

## **Gendered Inequity in Society and the Academy: Policy Initiatives, Economic Realities and Legal Constraints**

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### **Abstract**

Of all the social constructs impacting the contemporary world, gender is perhaps the most pervasive and the most insidious. Its inequities creep into our everyday lives with impunity. Across the globe, gender construction has evoked challenge, undergone reform and, in some instances, transformed thinking in societies. Yet, for all the gains made by the international community and all the rights women have managed to claim, there is lingering paralysis in societal efforts to close the gender gap and view women's rights as human rights. Even more disturbing is the fact that the academy, despite its reservoir of intellectual potential to create space for feminist transformations, proceeds at a visibly lethargic pace towards this end. Research on gender inequity has consistently focused on variations in income, employment opportunities, and other resources between men and women. But little attention has been paid to those societal forces that sustain gendered inequity, namely policy initiatives, economic realities, and legal constraints, which further complicate gender at the intersections of race, class and culture. And, in the academy, given the male-dominated nature of some disciplines (e.g. political science) gendered inequities are easily incubated and surface with increasing regularity. This study examines the political, economic and legal influences that exacerbate gender inequalities and offer practical recommendations for un-gendering society and the academy.

### **Introduction**

There has been a growing interest in gender inequality in society. In the academy, a microcosm of society, scholars in the social and behavioral sciences have contributed to a cross-section of research pertinent to the topic. They have largely reiterated the existence of gendered inequities in society illustrated as variations in income and other resources between men and women. They have failed to address, to any significant extent, the insidious nature of gender inequality at the intersection of race, class and culture, prevalent not only in society but in most disciplines within the academy. This study seeks to identify some of the gendered inequalities overlooked in society at the working and middle class levels and across cultures by exposing some of the strategies that have succeeded in exacerbating gender inequity.

Women are disadvantaged in economic, legal and social arenas. While gender inequity has been observed in Europe and the United States on economic or class levels, there has been little focus on the realities of cross-cultural gender inequality and what influences contribute to such variations. In developing countries, gender inequality is more concentrated in race and class intersections because of traditional social stratifications and conservative political cultures. Indeed, in most developing (more so than developed) countries, family behavior allows for differences in the treatment of males and females. The question of equity does not arise. Because gender is socially constructed, gender inequity often is down-played and considered a natural social response to traditional hierarchical roles as a necessary part of community relations, whether in the workforce or in the home. In many parts of the world, women ensure that boys

and men are better educated, nourished and cared for than girls and women. The welfare of men has been considered more important than that of women in places where men are seen to be the caretakers of the family. Given such cultural context, gender inequity has not been high on the research agenda of the academy.

In recent decades, female scholars (especially in Asia and the Caribbean) have researched and publicized gender constructed behaviors as unjust and more attention has been paid to the question of equity across sexes. With the development of a vibrant global women's movement and shared research, literate women are being educated about their right to equal opportunity in society as well as in the academy and other work spaces.

In the USA, at the aggregate level of analysis, gender inequality is understood in relation to family tradition as well as government policy (e.g. welfare policy), economic justice issues (cost of living, wage differentiation, employment access), and laws put in place to correct gender injustice (e.g. cohabitation rights, financial and property share). Often, the law/policy proves to be less of a corrective influence and more of a contributing element to gender inequalities evident in some societies. US reports show that two decades ago, gendered inequalities were as glaring as they are today. Full-time working women earned roughly 71% of what full-time working men earned and as much as three-fifths of poor households were maintained by a single female parent (Okin 1989). One cannot escape the impact of economic, political and legal influences on the continuity or erosion of gender inequity. Nor can one ignore the effects of such an impact in the academy.

Although the discipline of political science, with its study of democratic theory, has contributed much to a theoretical consideration of equality, it has not embraced the broad question of gender equality with any level of thoroughness. Some political theorists (e.g. Mill 1970, 1991) have drawn attention to gender inequality through a focus on women and work and women in the institution of marriage. Other theorists, specifically addressing the question of justice, fail to engage the subject of gender and justice. Notably, John Rawls, proponent of a theory of justice, although defending a theory of 'equal basic liberty' and the 'difference principle' neglects to include a position on gender justice or to recognize the family as part of the basic structure of society, which he regards as the primary subject of justice (Rawls 1977). Certain proponents of liberal feminism view gender inequity relative to female subordination as a set of customary and legal constraints blocking women's access to the public world (Tong 1998). A number of scholars (Schumpeter 1954; Gilpin 2001) who have made significant contributions to an understanding of political influences on the economy have remained silent on the matter of gender inequality, thus leaving the brunt of discussion on this question to economists.

