

Disparity of women in society and in the workplace

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According to the articles, videos, readings, and other research and reading I did on my own there is still great disparity when it comes to women in society and in the workplace. The information presents a version of male dominance and control, especially in work areas. Some of this has been reinforced through the supremacy of masculinity in militarization. The military is primarily patriarchal and clearly separates the roles and activities of women from those of men. Soldiers are stereotyped to be strong, brave and aggressive. Women, on the other hand are stereotyped to be weak, passive and in need of protection. Even though many women have broken through these stereotypes in our own military, with women successfully training and passing the elite Army Rangers training, they are still not allowed to fight in the front line. Although war and the military are considered to be “men’s work”, this militarist ideology and stereotype leeches and affects women all over the world.

Woman and children are mostly the primary victims of the political struggles and war. The feminist movement has worked aggressively to avoid war and has encouraged demilitarization, with little success. The reading refers to women being associated with peace and men being associated with war. This itself is somewhat stereotypical because historically, there have been many strong women who were revolutionaries. In fact, some of my own research shows that historically, queens were more likely to wage war than kings. New York University scholars Oeindrila Dube and S. P. Harish, analyzed 28 European queenly reigns from 1480 to 1913 and found a 27 percent increase in wars when a queen was in power, as compared to the

reign of a king. “ People have this preconceived idea that states that are led by women engage in less conflict.”

Women’s ability and role in fostering peace has often been very much overlooked historically and they have also been influential. When women participate in civil politics and there tends to be more democracy and responsiveness to citizens. According to the Inclusive Security, October 2015 Report, which quoted Valerie Hudson, “ There is overwhelming quantitative evidence that women’s empowerment and gender equality are associated with peace and stability in society”. “ The empirical evidence is overwhelming: where women’s inclusion is prioritized, peace is more likely—particularly when women are in a position to influence decision making”. Because of these research findings, women need to be at the peace table more often and need to be involved in the decision-making and in peace-keeping strategies. This is necessary because women are usually at the forefront of victimization during war and even in times of peace, and they are the direct beneficiaries or victims of these decisions.

One major benefit of more women in peacekeeping is that they bring attention to the protection needed for vulnerable groups such as women and children. For instance, from my own research, according to a participant from an all-female unit deployed to Haiti in 2010, ‘ For women it is easier to speak to a woman. Women, especially women in mission areas, are victimized for sex or gender based crimes so if women work for the UN as peacekeepers, civilian women can tell us everything that they can’t tell men.

We can go much closer and are softer with the vulnerable groups, especially women and children.”

Women can make enormous contributions to economies, and are involved in all industries such as businesses, farming and agriculture, as employees, or by doing unpaid care work at home. The articles also mention issues with entrepreneurship and the difficulties for women internationally to become business owners and entrepreneurs. There are many more constraints faced by women in developing countries compared to the United States. Many of these stem from gender discrimination and stereotype, work-family conflict, religious conflict, bias, inability to raise capital, and lack of training and education. Lack of training and education is a big factor which limits women’s ability to become entrepreneurs and get ahead in the business world. According to the Peace Corp “ Approximately one quarter of girls in the developing world do not attend school. Typically, families with limited means who cannot afford costs such as school fees, uniforms, and supplies for all of their children will prioritize education for their sons. Families may also rely on girls’ labor for household chores, carrying water, and childcare, leaving limited time for schooling. But prioritizing girls’ education provides perhaps the single highest return on investment in the developing world.” Additional research found that “ around the world nearly 98 million girls are not in school and 1 in 7 girls is married before her 15th birthday, with some child brides as young as 8 or 9.”

Public policies to promote female entrepreneurship should include fostering a gender neutral framework and opportunities for business development

including reducing administrative burdens, religious, cultural, social and regulatory restrictions, reducing stigma and bias, and ensuring equal access to financing for women. This of course requires educational opportunities for women specific to financial literacy, training, mentoring, and coaching.

There are some advances being made to educate women to fill these gaps. My research found that the United Nations has several programs in place to help this pervasive problem. According to the United Nations, “ Many international commitments support women’s economic empowerment, including the Beijing Platform for Action, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and a series of International Labor Organization conventions on gender equality.” UN Women supports women’s economic empowerment because there is a growing body of evidence that shows that “ gender equality significantly contributes to advancing economies and sustainable development of developing countries”. Achieving change requires political, policy, and program interventions that will improve women’s access to education, economic resources, alleviate forced responsibilities with regard to childcare and housework, remove legal and religious restrictions.

The articles read also refer to access of information being a benefit to women. Specifically, the internet can provide women information and access. Based on my own research, the Carter Center indicates that “ in more than ninety countries in the world, one-half of the population is limited in their full access of the right to information and the many benefits that it may provide. It is common that the most vulnerable and marginalized

populations suffer the greatest particularly due to limited access to information, and this is especially true for women in many countries where access to information is forbidden." There are many obstacles for women accessing information such as illiteracy, required household responsibilities, mobility limitations, geographic isolation, role identity, and religious and politics restrictions. Stereotypes may be also playing a role in the information divide and access to information. According to some additional research I found, in India, " around 12% of women would not use the Internet because of negative social perceptions, and 8% of women don't use it due to the lack of acceptance by family members" (Intel and Dalberg, 2012).

When analyzing my interviewees' work related testimony in relation to the videos and readings, I will analyze each of the issues separately. The first has to do with militarization and women and their representation in this field and their ability to contribute to peace. Interestingly, my interviewee was in the military for 4 years but did not serve during a period of war. She stated that there was stereotyping in the military and that in her branch, women are not allowed to serve in battle, at the front line. She states she really did not understand why that was the policy but you " take orders". She had no particular experience with top ranking military people but she was aware that the majority of these were men. There were few women in top leadership positions. She felt that this " male" culture might play a role in peace keeping and the ability to see things through a different lens and perspective. She thought we would be better off if one of those very high military positions were held by women.

The issue of women's entrepreneurship has been felt by my interviewee. Although she has not experienced it in developing countries, she has experienced it in different ways. She stated she had a friend that was trying to open a business and she had difficulty getting a loan and breaking through a glass "market wall" as she called it. She says it was a male dominated field and basically they "circled the wagons" to try to keep her out. She also had greater work-family conflicts than other colleagues in the same field because she was a single mom. All household and childcare was her responsibility which was a greater burden to her than to the male counterparts making it more difficult for her to be successful. She said her friend was diligent and used the equitable access to information we have in this country to be able to compete. She says she eventually gained respect in the industry and was seen as an equal but it took several years of her proving herself.

Review of the articles, videos, and interviews highlights the problems that women still have today in the United States and how they are similar internationally but to a lesser degree. Women in this country have a greater capacity for progress because of the socio-cultural advantages we have with less discrimination, bias, and control over women as well as the access to information. Much international progress needs to be made to bring women even close to the status in the United States.