



# You've Still Got a Long Way to Go, Baby

**AAUW's Founding Mothers Wouldn't Be Too Impressed With a Woman's Place in Today's World.**

By Patricia Hurley

Equity for women and girls: Achieved, right? After all, there are more women enrolled in college and university programs than men. In fact, girls are now so far ahead of boys that in January of this year, checkout stands at grocery stores across the United States were lined with copies of *Newsweek* shouting “The Boys Crisis. At every level of education, they’re falling behind. What to do?” from their covers. And the media ran with the story: PBS produced a two-hour documentary “Raising Cain;” the “Today” show, which averages more than 5.5 million viewers a week, featured a segment on this “crisis;” and other magazines and newspapers also devoted space to this issue.

If you speak to young women today just starting their careers, they’ll tell you the workplace seems pretty equal. They don’t see and haven’t encountered any inequities that plagued the workplace pioneers in the 1960s and 1970s. In its October 16, 2006, issue, *Fortune* magazine declared 2006 to be “The Year of the Woman.” Women are opting out of the workplace to care for their families full time—that must be progress, too: to be able to have a choice between a career and raising a family full time.

The list of recent advances and firsts goes on: Katie Couric ascending to managing editor and sole anchor of the CBS Evening News, the first woman to hold this position; Nancy Pelosi poised

to become the first woman speaker of the House (and second in line to the presidency, after the vice president); 11 female CEOs on the 2006 *Fortune* 500 list, the most ever; Danica Patrick racing Indy cars; Women soldiers fighting on the front lines in the Middle East.

All are moments that women should be proud of. But, if you scratch the surface of these fantastic accomplishments, you’ll find that these accomplishments are just pretty window treatments hiding some hard truths. Dig a little deeper, past the glare of the bright spotlight on these accomplishments, and the picture isn’t so bright. In fact, if Marion Talbot and Ellen Richards were to come back today, they’d probably be rubbing their heads in confusion, wondering to themselves haven’t they heard this before—is this country still talking about the same education, workplace, and leadership issues that have plagued it since the late 1800s?

## **The More Things Change, the More They Stay the Same**

The Association of Collegiate Alumnae (the predecessor to AAUW) stepped into the national spotlight in 1885 challenging the writings of Harvard physician E.H. Clarke, who claimed that higher education jeopardized women’s health and stated in his book, *Sex in Education*, “Identical education is a crime before God and humanity that physiology

protests against and experience weeps over.” ACA responded with a study that concluded that education is not harmful to a woman’s health or happiness.

More than a century later, another Harvard man made headlines for making similar remarks. In January 2005, Lawrence Summers, then president of Harvard University, suggested that innate differences might account for the disparity in men’s and women’s achievement in mathematics and science.

And the boy crisis of 2006 is nothing new either. In the early 1900s, boys were supposedly in crisis, too, reported the *Washington Post* in April 2006. “Monthly magazines, ladies’ journals, and books warned that young men were spending too much time in school with female teachers and that the constant interaction with women was robbing them of their manhood,” write Caryl Rivers and Rosalind Chait Barnett. Is the fear of women robbing men of their “manhood” the 800-pound gorilla in today’s public debates?

## **Advances in Education**

Education for women and girls has been the mission driving AAUW for 125 years. And as an organization, AAUW has been hugely successful in fulfilling this mission. In 2004, women accounted for 58 percent of all undergraduate students, but women earn fewer than half of the law, medicine, and doctoral degrees granted.

# because equity is still an issue

*Newspapers and websites are reporting weekly, if not daily, the hard truths about the state of equity for women. But you won't find these startling statistics on the front page. No these are found deep inside the 'A' section. Here's a small snapshot of facts that may have been overlooked from June through October 2006.*