### **Policy Initiatives in Society**

It is important to establish the societal context of the discourse before situating it in the academy. Generally, discussion on gender inequality should address the right of women to economic, legal and political justice. This is an issue at the core of women's movements all over the world. With

more and more families working at their fullest capacity and many households being headed by females, it is useful to examine policy decisions that influence growth in gender inequality rather than close the gender gap. There is evidence that real wages for women are declining relative to men's earnings. We also find that women of color are disproportionately affected by policy decisions designed to correct the inequality. Such policies are advanced by governments as well as by international organizations such as the IMF, whose structural adjustment programs are supposedly designed to raise the standard of living in poor countries.

In the USA, women's wages are up 22 cents since 1978 (Anderson 2001). Real wages for women grew 0.8% in the 1990s but there was also a 6.1% decline in wages for women in low-wage jobs. Some observers of wage trends (Mishel et al. 1998) conclude that after a decade of growth in wages for most women, between 1989 and 1995, the bottom two-thirds of women in the labor force saw their wages decline. These shifts have been blamed on the differential impact of restructuring policies on working-class women and women of color and demonstrate that gender inequity, especially in the United States, may not simply account for the variations in wage between men and women but may be a result of restructuring policies put in place to correct the acknowledged wage disparities among American workers.

A closer look at the economic pattern of inequality over the past two decades shows that while the median income for women has increased steadily since 1989, some groups have fared less well than others. For example, Hispanic women have not experienced high wage increases. And, although white women's income increased by 13%, this was still only 52% of what white men earned. Moreover, black women reportedly earned 27% of white women's income, which was approximately 47% of white men's earnings. Such statistics not only highlight the state of inequality in the United States but directly leads to a consideration of some of the political initiatives that have contributed to these inequalities in income earnings.

The U.S. Welfare program provides a basis for the study of policy influences on gender inequality at the national level. The welfare program was developed to end the spread of mass poverty that ensued during the Great Depression. As time passed, the welfare program came under attack for the effects of its disbursement practices. With the passage of the first federal welfare program, Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC), a "dependent mother" was considered to be a widow with small children, a woman whose husband had been disabled in an industrial accident, or a woman who had been abandoned by her husband. This policy negatively affected who could gain government assistance and who could not and therefore had an impact on the standard of living of different family groups, adding to the sentiment that welfare policies, while presumably aiming to create a just environment, actually contribute to gender injustice. Today, dependence on government funds and a cycle of families receiving aid, serves to widen the socioeconomic gap between black and white working-class women.

National welfare programs share similarities with global welfare programs administered by the IMF. Structural adjustment programs, as well as neo-colonial investment policies, have created conditions for micro-level dislocation, which results in gender inequity (Schoepf 1997). As new demands for revenue prompted local African communities to increase taxes and fees,

more and more women sought independence from the drudgery of household and rural work by migrating to the city, where waged jobs for women earned them much less than that for men. Educational and cultural policies in some Asian countries, which deny women access to education and therefore competitive work, also provide evidence that government policies are an important contributor to gender inequity cross-culturally.

In addition, national data differentiate the work that is valued among women in relation to men. Government policy is not promoted to value household work performed by women but to justify inequity in relation to jobs held by both men and women. Such policy argues for the right of men to earn more, given the difficulty levels of their work versus performance by women as well as the dependency of the family on earnings garnered by men. Feminist scholars continue to argue that women's household work has not received the merit it deserves either by governments or organizations and call for policy change in this respect (Folbre 1994; O'Connor, Orloff and Shaver 1999; Iversen 2005; Iversen and Rosenbluth 2006). Folbre proposed that a gender equity index be developed to include 'care work' as an economic measure, clearly recognizing the potential of policy to broaden the discussion of the value of women's work and to foster an opportunity for redressing issues of gender inequality.

