

Gender Equity in the Context of Organizational Justice: A Closer Look At a Reoccurring Issue in the Field

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Despite the number of women in the field of leisure services, gender equity is an issue that is still plaguing the profession. The purpose of this study was to continue a previous exploration of perceptions of workplace equity in leisure services within the context of organizational justice. Three forms of organizational justice were explored: distributive, procedural, and interactional. Subjects for this study were drawn from the American Parks and Recreation Society membership list using a systematic stratified random sampling procedure. Content analysis was used to place responses to an open-ended question regarding perceptions of gender equity within leisure services into the three categories of organizational justice. The findings of the study indicated that there was dissatisfaction among respondents with each type of organizational justice, and that women reported more inequity than did men. Although several positive comments were made regarding the progress of women in the field, negative comments dominated the analysis.

KEYWORDS: *Gender, equity, organizational justice, leisure services*

“The single most important event in the American labor market in the twentieth century has been the unprecedented entry of large numbers of women into the workforce” (Gini, 1998, p. 3). A great deal of attention has been given to the topic of gender diversity in the workplace, as both academicians and managers confront the challenges associated with an increasingly diverse workforce. Increased gender diversity influences many aspects of management and as a result, the literature includes a large number of areas of inquiry including the impact of diversity on communication, problem-solving, job commitment, and job satisfaction (Baugher, Varanelli, & Weisbord, 2000). Many authors have suggested that gender diversity can provide organizational benefits, such as greater creativity in group decision making and improved task performance (Cox & Blake, 1991; Nemeth, 1986; Shaw, 1983). However, another area of research focuses on the difficulty that

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organizations have in providing equitable treatment to diverse groups of people with unique needs. Some of the reasons given for the difficulty of integrating women range from the integration and acceptance of women into workgroups (Fagenson, 1993; Tsui, Egan, & O'Reilly, 1992) to the conflicts faced by managers who must balance diversity objectives against resource constraints (Barry & Bateman, 1996). In general, much of this research paints a fairly negative portrait of organizations' handling of gender diversity.

A similar scenario is evident in the leisure services field. Several studies have been conducted regarding the status of women in leisure service agencies (Allison, 1999; Anderson & Shinew, 2001; Frisby, 1992; Henderson & Bialeschki, 1995; Shinew & Arnold, 1998) and much of this research has indicated that women perceive inequity and discrimination in the workplace, and that women are often under-represented in higher levels of management. Given these recent findings, we felt the issue of gender equity deserved closer attention. Thus, the purpose of the current study was to examine gender equity under the framework of organizational justice. More specifically, we applied three forms of organizational justice to responses given to questions about gender equity. The findings are based on an earlier nationwide study of women and men working in public recreation agencies (Anderson & Shinew, 2001).

Organizational Justice

Fair and equitable treatment is a primary concern for most employees (Sheppard, Lewicki, & Minton, 1992). Research has indicated that employees often identify justice-related issues (e.g., inequitable administration of rewards, unfair evaluations) as sources of conflict between them and their supervisors. Moreover, several studies have indicated that positive justice perceptions lead to more cooperative behaviors among employees. For example, Moorman (1991) found that employees who perceived greater levels of justice generally engaged in more organizational citizenship behavior. Thus, the literature suggests that greater levels of perceived justice are generally related to more positive work attitudes and behaviors (Rahim, Magner, & Shapiro, 2000).

Three forms of organizational justice have been identified in the literature (Rahim et al., 2000). Initially, justice scholars focused on people's reactions to the perceived fairness of the outcomes they received, or *distributive justice* (Greenberg, 1982). Equity theory (Adams, 1965) guided this outcome-oriented viewpoint. "An important criterion for distributive justice in an organizational setting is equity, which relates to whether employees believe the outcomes (e.g., pay distributions) they have received are in accord with their contributions to the organization" (e.g., Adams, 1965) (Rahim et al., 2000, p. 13). Adams argued that social behavior is affected profoundly by the belief that the allocation of benefits and costs should be equitable, and that they should be proportional to the contributions of the individual. Adams posited

that equity is such a fundamental norm that when the allocation of outcomes does not meet the standard of proportionality, individuals will experience "inequity distress," a motivational state that prompts actions to restore equity.

Thibaut and Walker (1975) expanded on these concepts by indicating that people also judge the fairness of the procedures by which the outcomes are established, or *procedural justice* (Lind & Tyler, 1988). In general, this research has been "guided by the notion that employees who believe they are treated fairly will be favorably disposed toward the organization and engage in prosocial behavior on behalf of the organization" (Barling & Phillips, p. 649). Previous studies have supported this viewpoint (Folger & Konovsky, 1989; Greenberg, 1993). Further, Thibaut and Walker's research demonstrated that procedural justice influenced individuals' reactions to the outcomes (distributive justice) they received, as well as their evaluation of the parties responsible for the decisions. Since Thibaut and Walker's initial theorizing, it has been suggested that many factors may influence peoples' perceptions of procedural justice. As reported by Brockner and Wiesenfeld (1996), Leventhal, Karuza, and Fry (1980) concluded that procedures are judged as fair if "they are implemented (a) consistently, (b) without self-interest, (c) on the basis of accurate information, (d) with opportunities to correct the decision, (e) with the interests of all concerned parties represented, and (f) following moral and ethical standards" (p. 189). People do not expect every decision that affects them to be positive because most understand that decision makers must take into account competing interests. However, people do seek assurance that decision makers are using fair and equitable procedures in which to make their decision. The presence of fair decision-making procedures provides such assurance.

