

## **Women Sociological Faculty and Scholarship Success in the Heartland**

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### **Abstract**

Women's difficulty in achieving professional success in faculty positions in higher education is a continuing concern. Finding a balance between home and work responsibilities is more complex for women, and when traditional gender scripts are bent, they lead to harsher judgments from students, peers and administrators than for their male colleagues (Lindsey 2005; Bleakley 2002). There has been an increase in the number of women earning Ph.D.'s (Kramer 2005), but they still are more likely to be part-time faculty and to serve in untenured positions where opportunities for advancement are limited (Glazer-Raymo 2008; Lindsey 2005). One measure of success in the academic world is number of publications, and these are ranked from the most prestigious national and international journals, to the lower tiered yet still prestigious regional publications, to those at the bottom—the small regional or state publications. This project investigates four years of sociological journals at these three levels—the *American Journal of Sociology* (national/international), *The Sociological Quarterly* (large regional), and the *Great Plains Sociologist* (small regional). A comparison is made in two areas. First, gender and its interrelationship with first authorship is investigated, and second, the specific topic of the article is analyzed for gender stereotyping.

### **Women in the Workplace**

If I ask the following question any semester in any one of my Introduction to Sociology classes: "Are men and women treated equally in American society?" I will get a strong positive vote on the side of national gender equity. In many students' minds that war has been won. That opinion is not just held by first year sociology students. Christina Hoff Sommers, a resident scholar at the American Enterprise Institute for Public Policy Research also promotes this same idea. In a 2008 interview, Hoff Sommers explained:

Women are now approaching parity with men in law school, medical school, business school. There are more women than men in college. A lot of this happened in the so-called backlash decade. So that, in itself, is a myth. What historians and economists will have to explain was how there was so much progress in so short a time. That's the big story of the eighties, not the backlash. They got it backwards. Now, why they got it backwards is interesting: because the leadership and some of the more extreme feminists are addicted to a language and a rhetoric of oppression. They want to view American women as a subordinate class. They say we are oppressed by the "patriarchy." All of that is very silly. And it's also very inaccurate. (Sommers 2008)

Hoff Sommers' opinion is not a unique one. Many Americans would support her ideas. The reality is quite different, and the research that has been done would support the very inequality that Hoff Sommers believes has all but disappeared. Women are becoming very similar in their overall labor force participation with men, but their earnings still remain about 80% of what those men make (Macionis 2008). Women are still segregated both professionally and physically in the workplace. Women are still more likely to find the competing demands of home and job on a collision course, often disastrous for their professional careers. Hochschild's seminal work *The Second Shift* (1989) brought this concern out of the academic literature and into public sight, but women still today find themselves in a distinctly subordinate location in the world of work.

### **Women Academics in Higher Education**

In higher education this is also clearly the case. Kramer (2005) reports that women are only 41% of college and university professors, and that the employment of these individuals tends to be disproportionately in non-tenured and part-time and/or temporary positions. The U.S. Department of Labor (Glazer-Raymo 2008) states that women who have full-time appointments in higher education still only earn 79% of men's average income, even lower than the overall mismatched general employment situation. Academic women on the whole are more likely to be found in schools with lower levels of prestige, and they are less likely to be successful in their tenure aspirations (Lindsey 2005). Gender stereotyping also has been identified in the evaluations of faculty women by students, peers, and administrators. Female faculty often are straitjacketed by the requirements of their gender role script (Statham et al. 1991; Chamberlin and Hickey 2000; Miller and Chamberlin 2001; Bleakley 2002; Lindsey 2005) and "are expected to be nice as well as competent, maintain a pleasant classroom atmosphere, be more approachable and responsive to students with their personal needs, be overly accessible to students outside of class, ... [and they] are judged more harshly when they deviate from [this] gender-imposed model of a caring professor" than men (Lindsey 2005, 308).

U.S. women, however, do pursue and achieve over 50% of the doctoral degrees earned in this country (Smallwood 2003). This statistic, however, masks the reality of the situation. Women still are set apart from the whole of academia in narrowly focused disciplines, even though that space has somewhat expanded its boundaries. The disciplines into which women tend to be segregated are the ones that provide the least return in compensation and status. For example, we find disproportionate numbers of women faculty in those areas designated "semiprofessional" such as nursing, social work (closely allied to my own discipline of sociology) and education, jobs with higher teaching loads, lower levels of "help" with many fewer teaching and research assistants, and, of course, positions with lesser pay (Kimmel 2008).