### **Policy Initiatives and the Academy**

Often, it is assumed that gender inequality looks different at the societal level than it does in the academy. Such assumptions reflect a class perspective. Scholarly research (Committee on the Status of Women in the Profession, 2001; Monroe 2008) shows that there are similarities between observed gender inequality in society and in the academy. Institutional policies at a variety of universities have a similar effect on the equality gap as government and restructuring policies have on women cross culturally. Policies pertaining to research and publication, service, training, mentorship, tenure, and promotion, while aimed at regulating the advancement of women in the academy serve to frustrate women and exacerbate gender gaps, notoriously along racial lines. Policies which should ensure equal opportunity for advancement between men and women in the academy often end up creating a system of injustice whereby women are not the beneficiaries of collegial goodwill. Scholars argue that women in the academy do not gain from mentoring in the same way as their male counterparts; nor do they earn the same respect as men when they select areas of research that are discredited and devalued by male reviewers in the academy.

As a policy initiative, the idea of mentoring is intended to prepare the graduate student or the junior faculty member for advancement in the academy. Hesli, Fink and Duffy (2003b) explain that mentorship is required as early as graduate school but it is seldom the policy of degree-granting institutions to teach women what they need to know to survive a job search. If women find a faculty position, through mentorship, they could be assisted to advance in the academy while juggling family and professional duties. But, through the institutional policy of mentorship, male students are not only more likely to find faculty positions that are permanent or on the tenure track than women, but they learn the techniques of balancing grant-writing and

research while relying on their spouses to take care of family responsibilities, thus freeing them to progress through the ranks. In addition, the male-dominated nature of many disciplines (particularly political science) allows male faculty to move between job locations even as women continue to be offered temporary or non-tenure track positions, more often than not at non-research institutions. A number of universities have been known to advertise one-year positions and generally hire females. Often, however, a male candidate is able to snag the permanent position a year or two later.

Similarly, policies pertaining to sexual harassment and maternity leave, while giving the impression of institutional support for women, often are interpreted to favor the male faculty over the female when a situation arises. Nerad (2004) and Fox (2004) point out in their contributions to a 2004 American Political Science Association (APSA) report on gender inequity that sexual harassment contributes to what political scientists refer to as the leaking pipeline whereby women, as a result of negative experiences in graduate school or in the academy, drop out of graduate school or leave the academy early because of overall dissatisfaction with institutional practices. A greater number of women of color and first generation students enrolled in school are known to drop out of college, confirming a class effect. On the other hand, few men leave the academy but when they do so, it is to move up in the profession rather than to move out of it altogether.

Colleges and universities are aware of the problems women confront, especially women of color with little financial means, but the institutional climate has not changed over the last two decades. Nerad's research (2004) shows that academic institutions create cultural and institutional pressures for women to become a professor, marry a professor but not to have children. The reality for women, however, is that while 45% of them remain single, only 33% of men find themselves in that category. For those women who were married, only 6% of them had children as opposed to 24% of the males who had a wife as well as kids. The policy to grant family leave when needed has served to slow down progress among female faculty, with considerable impact on tenure, research productivity and promotion, whereas no ill effects of this policy are reported for males. Again, these findings are further differentiated for black and Hispanic women, few of whom make it into the academy and even fewer who get or stay married while they are in the academy.

### **Economic Realities and Society**

Policy initiatives aimed at deconstructing gender may play dual roles. But policy initiatives are not the only lens through which one might view gender inequities. Economic conditions all over the world offer other realistic means for evaluating gender inequality in society. Generally, women are more vulnerable than men to economic exploitation. They are largely concentrated in lower paying jobs and positions with little job security. Further, they are exposed to more difficult and dangerous working conditions than men (Higginbotham 1983; Malveaux, 1988; Amott and Matthaei, 1991; Sokoloff, 1992; Tomaskovic-Devey, 1993; Reskin and Padavic, 1994). A recent report in Ms. Magazine (Fall 2009) shows that because many women engage in

'care work', those who are employed are twice as likely to hold part-time jobs compared to men (25% to 11%) and earn just 79 cents on the dollar to men's earnings. While this literature focuses largely on the inequalities of earning between men and women, it also sheds light on the earning divisions between white women and women of color. Malveaux's research (1985; 1988) pointed to the differing economic interests of black and white women and suggested that the experience of racialized "women's work" has the potential to be politically radicalizing, in the sense that individuals living under oppressive economic conditions have the potential to become politically antagonistic. Amartya Sen (2005) adds to this thinking by showing how it is reflected in the political process where gender differences are seen in the way women vote as opposed to men.

