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# *Carrots and Sticks*

## *Comparing Institutional Policy Frameworks for Equity and Diversity in the Architecture Profession*

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*This paper is concerned with the historic and current governance of the architectural profession in Australia via its institutional bodies. Specifically, the paper examines the way that equity and diversity policy and strategies, as overseen and enacted by Institutes of architecture, differ over time and across comparable national environments. This paper, which represents one part of a larger study, examines the policy environment in architecture Australia and the USA, while the larger project also includes the UK and New Zealand. The larger project also addresses other professions in Australia.*

*In Australia, the profession's peak membership body—the Australian Institute of Architects—presently has a firm position on the role of policy, but a curious and perhaps incomplete suite of existing public policy instruments. This paper will examine those areas of an architect's professional remit that are presently covered by Institute policy (for instance public art, heritage, universal access, and sustainability) and those which are not (for instance employment, human resource management and, most importantly for this paper, equity and diversity). These elisions and emphases are partly contingent, a result of accidents of history, but they also provide a picture of how the “proper” concerns of an architect have been institutionally framed, past and present. This in turn becomes a question of historiography, framing that which is legitimated and entered into the historic record, and that which is excluded.*

*In the international context, the Australian Institute is unusual in having no explicit policy on equity and diversity, and the paper will examine some of the “carrots and sticks” deployed in the jurisdiction of the American Institute of Architects. At an institutional level, and seen historically, the pursuit of equity and diversity in the architecture profession remains an open question.*



## Carrots and Sticks

The statistics do not lie: there has been and continues to be considerable gender imbalance in the architecture profession in Australia. This is evident in base numeric terms: the most recent figures reveal that as of October 2012, only 21 per cent of practicing, registered architects in Australia were women,<sup>1</sup> in early 2013 women made up 28 per cent of members of the Australian Institute of Architects,<sup>2</sup> while in 2011 they made up 44 per cent of current students in architecture.<sup>3</sup> These figures conceal a knot of complexities: about the history of policy and governance in architecture; the role and efficacy of affirmative action initiatives; the inter-relation of gender and race as categories of difference; the ability of professional membership bodies to influence the actions of their members; the role of “professionalism” in an ethics of equality; and all of these matters as they bear upon architectural history and historiography. Mark Wigley has written:

The active production of gender distinctions can be found at every level of architectural discourse: in its rituals of legitimation, classification systems, lecture techniques, publicity images, canon formation, division of labour, bibliographies, design conventions, legal codes, salary structures, publishing practices, language, professional ethics, editing protocols, project credits, etc.<sup>4</sup>

In this paper we are concerned with how gender is reproduced at the level of institutional governance in architecture, even in attempts to ameliorate or redress gender inequity through policy on what has been variously known, under different discursive regimes, as affirmative action, gender equity, and diversity management.

It is true that many women work at the “margins” of the architecture profession, and are hence not represented in the figures cited above; legislative restrictions on who may and may not call themselves an architect have long been a barrier to true acknowledgment and celebration of the many women who work in unconventional patterns in the profession. The idea that only “architects” have rights or recognition in the industry could well have been a source of inequity in itself—it has certainly given rise to a cohort of largely invisible and certainly under-researched women who are not registered, nor members of the Institute, but work in architectural practices in ways and at tasks which are

1. Gill Matthewson, “Updating the Numbers, Part 2: At Work,” *Parlour: Women, Equity, Diversity*, January 28, 2013, online at <http://www.archiparlour.org/Updating-the-numbers-part-2-at-work/>

2. Gill Matthewson, “Updating the Numbers, Part 3: Institute Membership,” *Parlour*, February 10, 2013, online at <http://www.archiparlour.org/Updating-the-numbers-part-3-institute-membership/>

3. Gill Matthewson, “Updating the Numbers, Part 1: At School,” *Parlour*, January 29, 2013, online at <http://www.archiparlour.org/Updating-the-numbers-at-school/>