A number of studies have demonstrated that people also react to their perceptions of the interpersonal treatment they receive from decision makers (Barling & Phillips, 1993; Bies and Moag, 1986; Brockner & Wiesenfeld, 1996; Rahim et al., 2000; Shapiro, 1993). This type of equity is referred to as *interactional justice*, which is distinct from distributive and procedural justice. Two factors central to interactional justice are whether the rationale underlying the resource allocation decision are clearly and adequately explained to the affected parties, and whether those responsible for implementing the decision treat the affected individuals with dignity and respect (Folger & Bies, 1989; Greenberg, 1993). Scholars have argued that there is a "universal norm" of politeness that helps determine the level of sensitivity of people's interactions (Rahim et al., 2000). If this level is not met, people may feel that they have been treated in a disrespectful or unfair manner. The extent to which employees perceive themselves to have been treated with dignity and respect are connected to feelings of justice, and thus perceived equity.

The literature indicates that all three forms of organizational justice are associated with a variety of positive work attitudes and behaviors (Barling & Phillips, 1993; Konovsky & Cropanzano, 1991). Moreover, the three types of justice often work interactively (Barling & Phillips, 1993; Brockner & Wie-

senfeld, 1996; Konovsky & Cropanzano, 1991). One of the prominent explanations for this interaction is Folger's (1986, 1993) Referent Cognitions Theory (RCT), which includes several concepts that are similar to the three forms of organizational justice. RCT suggests that negative reactions to a decision occur "when two conditions are met: (a) the outcomes associated with the decision are considerably lower than imagined alternative outcomes and (b) the procedures that give rise to the outcomes are unfair, thereby rendering the outcomes unjustified" (Brockner & Wiesenfeld, 1996, p. 193). Similarly, if individuals are not provided with a clear and adequate explanation for the decision, they are more likely to view the outcomes as unjustified. For example, people will react more strongly to negative distributive justice if procedural and/or interactional justices are also perceived to be low. For instance, people will have harsh reactions to an adverse decision if they believe the responsible parties failed to follow proper procedures and/or treated them disrespectfully. A person who receives an unfavorable decision will determine whether the outcome would have been better if different procedures had been used (Sheppard et al., 1992). If the procedures are deemed fair, the decision is more likely to be considered appropriate and acceptable. Similarly, when decision makers are respectful and courteous (interactional justice), they imply that the people affected by the decision are important. Therefore, people are less likely to express resentment and harsh reactions when decision makers treat them with respect, even when they receive unfavorable results. These connections make intuitive sense, and may provide some insight into the gender inequity situations in the leisure services field.

Again, the purpose of the current study was to examine the issue of gender equity under the overarching umbrella of organizational justice. More specifically, we applied three forms of organizational justice to responses given to questions about gender equity. Given the study's purpose and the application of the organizational justice framework, we expected to find support for all three forms of injustice, and we anticipated that there would be some connection between the three different forms. The findings are based on an earlier nationwide study of women and men working in public recreation agencies (Anderson & Shinew, 2001).

Methods

Sample

The sampling frame for the study was chosen from the American Parks and Recreation Society (APRS). Members of APRS are professionals who work in the local delivery of parks, recreation, and leisure services. The sample was stratified by sex and was systematically drawn with a random starting point. A total of 500 men and 500 women were drawn from a population of 6000; all levels of management were sampled. The sample was chosen to serve as a representative sample of APRS members, allowing for variations in agency size and city populations. APRS was chosen as the sampling frame

due to the nature of the society—it is the largest membership society under the National Recreation and Parks Association (NRPA) comprised of parks and recreation professionals. Questionnaires, cover letters, and self-addressed, stamped return envelopes were sent to each randomly selected APRS member. Addresses were obtained from NRPA. Follow-up postcards were sent ten days after the initial questionnaire mailing. As an incentive, potential respondents were informed that returned surveys would qualify them for a drawing for a free registration for the NRPA's annual "Creative Programming Forum" worth approximately \$275.00. Of the 1000 surveys mailed, 549 were returned; however, six were returned as undeliverable resulting in a response rate of 55% for this study, 262 men and 281 women.

