

Gender Equality in Academia: Bad News from the Trenches, and Some Possible Solutions

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Is there gender discrimination in academia? Analysis of interviews with 80 female faculty at a large Research One university—the most comprehensive qualitative data set generated to date—suggests both individual and institutional discrimination persists. Overt discrimination has largely given way to less obvious but still deeply entrenched inequities. Despite apparent increases in women in positions of authority, discrimination continues to manifest itself through gender devaluation, a process whereby the status and power of an authoritative position is downplayed when that position is held by a woman, and through penalties for those agitating for political change. Female faculty find legal mechanisms and direct political action of limited utility, and increasingly turn to more subtle forms of incremental collective action, revealing an adaptive response to discrimination and a keen sense of the power dynamics within the university. Women attributed the persistence of gender inequality not to biology but to a professional environment in which university administrators care more about the appearance than the reality of gender equality and a professional culture based on a traditional, linear male model. Respondents described heart-wrenching choices between career and family responsibilities, with tensions especially intractable in the bench sciences. They advocated alternative models of professional life but also offered very specific interim suggestions for institutions genuinely interested in alleviating gender inequality and discrimination.

Despite numerous scholarly discussions of gender politics, there is little work on the situation of women within the Academy itself. Several recent reports and the brouhaha surrounding public comments about innate limitations on women's scientific abilities by the former president of Harvard only highlight the need for those concerned with gender equity to look to their

own houses.¹ This article thus considers the issue of gender equality and discrimination within academia. It asks whether gender equity exists in academia, whether female faculty experience discrimination—overt, subtle, or institutional—and what specific recommendations might alleviate existing cultures and practices of discrimination. It does so through a narrative analysis of in-depth interviews conducted with 80 women faculty teaching at the University of California at Irvine (UCI), a major Research One (R1) university, from 2002 to 2006.

Analysis consists of five parts. First we clarify that there is, in fact, a problem. We present statistics on salary and employment data for men and women within academia, since job and salary differentials are obvious indicators of

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inequality. Overall, these data suggest academia mirrors the rest of society; gender inequity still exists in academic settings. We then describe the data and narrative methodology we used to provide a more nuanced portrait, designed to reveal perceptions of subtler forms of discrimination. We ask how female faculty assess the situation. Do they see improvements? Do they define gender discrimination as a political problem, requiring intervention through legal or political processes?² Do they believe existing legal mechanisms help counteract discriminatory practices? Do these women trust university attempts to improve the situation, or do they find the university gives mere lip service to equality, hoping that doing so will quiet demands for real change? Responses to such questions then are presented. Analysis suggests that discrimination persists; it is both overt and subtle, and evident at the individual and institutional levels. In part, discrimination occurs through a process of gender devaluation, whereby the status and power of an authoritative position is downplayed when that position is held by a woman. The UCI women find legal mechanisms and overt, direct political action of limited utility. As a result, they increasingly turn to more understated forms of incremental collective action, revealing an adaptive response to discrimination and a keen sense of the power dynamics within the university. Similar reactions inform these female academics' attempts to ameliorate the major ongoing tension between career and family, a tension evaluated through complex appraisals of university life, in which speakers fluctuate between emphasizing institutional accountability and individual responsibility. We next ask what our analysis of responses to gender discrimination in academia can reveal about broader issues of politics, from our understanding of the nature of political power itself to insights on organizational ethics and collective action in large organizations. Finally we present some specific suggestions for change offered by the UCI female faculty.

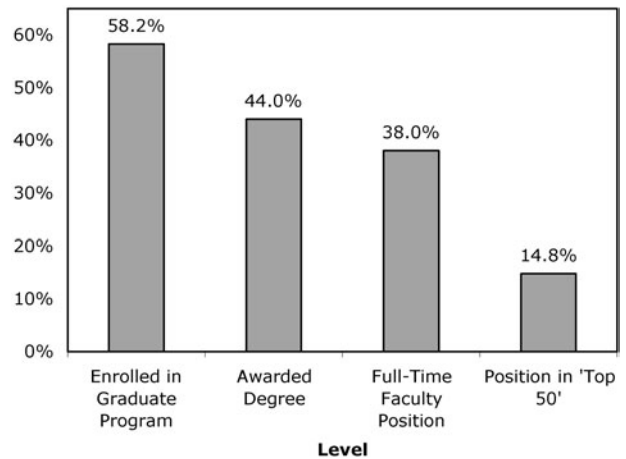
Is There a Problem?

Statistics on Gender Inequity and Discrimination in the Workplace and in Academia

Statistical works using employment and salary figures to measure gender discrimination suggest academia is no different from the rest of society; both groups continue to demonstrate significant differences in the way professional women and men are treated. Among both academics and professionals, there is apparent equity at the lower rungs and in broad aggregate statistics; nonetheless, we find strong evidence of gender disparity among positions with higher salaries and greater powers. Recent American Political Science Association studies suggest this general conclusion also holds for political science as a discipline.³

The professional and academic worlds hire men and women at roughly equal rates.⁴ Men have a 7 percent

Figure 1
Percent female employed by status level

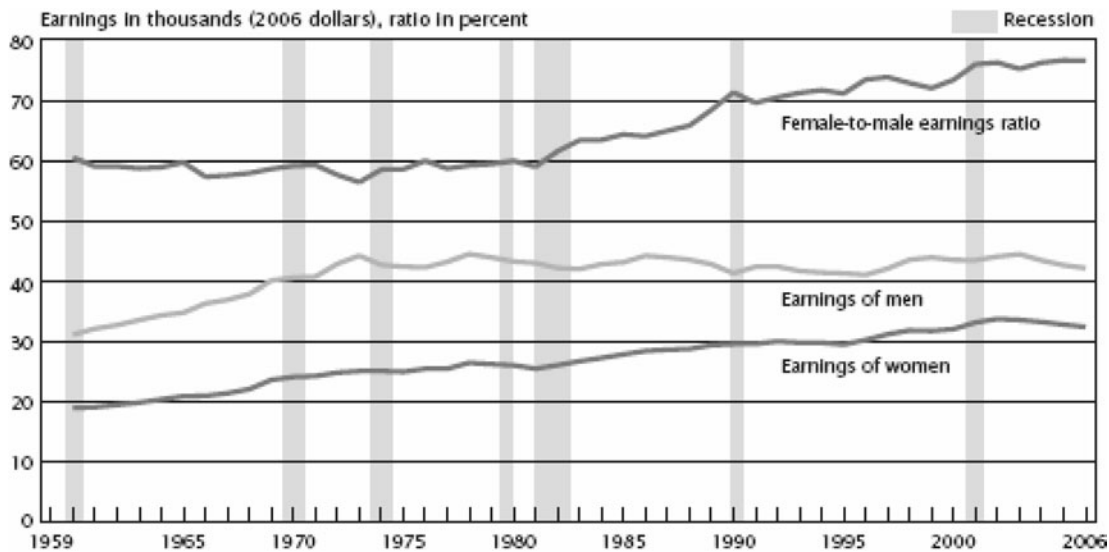


Note: Compilation of data in the *Professional Women and Minorities* book (CPST). The "Top 50" category is based on research expenditures as reported by the NSF.

margin over women in employment in the general workforce, 8 percent in managerial and executive positions, and 12 percent in college and university teaching positions. In the general workforce, gender often correlates highly with occupation type, but it is often assumed that gender distinctions of this type can be overcome in the professional world. However, the numerical equality among professionals is belied by differences in status. Women make strong showings in managerial positions, particularly in human resources, health care organizations, and education administration (60 percent to 70 percent), yet women fill only 26 percent of general manager and operations manager positions, and less than 19 percent of chief executive positions.⁵ Similarly, only 29 percent of lawyers, 28 percent of physicians and surgeons, and 22 percent of dentists are female.⁶ Higher status jobs, with better pay, go disproportionately to men.

Employment patterns in the academy reflect the pattern in the larger professional world; positions with higher status, power, and remuneration are generally dominated by males. While graduate enrollment in degree-granting institutions (figure 1) has been over 50 percent female for more than a decade (moving from 56 percent in 1996 to 58 percent in 2001), women accounted for only 44–45 percent of the recent Ph.D.s awarded, only 38 percent of the fulltime faculty in all institutions of higher education, and slightly more than 15 percent of the tenured and tenure-track faculty in "top" departments.⁷ In general, tenured professors are four times more likely to be male (80 percent of tenured faculty in 2001 were male), while tenure-track (65 percent male) and non-tenure-track (61 percent) employment move somewhat closer to the average.

Figure 2
Salary trends, 1960–2006. Female-to-male earnings ratio and median earnings of full-time, year-round workers.



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Current Population Survey, 1961 to 2007 Annual Social and Economic Supplements.