A central aspect of gendered social equality is women's economic inequality. Mill (1970) was one of the earliest political theorists to argue that the inability of married women to own property is a denial to them of individual freedom and economic independence. Numerous other studies document the processes of class segregation and segmentation in relation to gender. Women have been excluded from positions of ownership (Mill 1991; Wright et al., 1995, 1982), supervisory authority and decision-making power (Huffman, 1995; Jacobs, 1992; McGuire and Reskin, 1993; Reskin and Ross 1995; Spaeth 1985; Wolf and Fligstein, 1979a), and positions that allow male counterparts full autonomy (Adler, 1993; Glass, 1990; Jaffee, 1989). This means that opportunities for promotion and higher income earnings are denied women regardless of the levels of competence they may bring to the position. This has an impact on the social security benefits they earn and the insurance costs they pay. According to the Institute for Women's Policy Research, women over 64 receive \$10, 685 annually; men receive \$14, 055. In addition, insurers charge women up to 140% more than men for identical health plans (see Kornblum and Homer 2009).

An important aspect of the economic reality of gender inequity is the imbalance in property ownership. Key to the idea of property ownership is the idea of production. To the extent that women have the right to develop their own skills in the production of whatever entity can fetch a fair market price that is an allowance to them of property. What women bring to household work is no less their intellectual property than what men may bring to an engineering or other career. Especially in a marital situation, the economic value of the time and stress of household management, when appropriately accorded, reduces the gender inequalities that place women at a material and emotional disadvantage. In this context, social class has an economic influence on gender inequality. Often, the social interests of women in the upper classes override gender interests. In patriarchal societies, women in the upper classes have been subordinated by their fathers and spouses. Yet, few have acknowledged their subordination or empathized with working class women who have resisted similar exploitation in the home or the workplace. As emphasized by Collom (2001), middle and upper class women who achieve capitalist positions in society, such as small business owners or managers, adopt bourgeois ideologies, leaving working class women on their own to seek economic democracy in the workplace.

Looking outside of the USA to the international labor force, one finds that labor market opportunities for women vary systematically with the position of countries in the international

workforce and with the structure of the welfare state (Iversen and Rosenbluth, 2006). This arrangement impacts the bargaining power of women within the family and explains the cross-national variations found in the gendered division of labor. Studies show that the variance in income, labor market status, and the division of labor has been gender based. Women participate less in the labor market than men, although they assume far greater responsibility for household work. Women continue to be less well paid than men even while doing similar work. Further, they hold jobs with less job security, fewer opportunities to advance, and in some cases less responsibility. According to Sen (2005), growing awareness of and resistance to these inequalities have accounted for the gender gap in political preferences and voting behavior.

In an interesting analysis of the economic features of gender inequality, scholars find that class divisions among women are widening at the same time that gender divisions are narrowing (McDowell 1991). Class divisions highlight gender cleavages, showing inequality to be a problem both within and across sexes. Indeed, by some measures, wage inequality is higher among women than between women and men (McCall 1998). Some of the decline in wage inequality between men and women has been explained by increases in education among women relative to decreases in education among men. This would suggest that some of the barriers to economic equality faced by women have been overcome. But other studies (e.g. Blau and Kahn, 1994; Wellington 1993) reveal that variables such as education, work experience and job tenure offer little explanation for observed differences in wage between men and women. Blau and Kahn specifically draw attention to the fact that reductions in the gender wage gap are more evident at lower levels of wage distribution than at the higher levels. This may be attributed to a demand for women's labor at lower levels of labor-market skills, whereby earnings do not compete with men's income, given that men are likely to be employed at higher levels than women (1994, 28). The gender wage gap also offers perspective on the class and color of inequity since one is more likely to find working class women of color at the lower end of the labor spectrum.

