

## **Justice Perceptions in the Workplace: Gender Differences in Kenya**

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### **Introduction**

Gender inequality is a global concern (Bradshaw and Wallace 1996), and as indicated by the United Nations Decade (1975-1985) and the 1995 Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing, gender inequality in developing nations is receiving much of the attention (Kibwana 1995). At the heart of the gender equality issue is the concern with justice. The argument is that, on average, women and men have similar abilities and talents, and therefore should be treated and rewarded equally. When they are not, injustice exists. This ‘battle’ has not yet been won in modernized societies but there do exist policies and laws in most of these societies that support, in varying degrees, the equal treatment of women and men. Developing nations, like Kenya, are just as enmeshed in this struggle over gender equality, but in most instances the degree of inequality is greater and there are fewer legal structures that support equality (Hughes and Mwiria 1989; Miller and Yeager 1994; Kibwana 1995). Another major difference between developed and developing nations is the availability of data on gender inequality. Developed nations have the capacity (via government and scientific institutions) to collect, analyze and disseminate huge amounts of data that can be used to document gender inequalities. Developing countries lack these capabilities (and data) and as a consequence we hear pleas for ‘...valid, reliable, timely, culturally relevant and internationally comparable data’ on gender inequalities (Adhiambo-Odual 1995 : ix; Nzomo 1995 : 65).

Our purpose in this paper is to provide such data and help fill this gap. The data we report are quite specific, however, and are not intended to document all forms of gender inequality. They are descriptive data on the perceptions women and men in the modern Kenyan workforce have about how just (fair) their workplace treatment has been. There, of course, are many gender differences that have justice implications. These include the distribution of household duties, access to education, labor force participation, pay, political involvement and access to positions of authority. In all of these areas Kenyan women are disadvantaged (House-Midamba 1990; Kibwana 1995; Shaw 1995). We limit our study to gender differences in the modern (formal) sector workplace because it is the modern sector that will continue to grow and gain in importance, and it is the workplace in this sector

where female inroads are critical if gender economic equality is to be realized. The women pushing for change in Kenya are likely to be the more highly educated (House-Midamba 1990), so it is important to document the degree to which such highly educated women perceive injustices in the workplace. As we will argue when justice theory is presented, if these more 'elite' women do not perceive injustices, then it is unlikely that they will be initiators of attempts to reduce gender inequalities.

Justice in the legal sense refers to women and men objectively receiving what the law designates they should receive. Justice studied from a social science perspective refers to an individual's *subjective perceptions* of whether s/he is treated fairly or not (Mowday 1982; Markovsky 1985; Hegtvedt 1994). Examining these justice/injustice perceptions is important because an individual's attitudes (e.g., job satisfaction and political views) and behaviors (job quitting, union involvement and political activism) are affected more by their subjective perceptions of the fairness of differences than by the so-called 'objective' differences that an observer might identify (Sheppard, Lewicki and Minton 1992). Documenting whether women and men perceive similar levels of justice in the workplace is, therefore, an important first step in understanding and addressing gender equality/equity issues in Kenya. Data from a national sample of female and male agricultural technicians in Kenya allow for doing this.

After reviewing the justice arguments and describing gender inequality in Kenya, we will show that educated women in the modern sector perceive greater injustice in the workplace than their male counterparts. We will then suggest that this perception of injustice is one of the ingredients necessary for the kind of female-initiated action and change argued for by most of those studying gender inequality in Kenya.

## **Basic Justice Arguments**

The literature on justice has focused primarily on distributive and procedural justice. Both are important dimensions of justice, and both must be studied to obtain a complete picture of gender differences in perceptions of justice. Below we define each and indicate implications for our study of gender inequality.

### ***Distributive Justice***

Cohen and Greenberg define distributive justice as the person's 'application of a normative rule to the allocation of resources to recipients' (1982 : 1). 'Justice exists when there is congruence between expectations for outcomes based on the normative rule and actual outcomes (Hegtvedt and Markovsky 1995 : 259)'. *Injustice*, then, is perceived when there is an incongruence between the expectations and outcomes. Distributive justice theories are concerned primarily with how individuals evaluate and react to reward *distributions* that they perceive as just or unjust. Specifically, the theories delineate a process whereby perceptions of injustice in the distribution of rewards produce emotional distress for a person that then often leads to attempts to restore justice (Adams 1965; Hegtvedt 1994; Homans 1961; James 1993; Jasso 1980; Mowday 1982). This basic 'justice restoring' argument has been supported by empirical research in both laboratory and field settings (Hegtvedt 1994; James 1993; Sheppard, Lewicki and Minton 1992). Restoring justice from the perspective of the 'injured' party may involve affective, cognitive and/or overt responses on the part of that individual (Adams 1965; Markovsky 1988). Affective reactions are usually argued to occur prior to