Some evidence suggests a generational effect. Professors holding Ph.D.s for less than ten years match the gender distribution in employment (60 percent male), while those with Ph.D.s for more than 10 years are by and large male (78 percent). But this generational split is itself gendered across rank. Among those with over ten years in their field, full professors are overwhelmingly male (85 percent), while the difference is negligible—or even slightly biased towards women—for assistant professors and instructors. Further, since the Department of Labor reported similar splits according to gender almost a generation ago, in a series of reports on employment trends from 1980–87, this differential effect cannot be attributed solely to a passing age cohort.⁸

With respect to salary, women in the general workforce have made slow but steady gains with respect to men over the last quarter century. As of 2003, median income for women was three-fourths the income of men, up from a low of roughly 56 percent in the 1970s. For the most part, this is due to a ceiling in median income for men: median male income has remained constant at roughly \$40,000 since 1975, while median female income has steadily increased (figure 2). Academia is only marginally more equitable; the average salary for female faculty is roughly 80 percent of their male counterparts.⁹ This division correlates with rank; salary rates for instructors and lecturers are roughly equal by gender, whereas clear differences between genders are evident at higher ranks, regardless of the type of institution or contract.¹⁰

The aggregate statistical data thus suggest academia as a whole fares no better than the general workforce at large

in terms of gender equity. Women are still underrepresented in almost all disciplines, and men are more likely than women to hold tenure track positions, be promoted to tenure, achieve full professorships, and be paid more than women of equal rank.¹¹

Statistics provide one view of the situation for women; anecdotal data and biographies offer further insight.¹² The more detailed qualitative work on women in academia suggests a dismal picture: a rigid system of rewards that makes scant allowance for deviation from the traditional male model, high levels of isolation, stress and fatigue among female faculty, continuing unconscious and deep-seated discrimination and stereotyping by male colleagues, and a remarkably unbreakable glass ceiling.¹³ The MIT Report—based on a small sample of 22 female faculty—found young women begin by believing gender discrimination will not happen to them. Many initially felt well supported within their departments; they soon discovered, however, that working situations actually worsen with tenure.¹⁴ Tenured MIT women faculty described feeling marginalized and excluded from significant roles in their departments. This sense of marginalization increased as they moved up the ladder, with MIT faculty women receiving less despite comparable professional accomplishments. Female faculty reported critical differences in salary, space, awards, resources, and responses to outside offers. This pattern repeated itself in successive generations and the MIT Reports found little evidence that the situation for female faculty at MIT will improve much in the future.¹⁵

Existing qualitative work thus suggests the subtlety of discrimination cannot be detected using more traditional aggregate statistics. We therefore turned to interview data for a first-hand assessment of conditions for women in universities, to provide a more nuanced portrait of the situation than is available using cruder methods.

Data and Methodology

Data

With support from an NSF Advance grant, interviews were collected at the University of California at Irvine, a relatively new (circa 1965) but otherwise typical, R1 university.¹⁶ NSF Advance grants are designed both to investigate gender inequities and to change institutional cultures that reinforce these inequities. The data pool consisted of all 220 female faculty in the Academic Senate as of December 2002, women at all levels— untenured to chaired professors and top administrators, deans, and other key administrators—and women in all faculties, from Humanities to Computer Science and Medicine to Fine Arts. We wrote to all 220 of these faculty members; 80 faculty agreed to be interviewed on the record. An additional twelve faculty agreed to be interviewed privately by the lead researcher, but asked that no one else on the project have access to their names. These 12 faculty said they wanted to give information about gender equity at UCI but were concerned with reprisals if they spoke frankly and openly.¹⁷ Their information thus is used “off the record” except when they specifically approved quotes for publication. While many of the other 80 female faculty agreed to speak using their full or first names, we decided to give pseudonyms to all our speakers, to further cloak the identities of the speakers. Hence, none of the names assigned a particular quote is the actual name of the speaker.

The Interview

We developed a semi-structured narrative interview composed of two parts. During the first part, we got to know the speakers better by asking them to tell us something about themselves, their upbringing, background, and personal lives. This allowed participants to select items they deemed critical to their success and kept the interview focused on topics judged important by the speakers.¹⁸ In the second part of the interview, we ask more specific questions about academia and the situation for women at UCI. The specific questions posed grew out of our reading of the literature on academic success and were designed to capture how our interviewees perceive themselves, what kind of gender roles they were socialized into while young, their relations with parents and siblings, whether or not they had mentors who shaped their future career decisions, etc. We also developed questions to capture how women in academia balance their responsibilities at work and at home and how they cope with structural problems,

personal prejudices, and systemic discrimination. We treated all questions as prompts that guide the interview rather than working through questions mechanically. We emphasized taking the time to get to know the people with whom we were talking so they could express themselves in their own words and raise issues they found most relevant. These women were all extremely articulate, which proved a boon to interviewers. Most interviews ran between 1–2 hours, though a few lasted as long as 5 hours. All interviews were taped, transcribed, and shown to the speakers for approval. Once approval was received the original tapes were destroyed and interviews were entered into N-Vivo, a computer program for qualitative analysis.¹⁹ Data were coded by four independent coders. We coded for a number of different categories, from socioeconomic/family background, relations with the community, educational background, and socialization to gender roles, role models/mentors, gender discrimination in academia, culture for women at the university, etc. Only quotes on which there was uniform coder agreement are included in the analysis, which focuses here primarily on questions concerning gender discrimination.²⁰

Finally, how representative are our findings? Our respondents insist that their experiences reflect those of their friends and colleagues in other academic settings and their own experiences elsewhere. Assuming this is the case, then, the narrative interviews analyzed in this article provide important information about the subtle but institutionalized forms of gender discrimination and inequitable institutional structures within academia. It is the largest and most comprehensive study to analyze gender equity in academia, using narrative interviews.

A More Nuanced Perspective on Discrimination and Gender Equity

Subtle Institutional and Cultural Patterns of Discrimination

UCI faculty women drew clear distinctions between isolated incidents of discrimination on the part of individuals and the broader, more pervasive subtle institutional or cultural forms of discrimination. They noted the importance of how the university responds to both individual and institutional forms of discrimination. Few chose to engage in overt political responses that would actively challenge the structure of the Academy and university policy. Younger faculty tended to employ a more positive narrative about gender and academia, eschewing the paradigms of “oppression” and “victimhood” used by an older generation of feminist academics.²¹ But most of our respondents rejected overt and confrontational political responses to perceived discrimination in favor of a more adaptive discourse that both revealed a keen sense of the power dynamics in the university and prioritized incremental progress over cultural overhaul. These initially surprising

responses become understandable when set in the context of comments about insidious institutional or cultural forms of discrimination operating through less visible dimensions of power relations, where the conflict over preferences is not observable and openly engaged and where power's oppressive aspects are minimally visible. Perhaps because of this, the reactions of the women we interviewed initially struck us as lacking politicization of individual discrimination. Once we located their responses in the broader context of their personal and professional narratives, however, the complexity of their political appraisals of university life became evident.

Our women echoed the MIT faculty in describing a legacy of male chauvinism, much of it sub-conscious or pre-conscious on the part of well-meaning men who simply did not realize they were being patronizing or sexist. One woman told of a job interview in a top department, where an African American scholar took her aside and told her, "This is a great place for people like you and me, if you know what I mean, honey." The woman felt the man meant well, and was not offended. She noted, with some irony, that he simply did not realize it might be as inappropriate to call a 26-year-old woman "honey" as it would be to jovially slap a black man on the back and call him "boy." This lack of both male malevolence and sensitivity in this story are reflected in comments about the "old boy network," a system still alive and well in academia, according to our respondents.

CAROLYN: The most fundamental problem is the old boy network. These men have been here for 30 years and gotten into that power structure. They don't look for goals of equity. They have a whole interpersonal political structure set up to support their regressive values. That's why it's very frustrating here, because there's nowhere to go for appeal. The people you can go to don't seem to share the goal of supporting equity. They don't give a damn. It's shocking to me. It frustrates me that the administration doesn't seem to address that. It doesn't care that half the faculty is really unhappy. What kind of organization is that? A really poor one.

This speaker links the cultural legacy of the old boy network to the institution's failure to care enough to set up institutional constraints to correct it. This link was noted in other interviews that suggested bias which is subtle but nonetheless reflected in very tangible differences in advancement, promotion and tenure.²²

CLARA: You are paid lower and spend your whole career trying to get to where you should be. They discourage you from taking large jumps, because they want you to make these little incremental steps, so once you've come in at a low [rank] you're disadvantaged for the rest of your career. I've noticed a pattern of women coming in and being classified lower than some of their male counterparts. That's a pay issue, most definitely.

Q. Why do you think that happens?

CLARA: Usually because of things that are not gender related explicitly. The male counterpart might have more articles in

peer review journals that rank top-ten in the field, whereas the woman might have more book chapters. Or, the woman is seen as not as strong a candidate so she's brought in as an assistant professor rank one or rank two, not rank three, like the man is. [This means she gets less money and has to advance more slowly on the pay and promotion scale.] Those kinds of things are not explicit discrimination but they take a discriminatory toll. Women's profiles are often different than men. Or, the woman had a child. A woman's trajectory is a little bit uneven, whereas a man's is a straight line. Again, they're going to penalize the woman; she wasn't as productive. So there are a lot of things that ultimately would be related to gender, but are not explicitly talked about as being gender-issues.

A critical part of this phenomenon was internal. In general, women are less assertive than their male counterparts, seldom asking for an accelerated merit increase (from Step 1 to Step 3 instead of Step 2).²³ Since incremental increases accumulate into serious money over time, it is not in the university's interest to encourage accelerations.

Gender Devaluation and Holding Positions of Power

One common solution to discrimination is to increase the number of power holders who are members of the discriminated group. Our interviews suggest a more complex relationship of women to power, status, and office holding. Just holding office is not always enough to ensure change.

DOLORES: Having women in positions of power is important, no doubt about that. Is having more women in those positions enough to simply change the way we think about gender and the production of knowledge? No.

Our speakers agreed that being a dean or a chair provides the office holder more discretion to do "good" things for other women, but having women in positions of power cut both ways.

EVELYN: There's a sociological argument that if you have enough women [in power] then it does start to change. That's true to a certain extent. But I also think the men need to change.

