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History of Science and Technology

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Reflection 5

Recently in class, we have been discussing women in science and technology fields, and how they have been disregarded or diverted from these fields in the past. In one article in particular, it is mentioned that, in the 1950s/1960s, companies were replacing fully qualified women with semi-qualified men, as the computer age was taking off. While this is a profound issue, I had some concerns.

In the more recent past, there have been many trends working to combat the monopoly that men had on the science and technology industries. Women in these fields are sought after, and are desired by companies all over the country. One of my biggest concerns is that companies are actively trying to hire more and more women to help with their diversity “quotas.” My first thought to this idea, after some of our readings, is are semi-qualified women being hired for these positions, in lieu of a fully qualified person, simply because that person is a man? Why wouldn’t companies be instituting blind hiring, and simply hiring those that are most qualified for the job? This to me makes the most sense; to me, it seems a fair, straightforward, and unbiased solution. No one wants to be hired for a job they are not qualified for, because it sets them up for failure.

Assuming these potentially semi-qualified women suspect this is happening, and fear they are not up to par, can this affect the quality of their work? When you are not hired based off of merit, can it change the way you see yourself in relation to your field? In my own personal experience, it makes me nervous about the future. I already know that, in some aspects of my summer internship, I will not be as good as others; this is my first internship, and admittedly, I have not taken enough classes to have a solid understanding of the type of work I will be doing. As some say, I don’t have a leg up on my fellow interns. Although they mean well and are excited for what my future holds, my family keeps saying I will do great because I am a woman in my field, and there is such a high demand for women in technology. They don’t realize what they are saying, but with my shaky confidence in my course work/knowledge base, it makes me fear I am just a number to this company, that I am filling their quota.

One of my biggest fears with this internship is that I am set up for failure, because I am under qualified. My first computer science course was my freshman year of college, and although I have learned so much already, I am nowhere near some of my classmates. Computer science is not the only place that this fear exists. My friend’s uncle is a male nurse, and is writing his dissertation for his doctorate on the same issue in nursing, with the demand being for male nurses in this female driven field. My question now is this: how can we combat this issue, and raise the confidence in any minority, in any field, and eliminate the fear of being a number for some diversity quota, this fear of being under qualified, yet hired anyway.