the cognitive and behavioral reactions (Markovsky 1988). For example, an 'affective' justice restoring response to what is perceived as an unfair performance rating could involve becoming dissatisfied with one's superior and concluding s/he is inept. This dissatisfaction could lead to calculatively (cognitively) considering to search for another job, while actually quitting would be an example of an overt response. This series of responses, together, has restored justice in the mind of the individual because the individual has left a work environment where his/her skills were not properly judged. Although most of the justice research is based on Western data, there is considerable interest in cultural differences (James 1993). This comparative research, however, is mainly about Western and Asian differences and we know of no sustained programs of research on justice in African nations. A primary interest in these studies has been with what are called justice allocation principles. Three of the justice allocation principles given the most attention are: equity, need or equality. These are three answers to the question 'what is fair?'

Fairness according to the *equity principle* exists when there is an equivalence of the person's outcome to input ratio relative to the same outcome-input ratio for some comparison other. If the comparison other is another person, then one's outcome-to-input ratio is compared with the outcome-to-input ratio of that other person. If the comparison is intra-individual, then the person compares his/her current outcome-to-input ratio with the same ratio at an earlier point in time or when he person was with another employer. The equity principle has been found to be relied on more in judging fairness when individual performance (as compared with group performance) is given priority (Hegtvedt 1994) and in societies with individualistic (instead of collectivistic) values (James 1993). An example is when employee pay is based on the person's productivity. There would be pay differences across employees because of productivity differences, but these pay (outcome) differences would be considered fair based on the equity logic.

The *need principle* refers to allocating rewards to those who do not have the inputs that are normally considered as deserving of the rewards. This principle is invoked more often when the allocation system is designed to be humane based on a sense of good and morality (Hegtvedt 1994). An example would be a welfare based distribution where employees who have to support a larger family are paid more.

The *equality principle* (equal distribution regardless of inputs or needs) is more often the standard when individual differences are not considered as critical (or are to be avoided) (Sheppard, Lewicki and Minton 1992), or when a goal is to reduce conflict that might emerge in a competitive environment. For example, this justice principle is preferred more in Far East Asian societies (e.g., South Korea) where the collectivity is considered more important than the individual.

In Western societies both equality and equity norms are valued, but in a particular configuration (Hegtvedt and Markovsky 1995). The equality norm is applied to the *opportunities* to achieve outcomes, whereas the equity norm is applied to the *distribution* of outcomes. Thus, economic *inequality* (the distribution of outcomes) in Western nations is considered fair by its citizens. If equality of opportunity exists, then one must accept personal responsibility for his/her outcomes. These outcomes will be different because individuals will either differ in their inputs or will differentially take advantage of the same opportunities to utilize their skills and talents. Because of this equity based relationship between inputs and outcomes, the outcome distribution is considered fair (unequal but equitable).

These basic justice arguments are posited by theorists to apply universally, that is, the claim that injustice leads to emotional distress which, in turn, leads to justice restoring attempts is believed to hold universally. What is situation- and cultural-specific is the allocation rule (equity, equality or

need) that is used by the person in evaluating what is just. As will be shown, our measures of distributive justice capture an equity-based form and a form of justice that is not dependent on any particular allocation rule.

### ***Procedural Justice***

Whereas distributive justice refers to the fairness of the distribution of rewards or outcomes, procedural justice refers to the *fairness of procedures* used in deciding on the outcome distribution (Folger 1987; Lind and Tyler 1988; Thibaut and Walker 1975). Thus, it refers to the process whereby the distribution of rewards was created. Research has shown that procedural justice is at least as important to an employee as distributive justice (Sheppard, Lewicki and Minton 1992). Also, it is often claimed that perceptions of procedural justice have a positive causal impact on perceptions of distributive justice (Randall and Mueller 1995). That is, if one believes that the decision making process is fair, then the distribution of rewards is more likely to be perceived as fair. If workplace procedures (like how salaries and promotions are determined) in Kenya favor men, then women should perceive greater procedural injustice. The examination of procedural justice allows us to capture more the equality of opportunity component that characterizes Western perceptions of justice.

Because the Western employment relationship and the value of individualism has been largely instilled (forced?) in the modern sector of Kenyan society as a consequence of British colonization, other Western influences, and Structural Adjustment Programs (SAPs) (Miller and Yeager 1994), we expect both distributive and procedural justice in the workplace to be salient concerns for both working women and men. Because they are salient concerns, determining gender differences in perceptions of both dimensions of justice should help us document the potential for reactions to gender inequalities in Kenya.