Women were delighted about the increase in female chairs, deans, or central administrators; some considered that these increases signaled genuine improvement. Too often, however, a woman's holding of this position would devalue or minimize it somewhat, casting it into the service mode, not the power mode. We heard this comment so frequently across all disciplines that we finally named it *gender devaluation*. Gender devaluation refers to the subtle process by which administrative positions lose their aura of status, power, and authority when held by women. These positions often become treated as service or support roles until they are reoccupied by men. So, for example, being a department chair could be viewed as a position of power or one of service. When a man is department chair, the position confers status, respect, and power. When a woman

becomes department chair, the power and status seem diminished, and the service dimension becomes stressed.

How lasting is this phenomenon of gender devaluation? Because this is an area in flux, and one heavily mixed into university politics, it is difficult to say. Several women, speaking off the record, suggested recent increases in female deans had facilitated a power grab by central administration. The suggestion was that (1) women were weaker and (2) that the Provost/Executive Vice Chancellor had “put his people in the office” so they would owe their loyalty to him, and hence would not fight against decisions by the central administration. While some female deans were viewed as independent, then, others were seen as “yes (wo)men,” who owed their position to the Provost, or were simply ignored by the Provost. Female faculty felt this both illustrated the extent to which merely installing female deans does not necessarily increase power for women and underlines both the subtlety of political power in the university and the difficulties of effecting meaningful change.

Other women told how their accomplishments—being elected to a scholarly academy, an office in the professional association or international society, even receiving outside job offers—were routinely written off by their male colleagues as simply reflections of affirmative action, not the woman’s own accomplishments.

BEULAH: We had a man who held the same office [in our professional society]. When he had it, it was a really big deal. When I got it, it was minimized as the result of political pressures to find symbolic women, not because I was a good scholar.

This story was repeated, in diverse variants, in all Schools in the university. Our respondents were not naïve. Most acknowledged the politics in a university setting. They recognized that if having a woman in a position of power—or one who once had power—is not a guarantee of equity, a critical mass is at least a help. In this regard, the Faculty Women’s Association and formal mentoring programs were cited as important venues for change.

GLENDA: The main thing that needs to be done is to reach out to women in fields that are still so heavily male. I think women in some fields still have a very hard time. I was on the [faculty committee in charge of all appointments, promotions, and tenure] a long time ago. It was abundantly clear there were some departments, such as the medical school and the sciences, where women just didn’t stand a chance. I imagine it’s gotten much better. I think there’s more subtle forms of gender inequities, pay inequities, now on the campus, but any mechanism that gets the vulnerable women in biased departments together with women who have made it, and women who are ready to just reach out, will improve things. I’ve only been to a few activities of the Faculty Women’s Association. It’s a great group of people, with so many strong, terrific women on campus. In our department, every faculty member who comes in gets a mentoring committee. That is, the junior faculty get mentors. We’ve been

arguing about senior faculty needing a mentoring committee too, but so far it’s been junior faculty.

Service Is for Women

However defined, service was complained about by a majority of women; everyone commented that women do far more than their share of the service and suggested that this work is uniformly lower status, and not rewarded or appreciated by the system.

VICKI: One thing that is very gendered is the distribution of service work. Across departments, women are doing a disproportional share. Of course, service work is least rewarded. In my department, women do considerably more, and they do it better, faster, and in most cases without having to redo it. Yet, it is not as valued as research.

Other women echoed this complaint, noting the acuity of the problem for senior women.

Q: Do you see your workload as being more than what men are doing?

MARGIE: No. Junior faculty in general are pretty well protected. [At] the senior level, tenured women carry more an administrative burden than the men. But at my level, I don’t see that.

Q: What I heard from different people is that women ended up doing more administrative work, as opposed to focusing on their research. Then when it’s time to get tenure or promotion, it’s all about the research.

MARGIE: That’s true at the more senior level. There’s always work that needs to be done and somebody to do it and there’s no rewards for doing it. Women tend to do that more than men but that’s a gross generalization, not true in all cases.

Service differentials often resulted from subtle forms of discrimination. Some instances centered on different expectations of men and women and differences in the way the same behavior was evaluated, depending on the gender of the person performing the act. Women take on these service tasks, despite knowing the disadvantages of spending their time on duties for which they will not be rewarded, because they also recognize that such positions enabled them to open things up for other women.

VICKI: The other gendered barrier for female faculty is related to childcare. As chair, I just had a faculty member come to me with a request for reimbursement for childcare in a conference she went to. I submitted it and the University said, “No, we don’t do this. We don’t reimburse child care expenses.” This struck me as unreasonable. I thought, “This is something she has to do to go to the meeting; it is like catching a cab to go to the meeting. You [the university] have got to do it.” I am in battle with the University right now, attempting to discover how it is that we can get this paid for. She was still breast-feeding; she couldn’t leave the child at home. If the university wants her to maintain a professional standing, which means going to conferences and publishing, she should have the money on her own discretionary account to solicit childcare services. Let her get reimbursed.

Vicki's dedication and creativity stand in stark contrast to the entrenched mindset among male faculty who view requests for reimbursement for childcare as an inappropriate "perk." Vicki viewed child care as a natural part of the job, and hence something the university should reimburse, as it would cab fare.

Perceptions of Overt Discrimination

The pattern of working around discrimination rather than engaging in coordinated but frustrating political efforts to change an entrenched institutional culture is also evident in the way individuals react to what they perceive as explicit discrimination. We note that in these quotes, the "problem" is seen as the woman's, not the man's or the university's responsibility for allowing discrimination to continue.

JANE: I haven't experienced any discrimination but I experienced what I would call "harassment" from a very senior faculty, which was an unsavory experience that colored the way I do my work. This is related to this style of interaction that comes with being a young female faculty; you have to be nice, cooperative, friendly. There are no rules for how to deal with other people. You want to be nice but you don't want to send the wrong signals. So, with this one individual, I was asking for help, in a very junior faculty kind of way, not challenging authority, but just being friendly and open. My plea for help was interpreted differently by this male faculty. This is a real challenge, especially for junior female faculty. How do you negotiate your style? Was I sending mixed signals in terms of the way I made my requests? Or is it that my being a young faculty, he sort of assumed that he could pass that line back and forth. This is especially troublesome for junior faculty because your whole life is on the line until you get tenure. You can't afford people not supporting you.

Jane's distinction between discrimination and harassment is striking since, at least logically, sexual harassment seems an important subset of discrimination, involving a power inequality in favor of the man. Further, Jane's assumption of responsibility meant that she did not take any legal action. But part of this calculus also involved Jane's assessment of the person's political importance, that it simply would be potentially damaging to her career to confront him. The power equation was not in Jane's favor.

JANE: I did not file a complaint. This is a very senior person on campus and under no circumstance would I have filed anything. Until you get tenure, you have to take care of yourself, basically. I thought this was my issue. But it was a very upsetting experience. If I were male, he would never have misinterpreted things in this way. It is normal to ask for senior faculty's support to accomplish things you want to get done. Many female junior faculty are struggling with this issue of how do you negotiate your style without being misinterpreted.

Our speakers were careful to distinguish between discrimination and harassment, and to make further distinctions between overt and subtle forms of each. They also distinguished between individual actors and institutional bias.

We heard stories of all types; the consensus was that the institutional climate was too complacent about discrimination and harassment, preferring to keep things under wraps by discouraging official reports of discrimination or harassment. For example, Leyla reported that one male colleague was widely known as someone who "put the moves" on women. One of Leyla's students—we will call her Claire—came to Leyla, reporting that Professor X had grabbed Claire and given her a kiss, had patted Claire's bottom several times, and engaged in similar activities that upset Claire. Claire was afraid to file a complaint for fear her husband would be so upset he would make Claire leave graduate school. Claire allowed Leyla to talk with the dean (a man), but not to use Claire's name in describing the situation. The dean was sympathetic and, after Leyla conveyed this information to Claire, the student agreed to meet with the dean to discuss the issue. The dean expressed concern at the inappropriate behavior, and made some suggestions on how Claire could deal with this problem in the future, arguing that Claire herself needed to take the action here, not report it. The dean stressed his hope that Claire feel empowered, not weak. While the dean gave Claire a sense of sympathy from someone in the power structure, the bottom line was that the dean effectively protected the institution by indirectly discouraging Claire from filing a complaint, thus leaving the offender in place to harass other young women.

LEYLA: I felt the dean's actions were mixed. I didn't fight it because I knew Claire wouldn't file charges anyway, because of her husband, but the dean's action disappointed me. It wasn't what I hoped the institution would do.

This was but one example of how discrimination endures through the subtle closing of ranks to safeguard the institution against potential legal remedies. It illustrates how entrenched bureaucracies shield an in-group rather than protecting the victims of overt discrimination.

Career, Family, and Need for Alternative Models of Professional Success

One of the most striking findings from our interviews was the intractable tension between professional success and family duties. For the laboratory or bench sciences, Larry Summers properly identified a real problem but missed the critical explanatory variable.²⁴ It is not gender that imposes limits on women's professional success. It is children, family, and domestic duties. The relationship between familial responsibilities and gender discrimination is a subtle one, in part because the gender role models that society imposes are so deeply ingrained they often become confounded with biology. Childbirth and breast-feeding are, of course, biologically based, but they occupy relatively short periods in the overall span of a woman's professional life. Child-rearing and child-care, by contrast, represent vast investments of time and effort that have no biological

requirements, but are traditionally constructed as responsibilities of women. Further, there is no clear *biological* reason why care of elderly family members is a female responsibility. In this regard, then, the conflict of family and career is centrally a social issue, *potentially* as constraining on men as on women, but in practice resting largely on female shoulders. Not one woman in our sample said gender in and of itself limits women's potential to do top work in science and academia; the "problem" is socially constructed.

This leads us to a consideration of gender role models. What is the traditional male model? Does it discriminate against women? How does it limit men? What would an alternative model look like? What factors would it consider? We heard interesting comments when we broached this topic.