Table 1 shows the demographic characteristics of the sample. Respondents were largely white (non-Hispanic) (92%); the second largest racial group was African-Americans (4.1%). Almost 23% of all respondents indicated a personal income of \$40,000-\$49,999, followed closely by \$30,000-\$39,999 (22.6%). The largest percentage of respondents reported an annual household income of \$100,000 or more (26.6%). Almost 13% of all respondents indicated a household income of \$60,000-\$69,999. The respondents appeared to be a well-educated group. Forty-four percent of all respondents had completed their Bachelor's degree while 34.4% had completed either their Master's degree or their Doctoral degree. Sixty-eight percent of respondents reported that they worked for a municipal parks and recreation agency while 9% worked for a park district and 9% for a county agency. Sixty-eight percent of all respondents indicated that they were married compared to the 22.5% who stated that they were single. Finally, Table 1 indicates the level of management that respondents had attained. Both the middle management and executive level management categories each accounted for 46% of the sample. It is possible that those in upper levels of management are more strongly encouraged to retain membership in professional organizations such as APRS. A second consideration is that often organizations will pay for higher-level managers' memberships in these organizations, a cost that if not reimbursed, may be prohibitive to entry-level employees, thus leaving them out of this sample.

Questionnaire

A mail questionnaire was used to measure perceptions of equity and multiple work attitudes and behaviors among women and men employed in leisure services. Also included in the questionnaire were a number of demographic questions that were used as background information and to profile the study participants. The current analyses focused only on the open-ended gender equity question that was part of the questionnaire to determine whether respondents felt gender inequity was an issue in leisure services. The questionnaire was pilot tested by public recreation personnel to assess its face validity and clarity. No changes were made to the questionnaire based on results from the pilot test.

TABLE 1
Demographic Characteristics of Sample

Demographic Characteristics	Percentages		
	Entire Sample (<i>n</i> = 543)	Male (<i>n</i> = 262)	Female (<i>n</i> = 281)
Race			
African-American	4.1	4.2	3.6
White (non-Hispanic)	92.0	92.7	91.4
Hispanic	1.9	1.5	2.1
Asian	1.1	1.2	1.1
Mixed Race	0.3	0.0	0.0
Native American	0.0	0.0	0.0
Other	0.6	0.4	0.8
Annual Personal Income			
Less than \$29,999	9.8	4.7	14.7
\$30,000-\$39,999	22.6	20.5	24.7
\$40,000-\$49,999	22.8	18.5	26.9
\$50,000-\$59,999	16.1	17.0	15.4
\$60,000-\$69,000	13.0	15.7	9.7
\$70,000 and above	15.7	23.6	8.6
Annual Household Income			
Less than \$29,999	3.3	2.8	4.0
\$30,000-\$39,999	8.2	7.0	9.4
\$40,000-\$49,999	10.0	6.6	13.3
\$50,000-\$59,999	11.3	8.1	14.4
\$60,000-\$69,999	12.6	14.3	10.8
\$70,000-\$79,999	10.4	12.4	8.6
\$80,000-\$89,999	7.8	10.8	5.0
\$90,000-\$99,999	9.7	8.3	11.2
\$100,000 and above	26.6	29.7	23.3
Highest Educational Level			
High School, Junior College, Some College / Technical School	7.4	7.8	7.2
Completed Bachelor's Degree	44.1	46.3	42.0
Some Graduate Work	14.2	12.0	16.4
Completed Master's Degree or Ph.D.	33.9	33.5	34.1
Other	.4	.4	.3
Marital Status			
Single	21.5	11.5	31.0
Married	69.7	81.7	58.4
Divorced, Widowed, Other	8.8	6.8	10.6
Management Level			
Entry	8.0	7.0	9.1
Middle	46.2	36.7	55.1
Executive	45.8	56.3	35.8

To assess respondents' perceptions of gender equity, they were asked to complete an open-ended question that asked, "Do you perceive gender equity to be a problem in the field of public parks and recreation? Please comment on your thoughts." Content analysis was utilized to determine if any themes related to organizational justice would arise from the subjects' responses to the question.

According to Berelson (1952), content analysis is a "research technique for the objective, systematic and quantitative description of the manifest content of communication" (p. 147). Deacon, Pickering, Golding, and Murdock (1999) asserted that content analysis is useful in that it allows for the quantification of text, thus producing statistics that demonstrate a representation of themes within the text. The data in this study were clearly in a textual format and analysis sought to determine if themes related to organizational justice existed in respondents' answers to the study's question. Analysis of the data began with the question that we wanted answered, "Does the perception of gender equity seem to be influenced by the three forms of organizational justice?" From there, utilizing the definitions of the three types of organizational justice, we placed those quotes that exhibited reference to organizational justice into one of the three categories. Both researchers coded the data independently and then compared results to ensure inter-rater reliability. An inter-rater reliability of 95.9% was found for the coding process. Based on the completed coding, we then looked for trends within each type of justice. For example, in the category of procedural justice, family-related policies and the informality of policies both emerged as trends. Once coding was completed, enumeration of each category was conducted to quantify the data in relation to how often distributive, procedural, and interactional justice influenced gender equity. It is important to note that both positive and negative comments were included in the counts.