A good example of how failing to dig beyond the surface statistics can be found when we look at the sciences as a single category. When we group the physical and natural sciences into a single category there is certainly evidence to talk about the strides in gender equity that have

been made, but when we begin to pull apart the threads of that argument what we find is that it masks the reality that women primarily earn Ph.D.'s in the biological sciences, while men still maintain strength of numbers in mathematics, physical sciences and engineering -- the better compensated position both in terms of money and prestige (Kramer 2005).

### **Women Academics in Sociology**

The situation in sociology presents a somewhat different set of circumstances, but equally misleading. In sociology, we have seen a substantial increase in the number of bachelor degrees awarded to women. According to Kramer (2005), during 2000-2001 women earned 71% of the undergraduate degrees granted in sociology. The American Sociological Association's (ASA) Committee on the Status of Women in Sociology (2010) looked at 2001 and identified that 65% of the students in graduate sociology programs were women, up from 50% in 1981. At the same time, between 2001 and 2006, ASA reports that women's share of graduate school positions in sociology has remained flat. But 65% of positions in graduate programs is still a victory for women, right? Once again, let's pull the threads of the argument apart. The same time we see a substantial increase in graduate school participation for women, we also see a drop in the number of men participating in graduate school programs in sociology. "Between 1990 and 2002 there was a 23% decrease in the number of men in graduate school" with a very slight increase between 2001 and 2006 (ASA 2010). Both of these trends have leveled off, and at present we find no large decrease in men's numbers and no large increase in women's. However, this begs the question, "Did departments of sociology really open wide their arms to women to welcome a more gender equitable world or did women merely fill the hole left open by disappearing male graduate students?" Also curious, while women were 65% of graduate students in sociology in 2006, according to the 2006 NSF Survey of Doctoral Recipients, only 47% of those who earned Ph.D.'s in sociology in 2006 were women (NSF 2006). Women may be 65% of the students in graduate school, but those graduating with a completed doctorate, the pool that potentially can be hired into academia, is quite a bit smaller.

When we look at the position of women faculty in sociology, we again find both good and not-so-good news according to data from both the ASA Department Survey 2006/07 and the 2006 NSF Survey of Doctoral Recipients. According to the ASA data, when all institution types are investigated (research, doctoral, masters and bachelors) only 31% of Full Professors in sociology are women, but 50% of Associate Professors are women, and 56% of them were Assistant Professors. Faculty women in sociology are faring best at the lowest rank, the rank most impacted by the ability to publish. There is an additional category that the ASA research project included, the "other" category of women sociology faculty including adjunct faculty, instructors/lecturers, and other non-tenured positions. Women are 69% of this group and that is a serious concern, supporting Kramer's (2005) position that women serve at a disproportionate level in these unstable and poorly compensated positions. Overall, when all ranks and institution types are combined, women are 46% of the total number of sociological faculty. Another area of concern relates to women's advancement into departmental positions of authority, specifically

department chairs. ASA collected chair data for 916 colleges and universities in 2009. Overall, only 40% of these positions were filled by women, with the lowest representation at Research I and II and Doctoral I and II universities at 34%.

### **Publication Productivity of Sociology Faculty**

While the research illustrates that women are 56% of Assistant Professors of sociology, the ability to achieve the higher ranks of Associate Professor and Full Professor as well as movement into positions of authority like Department Chair has been much more limited. An important measure of success leading to these higher ranks is the ability to achieve promotion and tenure. In the academic world it is productivity, the number of articles for which an individual is able to achieve publication, that is critical to successful completion of the promotion and tenure hurdle. The successful academic career is often spoken of as built on three major responsibilities—scholarship, teaching and service. While lip service is given to the importance of teaching, and while truly awful teaching can result in not receiving promotion and tenure, it is neither excellence in teaching nor commitment to service that creates the academic career—it is scholarship and its most visible product—publications—upon which the scholar's professional life balances.

It has been demonstrated that overall faculty men publish at higher rates than faculty women (Blackburn and Lawrence 1996), what Cole and Zuckerman (1984) have identified as the “productivity puzzle.” More puzzling is that the research also supports the fact that even when men and women have the same publication productivity it does not produce the same rewards for the two genders (Fox 2005). In the recent past, we have seen the narrowing of this publication gap, but primarily in the life sciences and not in other scientific areas (Blackburn and Lawrence 1996), the category in which we would place sociology. In addition, Cole and Zuckerman (1984) have demonstrated that it does not matter if the individual is male or female, most scholars who are published tend to come from a very small pool of scientists. Reasons that have been reported for women faculty and their failure to achieve equal levels of success in the academy have been indentified at both the individual and institutional levels including the home/work balance (Valian 1998; Etzkowitz, Kemelgor and Uzzi 2000; Evans and Grant 2008; Glayzer-Raymo 2008), a failure to develop specialized research programs (Leahy 2006), academic “good old boys clubs” (Spanbauer 2009), among a variety of others. We will not discuss here the very disturbing comments of Harvard's President Lawrence Summers about women's lack of “intrinsic aptitude” for success in academia (quoted in Glayzer-Raymo 2008).