Q. How do you see the culture for women at UCI in general?

SAMANTHA: Good question. We have this pecking order with women on the "lower status" tracks. Sometimes women choose those tracks because they're less demanding. If they do have kids, they can focus on being a clinician and not have a huge research requirement to fulfill. It's very hard to combine clinical practice and research. It's tough for any woman and it's tough for men as well. So that is that issue. There are fewer women than I would like to see, fewer than deserve to be up there. So there are opposite trends. Overall, I'd just say that the institution doesn't put a lot of attention into helping women succeed. Again, this does center a lot around kids because women still have more responsibility, even though their husband might participate more than mine did when I was raising my kids. Women experience it as more of a difficult thing. I don't think there are very good mechanisms in place to help women figure out how to juggle those different rolls. You can imagine a different kind of society where it would not all fall on the individual woman. I think it's a social problem and it should have a social solution. Look at countries like Sweden. Their people are still alive. It's not like they haven't provided good health care. They just have different models. It was probably a huge mistake of the women's movement in America that we emphasize equality in solving these kinds of problems.

This statement captures a widespread belief among UCI faculty women that the academic success model needs to be more flexible. The speaker recognizes that not everyone can do everything. What was unusual in Samantha's comment, however, is the politicization of her experience. Samantha was one of the few speakers who explicitly noted an alternative model, in this case the Scandinavian model. Samantha's comment that the American feminist movement made a mistake in emphasizing equality suggests she believes individuals are not equal and that the key is to provide equal access to opportunities and then let individuals judge best what works for them.

Many women noted the need for a new model of professional life, one that accommodates both women and

men who want to be more involved with their families. As part of that model, Gale suggests we need to kill off "Super Woman," that elusive and mythical ideal who can excel simultaneously in both the male and female models.

GALE: When I had my children, the Super Woman complex was in my mind. I was determined that I would drop that baby on Friday, teach on Monday, and nobody would ever know. That's what I had to do. That was just how I felt like life had to be. Indeed, my first child was born ten days after I submitted my final grades. I did have the summer off. I went back to teach in the fall, but by that September my first book was due at the publisher, and it all got done. That's what one had to do. That's what I felt. I was a competitive bitch, and that was what I felt I had to do in order to make a statement about who I was. Four years later, I had my next child. I said, "Screw this, I've done that." That didn't really make me a different person but with my second child I took maternity leave, which was offered by the university by that point. It might have been offered the first time around; I thought it was a sign a weakness to ask. I just didn't ask. But, the second time around I was more than happy to take the time off. I was more than happy to have my mom come out and help me, more than happy to sleep during the day, and just take it easy.

She continued, speaking of her own difficulties in giving up the Super Woman role.

GALE: It is very hard. Then there's the feeling of guilt! I don't think you can eradicate that feeling. I knew I had to get back to school. I knew I was having an identity crisis as long as I was home. Those first few months I thought I was going out of my mind. I was happy to be with the baby, but I kept wondering what happened to the old me.

Q. The fear of losing your identity?

GALE: That's right. It was very scary, so I knew I had to go back, but on the other hand every morning when I dropped that kid off at the babysitter's I thought I was going to die. As soon as I got to school, I was fine. I went to pick her up every day by twelve thirty in the afternoon, so I was only gone half a day. It worked out fine, but you do feel guilty and you do spend an awful lot of time worrying about the vulnerability of that child, feeling you're the only one who can protect it, and you have many, many nightmares about the things that could happen to your baby when you're not there. If you work at all, you're going to feel these things. Academics have a slight edge, because they can do a lot of their work at home. They can work around difficulties. It's actually a better profession than most for being able to manage children.

Q. With your second child you said you took maternity leave. Was it because you didn't feel you'd experienced all the precious moments, that kind of thing, when your first child was growing up?

GALE: No. I just settled down by the second child, and realized that nobody was expecting me to be a super woman any more. I had nothing to prove any more, and with two kids to manage it was harder. Two kids are more than twice as much work as one, and the guilt had gone. I no longer felt that there was something horrible about my wanting to be home with my kids. I was more than happy to take that time off.

Gale was not alone in yearning for more flexible models of professional life. She raises an important question: do some jobs better lend themselves to this kind of flexibility? This topic is closely related to conversations about women in science. Our interviews suggest that the laboratory or bench sciences impose high demands on anyone holding them, regardless of gender. Research that does not require a laboratory—where the scholar can work at home, as many women said they did—makes it far easier to combine career and family. But the women we spoke with recognized the non-gendered aspect of this: it's tough for men, too. If the Academy wants to provide the opportunity for academics to combine these roles, we need more flexibility for both men and women.

MARY: [It's] really hard [to work] and still manage a healthy family life. If you live by yourself, you can shut down. Stop eating. Stop showering. Eat only frozen food and don't take care of the house. But with a small infant, I just can't abandon him for days on end.

Q. Do you think this is a challenge for many women in academia, dealing with those different aspects of their lives and managing everything equally well?

MARY: It's a challenge for both men and women. It's a harder challenge for women, particularly if there are children. I have a husband who is a phenomenal caregiver to our child, but he still can't breast feed the baby. That circumstance changes the hours available to me in the day to do anything else, eating, sleeping, or trying to get work done. Both men and women of a certain age group are trying harder to find balance. I see it with male colleagues and male friends of mine. They're spending a lot more time with their families than older brothers or husbands did. I don't think there's an easy answer on how you resolve that.

Virtually every woman with children noted the difficulties in balancing career and family. Mary and Gale remind us that family versus career is a human problem, not just one with which women wrestle. Is society responding to this challenge, trying to develop more flexible work models so both the men and women who want more family time can have it and still pursue a career? Our interviews suggest little evidence of such a move.

Is the Personal Political?

The Nature of the Political. The Complexity of Responses to the Situation

Politicizing the personal is an ongoing struggle for professional women.²⁵ Our speakers are no exception, and their interviews reveal both a cautious optimism and diminished expectations for change. They note three distinct strategies for navigating the complex shoals of institutional and cultural bias: legal and administrative mechanisms, collective action, and individual coping. Each of these strategies represents a different type of political response for coping with the complexities of gender bias in professional academic life.

Legal and Formal Administrative Mechanisms Offer Insufficient Solutions

How effective are existing legal mechanisms in protecting women? If women use these mechanisms, are they stigmatized for doing so? Our speakers suggest that the benefit of legal mechanisms is unclear but the costs associated with pursuing legal remedies are real and high.

JOANNE: There was an article in the *New York Times* maybe three years ago called "The Baby Bias" about what happens when people take extra years [to tenure] and the critical consequences of that. Someone from UCI was quoted in it, saying if you take an extra year, it's political suicide because they have higher standards for you. So in a meeting, I asked about this article and if this was the case. An administrator said, "Oh, no, no. We don't hold you to higher standards. We don't pay attention to how long you've been here. We just know when you come up, you have to have the tenure." The faculty members who were on the committee—they're the ones who are actually making the decisions—said, "Oh, come on, get real. Of course we look at when you got your degree and how many years it is. If you've taken more years, of course we expect more!" At that level, there is some discrimination. I get an extra year not because I *should have* done more, but because I *need* more time to get to the same point. So I think there's that issue.

Q. Not formal, but informal discrimination?

JOANNE: Yeah. The policies actually are pretty good. But just as in the corporate world, the problem is, if you take [advantage of these policies], you're stigmatized. And yeah, it has real consequences.

Statements like the above suggest that women who opt for legal remedies, including formal university policies and institutional equity rules, are often subjected to informal sanctions and ostracism. Perhaps because of this, the majority of our speakers were disenchanted with legal remedies and preferred less openly confrontational forms of change through collective action.

Collective Action

Our speakers were extremely adept at detecting the Academy's cultural cues. Most feared backlash and retribution if they agitated openly for change, so they rejected overt collective activism in favor of more subtle, non-threatening collective actions. Whereas overt activism tries to directly change power and institutional structures, collective action—as we conceptualize it—refers to organized efforts to improve women's conditions in the university through more proactive interpersonal processes. The most uniform and enthusiastic recommendation of this type was to expand and reconceptualize mentoring programs. Women especially valued mentoring from women, which provide both role modeling and concrete illustrations of alternative life choices to the traditional male model.

LETICIA: Problems were really eased in my third year when we hired a senior woman in the department. Suddenly at

meetings she could say things that I couldn't say to the other tenured faculty members. She would say, "X, that remark was discriminatory." I had been rather silent about some things. Her presence and candor was like a breath of fresh air. Rather than overt gender discrimination, I believe I was subjected to benign neglect, at times. My female colleague was the only one who turned to me regularly and said, "What have you written? Can I read it?" The men didn't tend to say that, for whatever reason. There was suddenly an active interest in my work that I hadn't experienced till she came.

Leticia captures the importance of mentoring in attacking gender discrimination directly. Her comments also reveal a widespread view: women have shared experiences that heighten sensitivity to the plight of other women. But female mentoring also aids professional success by providing general encouragement and direction in areas that are new, puzzling, and unanticipated, a role filled by traditional mentoring.

FELICIA: [Mentoring's] so important, even before you arrive on the scene, because a lot of women don't know they are expected to negotiate their salary, start-up offers, things like that. They really need mentoring even before they get there. In the bench sciences, every woman faculty member that comes in gets a mentor. Often times it's a women. We had enough women so far to make that true but we wouldn't hesitate to assign a man as long as they were supportive. In our informal poll, we found the women wanted informal mentoring, the social network, as well as formal mentoring. If we couldn't pair someone with a female mentor in their field, we would choose a secondary adviser who was a man in that field, but we thought it was essential to have another woman be part of the mentoring process.

