

PROMOTING DIVERSITY IN QUESTION ASKING



1 in 2 audience members in academic seminars are women.

But for every question asked by a woman, men ask 2-3 times as many



Visibility matters: people tend to judge whether they "belong" in a career based on who they see in it. Low visibility may lead to the attrition of women and other minorities in academia.

FINDING:

WHEN MORE QUESTIONS WERE ASKED, THE GENDER BALANCE IN THE QUESTIONS FROM THE AUDIENCE INCREASED*



TIPS:

Organisers: Allow more time for questions after a seminar

Moderators: Keep questions and answers short; intercept 'showing off' questions or comments

Audience: Ask questions after talks; save statements and comments for after the talk

FINDING:

PROPORTIONALLY MORE WOMEN ASKED QUESTIONS WHEN THE FIRST QUESTION CAME FROM A FEMALE*



TIPS:

Organisers: State expectations for behaviour that supports inclusivity

Moderators: Choose someone who would normally not ask a question first, if possible.

Audience: Consider holding onto your question briefly, to provide an opportunity for someone whose voice is heard less often

*these data are correlational, but the tips can't hurt to implement, just in case

FINDING:

WOMEN REPORT FEELING MORE NERVOUS THAN MEN ABOUT ASKING QUESTIONS, BUT MEN GET NERVOUS, TOO



TIPS:

Organisers: Allow a small break for time to formulate questions

Moderators: Be encouraging and keep an eye peeled for questions from less confidently-raised hands

Audience: Recognise that many others feel the same way as you; it's ok to feel nervous!