Number of articles published is only one indicator of academic productivity, and just getting published does not necessarily make a career. All journals are not equally prestigious, and there is much greater importance placed on publication in a prestigious academic journal than in a lower ranked one. Whether or not a scholar has made a “significant contribution” to both knowledge and her field is measured by the combination of both quantity of publications and the perceived quality of the journal in which that person publishes. While there are some small and highly valued journals, most scholarly publications are ranked in their “quality” from

the most prestigious national and international publications, to the lower tiered yet still prestigious regional publications, to those at the very bottom—the small regional or state journals.

### **Investigating Journal Publication by Gender at Three Levels**

This project investigates four years of sociological journals at these three tiers—the *American Sociological Review* and *American Journal of Sociology* (both sponsored by a national/international professional association), *The Sociological Quarterly* and *Sociological Forum* (sponsored by large regional professional organizations), and the *Great Plains Sociologist* and *Michigan Sociological Review* (sponsored by small regional or state professional organizations). All are peer-reviewed publications.

The *American Sociological Review* is both sponsored and published by the largest professional association for the discipline, the American Sociological Association (ASA). While it is not the oldest scholarly journal of sociology in the United States, that place of pride is held by the *American Journal of Sociology* published by the University of Chicago Press, it does have the honor of being the journal identified in 2008 as having had the greatest impact of all sociology journals, an indication of the number of times it was cited by other relevant publications ([http://sciencewatch.com/dr/sci/08/jul6-08\\_1/](http://sciencewatch.com/dr/sci/08/jul6-08_1/)). Second place is held by the *American Journal of Sociology*. Both of these journals have broad national and international audiences, and having an article accepted for publication is considered the highest level of recognition in the field of sociology.

At a somewhat lower tier, the Midwest Sociological Society (MSS), a large regional sociology professional organization, states on its web site (<http://www.themss.org/>) that it serves specifically the interests of sociologists in a nine-state area: Illinois, Missouri, Wisconsin, Iowa, Nebraska, Minnesota, Kansas, South Dakota and North Dakota. While the annual conference by the American Sociological Association draws attendees from around the world, the MSS conference primarily draws from the nine-state area. *The Sociological Quarterly*, the journal MSS sponsors, however, has a much broader audience than these nine states. To achieve publication of an article in *The Sociological Quarterly* is also a distinct honor, if not at the same level as gaining a spot in either the *American Sociological Review* or the *American Journal of Sociology*. Another relatively large regional sociological organization is the Eastern Sociological Society (ESS), and while it does not limit itself by listing a specific set of states that it serves, it is clear that it most strongly focuses on those along the Eastern Seaboard. This organization sponsors the *Sociological Forum*, another well-respected and noteworthy journal.

At a lower level of prestige is the *Great Plains Sociologist*, a publication of the Great Plains Sociological Association (GPSA) which identifies itself on its website (<http://sociology.sdstate.edu/gpsa>) as drawing members from North Dakota, South Dakota, Iowa, Minnesota and Nebraska. While the physical publication of the *American Sociological Review* is handled by Sage Publications, *American Journal of Sociology* by the University of Chicago, *The Sociological Quarterly* and *Sociological Forum* both by Wiley-Blackwell, *Great Plains*

*Sociologist* is self-published online by GPSS which several years ago gave up the physical periodical because of the high cost of publication. Inclusion in *Great Plains Sociologist* is, of course, noteworthy for the author of the article and carries with it a level of pride, but it also carries much less weight in the promotion and tenure wars than articles published in the other four journals. The same form of electronic publication is utilized by the *Michigan Sociological Review*, sponsored by the Michigan Sociological Society (MSS) and published online by Paradigm Publishers.

## Methodology

This project makes a comparison among these six journals in two areas. First, gender and its relationship with first authorship are investigated for each of the publications and at the level of the tier. Second, the specific topic of the article is analyzed for gender topic conformity. The most recent complete four years of each publication was used for the research project, including 2006-2009<sup>1</sup>.