The UCI faculty women distinguished between informal mentoring and institutional mentoring. Informal mentoring evokes either the image of a senior scholar selecting a talented junior to be groomed or the image of an unskilled junior who requires the protection and assistance of a more professional colleague. Institutionalized mentoring—involving formal structures, universally defined goals, and relationships developed with some form of assistance or intervention from the organization—carries more egalitarian implications. The UCI faculty felt that institutionalized mentoring works best as a mandatory program, for both male and female faculty, at all levels and ranks, to best aid all faculty and remove any stigma of mentoring as remedial. The UCI women knew informal mentoring always will exist but they wanted it supplemented with formal programs organized by universities. They felt organizational support for institutional mentoring could provide critical incentives for mentors and protégés to maintain their relationship and their obligations to one another. As part of the NSF Advance, some schools instituted mentoring programs that provided funding for senior faculty to take junior faculty out to lunch. The program involved all faculty, not just women, and had an equity advisor who reminded senior faculty of this responsibility. Uni-

formly, this program was judged successful, even when small.

ALTAF: We have 6 or 7 pairs of mentors and mentees. We just had a yearly lunch for them to begin the mentoring process. We have given them guidelines on what you should do for the mentee: look at their CV at least once or twice a year, discuss what they are teaching, their service duties, where to publish, where to apply for grants, advise that the mentors read the grants that they write, and offer suggestions, etc.

University support for such formal mentoring could make a critical difference for women and was strongly recommended.

Individual Coping: Working Harder and the Cult of Individual Responsibility

Finding that women reject legal and administrative mechanisms in favor of the subtler collective action proposals noted here reflects other findings in the literature. A more surprising result is the extent to which UCI faculty women fell back on a model of individual responsibility for their situation. Ironically, if not surprisingly, several of our women noted one important and insidious aspect of discrimination; they felt they had to do more to succeed than their male counterparts. While many lamented this, few seemed angered. This was closely related to the fact that these women demonstrated acute understanding of the authority of the university in considerations of family obligation and therefore adapted their experience of inequality to an individual model of responsibility. In this way, most did not relate their own experience with discrimination in broader political terms so much as they deemed it an individual problem they had to address on their own. They held themselves to high standards and interpreted their failures less to gender discrimination and more to their own shortcomings.

We were surprised, for instance, at the number of the women we spoke with who did not judge childcare issues as relevant for the university. (Samantha was unusual in this regard.) Instead, such issues were frequently held as solely the province of the individual. Beyond this, a surprising number of the women were much more likely to appraise discriminatory experiences in ways that assigned no blame to the institution or its structures. They ignored the possibility of political solutions that might result in more just alternatives and placed the responsibility for change on the respondents themselves. As examples, consider excerpts from several interviews about the individual's responsibility for balancing work and family.

CLAUDINE: I think I did a good job balancing the two [work and family]. I remember when I was teaching a big intro class, I would take my kids to the park to go play, and instead of interacting with them, just grade papers. I remember the number of years I got by on sleeping four hours every night, until I just collapsed.

This lack of sleep, in the face of dual responsibilities, ran like a constant refrain in our interviews.

VICKI: Something needs to be said about those who stay in the system and those who fall off the conveyer belt. We talked earlier about decisions about childbearing, family, relationships; these are the kinds of decisions that will pull you out of the conveyer belt. It creates an incredible dilemma for folks like me, who are in the position to advise young women. What do you say? Can you say, “Don’t have a family; it will pull you off the track.” Who am I to say that?

Several respondents voiced this view that the tension between children and professional life was simply a fact to be accepted, a tension endemic to all professional life, not simply academics.

MARY: It’s a very big challenge that you fight every day [balancing work and family]. It never seems to be a thing where you sort it out and say, ok, this is the plan we’ll adopt. The plan constantly needs updating. It’s always a struggle to manage. It’s hard work. Sure, you work more than 40 hours a week. I often work after I put the kids to bed at 9 o’clock until 12 or 1 or 2 in the morning. But it’s not any harder than when you are a successful professional, working in a competitive career.

Many other respondents told of the incredible pain felt as they were torn between children and the job. The emotional exhaustion and the sense of desperation, as they had to choose between what felt like irreconcilable conflicts, left women drained emotionally and unsatisfied with whatever solutions were crafted.

EVE: We were thinking about having children while we were in the Ph.D. [program] and now I’m two years into my Assistant Professorship and there’s probably not an opportunity right now. But that’s just the reality. When we came here, actually, I asked my department Chair about it and he was very supportive. He is married to one of my colleagues. They’re a couple and, they have a young child, and he’s a mature person. He would give me some very good advice, and the university is supportive of that. But the reality of it is that it [having children] does professionally stop you. It stops you in the middle of your research program if we have to think about how that’s going to affect you. That’s just the reality of it. Whether the university is supportive of it or not, it stops you, and that’s a personal decision you have to make.

When describing conditions associated with balancing academic work and family, woman after woman recounts an environment in which they are surviving—some just barely—rather than thriving. Exhaustion, struggle, uncertainty, incompatible tensions between professionalism and motherhood, the need to make difficult choices: these are the watchwords, at least until the children leave for college. The poignancy of this situation, while widespread, is perhaps best captured in the story of a woman who had to leave her baby unattended in the apartment while she took her language examination. It was her only remaining requirement for the Ph.D., her husband was working, and they had no family or money for a babysitter.

Two points are striking, as we listen to the sense of quiet desperation in the choices faced by these women. First, uniformly the UCI women believed the tension between career and family/children is a fact of life for all professional women. It is not unique to UCI, or to academia. Second, we heard a surprising lack of anger. Few women asked for institutional intervention toward a more just reconciliation between the commitment to family and the commitment to career. From the standpoint of institutional reform, then, these are not efficacious voices. These are voices of struggle, denial, and helplessness, ultimately lacking the empowering strategies to handle or change their seemingly intractable circumstances. They are not voices that see the personal as political. This process of internalizing responsibility also occurred in descriptions of both the subtle forms of discrimination and descriptions of overt ones. Stories of both types of discrimination, however, were closely linked to an institutional climate more concerned with bureaucracy and what several speakers called “window dressing” than with ethics. This linkage suggested the lack of political demands may represent a shrewd and knowing calculus on the part of policy savvy women who realize such politicization is doomed to fail in eliciting a positive institutional response.

ZELDA: I do not have any major experience of discrimination that I can recount. That doesn’t mean it wasn’t there and I might not have been somewhat oblivious to it. Like many people, when I didn’t get something, I tended to assume it was through my own failure. “I hadn’t been suitable, I hadn’t done well enough, somebody else was better than I was.” That was probably naïve, but I can’t point to any one instance and call it discrimination. What I can point to is social situations in which I have felt deliberately snubbed or slighted by men. In fact, it happened only last night: you’re the person whose opinion is asked, but whose answers are not listened to, that male ploy of showing interest until the conversation can be switched around so they can talk to you about themselves. Most of the women I know have talked about having this experience repeatedly. We’re hypersensitive to social nuances of this kind.

The dominant view of the situation was one where women had to take the responsibility to fit into the man’s world. The male model itself was seldom questioned. Many women even felt they had to “dress for success,” thereby denying their feminine personality to succeed.

MARY: I never wear pink. It’s true. I finally bought something pink when I was pregnant and I thought it was safe to wear pink then. So I don’t mention the fact that I cook or that I sew. I don’t even talk about kids when I’m at work because there’s this unconscious stigma attached to it. It’s sad but it’s true. Maybe if there were 50 percent women in the faculty that would change.

A surprising number of women echoed this view, noting they are careful not to dress in too feminine a manner or have too many family photos in their offices. This adaptation to the male model is evident in comments suggesting

the current model for advancement within academia privileges research and downgrades teaching and service, two areas in which women tend to do more. Interestingly, the speaker seems to object to this but then backs off and suggests that the system is this way and that people who want to do more teaching should go to a community or liberal arts college. Statements such as this one reinforced our conclusion that women are reluctant to place the blame on the institutional culture; instead, they take it on their own backs.

VICKI: [For women], instead of this linear model, there is a non-linear model.

Q. Would you consider this linear model itself to be anti-feminist?

VICKI: Yes. Because people have different career paths. What we value here is research and publications. The other things [things women do] are valued not even one point out of 100. It's not even there, and so that's a challenge. To keep not getting appreciated, but to see other people advancing, you ask why you're doing this.

Q. Is there no hope for female faculty then, unless they give in to the system?

VICKI: Well, I think the question is: "Should there be?" I think no. This is an R1 higher education institution. It is very stratified; you get R1 universities. You have junior colleges. You get state colleges. You get liberal arts colleges. This is a sector market. We are that sector, an R1 university. We never claimed to be private liberal arts. I always tell people, if I had a child, I would send them to Smith College. Get educated there, where the class size is smaller, where they claim to be about education. They don't claim to be an R1. So, within the way we are structuring ourselves, we are evaluating what we should. If you want teaching to be rewarded, go to a private liberal arts school. But that is what makes us elite. The faculty is in an interesting position; they want the prestige, and at the same time they want other things to be rewarded. You just can't have both. We have lower teaching loads to free people to do research.

Vicki's interview is insightful at many levels. First, she voices the widespread view that the university has no responsibility to be concerned with issues it considers personal. Further, Vicki echoes other UCI women in feeling the university defines as "personal"—and thus the responsibility of individual faculty—many obvious constraints on professional involvement, such as childcare, overt acts of discrimination, and other "women's issues." Vicki—like others in our sample—may be reading the cultural cues properly, but beyond this knowledge of cultural limitations Vicki remained extremely sensitive to women's issues, and noted instances when she had definitely perceived discrimination as an institutional problem/responsibility. (For example, she fought to get the department pay for a junior faculty's childcare during a conference.) This sophistication reveals the extent to which feminist issues are shifting on campuses, and findings are not black and white.

