

**We Can Do It?:  
The Role of Gender in Academic Life**

By

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**Abstract**

In this research note, we offer a critical review of the literature on gender and the academy within the areas of teaching, research, and service. We assess the interaction between gender and academia and argue that discrimination has moved away from overt, blatant prejudice, toward a covert, concealed bias that is pervasive and unacknowledged. We conclude with a call to update the literature and encourage revisiting the concept of a chilly climate.

## **Introduction**

A year into his term, President Obama received criticism for hosting an all-male basketball game with powerful Washington insiders, including high-level staffers and members of Congress. It was also reported that he had played 23 rounds of golf since taking office, none of which involved women. One woman interviewed noted that there was a sports-oriented “jocular familiarity” amongst the men in the Obama White House that did not extend to the female staff, leading another woman to deem the White House culture potentially “annoying” and “alienating” (Leibovich 2009). To be sure, the Obama administration is the most gender-inclusive in history, but subtle patterns of male-dominated access and power relationships are still incredibly apparent.

How common are these subtle patterns of discrimination within the academy? Indeed, women have made great strides in academia as they have reached the ranks of president, dean, and department chair. However, while female upward mobility is present, gender discrimination still exists. As with the Presidential basketball game, discrimination takes the form of subtle gender exclusion.

In this article, we seek to better understand academic culture as it’s experienced by female faculty by reviewing the literature on gender discrimination and exclusion in academia. We focus on the tripartite criteria for academic success—teaching, research, and service. Through our critical review, we argue that gender discrimination has moved away from the more overt, blatant sex discrimination of a few decades ago, to a more covert, concealed form of discrimination, one that is hard to pin down and identify, but is pervasive and often unacknowledged.

In reviewing this literature, we seek to provide the reader with a foundational understanding of the intersection of gender and academic culture and success. Our project seeks

to contribute to this literature in two ways. First, and primarily, we explore and integrate all three criteria for academic success and discuss how women in academia must work toward achieving all three roles, often having to make difficult choices regarding which to focus on more in their career. Certainly this is a dilemma facing male professors as well; however, we argue that women face a particularly problematic landscape as academic power-holders often expect less of them in some areas (research) and more of them in others (service). This is even more challenging given that research is typically held in higher esteem – in terms of academic success – than service.

Second, we identify the questions that are left unanswered in the literature and make recommendations for moving the discussion forward. For instance, we believe that the literature would benefit from studies that explore the area of gender and academia from the perspective of the faculty member. Particularly in the area of gender and teaching, much of the literature focuses on student perceptions of faculty members. Here, we suggest a focus on faculty perceptions of their role in academia in general. In addition, we recommend an updating of the literature on gender and the academy. The literature in this field is vast and very thorough, but it is aging. Much of it comes from the 1980s and 1990s, during the transition period out of overt sexism and the subsequent discrimination women faced, and into this period of more covert gendered inequality. In the 1980s, the term “chilly climate” for women in academia became a common moniker for the academic atmosphere, but since that time, the number of published pieces dedicated to researching this climate has been waning.

We first discuss what is meant by the term “chilly climate” and offer a description of the general environment for women in higher education. Then, we turn to a review of the literature

on research, teaching, and service and their interactions with gender. We end with recommendations for filling the gaps and questions left unanswered in the literature.

### **The Chilly Climate and the Tripartite**

A chilly climate involves exclusion from informal networks, being made to feel “invisible,” alienated, or disregarded, and the overt sexualization of a woman’s value (Acker 1980; Caplan 1994; Maguire 1996; Aguirre 2000; Roos and Gatta 2009). In 1999, a well-publicized MIT report on the status of women noted this more concealed form of inequity. Roos and Gatta write:

The study’s key finding is straightforward: contrary to the more blatant discrimination of the past, “1990s discrimination” is more subtle, stemming from “unconscious ways of thinking that have been socialized into...men and women alike.” The report documented a pattern of discrimination, including unexplained inequities in salary, space, resources for research, teaching assignments, awards, and committee assignments (2009, 178).