The first step was to ascertain the gender of the first author of each article published during this time period. In many cases this was relatively simple to determine since American names are fairly gender specific. If the gender of the individual was not apparent from their name or from the biographical description provided in the journal, an on-line search was completed using the home institution of the author. Almost every university publishes an online directory of faculty with pictures, and this was used to identify the gender of the author. This being said, transgendered individuals were categorized by their visible gender.<sup>2</sup>

In the second step, the general topic of the article was identified and categorized as either gender traditional or non-traditional depending on whether the author was a man or a woman. Access to the titles, abstracts and text of the articles provided the opportunity to identify the topic of the article. Women who wrote on “women’s issues” were categorized as traditional. For example, a woman who wrote about home/work balance would fit into this category. If a woman wrote an article about sociological theory, not a women’s issue, she was categorized as nontraditional. For men, if they wrote about “women’s issues” they were categorized as non-traditional. For example, men who wrote about elementary school teaching would be categorized in that way, but if they wrote on anything other than women’s issues, they were defaulted into the traditional male category.

There is a significant body of work that identifies those topics considered women’s issues with everything else falling by default into the men’s issues category. Included under women’s issues were topics on the domestic environment, about expressive action and roles, emotions work, on the family/children/life course/aging, about gender equity, public and elementary education, sexual orientation, about women, and on reproductive issues. Men’s issues included topics on the external/non-domestic world, instrumental action and roles, business and

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<sup>1</sup> Only 2006, 2007, and 2009 were available for review for the *Michigan Sociological Review*.

<sup>2</sup> It is interesting to note that there were no examples of androgynous individuals who did not conform to gender specific styles of front-stage presentation.

economics, issues of class and race/ethnicity, secondary and post-secondary education, sexual libido, and theory.

The following hypotheses were proposed:

- Hypothesis #1: There will be more articles written by men overall.
- Hypothesis #2: The lower prestige journals with a small regional or state focus will be more likely to have greater equity in the gender of the authors.
- Hypothesis #3: Both women and men will write primarily within their traditional gendered topic areas.

### Results of the Research

Hypothesis #1 was supported. (See Table #1.) The results of this research indicate that for all six publications faculty who are men are publishing substantially more than faculty who are women. During the four years analyzed, only 33% of the articles published by the *American Sociological Review* were by women. *American Journal of Sociology* and *The Sociological Quarterly* both had slightly higher rates of publication for women with 36%. *Sociological Forum*, the journal sponsored by the Eastern Sociological Society, did even better with 40% of its articles authored by women. The smallest and least prestigious journals included the lowest percentage of articles by women. *Michigan Sociological Review* only published 21% of articles by women, and *Great Plains Sociologist* published at the lowest level with only 15% written by women scholars.

Table 1: Comparison of Author Gender by Journal

Journal	# articles	% articles men	% articles women
<b>TOP TIER</b>			
ASR	172	67	33
AJS	146	64	36
<b>MIDDLE TIER</b>			
TSQ	125	64	36
SF	91	60	40
<b>LOWER TIER</b>			
MSR	91	79	21
GPS	13	85	15

Hypothesis #2 was not supported. (See Table #2.) Overall, when the six periodicals were grouped into the three different tiers of prestige, we see that at 38% of the total articles

published, the middle level publications provided the greatest opportunities to women scholars. The worst showing was by the least prestigious small regional and state periodicals that had been hypothesized to publish women at the highest level. They gave only 19% of their article slots to women authors. The top tier publications provided 34% of its article slots to women.

Table 2: Comparison of Author Gender by Tier

<b>Size of the professional organization</b>	<b># articles</b>	<b>% by men</b>	<b>% by women</b>
Top Tier (ASR/ASJ)	318	66	34
Middle Tier (TSQ/SF)	216	63	38
Lower Tier (GPS/MSR)	37	81	19
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>571</b>	<b>67</b>	<b>33</b>

Hypothesis #3 was supported. (See Tables #3 and #4.) Overwhelmingly, all of the reviewed journals published articles where both men and women authors stayed within their traditional gender topic areas. The least traditional focused were *American Sociological Review* and *The Sociological Quarterly* with 69% of the articles fitting into this category. *American Journal of Sociology* (71%) and *Sociological Forum* (72%) followed this same general trend. Once again, however, it was the smallest and bottom tier of the journals that shows the least gender progress. They gave the most publishing opportunities to traditional gender topics with *Michigan Sociological Review* publishing 83% of its articles by authors writing within that category. *Great Plains Sociologist* showed even greater levels of inequality with 100% of the articles it published on traditionally gendered subject matter.