In developing countries, interesting lessons can be learned from critical economic situations. In Zambia, for example, following the transfer of power from the colonial regime to an African administration, economic demands encouraged African elite to put in place social controls that denied women access to lucrative beer brewing jobs that the latter had developed in order to give men the opportunity to earn and be independent in the local economic environment (Glazer 1997). Similar examples of inequality generated by economic demand have been found in Swaziland, where jobs traditionally held by women in good economic times are transferred to men when the economy becomes unstable. Although Enid Gort (1997) describes what takes place between Swazi female diviners (*sangoma*) and male herbalists (*tinyanga*) as role transformation in gender-specific professional categories, she is also clear that males and females adjust their practices in response to the "socioeconomic imperatives that connect them to the modern world" (Gort 1997, 298). Overall, economic demands in developing and developed nations seem to influence male-female and female-female work relationships along race and class lines.

### **Economic Hurdles in the Academy**

As a microcosm of society and reflective of the ills of inequity, the academy offers a clear perspective of the economic realities of gender inequality. Male and female graduate students on the job market are offered jobs at markedly different salary scales. In 1998, a small case study found that women were offered salaries in the range of \$32,000 - \$34,500; men were offered \$55,000-\$58,000. The institutions offering the lower salary scales were liberal arts institutions with a focus on teaching. The other institutions, offering higher salaries, made clear their research expectations and provided opportunities for sustained research, limiting teaching at their institutions to two courses per semester as opposed to the 12 hours of teaching required at the liberal arts institutions. The females receiving the above offer rationalized that being at teaching institutions could not have the pressure to publish or perish that their male counterparts were likely to experience. Over the years, however, they revised their thinking. Not only have the salaries of the male faculty continued to grow, even with slow research production, but the men have been promoted to the highest levels of the academy while the women continue to serve at lower levels and earn salaries that the males were offered when they all first entered the job market. In effect, women find that they are treated like second-class citizens in the academy's hierarchy, mirroring behaviors in society.

Attention to gendered economic disparities in the academy also uncovered the economic place of minorities in the academy. APSA reports show that not only are minorities under-represented in the political science discipline but those who are employed earn lower salaries than their female and male counterparts. Lopez (2004) revealed that 46% of minority candidates in the academy were women and women of color were much less likely to find a faculty position than white women, let alone find a position with a better salary than white women. Lopez further shows that the most successful women of color were Asian Americans, who had an eighty percent success rate of finding a faculty position, followed by a 70% success rate for whites, a 67% success rate for Latinas and a 53% success rate for African Americans. Minority women who found positions accepted placement at the lower levels of the scholarly ladder. An APSA (2002) report confirmed this sad state of affairs by publishing data showing that in 2000, 45% of women of color held associate professorships in political science, equating to 4% of all associate professorships in the academy. A breakdown of faculty positions further revealed that 14 women of color were full professors (less than 1% of all full professors and 6% of female full professors). Among minority full professors, 11% were women. No Latina full professors were reported (APSA 2002).

Although the above data may have changed somewhat over the last few years for some categories of women, the economic reality of gender inequality has not. Recent research (Monroe 2008) found that employment and salary figures used to measure gender discrimination reveal that the academy is no different from the rest of society, particularly when one observes the strong evidence of gender disparity among positions with higher salaries and greater powers. Illustrating this, Monroe provides data to show that in the USA only 29 percent of lawyers, 28 percent of physicians and surgeons, and 22 percent of dentists are female. This confirms the view

that upon leaving the academy higher status jobs with better pay go disproportionately to men, continuing to assign women to second-class status. Also, in the academy, tenured political science professors are four times more likely to be male, whereas female faculty members are more likely to be assistant professors and instructors. In the current US economic downturn and in the face of the prevalence of such disparities across the developed and developing world, prospects for correcting such imbalance seem grim.