A number of other prominent universities followed with similar studies and found uncanny similarities among women: less satisfaction (Princeton), feeling less integrated (Cornell), and elusive collegial relationships (Johns Hopkins) (Roos and Gatta 2009, 178). Aguirre (2000) writes that this decreased satisfaction for women is the result of perceived pay inequities, a biased reward system, and a feeling that they are perceived as less competent than their male counterparts. Indeed, the dominant culture of the academic environment is one of “maleness,” where women are often excluded, devalued, and expected to fit into feminine stereotypes (Caplan 1994, 29; Monroe, et al 2008). An extensive qualitative study at our own alma mater, University of California, Irvine, documents this “gender devaluation” process, whereby “women’s work is devalued or minimized, so that work or positions once deemed powerful and conferring high status frequently become devalued as women increasingly take on these roles” (Monroe, et al 2008). In essence, the term chilly climate embodies this sense of a

loss of legitimacy, a general disregard for one's work and worth, and an institutional reward system defined by partiality to masculinity.

With regard to higher education, Aguirre (2000, 57) argues that women “find themselves in a workplace setting that favors the professional socialization of White male faculty.” This exclusion is particularly alienating given that it is in combination with social and physical isolation, as only 39 percent of full-time professor positions are held by women (Wilson 2006). As such, power remains embedded in an old-boys network, creating and reinforcing a chilly climate for women in higher education.

Female faculty must negotiate this chilly climate while fulfilling the three most common areas of performance review: research, teaching, and service. Aguirre (2000, iv-v) discusses the intersection of these areas for women: “[Women] are burdened with heavy teaching and service responsibilities that constrain their opportunity to engage in research and publication...they are ascribed a peripheral role in the academic workplace and are expected to perform roles that are in conflict with expectations.” Indeed, women are given conflicting signals – on the one hand, they are told that they can achieve high levels of academic success, but on the other hand, it is implied that they should not step outside of their socially prescribed gender role. “Acting like a man” may earn you access and success, but it may also be disarming and off-putting to some who encounter a woman who is not “doing” her gender – in other words, adhering to her socially constructed gendered identity. At the same time, a woman “doing her gender” may ensure acceptance and likeability but may also relegate herself to a permanent position of academic second-place. The message seems to be that we can and should be tough, but should look pretty while we do it. The result is an alienating and confusing environment that often prevents women from creating an authentic professional identity.

## **Gender in the Classroom**

Women professors often face a tension between establishing authority and credibility in the classroom, on the one hand, and conforming to sex-typed teaching styles and behaviors, on the other hand; this is what Statham, Richardson, and Cook (1991) identify as the “double bind” (6). For example, women may encounter a biased evaluation of their credentials on the part of their students. Miller and Chamberlin (2000) find that “the level of educational attainment attributed to male classroom instructors is substantially and significantly higher than it is for women...Students perceive incorrectly that their male instructors have achieved higher levels of educational attainment than their female classroom instructors” (294-295). Preconceived notions of educational credentials, along with other issues of authority and expertise, among students are paramount for how women faculty negotiate their role in the classroom.

Noting the prevalence of the “double bind,” Dion (2008) offers advice and specific tips on how female faculty can successfully “walk a fine line” between being authoritative and nurturing in the classroom (853). She offers suggestions on the wording and structure of the syllabus;<sup>1</sup> how to manage the course effectively; how to present one’s self on the first day of class;<sup>2</sup> tips on grading;<sup>3</sup> and how to establish positive classroom dynamics in terms of “organization, preparation, and delivery” (854). Above all, Dion advises that women should

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<sup>1</sup> It should be “reasonable and fair” but not “too draconian, inflexible, or unconcerned about students” (854).

<sup>2</sup> “[W]omen faculty should begin to establish both their authority *and* concern for students (854, italics in original)

<sup>3</sup> Consistent but empathetic and be available for discussions of grades.

dress well, and smile (855).<sup>4</sup> The section on dress particularly exemplifies the double bind: “For young women, the general suggestion would be to invest in neat-looking professional attire that is age appropriate—professional but hip, in a way that reflects individuality” (855). Not too formal, Dion says, or you will appear inaccessible. How women dress is a common theme throughout the literature, and one of the subtle and concealed forms of discrimination that female faculty face, especially in the classroom.