Table 3: Comparison of Gender Traditional/Nontraditional Topics by Journal

<b>Journal</b>	<b># articles</b>	<b>% traditional total</b>	<b>% nontrad total</b>
<b>TOP TIER</b>			
ASR	172	69	30
AJS	146	71	29
<b>MIDDLE TIER</b>			
TSQ	125	69	31
SF	91	72	29
<b>LOWER TIER</b>			
MSR <sup>3</sup>	24	83	17
GPS	13	100	0

Table 4: Comparison of Gender Traditional/Nontraditional Topic by Tier

<b>Journal</b>	<b># articles</b>	<b>% traditional total</b>	<b>% nontrad total</b>
<b>TOP TIER (ASR/AJS)</b>	318	70	29
<b>MIDDLE TIER (TSQ/SF)</b>	216	70	30
<b>LOWER TIER (MSR<sup>1</sup>/GPS)</b>	37	89	11

When we dig a bit deeper into these numbers and break out authorship by gender, however, we find that the summary data is somewhat misrepresentative. (See Tables #5 and #6.) In every publication and at every tier, women authors were more likely to write on non-traditional gender topics than men. The data is skewed by the much larger number of articles that men authored.

<sup>3</sup> Only 2006, 2007, 2009 were included in this data.

Table 5: Comparison of Men/Women Authors and Gender Traditional/Nontraditional Topics by Journal

Journal	# articles	% traditional men	% traditional women	% nontrad men	% nontrad women
<b>TOP TIER</b>					
ASR	172	53	16	14	16
AJS	146	55	16	8	21
<b>MIDDLE TIER</b>					
TSQ	125	50	19	12	19
SF	91	53	19	8	21
<b>LOWER TIER</b>					
MSR	24	79	4	0	17
GPS	13	85	15	0	0

Table 6: Comparison of Men/Women Authors and Gender Traditional/Nontraditional Topics by Tier

Journal	# articles	% traditional men	% traditional women	% nontrad men	% nontrad women
<b>TOP TIER (ASR/AJS)</b>	318	54	16	11	19
<b>MIDDLE TIER (TSQ/SF)</b>	216	51	19	10	20
<b>LOWER TIER (MSR<sup>1</sup>/GPS)</b>	37	81	8	0	11

## Conclusions

This research project predicted that there would not be gender equality in rates of publishing between men and women faculty in the national/international, the regional or at the state level. It was also predicted that men would author more articles than women and that both men and women would write within narrow gendered topic boundaries; unfortunately, the data supported these conjectures. The researcher also surmised that the smaller professional organizations would sponsor journals that more personally met the needs of its membership by publishing a

higher level of women's articles than the other two publication tiers. Again, unfortunately, the data did not support this. All journals in this study demonstrated a strong tendency to maintain the gender status quo by continuing to publish in the greatest numbers works by male scholars and articles that showed a commitment to mostly traditional gender topics.

The why behind this inequitable situation is not part of the present research project, and the results are certainly not generalizable to conclusions about all sociology faculty in American institutions of higher learning, but several thoughts do present themselves when considering what we know about faculty women in general and the data we find here. If the six publications analyzed in any way represent what is happening more broadly in the discipline, the following two repercussions are worthy of consideration.

First, the largest share of women sociologists are at the Assistant Professor level. Failure to achieve publication will severely endanger their success in the promotion and tenure game, intensifying the already unequal relationship between men and women at the Associate and Full Professor ranks, and even further limiting the pool of women eligible for positions of authority as Department Chairs, a stepping stone to higher levels of college and university administration positions.

Second, the failure to attain promotion and tenure also limits academic career choices to the non-tenure track/term, adjunct, lecturer/instructor or part-time options with much lower pay, lesser access to benefits and reduced levels of status and prestige, both in the post-secondary environment and in the larger community.

The failure of women scholars to achieve publication in sociological journals endangers their opportunity to move forward in the profession and achieve promotion and tenure and greater levels of equality and authority in the academy.

Further research should be done in this area to broaden the analysis. It should address the following questions:

- Does this same gender authorship inequality exist in other publications sponsored by large and small regional and state professional organizations in sociology?
- Since women are more likely to publish research outside their traditional gender topics, what subject areas are finding success in publication?

Of course, these all relate to the much broader question: "Why is it that women are 52% of the American population and achieve 65% of the Ph.D.'s in sociology and yet still achieve such low levels of publication in scholarly journals?" Gender inequality is alive and well in academia.

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