Results

Gender Equity in Leisure Services

Respondents were asked to reply to an open-ended question concerning their beliefs about gender equity within leisure services. Based on responses, answers were placed into one of two categories—"yes, it is a problem", or "no, it is not a problem". A total of 455 (84.1%) respondents answered the open-ended question. Of the 455, 165 (75%) men stated that gender equity was not a problem compared to 92 (39.15%) women who responded in this manner. Conversely, only 45 (20.45%) men responded that gender equity was a problem compared to 129 (54.89%) women. Twenty-four respondents were undecided (10 men, 14 women). Based on these responses, chi-square analysis indicated that more women perceived gender inequity to be a problem in leisure services ($\chi^2 = 66.54, p < .00$). Next, when appropriate, responses (both positive and negative as related to gender equity) to the open-ended question were put into one of three organizational justice categories: distributive justice, procedural justice, and interactional justice. Of those

statements that could be categorized into one of the three types of justice, 84 (42.86%) were classified as related to procedural justice, 58 (29.59%) were classified as related to distributive justice, and 54 (27.55%) were classified as related to interactional justice. It is important to note that 20.6% of both the procedural and distributive comments had a positive tone to them and only 5.5% of the interactional justice comments referred to positive interactions.

Distributive Justice

Distributive justice, or the perceived fairness of outcomes received, was seen as an issue with regard to inequities within the workplace. This type of justice, which focuses on the input:outcome ratio that is critical to the perception of equity held by an employee, seemed extremely important to the overall satisfaction of the employee. A number of respondents cited specific inequities regarding outcomes received from their organization. As indicated earlier, approximately 30% of the respondents referred to issues regarding distributive justice. For instance, one woman in middle management who had been in the profession for six years commented that she was paid considerably less than her male counterparts, particularly given the expectations placed upon her:

While my responsibilities are equal to those of the park superintendents, I continue to be compensated at a level of 12% less. Often tasks/assignments are that of management level, they are assigned to superintendents with me doing much of the working [*sic*] and the final preparation.

On the other hand, one female executive who had been working in the profession for 25 years, recognizing the reason behind a salary disparity, alluded to how her agency exhibited distributive justice when she stated, "My salary is slightly less than other directors—however they are responsible for much larger sections of our budget." A white male executive who had worked in the field for 26 years also indicated that outcomes, in this case salary, were fair based on differences in responsibilities, "There are as many female agency heads as males. Salary survey results reveal parity based upon size of department, responsibilities."

Inequity in salary is a consistent theme supported by previous analysis with this data set (Anderson & Shinew, 2001). Earlier quantitative analysis indicated that male middle managers received higher pay than did female middle managers ($\chi^2 = 20.78$; $p < .00$). Thus, not surprisingly, many women were unhappy with their salaries. One female respondent working at the executive level who held a master's degree, alluded to some progress regarding gender equity, although her story indicated very little satisfaction with the distribution of outcomes, specifically pay:

It has gotten somewhat better over the years. I love my job, but there are men working for this municipality who are Assistant DPW Foremen, that (*sic*) make 6 to 10 thousand more than I do. I have 3 related degrees and they have none.

I am also the lowest paid Department Head for this municipality. On several occasions I have thought of taking this to court and may still do so.

A second executive level woman who had been in the field 15 years concurred, "Although we are gaining, we are still held to less credibility, lower pay, etc." Finally, a third woman who had worked in parks and recreation for over 17 years indicated that blatant salary inequity had taken place in her agency, "Every male I know in my position is paid substantially more than I am, and works dramatically less in addition to having more staff."

Overall, distribution of outcomes appeared to favor male professionals, especially in light of education, experience, and amount of work performed. Although distributive justice is concerned with all potential outcomes, the respondents seemed to focus on salary inequity. While outcomes such as benefits, vacation time, and promotions are all important, salary seemed to be the trigger point for respondents' perceptions of inequity as related to distributive justice. This may be due to the fact that salary is the easiest comparison for co-workers to make, especially in a public agency where salaries are a matter of public record.

Procedural Justice

Procedural justice focuses on the fairness of the policies and procedures by which outcomes are established. The data collected from the respondents fell into four related areas of procedural justice: fairness of policies and procedures, differences in advancement and award opportunities, informal policies and procedures, and family-related issues.

The first category, fairness of policies and procedures, focused on the many respondents who felt that their agencies' policies and procedures were fairly developed and applied to both men and women. The second category, differences in advancement and award opportunities, tells the story of how policies and procedures can impact the career opportunities of professionals. The third category, informal policies and procedures, recognized that employees' careers are constantly impacted by policies and procedures that, while not in writing and formalized, may hinder or advance careers in a stronger manner than do the actual formal policies and procedures. Finally, the issue of family also comes into play when one considers procedural justice. Policies and procedures related to issues such as childcare, flex-time, and maternity leave, for example, will certainly impact career development, especially for women. Due to the broad framework of what could legitimately be placed in the category of procedural justice, it was deemed necessary to examine it in light of the different forms policies and procedures take, and how they affect employees in different ways.