### **Gender Inequality in Kenya**

Throughout the colonial period, women in Kenya experienced considerable social, economic, and political inequalities relative to men (Hughes and Mwiria 1989; Miller and Yeager 1994; Stichter 1977). The colonial state, for example, neglected women's education and training. In addition, the state favored males in the provision of paid labor needed by settler economies thus resulting in women being grossly underrepresented in paid labor. Most female employees served as unskilled labor in agriculture (Stichter 1977). As found in most developing nations (Boserup 1970), those who joined the nonagricultural sector (e.g., manufacturing) tended to concentrate in low paying jobs. For pay, existing evidence reveals that early female entrants into formal employment earned considerably less than male employees (see e.g., Kenya Colony and Protectorate 1955; Stichter 1977). During 1925, for example, women earned 10-12 shillings per month for unskilled labor in agriculture while men earned between 12-14 shillings (Stichter 1977). During the 1950s women's earnings in Kenya were uniformly less than those of men in all branches of industry and in domestic services; in agriculture they earned about half of what men earned (Kenya Colony and Protectorate 1955).

It was in light of the above inequalities that the Kenyan government, soon after independence (1963), adopted an ideology of African Socialism that was committed to bringing about equality among men and women in terms of equal participation in development and an equal share of its rewards and opportunities (Miller and Yeager 1994; Republic of Kenya 1965; Stichter 1977). The new ideology,

it could be argued, symbolized a desire by the government to promote equal representation and treatment for the sexes within the various institutions in the country, thereby conferring to Kenyan women both an equal role in development and an equal share of its rewards and opportunities. This equality has not been reached, however, and in fact, there has been very little progress, with even some reversals (Francis 1995; House-Midamba 1990, 1996; Kameri-Mbote and Kiai 1993; Kibwana 1995; Kobia 1993; Landau 1995; Miller and Yeager 1994; Sørensen 1992; von Bülow 1991, 1992). Although current gender inequality in Kenya is the consequence of a number of factors including cultural traditions and norms, religion, patriarchy, and government policy, there are two factors that stand out in understanding present-day inequalities. The first is the unanticipated consequences of the Structural Adjustment Programs (SAPs) imposed in the early 1980s by the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund. The programs were primarily macroeconomic strategies emphasizing economic liberalism, deregulation of prices, privatization of public enterprises and cutbacks in social services and employment. They were designed to aid the fragile and unstable governments and economic and social institutions of the post-colonial African nations. These programs are viewed as unsuccessful by many, however.

SAPs have failed to correct the deepening social, economic and political crises. If anything, adjustment measures have contributed to economic deterioration and generated political and social crises in Kenya (Nzomo 1995 : 48). SAPs are accused of neglecting entirely human and social adjustment problems, and ‘...the social costs have weighed most heavily on the low-income population, the vast majority of whom are women’ (Nzomo 1995 : 43).

The second critical factor perpetuating gender inequalities is the Kenya Constitution. Discrimination on the basis of race, place of origin, political opinions, or color or creed is not allowed, but ‘discrimination on the basis of sex is not expressly outlawed by the Constitution of Kenya or any labour relations law’ (Kibwana 1995 : 14).

Although gender based inequalities in Kenya predate independence, it was not until the mid 1980s that Kenyan women began to openly voice their concerns about their disadvantaged position. Specifically, the United Nations Decade for Women Conference that was held in Nairobi in 1985 seems to have ignited a desire among Kenyan women to evaluate their position in society and assert themselves in the struggle for equality with men. Soon after the conference, the subject of the unfair economic and social role of women in development in Kenya assumed a prominent position. In the debate that has ensued, Kenyan women have been concerned with equality of opportunity in education, the labor market, government (political) appointments, and political representation (Hughes and Mwiria 1989).

The prospects for reducing gender inequalities depend on altering culturally embedded attitudes about sex roles; changing laws about sex discrimination; government and nongovernment organizations being more affirmative about the employment and treatment of women; the active involvement of traditionally important women’s organizations; and the active involvement of women themselves in promoting gender equality (Khasiani 1993; Kinuthia 1993. Nzomo 1993, 1995; Thomas-Slyter and Rocheleau 1995). With the resilience of patriarchy, the absence of women in positions of power, and the lack of legal recourse, the recent literature on gender inequality seems to be pointing to two of these factors: greater active involvement of women and the increased reliance on women’s organizations.

There exists a remarkable tradition of women’s organizations in pre-colonial, colonial and post-colonial Kenya (House-Midamba 1996; Landau 1995; Nzomo 1993; Sørensen 1992; von Bülow 1991, 1992). These authors document the importance of these groups (both formal and informal)

throughout this century in combating patriarchy and economic deprivation. As a recent example, House-Midamba (1996) documents how women's organizations were important in the recent shift from single party to multi-party elections in Kenya.

