
Women Wage Gap in The Work Place

Making Way For Equal Pay

Women in the United States have endured a variety of hardships as opposed to men. Unlike men, who are born into this society with many innate benefits and privileges, women have to fight for their civil, political and social rights. If women do not speak up and fight for what they deserve, they will face constant discrimination. The type of discrimination can come in all shapes, sizes and forms such as: racial discrimination, social discrimination, occupational discrimination and sexual discrimination. All these discriminations contribute to the everlasting wage gap that has affected women in the work place for the past few decades. In order to combat the gender wage gap, it is crucial for women to understand why the gender wage gap exists and speaking up for the wages they deserve.

The rise of the gender wage gap can be credited to many factors. In "Gender Inequality in Labor Markets: The Role of Motherhood and Segregation," Paula England acknowledges two aspects that have widened the gender wage gap. The first aspect that is mentioned regards the role of motherhood and child-bearing. Many women have less experience and seniority to men because they have a responsibility to take care of their children. The reason women are more likely to take care of the children as opposed to men can be attributed to biological reasons, but also to social norms. It is expected for women to stay home and stay care of their family while the man goes out to work (England 275). It is not uncommon for women to leave their jobs when entering motherhood. While some may take a complete exit from the work force, many pursue a part-time job (England 276). But over the years, there has been a decrease in fertility, which has allowed a women's employment to be more continuous. The second aspect that England addresses is the glass ceiling that women face. The glass ceiling is a term used to describe the invisible barrier that prevents women from obtaining higher positions in their occupations, regardless of their accomplishments or achievements (England 280). In order to combat this issue, the government has passed several legislations such as the Civil Rights Act of 1964 which outlawed sexual discrimination in employment. But even with all these legislations, gender discrimination still occurs in the workplace due to norms created by society (England 272). For example the overseer manager of a construction company may have a strong preference to hire men because they assume that men are more suited for the job as opposed to women. As a result, women are more likely to enter a predominantly female job. On average, occupations that are predominantly male tend to pay more than jobs that are predominantly female because a majority males jobs are involved in authority over co-workers while a majority of female jobs are located in the lower paying industries such as the service-sector. Although the glass ceiling does contribute towards the gender wage gap, it does show that many women have a preference for nonpecuniary rewards as opposed to men who focus on maximizing earnings (England 277). Many women prefer to work in an environment that avoids physical danger; they willing to exchange their earnings for amenities by choosing safer working conditions. But by having this preference, women are digging themselves into a deeper and deeper hole because they are limiting themselves to a smaller job pool which further widens the gender wage gap.

Statistics have shown that for every woman who enters the work force, the smaller and

narrower the wage gap has become (Chichilnisky and Frederickson 298). This was true from the 1960s to the 1980s, but from the 1990s to present day, there seems to be stagnation in the movement towards equal pay. Even though women have been pursuing and obtaining higher degrees of education, the gender gap still exists. The reasons may lie in the amount of work that women do in the household. In "An Equilibrium Analysis of the Gender Wage Gap," Chichilnisky and Frederickson suggest that from an economic stand point, a women's income is heavily influenced by the amount of work placed into housework. On average a women will earn 77 cents for every dollar that a man makes. There is a direct correlation between the amount of time spent in home production and the wage gap because the average woman spends more time in home production as opposed to men, while the average man spends more time in the work place as opposed to women (Chichilnisky and Frederickson 298). Women spend at least two to three times more time on house work than men do, but the amount of time spent on in the work place and in the home are practically the same. On an average day in the United States a woman will spend 8.4 hours at the work place, while a man will spend 9.3 hours. As for housework, a woman will spend 2.5 hours, while a man will spend 1.5 hours. This results in a total of 10.9 hours that a woman spends working on an average day and 10.8 hours that man spends working on an average day. These statistics show that the more time a man spends in home production, the less time a woman has to spend at home, which results in woman spending more time in the work place, which ultimately results in a decrease in the gender wage gap (Chichilnisky and Frederickson 298) .

Although the amount of time spent in household production greatly puts women at a disadvantage when it comes to earning higher wages, discrimination has further exacerbated the gender wage gap. In "The Economic Boom (1991-1997) and Women: Issues of Race, Education and Regionalism," Boushey and Cherry focus on the assessment of women between the ages of 18 to 64 in the workplace and how factors such as political policies, discrimination, location and race affect the gender wage gap (Boushey and Cherry 35). It was feared in the 1990s that African American women were being left behind because a majority were uneducated and thus not given jobs. As a result the average African-American woman was at an even greater disadvantage as opposed to the average white woman because she was not given the opportunity to work. The lack of political support contributed as well, due to the lack of affirmative action. With the reduction of affirmative action, women within a minority group, such as African Americans women, had a harder time securing a job. This was due to discrimination towards their race, education or gender. With the reduction of affirmative action, a woman of a monitory group would have been considered lucky if she was able to maintain a well-paying job. As a result the gender wage gap became even larger than before because during this time the average wage of a white male was increasing.