4. Mark Wigley, “Untitled: The Housing of Gender” in *Sexuality and Space*, ed. Beatriz Colomina (New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 1992), 329.

virtually indistinguishable from those of a registered architect. The fact that this group has long been uncoun­ted and indeed largely uncountable, and has remained largely unrepresented by any professional or institutional body, provides the context for this paper, which is also concerned with the means through which the architecture profession is led, governed, or disciplined (or not) by its institutions. Specifically, the paper examines the way that equity and diversity policy and strategies, as overseen and enacted by Institutes of architecture, differ over time and across comparable national environments. This paper is drawn from a larger project which undertakes a four way comparison of the policy environment in architecture in Australia, the USA, the UK and New Zealand, and also compares the institutional environment in architecture with those in the professions of law, medicine, and engineering. Within the constraints of this paper, there is only a brief address to these other professions, and within architecture only the Australian and North American contexts are addressed.

The Australian Institute of Architects presently has a firm position on the role of policy, but this has shifted and developed over time. In the international context, the Australian Institute is unusual in having no explicit or implicit policy on matters of equity or diversity. In 2013, alongside various internal policies governing the workings of the Institute itself, it has nationally-agreed “public” policies on a range of matters including (in alphabetical order) Affordable housing, Client-architect agreements, Environment, Government Architect, Heritage, Indigenous housing, Planning reform, Public art, Registration and regulation of architects, Research, Sustainability, Tertiary education of architects, Universal access, and Urban design. The vast majority of these are directed outward, to the architect’s fulfilment of a professional role, and their ethical and professional responsibilities to a client body. Nevertheless, there are a few which address “inward” matters, specifically relating to architectural practice and culture—for instance the education of architects, and the way that architectural practice might impact on sustainability and environment. Likewise, a number of the policies address what might be called social justice issues, for instance Indigenous and Affordable Housing, and Universal Access. In light of these existing patterns of policy formation, it is curious that no policy exists on any matter relating to the ethical employment and working conditions of architects. It appears that architects in Australia have been simply expected to be equitable and meritocratic employers as part of their professional standards.



This differs from the Royal Institute of British Architects, for example, which “is committed to a policy of equal opportunities” with a policy statement to this effect, applying “to all members and staff of the RIBA,” adopted by RIBA Council in February 2001. In addition, the RIBA has explicitly recognized the relationship between equity and employment practices in the profession, and in 2004 a formal RIBA Employment Policy was endorsed. This policy “encourages best practice for both employers and employees and emphasizes the business as well as the social case for adopting good employment practice.”<sup>5</sup> The first-listed recommendation is that employment matters should be included in the architects Code of Conduct, and the policy generally frames good employment practice as a matter of professional obligation. The policy includes advice on the role of the RIBA, the practice/ employer, and the employee in achieving this, noting that “we need to recruit, retain and promote architects who can respond to the different needs and values of all sections of the community.”<sup>6</sup>

5. RIBA Employment Policy, online at <http://www.architecture.com/Files/RIBAHoldings/PolicyAndInternationalRelations/Policy/Employment/EmploymentPolicy.pdf> (accessed July 30, 2013).

6. RIBA Employment Policy, 1.

The fact that no such professional values have been set out in the Australian context is curious. Just what equity and diversity might mean, why it might be important, and what benefits might accrue to the architecture profession or the community that it serves, has never been clearly laid out. But this paper will concentrate on a comparison, not with the UK but another jurisdiction, the United States, which has a longer and more active and explicit engagement with such issues. The very discrepancy between approach and strategy in the Australian and US contexts demonstrates that the pursuit of full equity and the celebration of diversity in the architecture profession clearly remains an open question.