The direct personal involvement of women is stressed in the section on women and participation in decision making in the 1995 volume on the 'Women and Autonomy' seminar (Nzomo 1995 : 52-53):

Reliance on government action, its benevolence and good faith, may not prove very useful in attaining women's empowerment. Women must therefore first and foremost find autonomous channels of empowering themselves which are independent of government. Kenyan women may for example need to take the initiative in transforming socio-cultural attitudes and values that obstruct their advancement. There is need for women to empower themselves.

In sum, there still exist numerous and extreme forms of gender inequality in Kenya. Although legal and structural changes are needed to reduce this inequality, it is believed that women must personally become involved, individually and through women's organizations, if change is to occur. This involvement requires not only an awareness of the inequality but the perception that it is unjust. As argued above from the perspective of justice theories and research, it is people's perceptions of injustice (rather than any 'objective' inequality or injustice) that affects their attitudes and behaviors. There is little valid and reliable data on the degree to which injustice is perceived by either women or men in Kenya. Our objective is to provide this documentation. Implicit in this documentation is the hypothesis that women will perceive greater injustice than men.

## **Data and Methods**

### *The Sample*

The data were collected in Kenya between November 1991 and July 1992 (Mulinge and Mueller 1998). Surveys (self-administered questionnaires) were administered to a probability sample of 1850 technically trained agricultural workers (individuals who have formal training in agriculture or in an agriculturally related field such as plant breeding, horticulture, agronomy, plant pathology, entomology, and soil conservation) employed in three modern employment sectors as follows: public sector, 1,102 respondents; parastatal (semi-public) sector, 503 respondents; and private sector, 245 respondents. In 1991 the agricultural sector employed 272,000 or 18.9 % of those in the modern (formal) sector labor force in the Kenya.

To obtain a broad sample of agricultural technicians, it was necessary to sample the private, public and parastatal (semi-public) sectors. The private sector includes firms owned and funded by international or local commercial companies and/or groups of investors with the sole goal to generate profits through user charges for goods and/or services. They operate in a competitive market. Five private organizations were selected and contacted. Four agreed to cooperate: BAT Kenya Limited, Brooke Bond Kenya Limited, Kenya Breweries Limited and East African Industries Limited. All agricultural technicians who were not on annual or study leave were given questionnaires.

The public sector refers to the Ministry of Agriculture, the major employer of agricultural graduates trained in the local universities, colleges and institutes.<sup>1</sup> The sample was drawn from the division of Agricultural Education, and specifically, the District Agricultural Extension Services branch of this division. From this division, six administrative districts (Bungoma, Embu, Nairobi, Nyeri and South Nyanza) were randomly selected from the 41 districts in the country. In each sampled district all

agricultural technicians who were not on annual or study leave were given questionnaires.

Organizations in the semi-public (parastatal) sector are semi-autonomous government monopolies established through an act of parliament with the primary purpose of offering government controlled services such as power and lighting, telephone and postal services and research or the development of technical knowledge and innovations to the public. The largest of these, the Kenya Agricultural Research Institute (KARI), was established after the collapse of the East African Community in 1977. In 1979 KARI was established to conduct research in agriculture, as well as in numerous related areas. In the semi-public sector, research centers rather than administrative districts were the sampling units. Eight research centers from the 24 centers engaged in agricultural research were randomly selected. Questionnaires were distributed to all agricultural technicians on duty at the time of the survey.

Because agricultural production is the mainstay of Kenya's economy, these agricultural technicians in these three sectors are critical to the economic well-being of the nation. These technicians are either engaged in educating farmers about better farming techniques, commonly referred to as extension services, (as is the case for those in the public and private sectors) or in agricultural research (as is the case for those in the parastatal sector). Also, although the headquarters for the organizations are mostly in urban centers, the technicians operate out of district towns or rural trading centers.

Structurally, the organizations in these three sectors are not significantly different from each other nor are they unusual relative to organizations in the industrialized nations in the West. Organizations in the three sectors are characterized by hierarchical authority structures. In all three sectors, education level is the primary determinant of the beginning job level. All sectors have internal labor markets (ILMs) with the early promotions in the public and semi-public sectors being based mainly on tenure. Those employed in the private sector usually have 'proved' themselves in the public or semi-public sectors first. Seniority based promotions are somewhat less frequent in the private sector. No striking differences in management styles are found among the Kenyan organizations in the three sectors, nor are they notably different from those found in the West. This is understandable considering that virtually all organizations in Kenya have been established utilizing British and American structural models. Indeed, most of these organizations have at one time or another relied on Western expatriates in fashioning their organizational and management structures. Some, and especially those in the private sector, still have the highest positions in their hierarchies occupied by expatriates.