Fairness of Policies and Procedures. A number of respondents felt that policies and procedures in their agencies were applied equally to male and female professionals and impacted both groups in equitable ways. In fact, most respondents felt men and women were treated similarly and that their agencies' policies and procedures led to fair outcomes. One male respondent

who had been in the profession for 21 years and was currently in middle management indicated that he felt procedures were inherently fair, "Since all of us are employed by governmental agencies I believe we have sufficient laws to promote racial and gender equity." A woman in middle management who had worked in the field 20 years and held a master's degree also felt that procedures at her agency were gender blind, "I feel I have been evaluated/promoted on my abilities and skills. Never felt that gender played a significant role."

Differences in Advancement and Award Opportunities. Some respondents felt that policies and procedures led to injustices regarding opportunities for advancement and awards. A man in middle management who had worked in the field for 11 years reported that some policies within his own agency slightly benefited women, but also acknowledged that in the field in general some issues of gender inequity for women still exist:

I feel females who have the exact same qualification as males may have a slightly better chance of the position she is [*sic*] after than a male. This, I feel, could be due to Human Resource Departments requiring department heads to review their gender equity numbers annually.

A number of professionals indicated dissatisfaction with the manner in which policies and procedures were utilized to reward employees. A female professional with a bachelor's degree in an entry-level position indicated that she felt society's expectations influenced women's success in obtaining outcomes such as promotions, "Women are often passed for positions which our society perceives as 'male'." One male executive who had been in the profession 28 years admitted that policies and procedures might not be equal for all, "At upper levels it is not always a level playing field."

A woman at the executive level identified that the problem might be more a result of the lack of opportunity that women have to work in the "park side" of the field of recreation. A number of both male and female respondents had also indicated that gender inequity was a problem in that women were not encouraged to work in certain sectors of the field such as parks and maintenance; this factor seemed to hinder their career development. A 55 year-old female executive with a master's degree and 31 years experience in the field stated, "(It is) very hard for women to get park and recreation experience. Park side of business has more hard dollars (bond capital), and most decision makers place higher value on this." Another female middle manager also acknowledged barriers that female professionals face in relation to agency procedures, "I truly believe that men that I work with get more opportunities than the women do. I feel that their responsibilities are less. I feel that women are required to do more—men less."

A number of respondents focused on procedures specifically tied to promotion where women appeared to not be considered for promotion simply due to their sex. According to one woman in middle management who had 12 years in the field and a master's degree, "I know I was not considered for several positions that I was qualified for because I was female."

Once professionals were hired, it appeared that internal opportunities to advance were stymied due to informal procedures within the agency. A 43 year-old female professional in middle management noted, "I don't believe women are given the same opportunities to advance as men in the field. I seem to get assignments that are busy work, while my male co-workers get assignments to build their resume."

The Good Old Boys Network. The "good old boys" network appeared to influence the policies and procedures that affected outcomes received by employees. This type of influence, while perhaps more subtle and informal, obviously impacted the career advancement opportunities of women in the workplace. In fact, one man in middle management with 23 years in the field, made the connection:

If you are a woman who doesn't play 'good old boy' games, it's hard to get past a certain level. They don't want honest, hard working ethical employees at the top level if they have something to hide. Most young women professionals don't buy into those games.

A female respondent agreed with this remark, "Far more likely for upper management to be male, and hire males in upper management positions. Males receive far more freedom and preferences—it's called the good old boy network."

Hiring procedures were also influenced by the "good old boys" system. A woman in middle management with 14 years experience stated,

Gender equity is a problem in some parts of the US. Areas that are rather conservative and managed by the "old guard" of white males seem to promote their clones or/and friends, instead of hiring someone based on their merit, productivity, etc., then expect subordinates to carry their clones instead of getting rid of them when they fail to produce.

Other informal policies also seemed to impact the outcomes that were obtained by female professionals. In fact, a man in middle management with 20 years of experience reflected on hiring and promotion procedures at his wife's agency:

Yes (gender inequity is a problem), my wife is an excellently educated, well mannered, mature woman and has been passed over twice by present organization . . . nepotism hiring practices since its founding some almost 40 years ago.

One woman working in middle management with 10 years experience indicated that gender inequity was a problem, but seemed to be getting better due to a new player within the interaction equation, "Yes, but at least at my agency it is slowly changing. The good old boys network is adding newer young males, who in turn are supportive to women in executive/management positions."

Family Issues. Interestingly, some professionals indicated procedural injustice related to society's perception of the family hierarchy. A 43 year-old female in middle management, married with two children at home, expressed her beliefs:

Yes (gender inequity is a problem), more so at the maintenance end of recreation. Also, it seems employers feel men deserve to make more money because they may be head of household. I feel equity has improved to some extent.

Previous quantitative analysis indicated that a significant difference existed between men and women with regard to career interruptions; women's careers had been interrupted more often ($\chi^2 = 19.875, p < .00$) (Anderson & Shinew, 2001), which can certainly affect advancement opportunities. Often these career interruptions are a result of either maternity leave or taking time to raise children. Whatever the reason, they are seen as a negative when it comes to rewarding employees. One 57 year-old married man with three children at home who worked at the executive level indicated that:

Women still have a problem moving up because most take time to have a family. Family commitments keep them from giving the time required for 10-15 years. Women who never have a break in employment seem to be competing very well for promotions.