## The Australian Situation

In Australia, there have been few high-level, concerted attempts to redress gender imbalance in the architecture profession, despite its having been explicitly recognized in policy reports since at least 1986. In “Women in the Architectural Profession,” a submission to the Human Rights Commission in November 1986, the (then) Royal Australian Institute of Architects (RAIA) noted that

In 1984 the RAIA undertook a national survey of all its members to ascertain patterns of professional involvement . . . . This National Survey included a number of key issues which

could be considered on the basis of the gender of the respondents. Results for several of these key issues, such as levels of income, types of employment, and status in the profession suggested to the RAIA that women architects were still, in 1984, a distinctly different group than their male counterparts.<sup>7</sup>

7. "Women in the Architectural Profession," Report by the Royal Australian Institute of Architects to the Human Rights Commission, November 1986, 8.

The data from the survey of women architects did not suggest "blatant major systematic problems of discrimination for women in the architectural profession," the report found, but pointed rather to "pervasive and less visible patterns of difference which are no less important for their subtlety."<sup>8</sup> Overall, the report concluded that

8. "Women in the Architectural Profession," 36.

women are not equal in the architectural profession in either employment patterns or incomes. In both instances they show significantly different patterns to their male counterparts . . . . Clearly at the national level important improvements to the status of women [architects] could be made.<sup>9</sup>

9. "Women in the Architectural Profession," 36.

Despite this conclusion, it appears that little tangible action was forthcoming. Five years later, similar findings were reported in "Towards a More Egalitarian Profession," a report prepared by the Royal Australian Institute of Architects Committee on the Status of Women in Architecture, a working party of the RAIA National Education Committee, chaired by Anne Cunningham. Observing that "It is clear that not all female architects suffer as a result of their gender, nor do all male architects benefit as a result of their gender," this report noted that nevertheless "as a percentage [women] are a minority, particularly in senior positions in architectural firms and schools of architecture."<sup>10</sup> This report also made a series of specific findings, following the pattern of offering a "discussion," then "recommendations," then "policy" suggestions, in the areas of Career Advice, Education, and Architectural Practice. In many ways ahead of its time—given the enormous shifts in technology which were to transform the profession in the ensuing years—the document recommended amongst other things that

10. "Towards a More Egalitarian Profession," Findings of the Royal Australian Institute of Architects Committee on the Status of Women in Architecture, August 1991.

Practices must be made aware of the need for flexibility in work practices, working hours and work opportunities. The RAIA should produce an ideas brochure which would be distributed to practices providing examples of successful alternative work practices such as: job sharing, flexible working



hours, working from home, use of computer technology to link the home and the office, and equality in determination of staff roles (site inspection, project managers).<sup>11</sup>

11. "Towards a More Egalitarian Profession."

Once again, despite such specific recommendations, little tangible action was forthcoming. It is worthwhile to pause for a moment and consider why that might have been—in this and the earlier case. Possibilities might include bureaucratic inertia; expense; a lack of institutional will or ability to manage change; an inability to actualise policy recommendations in practical terms; an over-ambition on the part of researchers and policy-writers; a belief that change in this area is not a high priority; a belief that gender equity is a niche or fringe issue not of interest to the general membership; resistance amongst women architects themselves; or a myriad of other reasons. Whether any of these is the case here remains unknown, but it is indeed curious that repeated findings of the same problems, in research and reports commissioned by the Institute itself, have been consistently not acted upon, or not in a concerted or effective manner.

Some fourteen years after "Towards an Egalitarian Profession," Paula Whitman released "Going Places: The Career Progression of Women in Architecture," a report detailing the results of extensive research she had conducted on the architecture profession, using a variety of methods including surveys and in-depth interviews. This report, which was to become a touchstone for subsequent work on gender equity in the architecture profession in Australia, also made a series of specific policy recommendations based on the major findings of the research. Some of these findings seemed somewhat contradictory—for instance finding 4, that "there is a high level of satisfaction amongst women with their current jobs in terms of balancing work and personal lives and having control over their professional activities," which stood in contrast with finding 5, that "there is a low level of satisfaction amongst women with their current jobs in terms of remuneration, present rate of career progress and long term career opportunities."<sup>12</sup> Whitman explained this state of simultaneous satisfaction and dis-satisfaction in terms of women having distinct career aspirations, and measures of personal success and satisfaction, which they believed to be out of step with the rest of the profession—for instance women rejected "the scale of a project, practice size, awards and journal coverage as measures of their personal success, but believe that the profession generally value these factors as indicators of career progression"; likewise they felt that

12. Paula Whitman, "Going Places: The Career Progression of Women in Architecture," Royal Australian Institute of Architects and QUT, Brisbane, 2005, 6.