To be sure, the tips are useful to the extent that female professors do indeed have to “walk the line” in reality. Even though Dion observes that these double standards are admittedly unfair, she laments that students use these “social cues to form judgments and evaluations of their professors” (855). This is confirmed by the analysis on gender and the classroom, where evidence of the “double bind” and “walking the line” is widespread among students. The next two sections will discuss the studies conducted from both the perspective of women faculty’s own experiences in the classroom and then from the perspective of student’s gendered perceptions of professors’ behavior. The primary conversation in this literature focuses on the role of gender in the classroom with regards to authority and teaching personality, especially how each of these relates to sex-typed role expectations.

### *Professor’s Perspectives of Social Identity*

Very few articles are from the point of view of the professors themselves. Nevertheless, the two that are reviewed here suggest that women faculty are all too aware of the double bind

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<sup>4</sup> The suggestion to “smile” is reminiscent of Marilyn Frye’s “Oppression” (1983) article, in which Frye uses the example of how when people (men) tell us (women) to “smile” when we do not look particularly “happy,” we do so reflexively, thereby committing to our own oppression.

that exists. Chesler and Young (2007) discuss the “relevance of identity” from the perspective of professors by analyzing “how faculty members with different social group identities deal with two issues commonly faced by all faculty: questions about their subject matter expertise and questions about the authority of the faculty role” (11-12). This study is unique in that the data is analyzed by race and gender. In terms of race, they find that “very few of the white faculty interviewed anticipated or encountered a challenge to their expertise” (12). In fact, most welcomed the occasional challenge to their knowledge and were comfortable dealing with such issues. Faculty of color also expected challenges to their expertise, but viewed such circumstances through a different lens. While white faculty, especially white male faculty, deal with challenges in a more “off the cuff” manner, faculty of color addressed the anticipated challenges to their expertise by being hyper-prepared and asserting their credentials to students right from the start. In short, while all faculty members expect a certain degree of resistance from students, the way in which these situations are addressed in the classroom differs by race of the professor.

A similar pattern emerged with regards to authority and role expectations. White male professors are privileged with automatic authority, and their role expectations are not as rigid: “Among the key dilemmas reported are the tension between authority and warmth or kindness and the ways in which accessibility, warmth, or innovation by female scholars and scholars of color may be interpreted and reacted to by students as signs of weakness or loss of traditional forms of authority” (15). Not all of these challenges are derogatory; some role expectations experienced by women and faculty of color are based on “reposition[ing] faculty members as fulfilling supportive, nurturing, or intimate roles rather than professional ones” (15). How “non-traditional” faculty deal with differing role expectations varies primarily by gender. For

instance, female faculty, especially female faculty of color, pay close attention to how they dress for the classroom; an important detail that is not on the minds of many male faculty members.

Kardia and Wright (2004) further this discussion of how gender and race inform classroom dynamics by “document[ing] the ways that social identity affects teaching...” (1). Kardia and Wright find that an overwhelming majority of women faculty experience challenges to their academic role (82%). Importantly, these challenges are not exclusive to student interactions. Strikingly similar to what Chesler and Young (2007) find, Kardia and Wright note that the female faculty in their study experience a sense of “invisibility” when discussing these issues with colleagues and administrators. Male faculty and administrators tend to deny or are ignorant of the difficulties that female faculty face and fail to recognize the efforts that women professors employ when trying to overcome such difficulties.

This phenomenon goes beyond establishing authority and expertise, and bleeds into issues of “clothing, stature, and physical appearance” as well as “increases in workload associated with student responses to gender and race/ethnicity” (3). Again, similar to Chesler and Young (2007) and the suggestions of Dion (2008), dress for the classroom was of utmost importance. One female faculty member in their study noted that “There’s sort of a double standard because the men come in rags sometimes...and yet, we...can’t come in rags” (3). Here, we note again the recurring emphasis on dress and appearance. As discussed in the proceeding sections, dress and appearance informs student’s evaluations and expectations of female faculty, a phenomenon of which women in academia seem to be acutely aware.