A 42 year-old married female executive without children agreed that career interruptions and family life both seem to hinder advancement opportunities:

Yes, Yes. It is systematic and institutionalized. Many of the hiring and interview boards are predominantly male and age 40-65 years. Internal promotions are not as common as bringing new "blood" in from the outside. Women who interrupt their careers with family lost status, income, and security. Men who have families are perceived to be an asset. Women with families are perceived to be a defect.

Procedures dealing with everything from promotions to childcare and maternity leave seem to be hindering women's career advancement. A 51 year-old married female middle manager with children provided an example:

Yes, there are no positions held by women at the administrative level . . . leaves and absentee policies do not favor women with children. No decent childcare options. No flexibility of working hours for women with children. Women have to work harder to be noticed while balancing their homes and family lives.

While some respondents indicated fairness with regard to procedural justice, overall many more were unhappy with the impact that agency policies and procedures had on their careers. Specifically, respondents indicated that inequity existed in areas such as access to opportunities available within the workplace, informal policies and procedures such as the "good old boys network", and family issues such as childcare and career interruptions. Policies and procedures, both formal and informal, seem intent on keeping women "in their place." This "place" appeared to include staying on the "recreation side" of the field and obtaining no higher than middle management level positions. Agencies do not seem willing to take into account alternative models of career development such as the complimentary contribution framework (Henderson, 1992) that allows policies and procedures to recognize differences in the career development of men and women, differences that often stem from issues such as family. In addition, informal poli-

cies and procedures may be the biggest detriment to gender equity as it can be harder to combat a culture than a written policy handbook, especially a culture that has traditionally been controlled by male professionals. Once a group has power and control, they are typically reluctant to give it up. As exemplified by some of the quotes related to procedural justice, it appears that this power is still controlling many agencies' policies and procedures, and thus negatively impacting female professionals.

Interactional Justice

Interactional justice is concerned with the treatment that employees receive from those who make decisions regarding outcomes. In leisure services, the public, as a taxpaying body that supports the agency, is also considered to be a decision-maker. While members of the public are not directly responsible for hiring, promoting, and firing employees, through park boards and advisory boards they do have a say in how an agency operates. A number of employees specifically commented on the issue of equal respect for both sexes by co-workers and the public. For instance, a female executive with 12 years of experience, felt that overall, within her organization, interactional justice did not seem to be an issue:

People have always treated me fairly and equally. In the particular municipal government I currently work, it is difficult to judge . . . I'm the first new department head (male or female) in 10 years. Everyone has been extremely welcoming, encouraging, etc. to me, but I've got nothing to compare it to.

A male executive with 24 years experience indicated that he had seen nothing but respect given to female peers: "I feel the (female) executives I've been associated with within the profession have been treated with respect and given the same opportunities for advancement as their male counterparts." A female executive reported, "I am supervised by a five member elected board, all currently male, and I'm treated with great respect by them."

However, several employees stated they had experienced discriminatory behavior on the basis of their sex. Often their career development was hindered by disrespectful behavior toward them or a lack of recognition for their work by their supervisors. A 48 year-old female executive with 26 years in the field reported,

As the only female department head I can say without hesitation that the amount of respect and acknowledgement of job performance is considerably less than that given to all the other male department heads.

A female in middle management with 23 years of experience indicated that differences in how men and women are treated might be a result of interaction between decision-makers and the subordinate, depending upon each one's sex, "More recent promotions in my department have been males, due to the level of comfort in dealing with them by the male boss."

Along the same vein, a female in an entry-level position indicated that she felt promotion opportunities were equitable, but that interaction was not:

No (gender inequity is not a problem), in the sense that in our area promotional opportunities are equitable. Yes (it is a problem), in the sense that male counterparts in the parks maintenance still operate with much chauvinism and female discrimination in attitude only.

Some female employees indicated that issues related to interactional justice might be influenced by the geographic location of the agency. In fact, 17 respondents indicated, both positively and negatively, that regional differences seemed to exist regarding interactional justice. Although many women, referring specifically to their own states, indicated that their state was doing a good job keeping things equitable, a number of the respondents indicated that depending on the location, women were consistently given less respect than their male counterparts. One female executive who had been in the profession 15 years stated:

In my agency—no. State agencies—no. Southern Regional NRPA—yes. I attended a conference and no one acknowledged or reached out to two female executives. Older white coach syndrome was the standard and no others were welcome.

A second female in middle management with 16 years experience concurred,

Yes, especially in the Southern States. I find that the Park and Recreation Departments in Texas are lacking to the standards in Illinois, Colorado, California, and many coastal states. It is a different attitude difficult to change.

Men do not seem oblivious to the issue of interactional justice. Recognizing that it is not only an issue of respect from decision-makers, a male executive with 29 years in the field stated, "I have found that females don't receive the same amount of respect from the general public as males. This is only at first blush."

