

## *Managing Gender Inequity in Academia: A Guide for Faculty and Administrators in Public Affairs Programs*

By Gina Scutelnicu Todoran  
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Reviewed by Michaela E. Abbott

Gender inequity in academia remains a persistent and structurally embedded challenge, shaping not only individual career trajectories but also the performance and inclusiveness of public institutions (McCandless et al. 2022; Scutelnicu Todoran 2023). Within public affairs programs in particular, these inequities carry added weight, as they influence the development of future public servants and the extent to which values such as representative bureaucracy and pluralism are realized in practice (Scutelnicu Todoran 2024). *Managing Gender Inequity in Academia: A Guide for Faculty and Administrators in Public Affairs Programs*, authored by Gina Scutelnicu Todoran (2024), intervenes directly in this space, offering both a diagnostic assessment and a practical guide for addressing gender disparities within academic workplaces.

At its core, the book examines two central questions: the current state of diversity among faculty in public affairs programs and the ways in which academic and leadership career trajectories differ across gender, race, ethnicity, and their intersections. To answer these questions, the author employs a robust mixed-methods design, triangulating evidence from a comprehensive website review of 319 NASPAA-member institutions, original survey data collected in 2017 and 2021, and semi-structured interviews with 42 faculty members. This methodological breadth allows the book to capture both structural patterns and lived experiences, offering a nuanced account of gender inequity across career stages, institutional types, and professional roles.

The findings point to a set of persistent and interconnected barriers, including exclusionary organizational cultures, gendered expectations embedded in academic norms, hierarchical and male-dominated leadership structures, and inconsistent or inadequate work-family policies. The book situates these challenges within broader patterns of what it describes as “masculine organizational structures,” prompting important questions about whether these structures are merely descriptive of existing norms or reflect deeper theoretical assumptions about leadership, authority, and institutional design (2). In doing so, the book not only documents inequities but also encourages readers to interrogate the underlying systems that sustain them.

One of the book’s strengths lies in its ability to balance empirical rigor with accessibility and relevance. The data and methodology leave little to critique, offering a robust foundation for the book’s claims while also making the findings approachable for a wide audience. The text speaks to multiple constituencies—faculty, administrators, and scholars—while maintaining a personal and human tone that allows readers to see themselves reflected in the experiences described. This dual emphasis on evidence and lived experience enhances the book’s utility, making it not only informative but also resonant. The book functions as both a “reality check” and a roadmap, illuminating what faculty—particularly women—may encounter in academic environments while also pointing toward possible responses and strategies.

Readers are likely to see aspects of their own professional journeys reflected in these accounts, regardless of where they are in their careers. While the book centers on women's experiences, its implications extend well beyond a single group; it makes a clear case that advancing gender equity is not only a normative goal but also a practical one, that is seeking to contribute to more effective, productive, and inclusive academic departments and institutions. In this sense, the book bridges the research–practice divide emphasized by JSEPA (Guy and Williams 2023; Knepper and Evans 2025), translating empirical insights into actionable considerations for faculty members, administrators, and institutional leaders.

Substantively, the book identifies several persistent barriers that shape gender inequity in academia, including exclusionary organizational cultures, adverse workplace climates that enable harassment, hierarchical and male-dominated power structures, and inconsistent or inadequate work–family policies. These dynamics are situated within broader institutional norms that may be described as “masculine” organizational structures, raising important questions about whether such terminology reflects descriptive realities of power and hierarchy or draws from broader theoretical traditions in gender and organizational studies. By linking leadership pathways to workforce experiences, the book highlights how inequities are reproduced across institutional levels, reinforcing disparities in both opportunity and influence. At the same time, the text underscores that addressing gender inequity is not only a matter of fairness, but also of organizational performance, suggesting that more equitable institutions are ultimately more effective and productive.

Content is organized around key stages and pathways within academic careers, allowing for a longitudinal view of how gender inequities accumulate and manifest over time. Rather than treating inequity as a single moment or barrier, the authors trace patterns across career entry, tenure and promotion, mid-career advancement, and transitions into administrative leadership. Chapters on tenure-track progression and promotion to full professor (chapters 3 and 4) highlight how formal evaluation processes, often perceived as neutral, can produce uneven outcomes when filtered through gendered expectations and institutional norms. The inclusion of nontenure-track

faculty (chapters 5 and 6) further broadens the analysis, recognizing a segment of the academic workforce that is frequently overlooked despite its growing prevalence and distinct vulnerabilities.