Vicki was not alone in this nuanced perception of reality for women. We heard many instances of university

authorities telling women that "it" was not the university's problem and they would have to deal with it on their own.

JOSIE: There are a couple of things that really stand out in my mind and were quite difficult at the time. I was twenty-nine when I first got this job. I already had two little kids, two and four, when I came here. This was the time of this super woman model, the "just do it all" model. That fit very well with messages I got from my family independently. So I never questioned that that was the only way to do this. I remember I had been at UCI about, maybe two years, and tenured in the College of Medicine. There were barely any women around, anyplace. I remember going to talk to the Chair about what to do [about balancing life and family]. I asked the Chair the same questions as anyone else. "What would I be teaching? What I would be doing?" Finally at the end I said, "I have these two little daughters and what about daycare or something?" He looked at me. He wasn't upset or angry, but he said, "Well, I don't really know anything about one of those things." He called in his secretary and he said, "You talk to her about this; I just don't really know." There was no institutional sense at all that it was the institution's responsibility to help people if you had kids. They couldn't stop you but they wouldn't supply you with information on daycare. It took me a while to just find out that the university had daycare provided for staff and faculty.

While it was certainly not uniform—some women did feel the university was genuinely trying to change, and we should note that Josie herself *does* comment on how things are now improved in her department—the more common view was summed up by one senior woman:

ALICIA: For change to happen we need someone at a very senior level to state that these are very serious issues that need action. It's really a "damned if you do, damned if you don't" situation because there doesn't seem to be any way that women can mobilize to advance the cause of women generally without the individuals who are active being hurt. The institutional culture is so hostile to initiatives of this sort.

This recognition that there are negative repercussions for women who push for change was noted by others, one of whom (Beulah) told of losing long-time male friends in her department who interpreted her demands for pay equity as criticisms of them, not as attempts to achieve a more just working environment for women. She felt it was a difficult balancing act, to work for reform without making men feel threatened by change. Sometimes, women decided it simply wasn't worth the effort.²⁶

Overall, then, the women we interviewed characterized the university's commitment to gender equality as lukewarm, a low priority, motivated as much—or more—by the desire to protect itself legally as by a genuine concern to improve the situation for women on campus. Women claimed the lack of enthusiasm for change was evident at all levels, from a female dean (Marina) who identifies gender bias in personnel decisions but who never gets around to filing a complaint to Tricia's comment about central

administration's failure to create and publicize rules on how to achieve individual gender equity.

Q. How do you see the university culture for female faculty? Have you ever felt you were discriminated against because you were a woman, because you were a mother?

MARINA: Not at the school level. I came up for my mid-career review last year. It was an awful process, very negative. It ended up having the right outcome but it was not a nice process to get there. The Dean said that she really thought there was some gender bias at that level [beyond the school level]. She said she was going to do something, you know, file some sort of complaint. She never did. I think she got distracted.

Tricia broadened this complaint.

Q. How about inequities of payment?

TRICIA: Well, my school, for years, had the worst record on campus in terms of its negative residual score for women's salaries. It's not even clear to me that there are established policies for addressing those pay inequities. I discovered that I had negative residuals, which came as a great surprise to me. I asked that they be addressed in the context of a merit review and at the end of the day I was congratulated. I had a successful merit review, a letter had come back from the administration with a merit increase, but "by the way, we decided not to raise this salary inequity issue." So, I think there was a sense that raising the equity issue would have clouded the merit review. It was a unilateral decision—not my own—to not pursue the remedy. That then left me having to start over again. Something I haven't gotten around to doing yet, I must add. But if I wanted to pursue it, I'd have to start over again, get out and again put together the case, develop the history of salary disadvantage and extend it yet another year. I have sought further information on how I would go about making an appeal but even in speaking to people most closely associated with the issue, they are not entirely sure. They're still trying to figure out what the procedure is, or alternately create the procedure. So the lack of a standardized procedure for addressing these issues seems to me to be emblematic of the fact that this is not a high priority as an institution.

Q. Would that be something the NSF Advance could help here?

TRICIA: Well, they need to establish (a) the procedure and (b) the grounds. One can tell one story, the other can tell another story. But what are the grounds that are apt to be used in these decisions? We need to know this.

This lack of guidelines over how to correct discrimination was part of a broader problem concerning how the institution should deal with women having babies and families. Marta captures both the good aspect and the downside of adjusting to new realities.

MARTA: My school tends to be more conservative than the rest of the disciplinary fields. I think we're sort of in the dark ages perhaps. That said, there are a lot of women in my school here and most of them have had children. But very few of them have young children. To the extent they understood the juggling, they were supportive. They survived in the system. So they don't see any reason that I shouldn't be able to do the same. By the time I started here my

daughter was six months but when I interviewed she was three weeks old. They were actually very helpful. I had to nurse while I was here and they set time in my schedule. They were helpful that way. But I had my son here and figuring out what kind of teaching you do, what kind of service you have, they had no clue what to do. It took the Dean six months after I told them that I was pregnant to figure out what happens after the baby was born and what my teaching load would be and what my service commitment was to be. So it was pretty unusual. They weren't sure what to do.

Comments such as these on the lack of established procedures reflect an institution in flux, not one that is biased so much as unfamiliar with the needs of women and struggling hard to catch up to a new institutional reality and culture.

Is this phenomenon particular to UCI? Overwhelmingly, our interviewees said no, that their friends and colleagues at other institutions reported similar experiences.

ISABELLE: I had a very tortuous past. Actually, I have found a number of women just like that. I was at a research conference in New Hampshire. I met a woman I had known for years. She's several years ahead of me and is a senior member now at the National Institute of _____. It turns out she had a very similar, tortuous path in getting into science and engineering. I think it's very common for women.

Our respondents suggested discrimination is not restricted to the one university we surveyed. Many of the women had similar experiences at other universities, and many corroborated Isabelle's statement that their female colleagues elsewhere were similarly treated. Furthermore, discrimination is not something restricted to the vulnerable. Assistant professors actually appear happier than the senior faculty, who carry a disproportionate share of administrative work and service. Our findings thus echo the MIT Report, suggesting subtle forms of gender discrimination continue after tenure and worsen as one progresses higher in the academic hierarchy.

Another form of discrimination that continued after tenure, and which was especially visible in disciplines requiring external funding for laboratories or equipment, testified to the strength of the old-boy network in terms of collaborative research projects or professional leadership.

Q. Do you still feel gender discrimination now, even though you got tenure? Even though you have an established position?

BAO: Yes.

Q. I don't want to push you here, but in what ways has this been manifested?

BAO: It's been manifested in who's chosen for leadership positions. It's manifested in who's asked to be part of research programs. For example, the big push now is all these collaborative research groups. All the funding agencies want programs put together. I've seen numerous occasions where programs would be put together by a group, but I'm never invited to be a part of those. I shouldn't say never, but often times I'm not invited to be part of those even when it would make

logical sense [to include me]. I also see this in terms of administrative issues.

Subtle, cultural cues on what is appropriate are another form of this discrimination, one that results in women denying who they are, as witness women who say they do not keep family photographs in their offices, for fear of being stereotyped as “family” people, not serious scholars. This seems surprising, given that the interviews we conducted all came from successful women, many full professors and top scholars. Yet the cultural cues tell women to minimize or ignore their own needs and personalities and twist themselves to fit another’s model for them, or endure subtle forms of harassment and denigration. One woman told of being given a cup by a female colleague that summarized the secret for female success in professional life: *Dress like a lady. Act like a man. Work like a dog.*

Specific Insights and Possible Solutions

How do the women on the front lines of the battle for equality suggest we can find ways out of this situation? What kind of policies can tackle the difficult political aspects of gender discrimination? The UCI women offered suggestions for a wide variety of issues, ranging from individual instances of harassment and overt discrimination that go unchecked by the system to more subtle institutionalized forms of inequity that favor men. Reforms were important to these women, since many of them found gender discrimination evident in systematic arrangements that hinder female advancement, from promotion criteria based on a traditional male model that assumes a full-time professional with a spouse at home providing familial support to a process of gender devaluation by which work is classified as male or female and, once classed as female, becomes less valued.

Redefine Success, Allow Alternate Paths to Tenure

The UCI women pointed to the need to reconceptualize the model for professional life if we want to move toward achieving equality of opportunity for women in academia. The need to redefine success as an academic, moving from what is the traditional, linear male model in favor of one that allows both men and women to flourish as individuals and professionals, runs like a *leitmotif* through the literature on gender equality. We asked the UCI women to offer more specific recommendations as part of this general restructuring. Their responses were interesting, with many women advocating longer time, and more detours, on the road to tenure.

Q. There is an argument that academia is male dominated. Do you think that’s the case?

CAITLIN: Yes I do think it is. But the question is: what’s male dominated? I would define it as two things. (1) There are still more men than women in academia. (2) The stan-

dard career path, you know you have to play by the rules, that’s true. When you apply for funding or present a tenure case, you cannot say, “Then I took time off to have my baby.” You can’t say that. Even if you do juggle and balance to make these decisions, you still have to present your narrative as straightforwardly as possible. The idea that you do national searches for jobs, or on the other end of it, that the department searched nationally, this communicated the idea that you get your degree and then you move to the place where you can get the best possible job, and pursue your career, publish, teach, or whatever. This does not work in the face of pregnancy and parenting. When that’s the priority and then the mommy track kicks in, it doesn’t work sometimes.