Finally, a female professional in middle management with 15 years experience commented that career-enhancing interactions between men were deemed appropriate while female interaction was often seen in a negative light:

It's better than years past, but as a female I have to do more to prove myself. I also don't play golf, and that is when our executives get together to score points with each other. It's okay to take work time to talk about golf and play golf, but when female staff visits with each other, then we are having a 'hen party'. All our upper management are male and always have been.

Many of the respondents indicated fewer problems with equity regarding interactional justice than distributive or procedural justice. In fact, a number of both men and women indicated that they felt female professionals were treated with a great deal of respect. However, the responses indicated that some degree of inequity continues to exist in this area, specifically regarding the respect that female professionals receive from superiors, co-workers, and the public.

As indicated in the literature and alluded to in the study results, all three forms of justice work interactively. Interactional justice, often a more informal type of justice, affects how distributive and procedural justice are per-

ceived. While progress has been made, the results are clear in that women are not being treated the same by decision-makers. Today's workplace is changing; women have the desire and capability to move to higher levels of management and this needs to be recognized by those in power. Many women commented on how they had to "prove" themselves with male superiors and park boards. Hopefully the profession can move beyond the point where women feel this need to demonstrate themselves as worthy of the same positions men have had for decades.

Some Progress Is Being Made

Clearly, gender equity is still a problem in leisure services. However, while we tend to emphasize what is wrong with our field in these cases, a number of respondents indicated that the proverbial light at the end of the tunnel may at least be a flicker. Many respondents reported that while things may still be less than perfect, improvements are evident, more so than in the past. While some indicate that the problem in general seems to be getting better, others point to specific events that are helping the cause, such as retirement of traditional male executives who tended to perpetuate the "good old boy network".

Echoing the refrain of many of the female respondents, one woman in middle management who had been in the field 25 years has seen a change, "Not in the past 10 years. I had discrimination problems early on, but don't notice any now." A second female middle manager with 11 years in the field agreed, "No longer. More and more women are being promoted." Agreeing with these women and a number of others, a female middle manager with five years experience in the field wrote, "I think gender equity is getting better. More women are holding power positions in the park and recreation field than previously."

As indicated earlier, specific changes are leading to greater degrees of gender equity in the field. A female professional at the executive level with 15 years experience explained, "The change in gender equity is coming through old boy network retiring. . . ." A 10 year veteran in middle management agreed, ". . . at least at my agency is slowly changing. The good old boys network is adding newer young males, who is turn are supportive to women in executive/management positions." One final related comment was submitted by a female middle manager with 9 years of experience, "Yes, although I think it's getting better with the retirement of male directors allowing competent female leaders in the field to occupy upper positions."

Unfortunately, progress can often leave a new disgruntled group, the one that loses power. A couple of male respondents indicated that they had been victims of reverse discrimination. Perhaps these statements can be seen as an indication that the female employees are making some type of progress within the field. While encouraging that women are being promoted, we are certain that they want to earn their elevated status. However, perhaps not all men are sure they have and this, unfortunately, tends to perpetuate a differ-

ent type of gender equity problem. Interestingly, the charges of reverse discrimination are coming from a sample that is dominated by men at the middle or executive levels of management. One man in middle management with 21 years experience wrote, "White male is at bottom of ladder." Another at the executive level who had been in the field 20 years addressed what would fall into the category of procedural justice, "I have had prospective employers tell me that they are only looking to hire a female. Do I think that is a problem? Yes." Another male professional with over 20 years of experience and working at the executive level, also addressed unfairness in policies and procedures:

I've never witnessed or have experienced a problem in this area with one exception. My mentor was passed over for a job in management, because he is a male. He scored higher than the women who were picked for the position. City management made the decision, desiring to keep 90% women in management positions.

These statements may or may not reflect some type of progress in the fight against gender inequity. Without further study into the perception of reverse discrimination felt by these men, it is difficult to draw conclusions on the implications of these statements.

Discussion

Unlike most previous studies that have examined gender equity in the leisure services field, this research went further by examining its connection to three separate aspects of organizational justice. In doing so, we sought to move towards a more thoughtful analysis of this reoccurring issue. An important finding of the current study was that many respondents reported that they perceive gender inequity in their jobs, thus demonstrating that this continues to be a problem for the field. Moreover, there was evidence of dissatisfaction with each form of organizational justice, which indicates that this framework can provide additional insight into this issue. Further, it is noteworthy that more women indicated that gender equity is a problem than did men, which is consistent with previous research and indicates that this is a more relevant issue for women than it is for men. It should be noted, however, that several positive comments were made regarding the treatment and advancement of women in the leisure field, to the point that some men reported that they have experienced "reverse discrimination" due to the preferential treatment given to women. Although this finding demonstrates progress and is certainly worth noting, because there were more negative than positive comments made, it suggests that gender equity continues to be an issue for many women.