### **Legal Constraints and Society**

In the broader societal context, while law has taken a clear stance against gender inequality, and inequality as a whole, with laws such as the Equal Pay Act of 1963, the people (mostly male) who enforce and follow those laws continue to harbor attitudes of gender superiority. According to the U.S. Census Bureau in 2002, women made only 75.5 cents for every dollar made by a man. The Census Bureau further reported that the poverty rate for female headed households increased to twenty-eight percent in 2003, and poverty among adult women rose to 12.4 percent in that year as well. In that same report, over seventeen million women reported having no health insurance. Interestingly, while 169 countries guarantee paid maternity leave, in the USA, maternity leave is not guaranteed. And, in the US private sector, women workers do not get a single paid sick day.

The Equal Pay Act of 1963 is a federal law amending the Fair Labor Standards Act with the intention of abolishing wage differentials based on gender. In passing the bill, the US Congress strongly condemned gender discrimination for its depression of wage and living standards for employees among other transgressions. Yet in 2009, scholar activists still find evidence of gender injustice in the US workplace.

Also, while the Nineteenth Amendment gave women the right to vote, many of the gains women made in achieving legal equality and fighting gender discrimination did not evolve until the 1960s, with legislation that resulted from the Civil Rights Movement. The modern Women's Rights Movement fostered the development of feminist jurisprudence as a field of study and women using the legal system to challenge gender discrimination in employment, domestic relations, reproductive rights and education. Today, given lingering inequity, additional scholarship is needed in the study of gender and its disparities.

The Supreme Court has had much influence, both positive and negative, on the Women's Rights Movement. Reproductive rights were an important issue for the Supreme Court during the late 1960s and early 1970s. With landmark cases such as *Griswold v. Connecticut* where the Supreme Court struck down a Connecticut state law banning the use of contraceptives, the ruling established a right to privacy within a marriage, a right protecting married couples from government intrusions. Also, in *Eisenstaedt v. Baird*, the Supreme Court struck down a Massachusetts law banning the distribution of contraceptives to unmarried persons. This case extended the right to privacy to both married and unmarried persons. In *Roe v Wade*, perhaps the most famous case involving women's rights, the Supreme Court struck down a Texas law restricting abortion, holding that most state laws against abortion in the United States violated a

constitutional right to privacy under the Due Process Clause of the Fourteenth Amendment. Admittedly, such laws advance the cause of women's rights and challenge the notion of women as having subordinate power over their own bodies. Yet political ideologues do whatever is in their power to ensure that women's access to these rights is stymied.

There are several Court rulings that affect employment conditions for women, as well. In 1971, the Supreme Court ruled in *Phillips v. Martin Marietta Corp* that employers could not refuse to hire women with pre-school children while hiring men with such children. In *Pittsburgh Press Co. v. Pittsburgh Commission on Human Relations*, the Court upheld a Pittsburgh ordinance making it illegal to indicate a gender requirement in job postings. In the 1991 ruling in *International Union UAW v. Johnson Control Inc*, the Court found that manufacturers could not bar fertile women from jobs, even those jobs involving exposure to lead, despite the potential for fetuses to be harmed by lead poisoning. Each of these rulings established the will of society to recognize the right of women to equal citizenship.

Despite the legal strides made in protecting women's rights, however, domestic relations have been difficult to control. In the United States, 20% of all violent crimes experienced by women are cases of domestic violence. According to Kristen Anderson (1997), domestic violence is difficult to stop primarily because domestic violence has been viewed historically as a private family matter that does not require the involvement of the criminal justice system. The latter view is also articulated in a study of violence against women and children in Ghana. As Kathy Cusack finds, both in law and culture, Ghanaian men and women are not seen as equals; this "inequality serves as a catalyst for a man to beat his wife because he is superior and his wife inferior" (1999, 14). While laws of nations establish bases for equality between men and women, customary law contributes to gaps between working class and middle/upper class women in the areas of rights, liberties and economies.

