

## Report to the ANU Gender Institute

### **Distinguished Public Lecture by Prof Sharon Sassler on ‘*Early Career Transitions in STEM Employment: Processes shaping retention and satisfaction*’**

**3 July 2018**

#### **Event Details**

This distinguished public lecture presented by Research School of Social Sciences Visiting Fellow Professor Sharon Sassler (Cornell University) examined new research into the gendered experience of STEM employment in the USA. Based on research from two grants, Professor Sassler demonstrated the intersections between gender and field of study in how STEM employment is experienced in the early years of employment. Her results suggest that in most STEM fields, transitions into the STEM labour force have narrowed, but that women continue to experience employment in STEM jobs differently than do men.

Sharon Sassler is Professor in the Department of Policy Analysis and Management (PAM) at Cornell University. As a social demographer, Sassler’s research examines factors shaping the activities of young adults and their life course transitions into school and work, relationships, and parenthood, and how these transitions vary by gender, race/ethnicity, and social class.

The lecture, which was open to the whole ANU community as well as the general public, proved to be highly relevant to a wide audience of individuals interested in improving gender equity and diversity in STEM careers. The lecture and reception also provided an opportunity for interested attendees to meet and discuss potential research opportunities and ideas.

#### **Impact and Outcomes**

There were 65 confirmed attendees at the public lecture, including a range of academics and students from across Science, Gender and Social Sciences at ANU. The lecture also drew attendees from local STEM industry, including Datacom and Questacon. Notably, the audience included a considerable number of attendees from federal government departments including the Australian Department of Industry, Innovation and Science; the office of the Parliament of Australia; the Australian Government Digital Transformation; and the Australian Government Department of Defence. The lecture was followed by a lively Q & A session and then an extended reception.

The lecture was promoted and shared across a wide variety of internal and external web platforms, including Experience ANU and the social media channels of both the School of Demography and the Gender Institute. This included five different tweets from the School of Demography (before, during and after the lecture), which created a total of 4,313 individual twitter ‘impressions’ of the event and the ANU Gender Institute.

A [full video recording](#) of the lecture was produced by the ANU College of Arts & Social Sciences and is available on the websites of both the ANU Gender Institute and ANU School of Demography. The video was also shared across our social media platforms.

Subsequent to, and as a result of the lecture, Prof Sassler was invited for an interview by the Athena Swan Science in Australia Gender Equity (SAGE) group. The resulting video ‘Patching the leaky

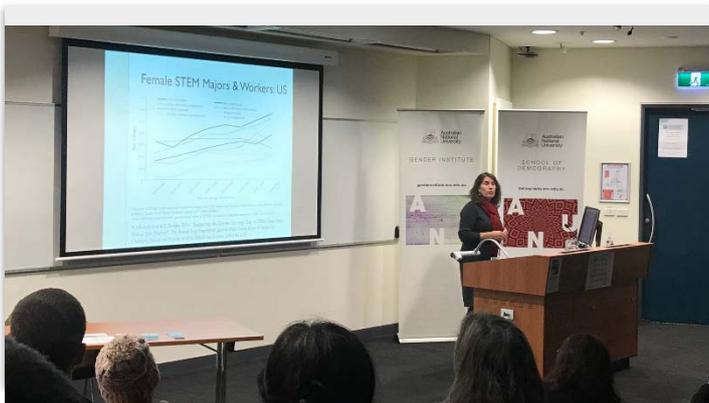
pipeline: Professor Steve Blackburn in conversation with Professor Sharon Sassler' is [now available](#) on the Athena SWAN website and has already had 160 individual views.

## Event Photos

*A/Prof Ann Evans, Senior Fellow and CASS Associate Dean (Research), introducing Professor Sassler:*



*Professor Sassler presents the Distinguished Public Lecture:*



*Audience (partial) during lecture:*





# Early Career Transitions in STEM Employment: Processes Shaping Retention and Satisfaction

**Tuesday 3 July  
6-7pm**

## Speaker

**Professor Sharon Sassler**

Dept of Policy Analysis & Management  
Cornell University, U.S.A.

## Location

**Theatrette (2.02)**

Sir Roland Wilson Building #120  
120 McCoy Circuit, ANU

**A reception in the foyer will follow the  
lecture**

## Registration requested

<https://sassler-anu.eventbrite.com.au>

This distinguished lecture is free and open  
to the public



The need for STEM workers in the United States (and elsewhere) is expected to grow at or above the national growth rate over the next decade (U.S. Department of Commerce, 2012). Furthermore, governments have focused a good deal of attention on increasing the presence of women and underrepresented minorities in STEM fields. The science and technology labour force has already diversified in important ways over the past few decades. Women's representation in science and technology education and employment has increased significantly, though their representation remains considerably smaller in fields such as engineering and computer science. Contemporary debates about the STEM labour force centre around claims that there is both a shortage of trained workers for the scientific and technical needs of employers, and that this shortage could be ameliorated with increased numbers of women and minorities trained in STEM disciplines. Drawing on several works in progress, I present results suggesting that in most STEM fields, transitions into the STEM labour force have narrowed, but that women and minorities continue to experience employment in STEM jobs differently than do men. Results are drawn from quantitative and qualitative projects of mid-career and recent STEM graduates.

**Sharon Sassler** is Professor in the Department of Policy Analysis and Management (PAM) at Cornell University. As a social demographer, Sassler's research examines factors shaping the activities of young adults and their life course transitions into school and work, relationships, and parenthood, and how these transitions vary by gender, race/ethnicity, and social class.

Her published research on family demography explores various facets of contemporary relationships, assessing whether marital or cohabiting unions are associated with the health of single mothers; how children born to unmarried parents fare with regards to their educational outcomes; as well as research on how cohabiting unions progress into marriage, parenthood, or dissolution. Her recently published (2017) book, *Cohabitation Nation: Gender, Class, and the Remaking of Relationships*, examines how cohabitation is contributing to growing levels of family inequality in the United States. A second stream of her work examines the retention and advancement of women in Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) occupations, examining transitions into and retention in STEM jobs, as well as the gender wage gap in STEM.

Presented by

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