The overall response rate for the study was 78.22% (1447 cases). The sample size used in the analysis is based on eliminating cases according to a listwise deletion procedure. This resulted in a sample size of 1,367 cases used in the analysis.

### *Measures*

Perceptions of both distributive justice and procedural justice are measured. Distributive justice is captured by an often-used and validated general justice measure (Iverson and Kuruvilla 1995; Price and Mueller 1986; Wallace 1995). Procedural justice is measured by a scale developed for this study. Both measures capture the degree to which the individual perceives that s/he is fairly treated in the workplace.

Four items using Likert scales with five response categories (strongly agree; agree; uncertain; disagree; strongly disagree) are used for the *general distributive justice scale*: (1) I am fairly

rewarded considering the responsibilities that I exercise (money and recognition are examples of rewards); (2) I am not fairly rewarded taking into account the amount of education and training I have (R: reverse coded); (3) I am fairly rewarded for the amount of effort I put forth; (4) I am fairly rewarded in view of the amount of experience that I have. As the content of the items indicates, this scale asks for a justice perception based on taking into account the person's inputs (e.g., education, training, effort and experience) and one's outcomes (rewards). Thus, it measures equity based justice. The range of possible values is 4 to 20 when the items are summed to form the scale. The alpha reliability coefficient is .87.

As described above, procedural justice refers to the fairness of the procedures and methods used to distribute workplace rewards, rather than the fairness of the distribution per se. It is measured by four items (with five Likert response categories) designed for this study that ask about the degree to which promotion procedures are perceived as proper or improper. The four items are: (1) promotions and pay increases in this organization are based primarily on how well you do your work; (2) the decision making processes in my organization are unacceptable to me (R: reverse coded); (3) the criteria used for promotion in this organization are unacceptable to me (R); (4) promotions in this organization are based primarily on 'pull' and 'politics'(R). When the items are summed, the range is 4 to 20 and the reliability alpha is .85. Procedural justice is correlated at .27 with distributive justice for women. The correlation is .36 for men.

### *Analysis*

Analysis of variance is used to compare perception differences across the three sectors and t-tests are used to determine if women and men differ in their perceptions of these two types of justice. The t-tests are conducted for the total sample and separately for the public, parastatal and private sectors. The small number of females in the private sector (N= 5) makes gender comparisons and t-tests for this sector essentially meaningless. Nevertheless, we present these data to provide as complete a picture as possible. The fact that so few women are employed in the private sector speaks for itself.

### **Results**

Table 1 compares male and female perceptions of justice for the total sample. The 'Total' column gives us some idea of the degree to which these respondents perceived justice or injustice. For the distributive justice scale, where the possible range is 0-20, with a high score indicating high perceived justice, the mean is 10.9, indicating neither high nor low perceived justice.<sup>4</sup> For procedural justice, where the range also is 0 to 20, the mean of 9.6 also indicates no extreme feelings about justice/injustice. Our primary concern is with gender differences. For the total sample (see Table 1) females perceive less distributive and less procedural justice.



**Table 1. Mean Gender Differences in Justice Perceptions for the Total Sample**

Justice Perception	Total	Male	Female
Distributive Justice	10.91 (4.04)	11.24* (4.09)	10.09 (3.79)
Procedural Justice	9.61 (4.02)	9.98* (4.12)	8.70 (3.64)
N	1367	975	392

<sup>a</sup> Values in parentheses are standard deviations.

The possible range for distributive justice and procedural justice is 0-20.

\* $p < .05$ ; All are 1-tailed t-tests for the gender mean differences.

Table 2 compares male and female perceptions of justice across the three sectors, and within each sector. Before examining gender differences it is meaningful to look at sector differences (see the 'Total' columns under the public, parastatal and private headings). Analysis of variance, with post hoc Scheffé tests (see table note b), shows greater perceived justice for both justice variables for private sector employees compared with public and parastatal employees. Also, public employees (9.38) perceive greater procedural justice than parastatal employees (8.58). In general, the greater the role of the private sector in the workplace, the greater the perceptions of justice. Put the other way, any involvement of the government (public and parastatal sectors) seems to instill a greater perception of *injustice* on the part of those employed in those sectors; the private sector clearly instills perceptions of justice.