13. Whitman, “Going Places,” 6.

“personal satisfaction and client satisfaction are the most meaningful measures of career progression for women.”<sup>13</sup>

A telling element of Whitman’s report was the acknowledgement by the then RIAA President Warren Kerr, in his foreword, that “Australia is missing out on the contribution at a senior level of many individuals trained to advise on and design the built environment.” He continued:

Based on the premise that the directors of architectural practices are the personnel in the architectural profession who are most likely to influence the design of the built environment, the findings of this study highlight a significant blockage in fulfilling the aspirations of female architectural practitioners to contribute to the improvement of our urban infrastructure.<sup>14</sup>

14. Warren Kerr (RAIA National President), Foreword to Whitman, “Going Places,” 5.

Despite the identification of this “significant blockage” with such broad implications for the lives of Australians, there was no subsequent uptake of Whitman’s policy recommendations on the systematic, national scale that she had recommended. It was this absence that led, another five years later, to yet another research project, currently in progress, on the under-representation of women in the Australian architecture profession, especially in senior leadership and management roles.<sup>15</sup> One of the major planned outcomes of this project is an equity and diversity policy for the Australian Institute of Architects. But given the long history of previous policies and policy recommendations that have not been enacted, this project also aims, perhaps more importantly, at the actualisation of such a policy.

15. “Equity and Diversity in the Australian Architecture Profession: Women, Work and Leadership” is a project funded by an ARC Linkage grant (2011-2014), and has five Industry Partners: the Australian Institute of Architects (nationally); Architecture Media; BVN Architecture; Bates Smart; and PTW Architects. The research team is led by Dr Naomi Stead (The University of Queensland, UQ); with Professor Julie Willis (The University of Melbourne); Professor Sandra Kaji-O’Grady (The University of Sydney); Professor Gillian Whitehouse (UQ); Dr Karen Burns (The University of Melbourne); Dr Amanda Roan (UQ); and Ms Justine Clark (The University of Melbourne). Ms Gill Matthewson is an APAI on the project, undertaking doctoral studies at UQ 2011-2014.

The purpose of this paper is not to discuss the project at hand, so we will abstain from a detailed description of its aims and outcomes here. But during the course of researching and drafting a new policy, in 2013, the project has also sought precedents and examples from other institutes of architects in other, comparable international contexts, and it is to this comparison—in this case with the United States—that we will now turn.

## The North American Situation

The American Institute of Architects (often known by the acronym AIA but referred to in this paper as the “American



Institute,” in order to avoid confusion with its Australian counterpart) has a long history of engagement with issues of diversity, particularly around race, ethnicity and gender. In this sense it is different from the Australian Institute which, with the exception of the Victorian Chapter’s Reconciliation Action Plan of 2010, has focused on issues of gender to the exclusion of race and ethnicity.<sup>16</sup> Incidentally this is also different from the British context, where the low representation of “black and minority” architects has been the object of significant research in recent years.<sup>17</sup> Over several decades, the American Institute has developed, trialed and implemented a range of initiatives to improve the diversity of its members. The American Institute appears to embrace three main approaches, which can be loosely categorised as pipeline, support, and retention. The three approaches appear to have been used with varying levels of success at different times and for different groups.

