

It's not us, it's you: Why women don't join Web3

"Welcome to our International Women's Day celebration!" the founder of Crypto Girls Club announced to the crowd. Women in Web3 had gathered from all over Berlin to celebrate the holiday and listen to panelists discuss the need for more diversity in tech.

Temps de lecture : minute

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It's a common topic at Web3 events: we need more diversity, perspectives, and women to help shape the nascent industry. Without them, it will again be a white man's world with incredible bias.

"I just don't understand it," an acquaintance told me as we settled into a Berlin Blockchain Week workshop several months later. "It's a meritocracy. Everything is open source, online, and free. Anyone can learn this stuff. Why aren't more women getting involved?" His question assumes that access has been the limiting factor to women entering STEM roles.

Internally, I shook my head. As an anthropologist, the barrier to entry is obvious.

Rewind to the 1960s and 70s. Men in white-collar offices have the ideas, women type them up. This thing called programming has just emerged. It's slow, menial work. Women punch cards and conduct data entry. Coding, like typing, is women's work. Over 50% of programmers were female, and the number of women pursuing computer science degrees was growing.

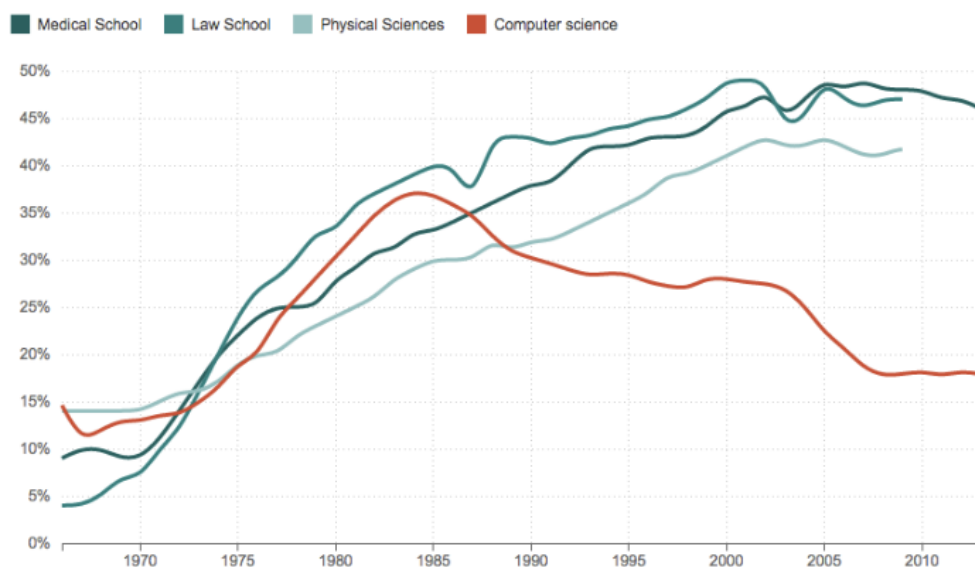
Fast-forward to 1984. It's Super Bowl season, and viewers are as excited to watch the million-dollar commercials as they are the game. They have good reason to be. A historic 60 seconds is about to change technology, forever.

On screen, there is a woman in bright orange shorts, running with a sledgehammer. Men gather, marching in single file, all wearing the same drab blue-grey jumpsuit, to obediently watch a political announcement. Guards rush to stop her, but the woman manages to smash the television screen before they reach her. *The new Apple computer is soon to be released.* To this day, this commercial is considered one of the top commercials of all time.

From this moment on, men began thinking of coding and computers as their domain. The media followed, *depicting men and boys as the primary computer users,* and marketing in-home desktop computers to men. Computer science degrees sought by women plummeted, *despite 50% of those who gave up on pursuing a degree being on the Dean's List.*

What Happened To Women In Computer Science?

% Of Women Majors, By Field



When I hear complaints that women make up only 13% of founding teams and 27% of crypto, blockchain, and Web3 careers despite the 'access' to learning tools, I hear ignorance. Women and minorities have been socialised to 'stay out of STEM.' In some ways, this socialisation comes from blatant statements like that made by the President of Harvard who argued women don't enter STEM due to genetic disadvantages. Most of the time, girls are shown tech is not for them in more subtle ways; the toys they are given, the focus of teachers in school, and ultimately the bias shown in the workplace.

We must break decades of bias for women to enter Web3 in the balanced numbers leaders desire. First, Web3 must begin to look like a place **for** women. Organisations like Crypto Girls Club, Funding Female Founders, and HerDAO are a great start, but they continue to silo women into isolated groups. Leaders of Web3 businesses and events, 87% of whom are men, need to consider an inclusion plan that makes their companies welcoming. Personally, when I see a team page on a company's website made up of all men, I veer away due to a history of microaggressions in tech.

Second, men will have to get used to parity. Women make up 51% of the world's population, yet when women make up more than 30% of a group, men feel threatened. That number is interesting in comparison to the 27% of women in Web3 careers. Is there a connection?

Finally, the lingo in Web3 creates an enormous barrier to entry. Greeting each other with "GM" instead of "good morning" sounds much like a greeting one would expect from a bro-tastic Silicone Valley startup. Sure, it's fun to be 'in the know,' to throw around terms like 'node,' 'DAO,' and 'hash,' but when speakers at events don't back up these terms with context, first-time visitors are much less likely to return. Yes, there are plenty of resources available to learn this language, but that is not how community is built, nor is it how humans default to learning. Children

learn new words in context and from interaction, strengthening bonds between parents, teachers, and siblings. We must do better on this front.

These are only a few suggestions in a sea of opportunity. Next time you wish to complain that women and minorities are not joining your community, think hard about the overarching social context that the community exists within. Nothing happens in a vacuum. You can make change, but you'll have to address entrenched biases to do so.

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