**Table 2. Mean Gender Differences in Justice Perceptions by Economic Sector<sup>a</sup>**

Justice Perception	Public			Parastatal			Private		
	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female
Distributive Justice <sup>b</sup>	10.43 (4.09)	10.56 (4.19)	10.22 (3.92)	10.45 (3.45)	10.66* (3.48)	9.76 (3.30)	13.62 (3.82)	13.74* (3.73)	8.80 (4.55)

Procedural Justice <sup>b</sup>	9.38 (3.72)	9.66* (3.76)	8.92 (3.60)	8.58 (3.90)	8.77* (3.94)	7.97 (3.71)	12.44 (4.10)	12.50 (4.10)	10.00 (3.39)
N	775	481	294	387	294	93	205	200	5

<sup>a</sup> Values in parentheses are standard deviations. The possible range for distributive justice and procedural justice is 0-20. <sup>b</sup> ANOVA with post hoc Scheffé tests for sector differences showed greater perceived distributive and procedural justice for all private sector employees compared with public and parastatal employees. Public employees perceive greater procedural justice than parastatal employees. \* $p < .05$ ; All are 1-tailed t-tests for the gender mean differences for the particular sector.

Comparing men and women within each of the three economic sectors reveals some sector differences (see Table 2), but does not alter our finding that women consistently perceive less justice. In the public sector, where the government ostensibly has taken steps to increase gender equality, women still perceive less justice, but only for procedural justice. In the parastatal sector, distributive justice and procedural justice are perceived less by women. Finally, the data for the private sector show that females perceive less distributive justice than males.

In sum, in no gender comparisons do men perceive less justice than their female counterparts, and there are six (of a possible eight) comparisons in which women perceive significantly less justice than men.

## Discussion and Conclusions

Gender inequality is a global issue that developing nations like Kenya are attempting to confront. From a justice perspective, confronting inequality involves making changes in both allocation procedures and the actual distribution of rewards. By most standards, this objective gender justice (equality) has not been attained in either developed or developing nations, but the gender gap remains larger in developing nations. Creating objective justice is only one piece of the puzzle, however. An individual's attitudes and behaviors in reaction to injustice are a function of that person's subjective assessment of what is just. On one hand, if people perceive justice in the workplace, even when there is injustice, then they are going to be satisfied and not proponents of change. On the other hand, perceived injustice can lead to attempts at change even when justice exists by some objective standard. In either situation, it is the person's perception of justice that is the critical factor in whether that person will be active in supporting change. For this reason, our goal in this study has been to provide national data on gender differences in perceptions of justice in the modern workplace in Kenya. Such data are critical in assessing what women and men believe about the fairness of procedures and the distribution of rewards in the modern Kenyan workplace.

Using two measures of perceptions of justice we found considerable evidence that women working as agricultural technicians perceive greater workplace injustice than their male counterparts. Specifically, without regard to employment sector, women perceive greater injustice than men--in a general sense when they are asked about their rewards given their inputs (distributive justice) and with regard to procedures used by the organization in making promotions (procedural justice). When employment sector is considered, it is only in the parastatal sector where women perceive less justice for both types of justice. There are three questions to be considered. First, why do Kenyan women perceive less justice than men? Second, why is it the parastatal sector for which gender differences

exist for both types of justice? Third, what are the implications of these gender differences for changes in gender inequality in Kenya? We address all three questions.

First, why do women perceive less justice? The basic causal argument of the equity version of justice theory is that if women have inputs that are similar to those of men, but their outcomes are lower than men's, they will evaluate the situation as unjust. Additional data from the sample allows us to compare women and men on the inputs of education and work motivation and the outcomes of earnings, benefits and number of past promotions. Women technicians earn 4299 Kenya shillings a month while their male counterparts earn 6677 shillings; women receive fewer benefits than men (5.38 to 5.89); women have been promoted fewer times than the men (.89 to 1.09).<sup>3</sup> These three differences are significant at the .05 probability level. However, there are no significant gender differences for two critical inputs: mean education (13.79 to 13.82) or mean work motivation (12.22 to 12.18).<sup>5</sup> Given these *similar inputs*, but *different outcomes* that favor men, the differences in justice perceptions we have found are consistent with justice hypotheses. If women are comparing their outcome to input ratio to the same ratio of their male counterparts, women should perceive less justice. This is precisely what we found.

Second, why were there gender differences for both types of justice only in the parastatal sector? This was not anticipated or hypothesized on the basis of justice theory, but we can offer a plausible explanation. The agricultural technicians sampled in the public and private sectors were essentially all extension personnel whereas those employed in the parastatal sector worked in agriculture research centers. The extension personnel work independently of each other, whereas the researchers work in groups and must collaborate in solving problems. It is in these collaborative settings (parastatal) where gender differences are more likely to be perceived on a day to day basis and thus be translated into justice perceptions. Certainly justice theorists would argue that the frequency with which injustices are experienced would positively influence the perceptions one has of any injustice that exists, and these group settings in the parastatal sector would produce more frequent experiences of injustice. This causal logic is important because it suggests that women who work side by side with men are those more likely to perceive injustice than those who work more on their own. Modernization will certainly produce more work situations where women and men work together, and it is likely that women and men will be jointly involved in the organizations and associations supportive of change (Thomas-Slayter and Rocheleau 1995 : 17). Our data and arguments from justice theories about women using men as reference points suggest that such situations could be an unexpected source of increased perceived injustice for women.

