"Where Are All The Girls?" Women In Collegiate Instrumental Jazz

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Abstract

This qualitative study was undertaken to answer a question posed by a visiting high school musician who, after sitting-in with a college jazz ensemble, noted that she was the only girl in the room. Three undergraduate women music majors were selected for this study. Each was an instrumentalist, had an extensive background in jazz at the high school level and had withdrawn from college jazz bands after the freshman year. Individual and focus group interviews with the participants revealed that each of the three had made conscious choices that led to their withdrawal from the jazz program. Analysis of the data revealed the following themes: (1) a lack of female role models and mentoring in jazz; (2) pressure to perform both classical and jazz and (3) a negative environment sometimes associated with jazz ensembles. These factors led the students to make choices based on self-assessment and gendered expectations for success.
Men outnumber women on computer science and engineering and technology, according to the number of students graduating last year. A glance at statistics for the past five years shows that in some subject areas, gender differences have widened. Most stark is the 52% increase in the number of women studying veterinary science – accompanied by a 4% drop in the number of men taking the subject. The difference in the numbers of men and women studying computer science also widened. Why is there a gender gap at universities? It’s unclear why certain subjects attract more women than men (or vice ver