The catalysing event for the American Institute’s engaging with diversity was an excoriating keynote address delivered by civil rights campaigner and head of the Urban League, Whitney M. Young, in 1968 at the American Institute of Architects national conference. The address included the admonition that “You are not a profession that has distinguished itself by your social and civic contributions to the cause of civil rights .... You are most distinguished by your thunderous silence and your complete irrelevance.”<sup>18</sup> Following this, the profession in the US appears to have been galvanised into acknowledging the lack of diversity in its membership, particularly with respect to racial diversity. In 1970, the American Institute and the American Architectural Foundation together established scholarships for Minority Disadvantaged students, which initially supported 20 students per year (and now supports fewer students for longer periods).<sup>19</sup> The American Institute also introduced the Whitney M. Young Award in 1972 to recognise those working to improve diversity in the profession.<sup>20</sup>

In addition to such initiatives internal to the American Institute, a number of extra-institutional, private or volunteer organisations have been active at different times to raise the profile and further the interests of minority groups. The volunteer-based National Organization of Minority Architects (NOMA) was founded in 1971 by twelve African-American architects located around the country. NOMA continues to operate today, promoting excellence, community engagement and the professional development of its members.<sup>21</sup>

16. The Victorian chapter launched its Reconciliation Action Plan “detailing steps and priorities to help achieve Indigenous equality,” on September 17, 2010. See <http://dynamic.architecture.com.au/i-cms?page=1.13262.156.3148.3509.15133> (accessed July 30, 2013).

17. See the UK Commission for Architecture & the Built Environment (CABE), *Black & Minority Ethnic Representation in the Built Environment Professions*, prepared by the Centre for Ethnic Minority Studies, Royal Holloway, University of London, June 2005; CABE (Helen Barnes, Jane Parry, Melahat Sahin-Dikmen and Dorothe Bonjour of the Policy Studies Institute), *Architecture and Race: A Study of Black and Minority Ethnic Students in the Profession*, CABE Research outcomes 6 (report not dated, but published in 2003 or later).

18. Whitney M. Young Jr and I. Livingston, “Unedited Transcript of the Speech Made to the American Institute of Architects in 1968,” *Twenty on 20/20 vision: Perspectives on Diversity and Design* (2003): 9.

19. “The American Institute of Architects: Five Students Selected for the AIA/AAF Minority Disadvantaged Scholarship, Press Releases,” n.d., online at <http://www.aia.org/press/releases/AIAB090513?dvid=&recspec=AIAB090513>.

20. “The American Institute of Architects: Whitney M. Young Jr. Award, Awards,” *American Institute of Architects*, n.d., online at <http://www.aia.org/practicing/awards/AIAS075330>.

21. National Organisation of Minority Architects (NOMA), online at <http://www.noma.net/article/45/organization/about> (accessed July 31, 2013).

22. “OWA | Our History,” *Organisation of Women Architects and Design Professionals*, n.d., online at <http://www.owa-usa.org/history.php>.

23. Judith Edelman Architectural Papers, Ms97-010, Special Collections, Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University.

24. “American Institute of Architects—1975—Affirmative Action Plan for the Integration of Women.pdf,” n.d., online at [http://www.aia.org/aiaucmp/groups/ek\\_public/documents/pdf/aiaap037597.pdf](http://www.aia.org/aiaucmp/groups/ek_public/documents/pdf/aiaap037597.pdf).

25. This is the subject of ongoing research in the current project “Equity and Diversity in the Australian Architecture Profession.” Judith Edelman’s papers are currently kept as a special collection at Virginia Tech University, which includes papers on women’s status in the field of architecture from 1971 to 1980, AIA taskforce reports and Affirmative Action Plan 1973-1989 as well as conferences on Women in Design and Planning, West Coast Women’s Design and Women in Architecture Symposiums 1974 to 1975