Increased workload comes in the form of more students in office hours, more personal information being shared with female faculty on the part of students,<sup>5</sup> and students in search of a mentor who “looks” like them. We might attribute more students in office hours to the differing pedagogical styles of female professors, who tend to subscribe to a more non-traditional style of teaching and establish a more “open” classroom environment.<sup>6</sup> In terms of mentoring, if we take seriously the fact that 1) the undergraduate population on our college campuses is now over fifty

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<sup>5</sup> Anecdotally, the authors of this paper identify with the trend of students sharing very personal information, and agree that gender is likely the key variable. One student confided in one of the authors that, “I wouldn’t be telling you this if you were a *male* professor, but I would like to be excused from class when we discuss anything related to abortion, because I had one last year and it is still hard for me to deal with” (emphasis added). The other author recently received an email from a former student who noted that she’d be sending the same email to a male professor, minus the entire second half which focused on a personal relationship in the student’s life. In our conversations with other faculty, the disclosure of such personal information on the part of students to female faculty is quite common. Male faculty, however, do not seem to experience the same level of information-sharing.

<sup>6</sup> Basow (1998) notes that there is a distinct pedagogical gender difference present in the literature: “[M]ale faculty were found to be relatively more teacher-centered and direct; female faculty were found to be relatively more student-centered, indirect, and supportive of students” (147). Female-led classrooms tend to be more participatory, more “discussion-oriented,” are “more likely to vary their lecture styles,” and handle “classroom management problems” from a more understanding and accepting perspective (148-149).

percent female, and 2) the composition of faculty does not mirror that trend, then it is not surprising that female faculty are overwhelmed with students looking for a mentor whom they can emulate; a person who has a similar identity to which they can relate, and see their own attempts at academic success echoed back at them. We discuss these heightened mentoring demands on female faculty further below, when we discuss university service.

### *Student's Perspectives: Expectations and Evaluations*

Of primary interest in this portion of the literature is what is *expected* and what is *accepted* behavior on the part of women professors. This is most often measured using student evaluations of teaching (both formal course evaluations and student surveys of “instructional dimensions” that focus on sex-typed specific pedagogical and personality traits). Kardia and Wright (2004) indicate that “[t]he common interpretation of this body of research is that student ratings are not biased by gender” (6). Feldman (1993) also does not find gender to be a significant factor in the way that students evaluate their instructors but is careful to point out that “certain correlates of overall ratings and of ratings on the teachers’ balance in interpreting pertinent viewpoints were differentially consequential for men and women...” (178).

In other words, lack of a gender bias in overall evaluations does not mean that there is no gender bias in *reaching* that evaluation (Basow 1998, Chesler and Young 2007, Kardia and Wright 2004; Andersen and Miller 1997). Students perceive the same behavior through a different lens depending on the gender of the instructor.<sup>7</sup> From the perception of students,

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<sup>7</sup> Several studies also find that there is a same-sex preference when it comes to instructional assessment (Basow 2000, Centra and Gaubatz 2000, Basow 1995, Feldman 1993, Basow and Silberg 1987, Martin 1984). Female students tend to evaluate female professors higher than

female instructors who spend less (yes, less) time on class material, are more expressive, convey more warmth, conduct more interpersonal interactions, and who are in a classroom where students expect to receive a high grade will benefit from higher evaluation scores in comparison to their male counterparts. In short, quantitatively, female professors do not suffer lower evaluation scores than their male counterparts, and in some studies actually exceed them. However, qualitatively, the equal or greater scores mask the strategic and negotiated efforts on the part of female faculty to create a classroom experience where their authority and expertise is accepted and validated.<sup>8</sup> There is, indeed, a different lens through which students appraise classroom performance, and this lens is gendered.

For example, Basow (2000) finds gender differences in the ratings for “best” professors, but the ““worst” professors were described similarly regardless of professor or student gender”

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males, and male students tend to rate male professors higher than females. This is undoubtedly a gender affinity among students, especially female students.

<sup>8</sup> There are also other variables that affect student evaluations such as the discipline of the course, level of the course, rank of the professor, expected grade. All of these factors influence student ratings of a class, but when controlled for, there still appears to be a gender effect. Even so, we would argue that these “control” variables are not unrelated to gender: female faculty are more likely to be present in humanities and social sciences, where male faculty predominate in the natural sciences, math, and business departments; female professors are more likely to be untenured, junior faculty while male professors are more likely to be tenured, senior faculty; female professors tend to teach more introductory courses, whereas male professors tend to teach more upper division courses.

