affect expectations for SoTL, from norms for research design and methodology to the genre and style of its products? Are women in the humanities resisting the stigma of doing the women's work of SoTL in part because they're already in feminized fields in the academy?

Similarly, are women in traditionally male-dominated fields participating in SoTL at higher rates? Looking at history, women earned a range of 26 percent to 42 percent of the Ph.D.s for the years from 1979 to 2005 (Townsend, 2007) and held 29.8 percent of all faculty and instructional staff positions in the degree-granting institutions in the US in 2003 (Digest of Education Statistics 2008, Table 255). Similarly, 38 percent of members of the History SoTL organization are women, and 55 percent are men (7 percent unknown). Thus, for history, the representation of women in SoTL fairly closely resembles that in the discipline as a whole: they are the minority both in the discipline and in SoTL in the discipline.

Finally, we believe there may be implications of the gendered nature of SoTL participation for networking and collaboration opportunities in the field of SoTL. If, in fact, there are still some traditional gender role differences in interpersonal behaviors, it is likely that the participation of a larger percentage of women in SoTL may help make the field a 'kinder, gentler' field of research in higher education. That is, we may see the following in SoTL work relative to many other fields with higher levels of participation by men: more efforts to collaborate with colleagues by engaging in joint projects, greater willingness to volunteer in professional organizations and other SoTL service, offers of informal assistance to colleagues on their SoTL work, open sharing of research ideas and methods, and more frequent extensions across disciplinary, institutional, and other boundaries. Future research should assess whether SoTL is characterized by qualitatively or quantitatively different levels of networking and collaboration than other fields.

Future Research

We are well aware that in this exploration of some existing data and speculation about causes and implications of the disproportionate over-representation of women in SoTL activities, we raise many more questions than we answer. Thus, our study and discussion suggest opportunities for further discussion, theorizing, and research. First, our findings

lead us to suggest that a larger, more sophisticated quantitative study of the role of gender in SoTL participation is needed to validate and extend the preliminary data reported here. Such research could utilize other existing data or obtain original data through a self-administered questionnaire to higher education faculty and academic staff members in a variety of nations. The study should also consider other variables including race, age, rank, discipline, institutional variables, and nation.⁶ At the same time, a study focusing on what men and women say about participating in SoTL would be important as well. For instance, as the 2007 HERI Faculty Survey documents women's lower levels of satisfaction with their scholarly pursuits, a similar satisfaction survey and/or qualitative interviews among those involved in SoTL would be valuable.

Second, we encourage future studies to document and clarify the possible implications described above, such as the relative salaries of faculty involved in SoTL, sex differences and similarities in motivations for engaging in SoTL, if and how structural advantages for doing SoTL vary by sex, the disciplinary makeup of SoTL participants and projects, sex and institutional type differences in participation in SoTL, whether and how representation by sex in those engaged in SoTL affects collaborative work and the interpersonal nature of the field, and the role of sex in engaging student voices in SoTL.

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² Some of the baseline data includes those with master's degrees, and women generally make up a greater percentage of master's degree recipients than do men, compared to doctoral degrees. However, based on our experiences and knowledge of those involved in the international SoTL movement, we believe the vast majority of these individuals have doctoral degrees and, thus, that that is the better comparison group.

³ We acknowledge that some names are sex/gender neutral and, thus, if we didn't know the person, these were coded sex unknown. In addition, some names of those from outside the U.S. were more difficult for us to code without other information. Though it is possible that there is some error in our coding of male or female and/or systematic bias in the unknown category such that a significantly greater percentage of one sex was coded as sex unknown, we believe that any error here is random or small enough not to alter the overall pattern in the findings.

⁴ Given that we are interested only in the general pattern of the data and that there are problems (e.g., small N, missing data) with some of the individual data sources, we chose not to make any statistical comparisons.

⁵ For instance, because humanities-based disciplines tend to have fewer resources than many of the science, social science, and professional disciplines, it may be more difficult for them to attend non-disciplinary conferences, especially international ones such as ISSOTL.

⁶ Liddell (2008) has already noted at ISSOTL conferences a dearth of faculty from institutions that serve primarily students of color, as well as faculty from African, Latin American, or Caribbean institutions. Documenting whether any of McKinney's (2008) possible solutions have been employed, as well as their effects, would be useful.