In the early 1970s, a number of local groups for women architects began to emerge, including the Chicago Women in Architecture group, the Organisation of Women Architects (OWA, also referred to as the Alliance of Women in Architecture in San Francisco) as well as less known groups in other major cities.<sup>22</sup> Following on from this grassroots beginning, the 1973 American Institute national convention passed a resolution that “the [American Institute] take action to integrate women into all aspects of the profession as full participants.” A task force on Women in Architecture, chaired by Judith Edelman, was formed to study the issues.<sup>23</sup> The Task Force surveyed the profession and reported its findings to the board in 1974. In that year, women members of American Institute numbered just 300, in comparison to some 24 000 male members. From this data, problem areas were identified in the 1975 *Report on the Status of Women in the Architectural Profession*. Following this, the Board directed the Task Force to develop a four-year Affirmative Action Plan (AAP) for 1976-1979. The Task Force was wound up after delivering the AAP to the Board in December 1975.<sup>24</sup>

The three problem areas identified and addressed in the AAP were underrepresentation, employment discrimination, and alienation of women from the American Institute. Contributing factors to these three areas were also identified. A clear infographic of the four-year objectives, specific goals and Programs/Actions/Tools required for each were also provided. In retrospect, the report makes for somewhat disheartening reading: more than 30 years later women are still paid less and motherhood is still seen as a barrier to professional success. Many of the improvements that have occurred in the intervening period appear to be due to overriding legislative changes (such as those that prevent the dismissal of pregnant employees) rather than any cultural change within architecture, even though it is true that the numbers and proportion of women architects, women students and faculty have all improved in the intervening period. While the AAP provided clear goals for measuring success, it is not clear whether this proposed research and monitoring was carried out, or what decisions were made on the basis of it.<sup>25</sup>

In 1992, the American Institute President’s Task Force on Equal Rights and Proactive Action was formed to develop a strategic plan to implement the 1991 civil rights policy. This Task Force



evolved into a Diversity Committee and was comprised of members from the Minorities Resources committee, Women in Architecture Committee, NOMA and the Organisation of Lesbian and Gay Architects and Designers (OLGAD).<sup>26</sup> This Diversity Committee was charged with the organisation of a diversity conference, the first of which was held in 1994. The conference organisers explicitly invited those who had traditionally been on the margins of the profession (such as women and ethnic and racial minorities) to attend and organise around a socially progressive agenda. The first conference was widely regarded as a success and was repeated in the following three years. However, low registration rates forced the cancellation of the planned 2000 diversity conference, and successful resurrection has not yet occurred.<sup>27</sup>

26. Kathryn H. Anthony, *Designing for Diversity: Gender, Race, and Ethnicity in the Architectural Profession* (Champaign: University of Illinois Press, 2001).

27. Anthony, *Designing for Diversity*.

Nevertheless, the self-designated “Diversity Squadron” Summary of Achievements between 1992 and 1998 indicated that the conferences succeeded in creating and nurturing an intergenerational community of architects with diverse backgrounds. Several of those who were active in the initial stages of organisation went on to hold leadership positions in the wider profession through their work in academia, publishing and the American Institute itself. Further, the diversity conferences served as a recruitment tool for the American Institute, with many joining the organisation and taking an active role in local chapters as a result of their attendance at the conference.<sup>28</sup>

28. “Summary of Achievements/1998—AIA Diversity History,” *AIA Diversity History*, n.d., online at <https://sites.google.com/site/aiadiversityhistory/1998-summary-of-achievements>.

In 2004, the American Institute board ratified a resolution to improve diversity figures in the profession. This was followed by a funded study into the profession’s demographics; it found that “as of December 2004, approximately 12% of all the AIA members are female.” In 2008, a meeting was convened of the multiFORMity AIA Diversity Plenary, which resulted in a milestone “Gateway Commitment,” which committed the American Institute to:

significantly improving the representation and management of diversity in architecture education and practice. We believe this requires a cultural shift in the Institute, in our workplaces, and in ourselves. We envision a continuing conversation to articulate a specific action agenda concerning: using our members’ expertise to expand our diversity with creative career mentoring opportunities from kindergarten to retirement; learning from other colleagues

and related organizations that have successfully addressed diversity issues; focusing on a series of coordinated action items and ideas to promote diversity, with comprehensive oversight; asking our membership to initiate conversations and actions on the local level; sharing and celebrating best practices in promoting diversity; recruiting and retaining the best and brightest in our profession; and, employing the appropriate resources to implement these initiatives. Our purpose in setting forth this commitment is to develop a profession that reflects the diversity of the communities, users, and clients we serve.<sup>29</sup>