Additionally, the attention to career trajectories is complemented by a focus on leadership and administrative roles (chapters 2 and 5), where disparities become particularly visible. By examining pathways into these positions, the authors connect individual career advancement to broader institutional power structures, reinforcing how leadership remains shaped by hierarchical and often male-dominated systems. The chapter addressing the COVID-19 pandemic (chapter 7) adds an important temporal dimension, illustrating how crises can exacerbate existing inequities rather than disrupt them. Across these chapters, the author consistently demonstrates that gender inequity is not confined to isolated experiences but is embedded within the structure and culture of academic institutions. This longitudinal and multi-level approach is a notable strength, as it allows readers to see both the continuity and evolution of inequities across contexts.

The book's empirical findings offer a detailed and often sobering account of how gender inequities are reproduced across academic career stages. Particularly compelling is the documentation of how seemingly neutral expectations—such as the distribution of teaching, research, and service—are in fact gendered in both perception and evaluation. Teaching and service are frequently treated as “feminine” domains requiring high levels of emotional labor, while research and administration are associated with “masculine” technical and cognitive contributions, shaping both workload allocation and reward structures (Newman, Guy, and Mastracci 2009). The book further demonstrates how these dynamics translate into concrete disparities: women are held to higher and often “invisible” standards across teaching, advising, and service, while also facing heightened expectations in research productivity despite structural barriers to publication and citation. These patterns are compounded by work-life balance challenges, particularly for academic mothers, and are reinforced through leadership pathways marked by glass ceilings, glass walls, and glass cliffs (Kulkarni 2022).

At the same time, several areas emerge that war-

rant future consideration. While the book engages intersectionality through gender, race, and ethnicity, the analysis appears more limited with respect to other dimensions of identity, such as gender identity, sexual orientation, nationality, and first-generation status, suggesting an opportunity for a more expansive intersectional framework in future research. Similarly, although the focus on public affairs programs is a strength in terms of specificity, it may also limit the generalizability of findings to other academic disciplines; the extent to which these dynamics translate across institutional and disciplinary contexts is not fully clear based on the available evidence. Finally, while the book offers a range of recommendations, the feasibility and institutional uptake of these strategies remain somewhat underdeveloped in the available discussion, making it difficult to fully assess how readily they can be implemented across diverse academic settings. These limitations do not detract from the overall contribution, but they do point to areas where further elaboration or future research would strengthen the work.

The book makes a meaningful contribution to both social equity scholarship and public administration practice by bridging empirical analysis with applied insight. For scholars, it provides one of the more comprehensive examinations of gender inequity within public affairs programs, offering systematically collected data that documents disparities across rank, career progression, and leadership pathways. In doing so, it extends ongoing conversations about representation and equity by situating gender inequity within the broader framework of academic labor, organizational culture, and institutional power. For practitioners, particularly those in higher education leadership and administration, the book translates these findings into actionable areas of concern, including tenure and promotion clarity, mentorship structures, and work-life balance policies. Importantly, it frames gender equity not only as a normative goal aligned with social justice, but also as an institutional imperative tied to organizational performance and effectiveness. In this way, the book reinforces and advances the connection between representative bureaucracy, pluralism, and the internal functioning of the very institutions responsible for educating future public servants.

It is well-suited for a wide but clearly identifiable audience within public administration and higher education. Junior and mid-career faculty—particularly women and those from underrepresented backgrounds—will find value in the book's candid portrayal of career pathways, expectations, and barriers, as well as its guidance on navigating key transitions such as tenure, promotion, and administrative appointments. Academic administrators, including department chairs, program directors, and deans, are likely to benefit from the book's insights into structural inequities and its recommendations for institutional change, particularly in areas such as mentoring, evaluation standards, and workplace policies. The book also has clear pedagogical applications, especially in graduate public affairs programs, where it could be used to introduce discussions of equity within academic institutions themselves, complementing coursework on representative bureaucracy, organizational behavior, and public sector leadership. While its primary focus is on public affairs programs, readers in adjacent disciplines may also find the themes broadly relevant, though the extent of applicability beyond this context is not fully established in the available discussion.

Overall, *Managing Gender Inequity in Academia* offers a timely and empirically grounded contribution to understanding how gender inequities persist within academic institutions, particularly in public affairs programs. Its strength lies in its ability to document these patterns across career stages while also centering the lived experiences that give rise to them, making the analysis both rigorous and accessible. At the same time, future editions of the book would benefit from a more expansive intersectional lens and a clearer articulation of how its recommendations can be implemented across varying institutional contexts. Despite these limitations, the book succeeds in advancing critical conversations about equity within academia and provides a valuable resource for both scholars and practitioners seeking to better understand and address these challenges. As higher education continues to grapple with questions of equity, representation, and institutional effectiveness—particularly in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic—this book lays an important foundation for future research and action aimed at creating more inclusive and equitable academic environments.

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