- ▶ Women represent less than half of the faculty in all but one of Harvard University's schools. In the natural sciences, 25 percent of the faculty on the tenure track were women, but only 8 percent of the tenured professors were women. (*New York Times*, 6/14/06)
- ▶ Women now make up 51 percent of the students in divinity schools, but account for only about 3 percent of pastors leading large main-line Protestant congregations. (*New York Times*, 8/26/06).
- ▶ Almost 50 percent of law school graduates in 2005 were women, yet women account for only 7 of the 37 law clerkships for the Supreme Court this session. (*New York Times*, 8/30/06)
- ▶ Los Angeles fire captain Alicia Mathis, a 17-year veteran, filed a complaint alleging gender discrimination, hostile work environment, harassment, and retaliation as the preliminary step in a class-action lawsuit against the Los Angeles Fire Department. (*Los Angeles Times*, 9/28/06)
- ▶ Influential magazines publish fewer female bylines than male bylines. On average, women write one article for every three by men in *The Atlantic*, *Harper's*, *The New York Times Magazine*, *The New Yorker*, and *Vanity Fair*. (Women's eNews, 10/18/06)
- ▶ The average *Fortune* 500 company had 21.8 corporate officers in 2005, and women held only 3.6 of these positions. (Catalyst report, 7/06)

And while women hold the slight majority of master's level students, they often concentrate in historically female disciplines, education and psychology.

But attending college is still not an option for most people in the United States. According to the Census Bureau's 2005 Current Population Survey (released on Oct. 27, 2006), 28 percent of people 25 and older had at least a bachelor's degree, compared with about 24 percent in 2000 and 11 percent in 1970. The survey also finds that 85 percent of people 25 and older had at least a high school diploma or the equivalent in 2005 compared to 80 percent in 2002 and a little more than half in 1970.

Female students continue to stay away from the science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) degrees. A panel convened by the National Academy of Sciences in September 2005 said that women in science and engineering are hindered "by bias and outmoded institutional structures." Mary Ann Mason, dean of the graduate division at the University of California, Berkeley, concurred in *Newsweek*, "The tenure system was created by men and is based on a male model that leaves women at a disadvantage."

But to get more female faces in these college-level programs, girls need to be exposed to and nurtured in STEM disciplines during elementary, middle, and high school. In 1992, AAUW released the pivotal report *How Schools Shortchange Girls*, which revealed among other things that girls are not pursuing math-related careers in proportion to boys, and although the gender gap in math is shrinking, the gender gap in science is increasing. These forms of gender bias undermine girls' self-esteem and discourage them from pursuing nontraditional courses of study, such as math and science.

## She Works Hard for the Money

Carly Fiorina created quite a stir when she became CEO of Hewlett-Packard in 1999 and claimed that there was no glass ceiling; women just had to play the game like men do. But in 2006, she is telling a different story.

Fiorina told Salon.com in a recent interview during her press tour for her new book, "When I went into business, my

desire was to be able to play by the same rules as everyone else. I thought when I went to HP that we had come further than we had. I hoped I was advancing women in business by putting women in positions of responsibility. But it's clear that we don't yet play by the same rules and it's clear that there aren't enough women in business, and the stereotypes will exist as long as there aren't enough of us."

Women continue to be severely underrepresented in top corporate leadership positions, according to Catalyst, a nonprofit that researches women's career opportunities in business. There are currently 11 women CEOs at *Fortune* 500 companies, about 2 percent. "Although the total number of corporate officer positions has declined since 1995 and women's representation has proportionately increased a bit, the continuing gender gap in senior leadership, especially among women of color, demonstrates a persistent uneven playing field," says Ilene H. Lang, president of Catalyst.

In this same report, Catalyst says that such slight progress has been made in advancing women in top-paying positions that it could take women until 2046 to achieve equality with men in corporate offices.

Level of education affects a woman's real hourly wage. According to the Economic Policy Institute's *The State of Working America 2006-2007*, in 2005, a woman with a high school diploma made, on average, \$12.24 per hour versus \$21.30 per hour for a college graduate and \$27.08 per hour for women with advanced degrees. And when compared to men, that gap grows even wider: with a high school degree, a man earns, on average, \$15.65 per hour; with a college degree \$28.06 per hour; and with a graduate degree, \$35.67. For both sexes, a college degree is equal to \$23,000 extra in pay, says the U.S. Census Bureau.

The report also found that minimum wage workers tend to be disproportionately women (59 percent), and the minimum wage has been stuck at \$5.15 per hour since 1997.

"There is an earnings gap among college-educated women and men that appears within the first year after graduation and grows wider over the next 10

years. That gap affects women as they become parents, and in turn, affects the family as a whole,” says Catherine Hill, director of research at AAUW.

### On the Verge of Leading

Look around the globe and you'll find women leading their countries. This year, Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf, president of Liberia, and Michelle Bachelet, president of Chile, joined the growing ranks of female heads of state, which includes Jamaica, Peru, Germany, and Finland.