29. The Gateway Commitment is reprinted within the AIA Diversity Action Plan, available for download at <http://www.aia.org/about/initiatives/AIAS076701>

This important statement of principle was more than simply aspirational—it was actualized through a Diversity Action Plan, with clear goals, actions, and metrics. This was both the realization and carrying out of the American Institute’s commitment to diversity in its own strategic plan—thus to “expand the racial/ethnic, gender and perspective diversity of the design professions to mirror the society we serve.”<sup>30</sup>

30. Quoted within the AIA Diversity Action Plan, available for download at <http://www.aia.org/about/initiatives/AIAS076701>

In addition, the American Institute’s National Diversity and Inclusion Council sets out current “Position Statements” on both civil rights and diversity, with the latter stating that

The AIA believes that diversity is a cultural ethos – a way of thinking or acting that fosters inclusion, enhancing our membership, our profession, and the quality of life in our communities. Embracing this culture of diversity, all programs and initiatives of the AIA and its members shall reflect the society that we serve, regardless of race, gender, sexual orientation, physical abilities, or religious beliefs.<sup>31</sup>

31. AIA Position Statement on Diversity, online at <http://network.aia.org/DiversityandInclusion/Home/>

It is worth noting the breadth with which diversity is defined here, and noting also that race is mentioned before gender, which in turn is listed before sexual orientation. In this we might discern a clue as how the dynamics of subsequent waves of civil rights activism tended to sediment within diversity policy in the architecture profession. Gender equity, in this context, is framed as a subset of human rights and civil rights, with gender being one category of difference which may be embraced in a professional context. This remains the case to the present day in the US, with racial and ethnic minorities maintaining a strong and vocal presence, alongside womens’ groups. In Australia on the other hand, the current activist emphasis is almost entirely on gender equity, with other categories of difference in architecture largely set aside.



Leaving aside the soaring rhetoric and sentiment of the American Institute documents, and acknowledging that the Diversity Action Plan represents a high point in diversity management within the Anglophone architecture institutes, it remains to be seen whether this strategy is actually working, or will actually work. By far the dominant diversity focus at the American Institute, and the one it has pursued most vigorously at those times in its history when the numbers of minority architects have been extremely low (ie less than 5% of members), is on “pipeline” efforts, that is, the path or “pipeline” to becoming an architect. This has involved identifying high school students for participation in ‘shadowing’ programs, scholarships, mentoring and support, each of which are targeted at minority groups. With regard to women, this process has largely been successful, with the number of female students rising steadily since efforts began in the 1970s. However, it has to date been somewhat less successful for racial and ethnic minorities. For example, over half of all Black architecture students in the USA are enrolled in programs at Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCU), located in the south of the country, where employment and internships have historically been less available. Thus, while the proportion has increased, the distribution is far from uniform. For those who sit at the intersection of multiple minorities (notably Black women), there are predictably even worse outcomes. The outcomes for “invisible” minorities such as queer practitioners and practitioners with a disability are not known, as data is not collected.

The second approach to increasing diversity has been one of peer based support, networking and increasing the visibility of underrepresented architects. This can be seen by the work of a number of groups outside the American Institute such as NOMA, OWA and Arquitectos (the Latino/a architects group). All three organisations run events to help their members progress professionally. This includes support for registration through information sessions, formal APE preparation, mock exams (indeed the OWA mock exam was so successful it was sold to AIA for use nationwide), portfolio review sessions, training in public speaking, mentoring programs, and networking retreats.