The third question concerns the implications of our findings for the likelihood of change in Kenya and in developing countries in general. The major issues are what is referred to as the 'paradox of the contented female worker' and whether perceived injustices are translated into action and change. There are both micro- and macro-implications to be considered. The micro-component refers to whether individuals who perceive injustice actually translate this perception into personal dissatisfaction with the source of the injustice, and because of this, act in some way to restore justice. The macro-component refers to how such injustices perceived at the individual level can be translated into change at the societal level. We address the micro-level concern first.

There is now a large body of Western research (Crosby 1982; Hodson 1989; Mueller and Wallace 1996; Phelan 1994;) documenting that women, who by objective standards, are not equitably treated and rewarded in the workplace when compared with men, are *not* less satisfied with their jobs or less committed to their employer. This has been called the 'paradox of the contented female worker'

(Crosby 1982). The inference in these studies is that women do not consider this objective inequity to be unjust and thus they are not less satisfied or less committed than men. Because this paradox is consistently found, considerable effort has been devoted to trying to explain why objective injustice does not lead to dissatisfied female workers.<sup>6</sup>

There appears to be no paradox in Kenya - educated women in the modern sector, who by objective standards are treated unfairly, perceive less justice than men in the same work settings. We believe this is explained by a combination of four factors. First, there actually has been less done objectively in Kenya than in the West that is directed specifically at reducing gender inequities. Although seniority as the basis for pay and promotions is institutionalized (especially in the public sector), there is no Office of Economic Opportunity, no affirmative action policy and no comparable worth programs and most important, no constitutional law against discrimination on the basis of sex. Second, the women's movement is in more of an infant stage in Kenya, as compared with Western nations. It was not until the mid-1980s that concerted efforts were made by women to create a greater awareness of gender injustices. As a consequence, there has not been enough time for a 'mellowing' of views about gender injustices. Third, and related to the previous point, there have been gains by women in access to education, labor force participation and pay over the past couple decades (Hughes and Mwiria 1989), but as reported above, women still lag considerably behind men. Relative deprivation arguments (Davies 1962; 1969) claim that following a period of high expectations and accompanying rewards, discontent will be highest when rewards start to taper off but the expectations still remain high. It is possible that these women, all of whom have been educated for employment in the modern sector, have found that their workplace experiences do not match their lofty expectations, and this has been translated into perceptions of greater injustice. Fourth, our data indirectly suggest that women are using men as their comparison group in assessing whether there is injustice. This is because the men are rewarded better in terms of pay and management positions, and this should lead to perceptions of injustice on the part of the women. If women were comparing themselves with other educated women in the workforce (as is claimed in explaining the paradox found for Western women), then we would expect these women to perceive justice, which, of course, they do not. Also, if Kenyan women were comparing themselves with the conditions of women in the past and the uneducated women in the traditional Kenyan workforce, then they should perceive justice, because their own pay, benefits and promotion opportunities are far superior to those of working women in the past and those not in the modern sector. However, and to reiterate our initial point, if women are comparing themselves with male agricultural technicians in the modern sector, then they would be expected to perceive injustice, as they indeed do. In sum, Kenyan women may have improved their position dramatically relative to women in the past, but they still lag behind their male counterparts. This is salient to them, and they view it as unjust. Put another way, there is no 'false consciousness' on the part of these women.

We now address the likelihood that such awareness of injustice can be translated into societal level change - the macro level concern. At the 'Women and Autonomy in Kenya: Policy and Legal Framework' Seminar (February 17-18, 1995) a number of recommendations were made that were specifically directed at producing greater gender equality. Among the recommendations offered are those summarized by Nzomo (1995 : 52-53): (1) government and nongovernment organizations must actively work at removing negative attitudes and social practices that promote discrimination against women, (2) women's organizations must play a leading role in supporting change, (3) social support systems are needed to aid women in meeting the demands associated with their multiple household

and work roles in Kenyan society, (4) women must find channels independent of the government for empowering themselves, and (5) private and public employers must actively promote fairness in the workplace.

