

Winter 1990

Gender-Issues Department: Introducing the Gender-Issues Department

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Recommended Citation

Hooks, Karen L. (1990) "Gender-Issues Department: Introducing the Gender-Issues Department," *Woman C.P.A.*: Vol. 52 : Iss. 1 , Article 6.

Available at: <https://egrove.olemiss.edu/wcpa/vol52/iss1/6>

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Introducing the Gender-Issues Department

The initial reaction to a new department in *The Woman CPA* for gender-related articles might appropriately be one of surprise. Not surprise that *The Woman CPA* should begin such a department, but surprise that it does not already have one. The gender-issues department will be a new addition, but the subject material has traditionally been a significant part of the journal. The department is a new showcase for articles that address gender-related topics.

To say that the new department will include articles on topics traditional to the journal does not mean that there will not be changes. Upon being invited to edit the new department for *The Woman CPA*, I began considering what the department should be and should strive to accomplish. This introduction will communicate those thoughts and will also provide information to both readers and potential authors regarding what to expect.

Why a Gender-Issues Department?

Several forces instigated creation of a gender-issues department. One of the strongest was the large quantity of manuscripts received by the journal on gender-related issues. Another factor is that people look to *The Woman CPA* as a source of information on gender-related issues. The journal is sponsored by two organizations of accountants, the memberships of which are almost exclusively female. Given the demographics of the sponsoring bodies, it seems quite logical that the journal should receive and publish gender-related manuscripts. Further, although the journal has quite a diverse readership, the members of the two sponsoring organizations are an important part of that readership. It is hoped that those members may benefit from a regularly published department on gender-related issues.

The Woman CPA is already a leader in publishing gender-related articles. That leadership is demonstrated not only by those articles published, but also by the submissions received and the interest of the readers.

Accordingly, it is appropriate that the journal highlight this aspect of its service. It should display focussed direction and accomplishments in this important topic area. *The Woman CPA* has the unique opportunity to excel in this market segment. Accompanying this opportunity, and a strong market position, is also the responsibility to provide a quality product.

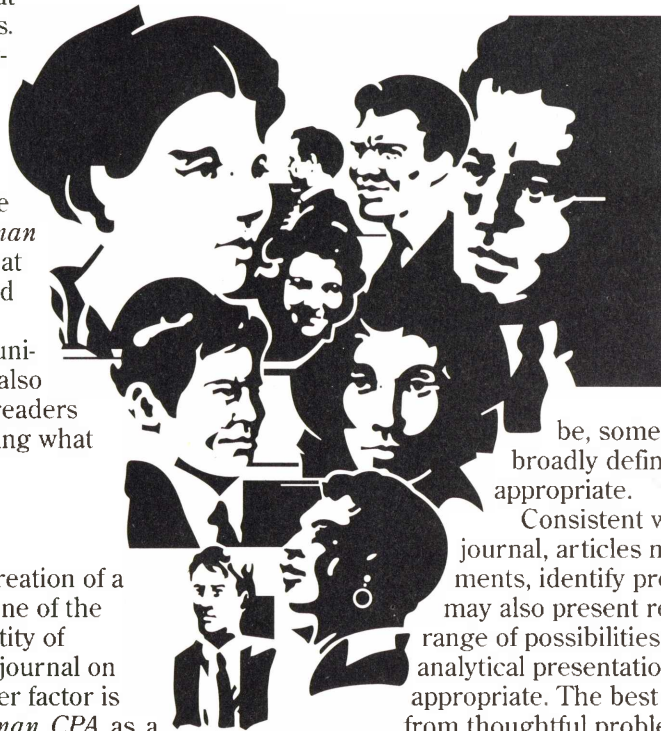
Striking a Balance

The gender-issues department will have goals and objectives that are consistent with *The Woman CPA*. Probably of greatest importance among these is the goal to produce articles that are perceived to be of high quality and to meet the needs of the various constituents of the journal. Given the various constituents, this ultimately means that the journal is, and the gender-issues department will

be, something of a hybrid. The topics are broadly defined and many methodologies are appropriate.

Consistent with the editorial policy of the journal, articles may report on current developments, identify problems and develop theory. Articles may also present research results. Given this wide range of possibilities, descriptive work, case studies, analytical presentations and empirical studies are all appropriate. The best scenario is a range of presentations from thoughtful problem identification, through analysis, exploratory research and confirmatory research. All possibilities are encouraged and invited as submissions.

The gender-issues department has a challenge before it. That challenge results from the diversity of readers of *The Woman CPA* and the basic difference between its primary authors and its readers. The readers are practitioners, academics and students. Each category of reader is likely to be most satisfied with an article style that differs from styles best suited for the others. Most of the manuscripts submitted are written by academics. Thus, the challenge is to produce and publish a mix of articles that will satisfy the various reader groups from manuscripts written, for the most part, by academics. This means that articles must address interesting subjects, at least some of which are very timely, in a sufficiently credible manner to



instill confidence in what is being reported while still being readable. The articles must include sufficient background and authoritative support to satisfy the academics, and yet, not so much as to bore practitioners or confuse students.