### **Legal Constraints in the Academy**

In the academy, gender inequity discourse takes its cues from the broader society. Legal arguments surrounding gender abuse, discrimination, or dispute over family and medical leave, no matter how subtle, highlight and exacerbate the tense, sometimes hostile, departmental environment. As evidenced in Finland, the US, the UK and areas in the Caribbean, gender discrimination is not absent from the academy. In the political science discipline, it is not unusual for a woman to be the only female in the department and therefore an easy target of gender discrimination and disrespect (see Kantola 2008). Gender abuse in society and the academy has changed its look in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Abuse is no longer confined to the physical with a male hitting a female in the home or verbally ridiculing her in the workplace. Today, especially in the academy, abuse is emotional, involving the not-so-subtle comments made by male faculty in the presence of a female faculty member. Abuse surfaces as a favorable comment about an unpleasant music video that is degrading to women or a flippant remark about the nature of research in which quality research is defined by its design rather than its analysis. Couched as it often is in conversational style, no legal case can be brought against a male student

or colleague for the disrespect and humiliation inflicted on female faculty, which warrant the label of abuse.

Not all policies (legal, political or economic) put in place to address inequity deliver the intended outcome. Female faculty members repeatedly encounter hostile departmental situations but only on rare occasions have they filed law suits against their colleagues. Discrimination and disrespect seem to go hand in hand. As argued by one female in the academy, the problem of gender inequality in the academy is no longer about hiring women, it is now about women finding ways to stay on par with their male counterparts in terms of “salary, respect, rewards, awards, acknowledgment and power” (van Assendelft et al, 2003, 315). Moreover, when the act of discrimination is so subtle as to be mistaken for other than it is, being unwritten and usually silent, there is no legal action that can be taken to stop abuse or discrimination. The irony is that white men have often accused black women of having the legal upper-hand. As Nerad (2004) reports, when responding to a 1997 survey, asking faculty members what would have helped them in their job search, some white males responded that being a woman or a minority would have helped them, suggesting that there were legal constraints (perhaps in affirmative action) to men’s realization of job satisfaction.

### **Conclusion and Recommendations**

Gender is the most egregious social construct highlighting inequity in society and the academy. Gender inequality exists at the intersections of race, class and culture and is influenced by policy initiatives, economic imperatives and legal frameworks at both the societal level and in the academy. Government policies in the USA as well as in Asia and Africa have been catalysts for the gendered inequities perceived in society and in the workplace. Through the development of welfare programs, education policies and social controls in the workplace, governments have continually put policies in place that have resulted in a widening of the gap between men and women as well as among women of varying social status. Economic policy and realities also have contributed to the persistence of a gender gap. Wages paid to men and women, the gendered division of labor, market skills, production costs and ownership, as well as internal and external economic controls have all contributed to the wage gap which disadvantages women. In addition, gender inequity has legal underpinnings and implications for differentiating status across culture, race and class lines. Many of the legal measures implemented for the express purpose of controlling inequities have the opposite effect and actually perpetuate inequities across sexes.

The literature on gendered wage inequity has highlighted anomalies in the way societies regard women and men in the workforce, including the academy. Until research identifies the full range of factors that sustain inequities between and among gendered groups, there will continue to be a need for further elucidation of this theme. The academy has been called upon to lead in a movement to mitigate gender inequity. Since research/publication is likely to be the vehicle for promoting such change, there is little reason to expect this issue and challenges associated with it to disappear in the near future. If female subordination is to be corrected in the

society as in the academy, it cannot continue to be rooted in customary and legal constraints which block the access of women to the public world. Justice postponed is justice denied. The academy should vigorously interrogate gender inequality at all intersections of its existence, if it is to be uprooted and eradicated.

The question, however, is how do we un-gender society and the academy? It is important to start by altering the gendered division of power globally and domestically. This may be done by ensuring that the voices of women are heard in society and the academy. Violence could be un-gendered by reducing public expenditure on arms and increasing spending on social capital, thus allowing to women and girls equitable public access. Society also needs to un-gender labor and resources by ensuring that women have access to the upper rungs of corporate hierarchies and greater decision-making rights to land and capital. At the level of the academy, there is urgent need for greater recruitment and funding of women in graduate programs, increase in job placement at higher pay rates and status levels, and encouragement of greater political activism to ensure better laws and policies which enhance prospects for women across race, class and culture. Greater visibility of women via heightened academic research on women's issues and sustained roundtable discussions contribute to unmasking gendered inequities in society and the academy and clear the way for more equitable use of our human resources. Since women now occupy 50% of the paid labor force, the time has come for social reconstruction where gender equity is at the center of reform.

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