In terms of distributive justice, most of the comments focused on pay dissatisfaction. The issue of equal pay between women and men certainly extends beyond the leisure services field. The existence of a significant wage gap between men and women is longstanding and repeatedly acknowledged by researchers (Keaveny & Inderrieden, 2000). Bureau of Labor Statistics

(1997) data show that in 1997 white women working full-time had weekly earnings equal to approximately 75 percent of the weekly earnings of white men. This is an improved statistic compared to 1979 when the percentage was 62. Nevertheless, pay inequity is a consistent finding in the leisure research and one that deserves attention.

Results also indicated dissatisfaction with the manner in which policies and procedures were utilized to promote and reward employees. In general, comments reflected a feeling of reduced opportunities for women. Again, this is a consistent finding of previous research. Shinew, Anderson, and Arnold (2000) found that women perceived that they had fewer opportunities for promotion than did their male counterparts and Allison (1999) noted specific cases of favoritism and selective hiring and promotion practices that were discriminatory. Comments referring to the "good old boys" network were also evident in this study. This "network" can be frustrating for women because it is typically not officially recognized in the organization, and thus can be difficult to fight. Yet, this network can influence many of the decisions that are made in the organization. Dissatisfaction with policies and attitudes about women and family-related issues is also disturbing. Today most organizations, at least overtly, report being supportive of family situations (Miliken, Martins, & Morgan, 1998), yet the findings of this study indicate the many women perceive that they are "punished" in terms of their advancement opportunities as a result of their family situation.

The comments regarding interactional justice were also disturbing. Women reported that they had experienced discriminatory behavior on the basis of their sex, and that they did not receive the same amount of respect as their male counterparts. Again, this is not a new finding. Shinew et al. (2000) found that women were significantly more likely than men to report gender inequity with regard to the amount of encouragement and respect they received from their supervisors. Similarly, a comment was made in this study by a woman who felt that she needed "to do more to prove" herself, which is similar to the finding by Shinew et al. (2000) that women felt the expectations were higher for them.

The findings also provided continued support for the notion that the three forms of justice are interrelated. For instance, an informal policy that reportedly served to increase men's pay due to their stereotypical head of household status would logically also impact a female employee's ultimate perception of distributive justice when she saw a difference in her paycheck. Additionally, if a female professional feels that she is not treated with respect by her supervisor due to her sex, she may perceive her lack of progress up the career ladder as a lack of distributive justice brought about through the lack of interactional justice. It is important that practitioners recognize the power of this interrelationship and the domino effect one injustice can produce. Without this recognition, any attempt to combat gender inequity by only focusing on just one area of justice will be undermined by these relationships.

The findings of this study should be interpreted through the limitations imposed by the methods used. The findings cannot be generalized beyond

leisure services professionals. In fact, it is not appropriate to generalize the findings past the membership of APRS. Additionally, of those who returned the questionnaire, over 90% were from middle or executive levels of management; a representative sample from entry-level managers would have certainly added another aspect to the study. In addition, data for professionals employed in areas such as commercial recreation agencies and private not-for-profit agencies may be quite different from that in the public sector and, therefore, it would be inappropriate to generalize the current findings to these groups. Further research that focuses on people working in other areas of the leisure delivery system such as campus recreation, travel and tourism, and commercial recreation is needed. This is warranted in light of recent research on gender equity in the field of therapeutic recreation. Anderson and Bedini (2002) have found significantly different results than did the current study. Structured as a quantitative study, the survey instrument did not allow for additional probing to the open-ended question. A different research design would allow for more in-depth inquiry. Another limitation of the study was that the results were based on *perceptions* of equity as well as employees' self-reported data. We did not go into workplaces and obtain objective data such as job titles, policy statements, and salary levels. As mentioned, this study examined *perceived* inequity among employees. Perhaps a study is needed at the organizational level that examines policies, procedures, salary rates, promotion decision, and recruitment strategies. This information could then be used to compare perceptions to actual practices. Finally, an examination of how different aspects of organizational justice impact the health of an agency from the perspective of the agency, the staff, and the public would further our understanding of the relationship between gender equity and organizational justice.

Given these limitations, additional research is needed to further our understanding of gender inequity in the leisure services field. The organizational justice framework was useful in that it helped elucidate some of the specific issues related to gender inequity. Decision makers may be overwhelmed when faced with the issue of gender inequity in their organizations. The current study helped break apart the issue, which hopefully will make it easier to address at a practical level. The application of other theories would inevitably shed additional light on this reoccurring issue. Applying creative methodologies and different theoretical frameworks to the gender inequity issue may help move this dialogue forward and may facilitate meaningful solutions.

In summary, the research indicated that perceptions of inequity are clearly tied to organizational justice. Each area of organizational justice—distributive, procedural, and interactional—plays a role in how professionals perceive levels of equity within their agencies and profession. We need to continue to explore ways to increase justice within the workplace to ensure female professionals are on the same playing field as male professionals. Without a conscious effort to increase organizational justice, perceptions of inequity and the resulting outcomes such as job dissatisfaction and turnover may continue to be issues among women working in the field.

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