

W Women in Science



LARGE PHOTO COURTESY OF BRYN MAWR COLLEGE ARCHIVES, CIRCA 1985

“Women in Science” — Pieces of a Puzzle

In 1992, the situation of women in science is complex and rapidly changing. In many fields the era of out-front discrimination is fading as women enter research in growing numbers. But that doesn't mean women are zooming straight to the top. ♀ On the contrary, subtle obstacles and unconscious assumptions are taking the place of explicit sexism. Among those obstacles is the expectation—sometimes internalized by women as well as by men—that women will not have the same level of success as their male colleagues. This special section has not attempted to provide a complete picture of the situation of women in science. Instead, it offers pieces of a jigsaw puzzle. Among those pieces are profiles of three fields that offer very different atmospheres for women. ♀ In Neuroscience outspoken gender-based discrimination has largely disappeared, to be replaced by invisible obstacles. ♀ In Mathematics, by contrast, sexist ideas are pervasive, and women often feel isolated and embattled. ♀ Chemistry lies somewhere between the extremes. ♀ Other pieces of the puzzle are short reports on key issues women face as they climb the career ladder, including the special problems they have in finding mentors: the senior scientific guides who are so crucial to career advancement. ♀ The final pieces, sprinkled throughout the section, are mini-profiles that allow a handful of successful female scientists to speak out on what it took for them to succeed in science. Part of the answer is clearly—determination. ♀ And don't skip the fax poll on page 1388. We'd like your view of what might be covered in next year's edition.

John Benditt
John Benditt

Editor, “Women in Science”