(413). Clearly, all students desire good professors, but the criteria on which this conclusion are based are colored by the gender of the professor. Kardia and Wright's (2004) work strengthens this finding: over "four fifths (83%) of the students interviewed describe different standards for female and male instructors" (4). Moreover, and a little unsettling, is the acknowledgement by students that these expectations are overt and acknowledged. They quote one female student as typifying the general tone among students in their study:

I always have higher expectations for female instructors than male instructors. And, yeah, when they don't meet them it's a let down. And if it's a male instructor I tend to blow it off and say, 'Well, that's typical...' I mean, I don't expect my male instructors to be as caring or concerned as I expect my female instructors to be. Whether that's good or a bad thing to be going on in my head, it's just a real thing. And I think it's pretty universal (4).

As noted above, the title of our article tries to capture this dynamic as men can more readily declare that their lecture "might be messy."

Differing standards can take the form of preparedness and availability as well as expressiveness and warmth (Kardia and Wright 2004; Arbuckle and Williams 2003; Basow 1990; Bennett 1982), and are consistently noted throughout the literature. Males who are unorganized, unclear, "overbearing," and/or less prepared are not penalized for these attributes in the classroom. In fact, students chalk this up to the stereotypical image of what they think a professor should be. Females who exhibit these same qualities are cited as not knowledgeable, scattered, and the all-too-common "bitch" classification (Kardia and Wright 2004). In a sense, and ironically, male professors are actually *rewarded* for less than desirable classroom behavior because it fits what students have come to expect. When female professors display these same behaviors, they suffer the consequences, primarily because they lack the one attribute that would make these behaviors tolerable to students: they are not male.

Perhaps gender itself is not the issue, but whether or not female instructors conform to expected sex-role behavior. Freeman (1994) concludes that “*gender role* is more important in affecting student evaluations than are instructor and student gender” (629, italics added).

Kierstead, D’Agostino, and Dill (1988) discover that

behaviors indicating warmth and/or friendliness interact[ed] with instructor’s sex...Socializing with students outside of class improved a female instructor’s SRI, but...did not affect the ratings given to male instructors. *Smiling slightly depressed ratings given to male instructors, but it elevated those given to female instructors* (344, italics added).

Whether we call this differential evaluation of preparedness, availability, and expressiveness a different “set of rules” (Bennett 1982, 171), “walking the line” or a “double bind,” it is clear that women faculty must be overly prepared, organized and charismatic, but also warm, inviting, and accessible all at the same time. Students expect this, and female professors are keenly aware of the double-standard.

We now turn to a discussion of how gender informs academic research. What we show below is that many of the patterns portrayed above, with regard to the “double-bind,” the necessity of “doing” one’s gender, and differing perceptions of women and by women in academia are similarly apparent in research arena.

### **Gender and Academic Research**

As Monroe et al (2008, 230) note, “the status hierarchy rewards research.” The issue, of course, is that gender is often ascribed to the various roles that we play as professors, with service and teaching being viewed as female roles and research as the venue of male professors. Female academics thus tend to step into a structural arrangement tilted against them from the outset. We turn here to a discussion of some of the particular obstacles women face in achieving research goals.

## *Family/Career Balance*

Much of the literature on gender and research explores how women struggle to maintain a balance between family and career. This myopic focus is problematic in that it is assumed that most academic women are wives and mothers, which of course, is not entirely the case. In fact, non-married women in academia face a potentially more hostile environment than married women, as society views them as failing to “do” their gender.

Most of the literature on the struggle of women to balance family and career focuses on time constraints. Jacobs argues, “the long and growing hours expected of full-time professors are one reason that women have made less progress entering the academy than other professions” (2004, 4). He notes that full-time male faculty work 54.8 hours per week on average, while their female counterparts work 52.8 hour, a pace that is a 9-12 hours longer per week than men and women in other high-status occupations (Jacobs 2004, 7). We can view the two extra hours that academic men work in two different ways: they choose to work more often or they are able to work more often. We believe it to be the latter, as we discuss further below.