Explicit in these recommendations and in those by many others (e.g., House-Midamba 1996; Landau 1995; von Bülow 1991, 1992; Sørensen 1992; Thomas-Slayter and Rocheleau 1995) is the need for active involvement of women, individually and in organizations, in working toward gender equality. The consensus seems clearly to be that without their active involvement, equality will be slow in coming, if at all. Justice theory and research is clear about what is necessary for individuals to become upset and attempt to alter current conditions - the individuals must perceive injustice associated with the current conditions. Our research has shown that highly educated women in the formal sector do indeed perceive greater injustice in the workplace than do their male counterparts. *The importance of them perceiving injustice and not just inequality is critical.* Inequality, if institutionalized, as is true in Kenya, becomes internalized and accepted from generation to generation through socialization. When the inequality is interpreted in moral (justice) terms, the potential exists for the kinds of involvement of women recommended above. To be stressed, however, is that our data indicate that the potential for this involvement exists; there is no guarantee that the necessary action will be taken. A number of questions are yet to be answered. Are these perceptions of injustice strong enough to lead to active involvement of these women in the kinds of women's organizations so historically important in Kenya and viewed by most as so critical leading to change? Will these educated women identify enough with the uneducated rural women to work for their equality? Do less educated rural women (the majority in Kenya) also perceive injustices, or do they only perceive inequalities that they have learned to accept? Are gender based inequalities outside the workplace (e.g., household, healthcare, politics) also perceived as injustices? Will the strongly encouraged (World Bank 1992) downsizing of the public sector (where at least women and men perceive the same level of distributive justice) and the privatization of the parastatal sector have unexpected consequences for gender inequalities and injustices? If the public sector is reduced in size and privatization expands, will Kenya experience what we found for the private sector—a segment of the modern economy that largely excludes women? Our research has not answered these questions, but perhaps it will spur interest in approaching gender inequalities from the perspective of whether such inequalities are perceived as injustices.

To conclude, we must offer the caveat that our analysis was based on one developing society, only modern sector employees, and a relatively homogeneous segment within that sector. Whether our findings would be replicated in the larger population remains an unanswered question. However, we have used a relatively large national sample and provided data important to documenting perceptions of injustice in Kenya, and we have strongly argued that the perceptions that exist signal the existence of an important ingredient of change. This is far from trivial, because as Hegtvedt and Markovsky remark, the '...issues of justice and injustice are fundamental problems inherent in the maintenance of social order, the existence of inequality, and the fomenting of social change' (1995 : 257).

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## Notes

1. There was a structural reduction policy during this time in Kenya to reduce the size of the public sector, but there were no forced layoffs. Instead, early retirement was encouraged with lump-sum monetary payments. This was referred to as 'the big handshake'.
2. The means for data using a very similar scale are as follows: South Korean teachers (10.7) (Jo 1995); employees in a U.S. Veterans Administration hospital (11.4) (Agho 1993); Canadian lawyers (13.4) (Wallace 1995); U.S. Air Force medical personnel (15.2) (Price and Kim 1993). These comparative data suggest that the Kenyan employees perceive somewhat less justice than has been found with a similar scale in Western studies.
3. Using a list of 18 benefits (e. g., life insurance, paid sick leave, paid vacation, savings plan) employees were asked to mark the benefits they currently receive from their employer. The number marked was recorded for each respondent. The values given represent the means; women averaged 5.38 benefits, while the men average 5.89. Number of times promoted is the number of promotions received since joining the organization.
4. The means for data using a very similar scale are as follows: South Korean teachers (10.7) (Jo 1995); employees in a U.S. Veterans Administration hospital (11.4) (Agho 1993); Canadian lawyers (13.4) (Wallace 1995); U.S. Air Force medical personnel (15.2) (Price and Kim 1993). These comparative data suggest that the Kenyan employees perceive somewhat less justice than has been found with a similar scale in Western studies.
5. Education is years of schooling. Work motivation is a 3-item scale that measures the degree to which the employee feels work is central to one's life. The items are: (1) work is something people should get involved in most of the time; (2) work should only be a small part of one's life (reverse coded); (3) work should be considered central in life. Likert response categories running from strongly agree to strongly disagree were used. The items were summed to obtain the score for each employee. Means by gender are reported. The range of the scale is 1 to 15, with a high score indicating strong work motivation.
6. Some of the arguments have been as follows. (1) Women have different values. They value intrinsic rewards (like friendly workplaces and supportive supervisors) more than extrinsic rewards. As a consequence, the extrinsic reward differences usually found are not important to them and therefore they do not perceive injustices. (2) Women have been socialized (in childhood or in the workplace) to expect less than men. So when their rewards are less, they do not perceive less justice. Phelan (1994) calls this the entitlement explanation. (3) Women compare themselves to other women rather than to other men. Because other women are receiving rewards similar to their own, they do not perceive greater injustices than the men. Although there have been no powerful tests of this third argument, it is the explanation most have relied on to account for the paradox (Hodson 1989; Hegtvedt and Markovsky 1995; Mueller and Wallace 1996).

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