Many women raised this issue, and many suggested that universities allow longer time before tenure.

MITRA: When I look at well-regarded, top institutions, I see more flexibility in terms of how people can be successful, achieve and demonstrate excellence. There is room for people to do work that is applied, very engaged with the community. There are different ways to be a professor in institutions that have longer standing. At UCI, it is gendered and there is a very narrow interpretation. This is also a result of the insecurities of this campus, a feeling that because we are new, that we have to prove ourselves. Research is the most important activity; we all have to publish in peer-reviewed journals. There is no other way to be a successful professor. Nothing else you do matters. That is gendered in the sense that it disregards the other types of work that faculty can do that benefits the community. A lot of the work I do is out in the community; it is promoting community engagement. It is not recognized as research. Research matters above all. At older, more established universities, such as UCLA, if you do what you do and you are excellent at it, you will be rewarded. There are different ways to interpret your job, but here we are too uptight and nervous about research. Also, the way women interact, not only with students but fellow faculty, is very much through consensus building, making things smooth etc., and this is tied closely to gender.

Mitra articulates a view expressed by many female faculty, who want to redefine what is included in professional success, broadening and humanizing it.

Q. What kinds of changes would you like to see in the institutional culture and the position of women in particular? What would you advise the NSF Advance in those respects?

MITRA: The Advance project is very interesting. The issues are so much deeper than simply pay equity. It is the whole notion of what counts as knowledge, what sorts of knowledge are valued, and that is bigger than this NSF project, but it is so important. The whole notion of disparity in the valuing of science versus social sciences and the humanities and knowledge and the amounts of money available for each, for example. In a way, this is gender discrimination because if you look at the distribution of the kinds of work women are doing, that matters very much. That is not to disparage the focus on bringing women’s salaries up to par, making sure that people get an appropriate tenure clock, but these concerns do not challenge the box within which academic work happens. The importance of grounded research, the importance of action research, the importance of social science and humanities as well as

physical sciences and natural sciences research. So, is that something the NSF cares about? I doubt it very much. But to me, if they really want to address the issues of gender and the production of knowledge, they really need to be dealing with those questions.

This comment about privileging sciences, with their larger external funding and generous overhead, often from the NSF, reflected the view that this trend itself contributed to gender devaluation, a devaluing of areas—action research, social science and humanities—in which women had made important inroads, and a favoring of the fields that remain male dominated (physics, engineering, math). More than one woman commented that the NSF Advance itself—with its emphasis on improving the situation for women in science—was actually a contributor to this problem. Certainly, the UCI administration was faulted for an emphasis on the male scientific model.

TRUDY: All central administration cares about is getting more external grant money, so they give all the resources to the hard sciences, and this ignores the fields women are well represented in.

Reward Service and Build Community

Redefining professional success so it included those people who worked hard to create a sense of community in the university, whether male or female, was another recommendation to change the institutional culture.

Q. Does the system need a change in terms of its rewarding structure, valuing service and other administrative, managerial works as much as research, for example?

JANINA: But how do you build that into a review file? How do you say Faculty X did a great job from keeping the faculty from being at each other's throat after a difficult personnel decision? No, what she did was, she went into the hall. She talked to everybody. She made them feel good. That's an invaluable contribution and yet we don't value it. There is no question the system values research and publication over service. I think there are three ways to talk about this. Where are the moments in which we reveal our values? (1)When we hire people. We never hire people who are good citizens; we hire those who have published, and published in the right places and published frequently enough. Then we look at their research and teaching. I can tell you, nobody is being hired in the University of California system for being a good teacher or being a good citizen. (2)We can look at how people get promoted. I don't know if your research team is going to do this, but I hope at one point the team looks at promotion files. Whenever you write up a promotion file, the first section is research, and then teaching and service. Imagine if teaching really mattered, what would our promotion cases look like? We would write that section as vigorously and in the same detail as the research section. Then we might actually go observe others teach, the way we read each other's publications. We might do more than just rely on student evaluations. I get great student evaluations, but I still think these are basically student responses that tell us how much they like you. It is comical that we ask the students: "How much does the professor know the material?" If they are in a

position to judge my knowledge, they probably should not be in that class! The bottom line is if we cared about teaching, we would do peer reviewing of teaching in the same way we do peer reviewing of articles. (3) Service? Even less decisive than the teaching. I was actually called a chump for becoming a department chair. Why? It is a waste of time that could be spent on research and publication. It is not rewarded. For example, right now, I am preparing a 20-page statement for the department, since we are being reviewed. I could have written one article in that time. The system would reward the article but the statement will not be rewarded.

The recommendation to reward service more highly as a way to combat gender devaluation was wide-spread. Most women felt service work was definitely sex-typed.

Q. What kind of changes would you like to see at UCI and how do you think those changes can be implemented?

TRICIA: The structure of compensation and particularly the Committee on Academic Personnel [CAP; the committee in charge of appointments and raises] needs to be changed. Our current structure is one which is very much against women. Women's participation in administration tends to work against them because that's not rewarded on this campus. No good deed goes unpunished by CAP. There are various expectations about what one's level of research—just not teaching activities—will mean to the Administration. Committee work doesn't count as much. To think it does, that doing this work helps your career, that's not a realistic expectation. By and large, in looking back over the last ten years, women in the school carried a good proportion of committee assignments. But all those things are apt to be substantial distractions for women. We want women integrated into the power structure of the university and we need to realize that serving that power structure is something that needs to be rewarded. In their life course, people will have different profiles; sometimes they will concentrate on instructional development, other times they will be more concentrated on their research or on administrative work. This preoccupation with only research in promotion doesn't serve the interest of women very well.

Again, this was a criticism of the NSF Advance itself. Several women, speaking on condition that they were not quoted directly, complained that the NSF-sponsored Advance took some of the best women on campus, women who really care about UCI as an institution, and asked them to serve as School Equity Advisors. As Equity Advisors, they had to sign off on all external hiring searches, to ensure that women and other minorities were adequately represented on the search committee and in the pool of candidates interviewed. While women agreed this was good for the schools, and acknowledged it may have helped avoid gender bias and cut down on the impact of old boy network, they nonetheless complained that the effect on the women who did it was to take them away from their research, which will hurt them when they come up for review next time. To paraphrase one participant who wished anonymity: "They'll not get the next promotion, or the next raise. And it also made them lightning rods for all the

frustration on campus that women are getting special treatment. So it was a perfect example of service that helps the institution but really hurts the individual.” Others added to this, noting that women are more community-spirited and thus get taken advantage of more in the competitive world of the male professional model.

Q. Women tend to do more service work. Do you think this is a problem?

SAMANTHA: Oh, yes. That is a big problem. First, you’re not going to get credit for service work. Your service work should be something that you do in your spare time. On the other hand, everybody is supposed to do it. I think people have different standards and agree to do things at different rates. Maybe gender is an issue here. The idea is that you should have a sense of community and that everybody should pull equal weight, but I don’t think that is really what happens. It is more of a personality issue than a gender issue. Some people just don’t want to do it. Or they do it in such an incompetent way that people don’t ask them to do anything again. This is a free rider problem. That being said, Chairs have to protect the junior faculty. Chairs have to protect women, especially if they are made to feel it is their obligation to serve on committees. It is a Chair’s dilemma. When I was Chair, I was always short of people to do things. You know the people who are going to say yes, and you go to them over and over again. Even though you want to protect the junior and female faculty and make sure they don’t get overburdened, it is not always easy to do so, because work has to be done.

Offer Spousal Hiring and Daycare

Another recommendation was to continue and expand university programs for spousal hiring and daycare. The first proposal recognized that professional women tend to marry other professionals, and hence need jobs for spouses in order to move. Because fewer men are married to other professionals, this problem is more acute for women than for men, although the general policy affects any professional couple. The second recommendation recognizes that good childcare is hard to find.

Q. What kind of advice would you have for the NSF to improve the conditions of women here? Things you believe are not working well, or can work better if certain changes were made?

ANNALIESE: In terms of my personal experience, having the spousal hiring program was critically important. Anything we can do to promote, not just a formal spousal hiring program, but some kind of a preference for all kinds of university employment—university networking with community employers—all that stuff is important. A majority of women are in some kind of family relationship and have some partner who’s trying to work, and that can really be a limitation. Continuing to promote childcare options is important. I don’t directly use the university system because of where I live, but I’ve had a lot of childcare juggling where I do live and one of the real costs for me is a patchwork, unreliable childcare system. So anything we can do to make sure

that the people who are around campus have not just childcare but backup childcare and ways to deal with sick kids or school-aged kids when school is closed is vital. I now have two daughters who are in two different school systems, with two different schedules. For one of them, the school is closed every three or four months for two weeks; it’s a rotating break system. That means that school break, camps, and things like that are a challenge, and anything the university could do to help with that is a plus. I happen to be in a department that has an unusually high number of female faculty, so we’ve been able to do a better job than usual in terms of mentoring and networking and encouraging female graduate students. But some of the other female faculty are not as able or willing or don’t think to talk to female graduate students about some of the life/work issues. They concentrate on getting published and getting themselves going professionally. That’s important too, but you can’t get yourself going professionally when you can’t go anywhere. So it’s important for us to continue to mentor women in that way.

Conclusion

We have addressed a problem too frequently overlooked in discussions of gender politics: the situation of women within the Academy, an entity somewhere between a medieval guild, Byzantine fiefdom, and corporate bureaucracy, but reflecting many of the same issues as in the society at large. Aggregate statistical data suggested gender discrimination continues to exist in the form of pay differentials and differences in employment status, but we knew that much of the important aspects of equality cannot always be detected with aggregate data. We thus considered gender equality within academia through a narrative analysis of in-depth interviews with 80+ women faculty at UCI, a large Research I University, to determine what their perceptions of the situation could reveal. This is the largest systematic set of interview data on this topic.