Time commitments in academia haven’t always been so strenuous; Jacobs writes that the faculty work week rose dramatically in the 1990s, as teaching pressures mounted. It’s likely that this increased time commitment was better absorbed by men for two reasons. First, many men had been in academia for a number of years, thus in the 1990s, most already-tenured faculty were men. In contrast, the 1990s saw an influx of women just entering academia, thus this increased work load would’ve been particularly crushing for these women who faced new class preps, tenure pressures, and general acclimation challenges. Second, as feminist scholars have long noted, many working women face a second work day at home, often being the primary caretaker for the responsibilities of family life, including housework and childcare. Even if the working

academic woman has a helpful and co-equal spouse or partner, these women still typically face more at-home duties than their male counterparts. The reason lies in the marriage and work patterns of academic families. Jacobs notes, “just over half (56.2%) of married male faculty and nearly all (88.5%) of married female faculty have spouses working full time” (2004, 11). Thus, for married male faculty, there is a greater likelihood that their partner is more available to shoulder more of the responsibilities home and family life (Acker 1980, 82; Denker 2009, 108).

These time constraints disproportionately burden academic women and hinder their advancement in their field. When Jacobs analyzed work load and research achievements, he found that “there was a statistically significant positive relationship between the proportion of time spent on research and total working time” (2004, 17). Thus, as women face greater family and home responsibilities than men, they are disadvantaged to the extent that they are unable to dedicate more time to research goals. This obstacle is particularly burdensome in that women tend to feel as though the research that they do accomplish is “trivialized and discredited” (Kettle 1996, 63).

In addition, many feminist scholars have noted that male-dominated institutional patterns, particularly surrounding the research path, have been embedded in higher education for hundreds of years (Acker 1980; Acker and Armenti 2004; Miller and Hollenshead 2005). It is a system that rarely allows for alternative schedules and inadequately deals with the problems of “clashing clocks” (that is, biological and tenure) whereby women typically start down the tenure path right as they are in their peak childbearing years. Universities and colleges have begun to institute tenure clock extensions or stoppages for women, but many women fail to take advantage of them for fear of being seen as inept or less serious – in other words a perpetuation of the image of females as less capable or weak. The result is a “leaky pipe” system whereby women exit

academia altogether rather than be seen as unsuccessful. Indeed, a recent UC, Berkeley study found that tenure-track women who have both a PhD and young children are 27 percent less likely than men with children to eventually achieve tenure (Mason, Goulden, and Frasch 2010). In sum, women must learn to navigate a system that was not designed for them. Research aspirations are pushed to the side for many women, as the more daily pressures of family life and class preparation are necessarily prioritized. Lacking those two extra work week hours on average, women are often not as able to focus on research and scholarship. In their study of the academic environment for women, Acker and Armenti cite one female faculty member who sums up the dilemma for female scholars: “I mean, if I didn’t have to sleep, it would be fine” (2004, 3).

### *The Pipeline*

For many years, conventional wisdom stated that women had not reached the highest ranks of academia because they had not yet exited the “pipeline.” Having gotten a later start than men in academia, the argument was that they had not yet made their way through all the channels – the masters degree, the doctoral program, a tenure track position – to find themselves on the other end as a high-ranking research professor.

Studies now indicate that the pipeline theory is no longer valid (Collins, Chrisler, and Quina 1998; Roos 2008; Roos and Gatta 2009). We are, quite simply, beyond the point in time in which women should have reached parity with men. So what is driving this outcome? Why are there still so few women at the top of the research heap? There are two theories to explain this condition. The first states that the pipe is leaky, as mentioned above. This is the so-called “choice of exit” theory, which argues that women voluntarily choose to leave the academic world before reaching tenure, due to the time and family constraints discussed above. The other

theory states that the pipe is obstructed. This is the “accumulated disadvantages” theory (Wilson 2006), which argues that women face a series of mechanisms of inequity, or subtle sex biases woven into the fabric of the institution which produce unequal gender outcomes (Roos and Gatta 2009). The next two sections discuss these mechanisms of inequity.

### *Resource Distribution*

Universities and colleges often face the problem of scarce resources – money, space, staff, equipment, and so on. Inevitably, there will be competition for these limited resources. Men are often rewarded with these resources to a greater extent due to the fact that, as discussed above, the institutional system is male-constructed and male-dominated. In turn, women often suffer in terms of ability to secure these resources and advance in terms of research productivity.

Collins writes,

Women often report that their share of grants, research support, and committee responsibilities is inequitable. Research results confirm that women receive a small proportion of the resources. Although women constitute 9.6% of the workplace, they receive only 7.5% of small grants, 6.0% of federal (largest) grants, 2.5% of industrial grants, and 5.7% of other grants (1998, 61).

As such, women face a greater uphill battle in achieving research production goals.