Achieving an appropriate blend of readability and support is difficult. To date, the most effective mechanism for producing articles with the required balance has been iterations of the writing process. In the future, perhaps the style of the department will be so clearly defined that manuscripts will be submitted with the balance already achieved. If so, it will be good for the readers, who will enjoy the articles, and the academic submitters, who will have a respected and well defined publication outlet.

Balance is the key word. Often manuscripts are received that contain excessive amounts of terminology that is very specific to the research process, and is cumbersome to non-academic readers. Authors would be well advised to use easily comprehended terms. Alternatively, sometimes manuscripts are received that merely set forth opinions. Sometimes the opinions are controversial and strongly stated. While problem identification is an appropriate objective of a manuscript, the department, even though it does relate to gender-issues, is not a "soap box". Problem identification should be supported and related to practical issues or existing theory. While controversy may be interesting to read, credibility is critical for respect.

A final component to producing articles that will accomplish all the department's goals is the review process. The reviewers for the gender-issues department contribute varying types of expertise. Some are very knowledgeable in the subject area. Some are expert in the research methodologies. Still others contribute editorial feedback on whether a manuscript is interesting. These reviewers will be able to contribute significantly to the process of producing articles and should be a major help to the authors.

The Topics

Subject areas that are appropriate for the gender-issues department are

quite broad. They include any topics related to gender. For example, several gender-related issues that affect individuals on a personal level are the balance of family and career management, career planning and relocation. At the business-entity level gender-related topics include: recruitment, promotion, turnover, compensation, benefits, client service, sales, scheduling and the work environment. Clearly, all these topics affect individuals, as well, and could probably be addressed from a micro level. A number of topics that have been included in psychology and management journals may also be gender-related. Some of these are: job satisfaction, organizational commitment, motivation, mentoring, productivity, management styles and organizational structure. These might also be studied from a company's or an individual's perspective. The topics appropriate for the column might be even broader. Examples are: history, laws, discrimination, taxes, education, public policy, politics, ethics, economics and linguistics. Obviously, the possibilities are extensive.

As stated earlier, there are virtually no limitations on the appropriate methods of investigation and presentation. This should be even more apparent from the list of subjects. A wide diversity in topics calls for a wide diversity in investigation and reporting. Innovation and creativity are invited in manuscripts, and will be valued.

Conclusion

The initiation of the gender-issues department presents a unique opportunity and challenge. I am quite honored to have the opportunity to guide the department in its formation. I ask for your support, either as a reader or a potential author. I invite any with an interest to submit manuscripts. The final product will be dependent upon many factors. The most important of those, however, is the manuscripts received.

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U.S. Postal Service STATEMENT OF OWNERSHIP, MANAGEMENT AND CIRCULATION Required by 39 U.S.C. 3685		
1A. Title of Publication THE WOMAN CPA	1B. PUBLICATION NO. 0 10 4 3 7 2 7 1	7. Date of Filing September 29, 1989
3. Frequency of Issue Quarterly: January, April, July & October	3A. No. of Issues Published Annually Four	3B. Annual Subscription Price Members \$ 3.40 Foreign \$ 15.00 Others \$ 8.00
4. Complete Mailing Address of Known Office of Publication (Street, City, County, State and ZIP + 4 Code) (Not printer): 3998 Ridgedale Drive, Cincinnati, Hamilton, Ohio 45247-6968		
5. Complete Mailing Address of the Headquarters or General Business Office of the Publisher (Not printer): Same as Item 4		
6. Full Names and Complete Mailing Addresses of Publisher, Editor, and Managing Editor: (This item MUST NOT be blank) Publisher (Name and Complete Mailing Address): American Woman's Society of CPAs, 111 E. Wacker Drive, Suite 600, Chicago, Illinois 60601 American Society of Women Accountants, 35 E. Wacker Drive, Suite 1068, Chicago, Illinois 60601 Editor (Name and Complete Mailing Address): Lillian C. Parrish, University of Central Arkansas, Box 4931, Conway, Arkansas 72032 Managing Editor (Name and Complete Mailing Address): None		
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B. Paid and/or Requested Circulation (For instructions on reverse side)		
1. Sales through dealers and carriers, street vendors and counter sales		
2. Mail Subscriptions (Paid and/or Requested)	12,719	13,219
C. Total Paid and/or Requested Circulation (Sum of 1B1 and 1B2)	12,719	13,219
D. Free Distribution by Mail, Carrier or Other Means (Samples, Complimentary, and Other Free Copies)	126	131
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G. TOTAL (Sum of E, F 1 and 2—should equal net press run shown in 10A)	12,975	13,400
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