The United States has never had a woman president or vice president. And a woman has been a major party candidate just once—Geraldine Ferraro in 1984. Only 30 women have held cabinet or cabinet-level appointments in the history of the United States, says the Center for American Women and Politics. Currently, according to the Center for Women in Government and Civil Society, there are eight women governors, 15 lieutenant governors, 15 chief justices of states' highest courts, one Supreme Court justice, 14 U.S. senators, and 70 U.S. representatives.

A Women's eNews report says that there are a record number of women running for elected positions in 2006. “This year, 2,431 women are running for state House and Senate seats, a 10 percent jump from 2004, when 2,220 women sought those seats ... 10 women running for governor.” We went to press just before the 2006 mid-term elections, and the outlook for more female voices in government leadership positions looks bright. Maybe a woman sitting at the top of a national party's ticket for president will soon be a reality.

### Something Isn't Adding Up

Progress towards full equity for women and girls is being made, but to younger women, feminism and equal rights for women have become bad words. They say they don't relate to the struggles that the first and second wave of women advocates faced. Also society and the media have convinced them that “retro” actions—from “opting out” of the workplace to not “seeing” workplace discrimination to not appearing too smart to

get a man—are choices they are able to make because of equity in society.

In the workplace, for instance, many young women say they've never heard about or experienced gender discrimination. Nina Flores, a 25-year-old trial consultant from California, acknowledges that she finds herself believing the perception that women have achieved complete equality in today's world. Jessica Bonardi, a 23-year-old retirement plan transition specialist at a Maryland-based company, admits that she doesn't see equity as a problem in her workplace; in fact, she sees many women climbing the corporate ladder.

Is the workplace more equitable or has workplace inequity just become more subtle in the 21st century? As one boomer put it, “The reason women today don't see equity as an issue is because gender discrimination is more hidden than it was in the past ... Inequality still exists in understated forms, such as withholding knowledge and access to information ... and skill-training from women.”

Women have come a long way since 1881—we are earning college degrees at record rates, we are beginning to lead big companies, and the opportunities for girls and young women today seem almost limitless. But while the equity gaps are closing, for minority women and girls and less affluent women and girls, these gaps still persist. Race, class, and culture are still hurdles that need to be tackled. Only 28 percent of adults over the age of 25 have a college degree, which means 72 percent of the adult population have just a high school diploma or less.

Success for women and girls does not compromise the success of men and boys. Society needs to recognize that girls' success in the classroom does not mean that boys have suffered.

The journey for women and girls is far from over because equity is still an issue. **□**

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## because equity is still an issue

- ▶ School districts will have unprecedented freedom to open up all-girls' or all-boys' schools and classes under new regulations announced by the U.S. Department of Education. Schools will be allowed to separate students by gender and won't have to provide an equivalent class for the other sex. They'd simply have to offer a “substantially equal” coed class in the same subject. (*USA Today*, 10/25/06)
- ▶ At nine Wall Street investment banks, women represent, on average, 33 percent of the top banks' analyst class, 25 percent of incoming full-time associates, and 14 percent of managing directors. (*New York Times*, 8/6/06)
- ▶ Fewer women will make up the class of 2007 than 2003 at the top business schools. For example at Columbia Business School, in '03, women represented 36 percent of the class; in '07, the number dropped to 34 percent. (*New York Times*, 8/6/06)
- ▶ According to *Women's Empowerment: Measuring the Global Gender Gap*, the United States ranks 17th out of 58 countries. The nation lagged behind because of its failure to have paid childbirth leave, wage inequalities in the private sector, and a lack of child care. (*Newsday*, 8/24/06)
- ▶ Women earn one-third of the doctorates from the top 50 chemistry departments; account for 27 percent of math and statistic doctorates; earn one-fourth of the doctorates in chemical engineering and 15 percent in engineering at the top 50 engineering departments, yet four times more men than women hold full-time faculty positions. (*Miami Herald*, 9/25/06)
- ▶ Because women earn less at work than men, their Social Security checks are smaller when they retire. Today, newly retired men receive checks that are 47 percent larger than those for women. (*Dayton Daily News*)
- ▶ In the last three years, the average growth of corporate officer positions held by women at *Fortune* 500 companies has fallen 0.23 percentage points per year. (Catalyst report, 7/06)