Resources include many things on an academic campus: “student assistantship hours, better computer equipment, funding opportunities, summer support, software, and equipment” (Collins 1998, 61). They also tend to include spatial resources – a corner office, prime lab space, a larger work area. These resource advantages have been described as “positive kicks” (Cole and Singer 1991; Roos and Gatta 2009). Similarly, “negative kicks” would include a smaller office, an older lab, less merit money, lower levels of research support (either in the form of money or student assistantships, or perhaps even time off). Roos and Gatta argue, “To the extent that men experience a larger number of positive kicks...or women experience a larger number of negative

kicks..., the gender success gap will tend to persist” (2009, 181). Therefore, men benefit from a cycle of advantage – acquiring resources tends to promote greater research capabilities and higher research production rates tend to harvest more resources. Therefore, the gender-biased patterns in which these spatial, financial, and support resources are distributed is one of the mechanisms of inequity that disadvantage women in their research agenda.

### *Inequitable Recognition*

In looking at tenure and promotion patterns, it has become evident that women move through the process more slowly than their male counterparts, even when we control for research productivity (Collins 1998; Denker 2009). This also appears to be the outcome of a male-dominated and male-instituted system of advancement where competence is defined in masculine terms. Despite the best efforts of many in academia to institute more objective tenure and promotion policies and criteria, the fact remains that “our academic judgment of the quality of a colleague’s work is inherently subjective” (Roos and Gatta 2009, 180). It remains the case that in these situations, people inherently fall back on gender, race, or other personalistic schemas and biases (Roos and Gatta 2009, 180). The literature abounds with anecdotal stories of women not receiving tenure, despite similar, if not better, research records than men who were awarded tenure (Roos 2008). This often drives women to look for success in other areas of academia, including teaching and service. Therefore, the lack of recognition of women’s research typically pushes them to over-perform in the roles that more appropriately allow them to “do” their gender (Denker 2009).

This, of course, then further disadvantages women in their pursuit of academic prestige. As they move out of the research field, they move further away from the primary academic criterion that bestows on us “academic fame.” Research success is linked to prestige, power, and

salary, and as women are distanced from the research world, they continue to fall further behind in the academic process. It remains the case that most universities value and reward a strong research agenda more than a positive teaching or service record. Therefore, research tends to be more highly regarded in the tenure and promotion process. This inequitable recognition is yet another mechanism of inequity that women face in higher education.

We have laid out above the ways in which gender intersects with the role of research in academia. The literature clearly describes the obstacles women face in approaching, achieving, and finding support for their research agendas. We turn now to a literature review of gender and university service, the third criterion for evaluation in higher education.

### **Gender and University Service**

The literature on women serving the university portrays the dichotomous way in which women are perceived in an academic setting. When women serve on university or department committees, the literature indicates that they are often disregarded or ignored as others view them as irrelevant or incompetent. However, when women serve as student mentors and advisors, the literature shows them to be well-received and highly regarded as others see them as “maternal” and “nurturing.” In other words, there is value in women “doing” their gender while, similarly, there is a risk of being devalued for failing to do one’s gender. Below we outline some of the key areas of the literature that discuss women’s role in university service.

#### *The Maternal Mind*

Women in academia are often celebrated as being the mothering touchstone for many young undergraduates. They are seen as maternal and caring, and thus appear to be a natural go-to for young twenty-somethings looking for life advice. This can be the case for students who are not even officially “assigned” to the professor as an advisee. Yet this image of women as

inherently maternal hinders them in many ways, as mothers are often viewed as powerless in society. Thus, the maternal image of women in academia tends to perpetuate the image of women as mindless and weak, and generally lacking in academic credibility.

### *Too Much Service*

Lack of credibility is unfortunately not the only downside to being viewed as having a maternal mind. As Dale argues, “[Women] are subliminally required to feel a skewed form of maternal responsibility to the ivy walls, a reality that translates into extraordinary demands on women’s time...for by gender alone we are the externally and self-appointed guardians of ‘quality of life’ on campus” (1998, 130). This is what Dale refers to as “the expectation of institutional nurturing” (1998, 130). It is essentially an extension of societal norms of women as caregivers. There is evidence for this in amount of time dedicated to university service - Collins reports that 58% of women and 37% of men serve on university committees, and that most women reported that their participation was required due to their gender (1998, 65).