The third approach, of retention, has the shortest history of the three in the US context. It is not clear whether retention of minorities has been thoroughly investigated or whether specific efforts have been made to address the retention of women. Given that numbers of female students are steady in the high 40 percent range, and given that women architects themselves have identified the problems of flexible, part time, and unconventional working patterns as significant disincentives to staying in the profession, one wonders if the overlooking of retention approaches could be reconsidered.

## Other Australian Professions Responses to Female Participation

Within the Australian context, many other professions including law, medicine and engineering have also grappled with increasing women's participation and retention in the profession. Interestingly, their responses have tended to follow the American model of official policies and programs designed to boost the pipeline, network and retention within the profession, supplemented by external special interest groups. The rapid growth in the number of women entering the professions in some cases outstrips that of architecture, despite educational barriers falling at approximately the same time. For example, in NSW, the number of women solicitors has grown by 465% since 1988. Women now make up 46% of the legal profession, but remain underrepresented at partner and principal level.<sup>32</sup>

32. Law Society of NSW, "Thought Leadership 2011: Advancement of Women in the Profession," n.d., online at <http://www.lawsociety.com.au/ForSolicitors/advocacy/thoughtleadership/Advancementofwomen/index.htm>.

In the case of both law and medicine, there are well-established policies around issues gender equity (including around aligned topics such as flexibility and part-time work) held by the professional membership bodies. There are also well-established and active women's organisations that sit outside the overarching professional bodies of both law and medicine, which advocate for and connect women. The special issues facing women are recognised from university level, with some universities offering mentoring and "women in law/medicine" clubs. In contrast, engineering, which continues to struggle to boost numbers of female students (women were just 14% of completing students in 2010), the professional network (Engineers Australia) has a dedicated "special interest group" with financial autonomy, known as Women in Engineering. Due to the low number of women entering engineering, current programs are very much focussed on pipeline efforts targeted at school students before the career paths are chosen.

## Concluding Thoughts and Areas for Further Research

As Francesca Hughes has written, "The absence of women from the profession of architecture remains, despite the various theories, very difficult to explain and very slow to change."<sup>33</sup> Thus while we have attempted here to sketch a history of equity and diversity initiatives in Institutes of Architecture in Australia and the US, what has not been possible at this stage is to evaluate the power and effectiveness of such initiatives. Partly this is because many of them are recent, and their effects not yet fully felt. But more pertinently, critical evaluation of such programs, when it is done at all, is not generally made available for public consumption. There is a pressing need

33. Francesca Hughes, *The Architect: Reconstructing Her Practice* (Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press, 1996), x.



not only to invest more effort in equity and diversity initiatives in the architecture profession, in order not to perpetuate the inequities which have persisted for the past thirty years, but also to assess what is effective and what is not. One way to do this might be through further recourse to other professions.

While architectural working environments are often regarded as unique, many professions are in fact tackling the same issues with regard to workforce diversity. The historical exclusion of women, differences in post-qualification remuneration and career trajectories and under-representation at management and senior levels are found other fields. Further comparative work is required, especially examining policy initiatives which have been tried, tested, and found to be effective or not in these other fields. But while these other professions that require tertiary education and have a formal registration system in place might seem the most obvious comparative cases, there are some aspects of architectural practice that arguably have greater commonality with other “creative” disciplines: irregular hours, a dominance of small and single person practices, low unionization rates, a lack of formal Human Resource Management structures, and an ideological attachment to informality. For this reason, additional work on diversity in other design and creative industry fields such as film, television, advertising and software development is also required.

Silvia Gherardi notes that “Both men and women are prisoners of gender, albeit in different ways, in asymmetrical situations of power and in an interrelated manner.”<sup>34</sup> In order to release both men and women from the asymmetry of their gendered situations in architecture, more concerted work is needed, with policy a key element of this.

34. Silvia Gherardi, “Gendered Organizational Cultures: Narratives of Women Travellers in a Male World,” *Gender, Work & Organization* 3, no. 4 (1996), 187.