The UCI faculty women told us that while things have improved, they still find academia retains both overt discrimination (including sexual harassment) and subtle institutional and cultural forms of discrimination. In particular, female faculty identified a process we call gender devaluation, the subtle process by which 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. Service tends to be thought of as a female job, and service within the university is undervalued, as is teaching. The status hierarchy rewards research.

One surprising finding was the political responses to gender discrimination. When women discussed discrimination—overt or subtle and institutional—they did not define it as a legal or political problem so much as a personal one for which they had to take on individual responsibility. Was this a subtle psychological response to depersonalize the sting of discrimination or to take back

control, since it could be argued that taking responsibility confers control? Or was it simply a reaction to the also-noted fact that women who made an issue of discrimination were punished by their colleagues for their acts? The speakers' complex appraisals suggest they employed a highly nuanced engagement with power and discrimination. They had tried the legal route, and found it produced little. Similarly, the UCI women quickly learned that overt forms of political action evoke stern reprisals for the agitator. They thus turned to more subtle forms of collective action to change gender discrimination. This phenomenon lends insight into the nature of political power in universities. Where power operates behind the scenes, subtly shaping structures of daily life and political beliefs, the assessments of those subject to its oppressive impact are adaptive and their responses challenge it indirectly. Our speakers, for instance, show a keen understanding of where the Academy stands relative to the necessary sacrifices all its participants must make in terms of family life. Our speakers' appraisals of academia's rigid treatment of the tension between career and family conform to the Academy's value structure, demonstrating our speakers' careful attention to the Academy's political cues. As a result, the responses of the women we interviewed fluctuate between calls for action and inaction, leaving the overall vision of change severely underdeveloped. We are exploring this question in on-going work but this phenomenon raises the difficult issue of whether subtle discrimination can be alleviated through processes of adaptation and incremental political change.

The most intractable problem came in the tension between career and family. It was noteworthy that almost every woman who had children lamented the difficulty in balancing these two roles. Most women juggled by working at home, often late at night or while watching children. All told stories of exhaustion, stress, and constant anxiety. The tension for those in the bench or laboratory sciences, where scholars have to supervise laboratories on a 24-hour basis, seemed so acute as to suggest it may be irresolvable and we note with poignancy the obdurate nature of this problem for women in the laboratory sciences.

Finally, we asked about how to improve the situation for women. Here, our interviews suggested specific findings relevant for reform and pointed to several strategies useful in dealing with gender inequity in society at large, not just academia. First, having more women and minorities in positions of power helps sometimes but is not enough. As a general reform, the concept of professional success needs to be redefined so it allows for alternative models, not simply the traditional, linear male model in which the professional is full time and focused on a career, with few family duties. An important aspect of this issue concerns the extent to which the male model also traps men into stereotypes, making it difficult for individual men to break out of traditional roles, if they so desire. We find the human dimension of this issue largely ignored in

the feminist literature and believe a new model, which displaces both the traditional male model and the exploited female model, would be greatly welcomed. Second, as part of this general reform, specific policies can help. Institute longer tracks to tenure and allow for maternity and family leave time. Ensure that legal mechanisms are in place and that they actually work since our interviews suggested such policies that do exist are in place but unobserved in reality. Third, as part of this general re-shifting in the professional model, recognize that women who are professional frequently have husbands who also are professionals, and institute career partner-hiring policies. Finally, institute a comprehensive and reconceptualized mentoring program, so that all faculty—not just women—are automatically entered into it. This will help remove the stigma of participating in formal mentoring. Mentoring also should be extended beyond tenure. Doing so would recognize that the requirements for professional growth are on-going and existing career models make it difficult to conceptualize one's way out of situations often held irreconcilable, such as the tension between children and career. Such reforms recognize the difficulties of progressing up the academic ladder and respond to the need for continuing institutional efforts to help crack what remains a glass ceiling for women in academia.

Notes

- 1 The MIT Reports are among the few analyses drawing on extensive qualitative interviews. They suggest discrimination is more pervasive and entrenched than many analysts—and young female scholars—had been aware of, particularly for women in the hard sciences; see *MIT Faculty Newsletter*, XI (4): March 1999. The 2005 APSA Report from the Committee on the Status of Women in the Profession suggests the problem also exists within political science as a discipline.

In a 2005 event on diversification in science and engineering, Lawrence Summers claimed the low numbers of women in science and engineering positions was not primarily due to discrimination or exclusion. Instead, he offered two alternative explanations: (1) Personal and familial distractions may make women unwilling or unable to commit themselves to the strenuous time commitments of professional research; (2) Genetic differences between men and women might make women less interested in science and engineering (even when controlling for socialization) and less likely to succeed at the highest levels by virtue of a smaller standard deviation in intelligence. Sharply criticized for these remarks, Summers later published a public apology but the incident played a major factor in his eventually leaving the presidency of Harvard.

- 2 By “legal” we do not specifically mean only legal actions, such as filing lawsuits, though there were women in our sample who discussed that response to discrimination. We use the term more broadly to refer to the use of federal/state laws or established university policies—specifically “Equal Opportunity” or “Affirmative Action” laws and policies—to insist on equity within a school or department.
- 3 The report was “prompted by an alarming stall in the number of women entering the discipline and persisting through early years of faculty service to achieve tenure.” At the March 2004 Workshop that resulted in this report, the APSA “found a mixed picture for women political scientists,” with “the proportion of women entering graduate school show[ing] no steady growth, and the proportion of junior and mid-career faculty women has stalled.” The “broad problem is under-representation of women in the academic ranks” of political scientists, with women constituting roughly 24 percent of all full-time faculty in 2001. Nonetheless, “within the leaking pipeline, there are promising trends as well, such as the proportion of women receiving undergraduate degrees in the discipline, the parity between men’s and women’s success in the job market, the steady growth in numbers of senior women faculty, and the disappearance of a salary gap”; from the Executive Summary, iii). See www.apsanet.org, Ad Hoc and Special Committee Reports, Women’s Advancement in Political Science Report (2005) for a fuller description.
- 4 Non-academic and non-managerial workers show broad divisions along gender lines. Women are five times as likely to be administrative or clerical staff as men; men are three times as likely to be machine operators or laborers, and ten times as likely to be in technical crafts or precision production work.
- 5 Bureau of Labor Statistics 2002.
- 6 As opposed to dental hygienists, physicians’ assistants, nurses, health-care practitioners, legal aides and assistants, and other professionals in secondary or support roles, positions which are largely staffed by women (from a minimum of 60 percent to over 97 percent in the case of dental hygienists).
- 7 These statistics are rated by research expenditures; Commission on Professionals in Science and Technology, CPST, 2004.
- 8 Naff 1994.
- 9 Salaries of \$76,198 (male) to \$61,835 (female) for faculty with year-long contracts and \$67,509 versus \$55,425 for those with nine-month contracts; Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, 2003–4.
- 10 NCES 2004.
- 11 Koshland 1988, Oakes 1990; Isaacs 1995.
- 12 The anecdotal/biographical data are too vast and too mixed to provide a systematic view, and thus are not discussed here, for reasons of space.
- 13 McCoy and DiGeorgio-Lutz 1999, Acker and Armenti 2004, Aisenberg and Harrington 1988, Bagihole 2002, Bell and Gordon 1999. The 1996 MIT Report (commissioned in 1995 and updated in 1997 and 1998) reported that, as of 1994 only 8 percent of the faculty in the School of Science were women (22 out of 272).
- 14 MIT 1999. The sample initially included 22 female faculty in the school of sciences; an additional 14 interviews with tenured faculty women were later conducted.
- 15 The percent of women faculty in the MIT School of Science (8 percent) had not changed significantly for at least 10–20 years, and the report found no evidence to suggest this would improve in the future.
- 16 R1 universities are defined by the Carnegie Foundation as those giving high priority to research and offering a full range of baccalaureate programs, and to graduate education through the doctorate. Hiring, tenure, and movement through faculty ranks are based on research accomplishments.
- 17 When they gave their permission, we include a few of their general comments in summary form or by paraphrasing their opinions. Nowhere in our files are these speakers identified by discipline, rank, or name. Nor do we include them in the final count for our sample (N=80) since their responses were usually not formally recorded and we want to respect both their wishes and their privacy.
- 18 Monroe 1996.
- 19 QSR International. *NVivo: research software for analysis and insights*. <http://www.qsrinternational.com>. retrieved June 17, 2007.
- 20 Fuller analysis of the data, including results from a smaller but comparable survey of male faculty, is on-going and will be published later.
- 21 Luke 1999.
- 22 According to university rules in operation during most of our survey period, all merits and promotions are open, decided by all members of the department, and then go to the dean and the Committee on Academic Personnel before being finalized by the Executive Vice Chancellor/Provost. There is an elaborate system of steps, wherein a faculty enters as (for example) an Assistant Professor Step 1, 2, 3, etc. A professor who comes in at a lower level (Assistant Step 1) will ordinarily earn less than a professor who comes in at a higher step (Assistant Step 3), and has more time to pass before consideration for tenure, except for unusual circumstances, such as an outside offer.
- 23 Babcock and Laschever 2003.

- 24 See n. 1 for details on comments by Summers.
- 25 This struggle was first brought to public awareness in 1963 by Friedan's *The Feminine Mystique*, and has remained a central issue for feminist writers since then.
- 26 We are still completing interviews with male faculty, to explore male responses to affirmative action policies to determine how the decision-making dynamic changed as more women came into departments.

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