Indeed, we may argue that women being in high demand to be on committees is a positive step forward for women, as just a decade ago women were facing difficulties in achieving tenure due to a dearth of committee assignments. However, two points should be made here. First, it’s not entirely clear that women are being placed on the powerful committees to actually advance their tenure chances. Second, in moving in the opposite direction to an extreme extent, women are disproportionately burdened with university requirements that once again, take away from a research agenda – typically the primary criterion used in academic evaluation. Thus, institutional nurturing remains the purview of women, despite the way in which it detracts from research and teaching goals.

The nurturing extends to the individual students as well. Studies find that women are more likely to take on a mentoring role; at one large research institution women made up just 7% of the faculty, but mentored 37% of female graduate students (Hulbert 1994, 256). As Denker reports, “Women’s gendered performance of caring can impact students’ perceptions of who can be of assistance, and who is available to help” (2009, 107). However noble and rewarding it is to mentor students, it remains the case that as women play this role to a disproportionate extent, it acts to reinforce the image of woman as caregiver.

Thus, universities have not been able to help women find a sense of balance when it comes to university service. Overwhelmingly, they are viewed as maternal caretakers for both the institution and the students, a role that often places a heavier burden on them in terms of time commitments outside of teaching and research and in comparison to their male counterparts. The result is yet another “deterrent to productivity” (Collins 1998, 66). Service is still viewed as an important, but not critical criterion for promotion and tenure, and the fact that it is the primary area in academia in which women excel and are asked to participate is further evidence of gendered patterns and interactions in higher education.

### **Concluding Thoughts and Recommendations**

This paper offered a critical review of the literature and presented the ways in which present-day gender discrimination is more subtle and covert than previous decades, and yet still intensely felt by women on academic campuses. Women in higher education are making great strides, and yet feel incredibly conflicted as they face a system that issues a mixed message – “do your gender” but act like a man. It is the “double bind” of the academy and it is one of many complex issues that women face in academia. From this review, it is clear that the women faculty do indeed face a “chilly climate” and have to negotiate a “double bind” on academic campuses across the

United States. However, most of the scholarship in this area has been published only on gender and the classroom, which is ironic considering that research is often the most “valued” prong of tenure decisions, but not surprising given that more data is readily accessible for analysis (albeit primarily from the perspective of students). For gender and research as well as gender and service, the empirical research to date has been less frequent and more heavily qualitative.

We have two recommendations for augmenting the literature. First, we suggest that more work be conducted from the perspective of female faculty members. As noted above, much of the research on the classroom is culled from the perspective of students, and not enough research is conducted on female faculty’s view of their research and service obligations. Furthermore, very few studies examine the tripartite in unison. Since women have to concentrate on research, teaching, and service simultaneously, it seems prudent to better understand how all three interact with each other. We submit that how a female faculty perceives and experiences one area of her job, say teaching, will inform how she approaches and achieves success in the other two areas – teaching does not exist in a vacuum, and neither does research or service.

Second, we recommend an updating of the literature. Studying and documenting the “chilly climate” that women professionals experienced was a hot topic in the 1980s and 1990s, but it has lapsed since then. As we moved out of a system where overt sexism and discrimination was accepted and transitioned into a period of more covert gendered inequality, scholars seemed to lose interest in the phenomenon of the “chilly climate.”

It is for the above reasons that we plan on developing such an investigation. We believe that those familiar with the academic world would agree with us that power is a central component of academia, and our study will explore the gendered nature of academic culture in relation to research, teaching, and service. Thus, we seek to understand whether or not there are

differences in how men and women perform these three roles. Specifically, we contend that there will be quantitative and qualitative variations in how female and male professors approach, achieve success, and are supported in these roles.

Our goal is to resurrect the conversation on gender and the academy and attempt to document female faculty's experiences in this environment. We will seek to understand the ways in which present-day gender discrimination is more subtle and covert than previous decades, and yet still intensely felt by women on academic campuses. Women in higher education are making great strides, and yet feel incredibly conflicted as they face a system that issues a mixed message – do your gender but act like a man. It is the greater “double bind” of the academy and one of many complex issues that women face in academia. We suggest exploring this complexity in an effort to understand how women navigate this intricate system of gendered expectations.

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