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Gender Pay Inequality

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Abstract

Equality should be share among individuals in our society. Age, race, ethnicity, sex, or gender should not be a cause for discrimination. The struggle for gender equality has brought many to construct research and movements throughout the world and in history. The question address in this research is why do women get paid less than men. The gender pay gap is a social problem that afflicts women in our society. This research exposes the different factors that contribute to the inequality in pay between men and women, and why it still persist in our society despite the laws and the awareness of social justice among individuals. Different information based on quantitative and qualitative research is presented to examine women's economic attainment in comparison to men's, which clearly shows the difference in pay between men and women.

Gender Pay Inequality

J. Elizabeth Campos

Introduction

Equal pay is a contemporary issue that needs to be addressed, being such a prevalent social problem in today's date, some individuals might know nothing or so little about this issue that could be affecting them. Why women are still struggling to reach equality in the workplace and in particular with equal pay? On my research I present the main causes of income inequality between men and women. I also present solutions to this problem, things that are being done such as laws and regulations to end the gender pay gap or at least bring it to its minimum difference. I am presenting statistical data from the United States Bureau of Labor Statistics, which shows the disparities in income between men and women. I will be using feminist social theory to analyze this problem. No one can better understand and explain the reasons and causes of women's afflictions in society but women themselves.

There are many factors that contribute to the gender pay gap and it varies in different cultures and in different market economies. It has been also stated that wage inequalities result from differences in men and women's human capital (Auster, 1989). Segregation is one main factor of the differences in pay between men and women. The work sector is mostly segregated by gender, men and women tend to hold occupations, which for men it enables them to grow in their professional careers and obtain a good pay and, on the other hand, women are not in the same situation. Women's occupations can keep them stuck in their professional careers and with a low pay. My research is presenting contemporary literature showing women holding lower status jobs, less lucrative specialties and men holding higher status, higher paying, and more prestigious jobs. This social problem also varies in countries, the severity of it and its roots. Variations in the gender earnings gap across countries are systematically associated with structural characteristics of national labor markets, and especially with the extent to which the labor market is regulated (Mandel and Semyonov, 2005).

I am interested in this topic because being a woman and in particular a Hispanic woman it means a lot to me; I consider myself a feminist because I attempt to reach equality for us, to help those not only women but everyone who suffers from oppression in some social way. I feel that I have to be informed about the struggles that are in society, and use my knowledge and abilities to help and inform those who are in need. From a sociological perspective I intend to explain this issue and hypothesized that women still struggle up to this date with equal pay

due to the lack of opportunities for better jobs for them, segregation in the workforce, and the patriarchal society in which we live in. The expected outcomes are that women tend to have a harder time finding a suitable job for them, being able to negotiate their pay, sex role stereotypes, gender bias, and their personal lives that intervene with their professional life such as becoming mothers. The main method for this research will be archival, and statistical research. I will be obtaining statistical data from the United States Bureau of Labor Statistics that shows the differences in income between men and women.

Literature Review

This section will review literature based on the main factors that contribute to the differences in pay between men and women. Also how the division of gender in labor came to be and how this division has impacted women the most than men.

The gender pay gap refers to the difference between men's pay and women's pay as a percentage of men's pay. As already mentioned, it is also a summary statistic for an individual's education, training, prior labor experience, and expected future participation (Polachek, 2004). We may ask ourselves why we address this topic or why is it important if we are in the 21st century, and this should be an issue of the past. Despite the advances in society in relationship to rights and social equality, women still get paid less than men. Authors of *The World Development Report of 2012* say that for an economy to be functioning at its potential, women's skills and talents should be engaged in activities that make the best use of these abilities.

In the United States a woman earns \$0.77 on the dollar compared to men, and according to the Joint Economic Committee, for minority women, the average gap is even larger. African American women earn only \$0.62 for every dollar earned by white men, and Hispanic women earn \$0.53.

Throughout the 3 feminism waves women have looked for social and economic equality, rights and privileges that men have in society and somehow women do not get to fully enjoy them (Ritzer, 2003). Authors of *The World Development Report of 2012* conclude that women have made unprecedented gains in rights in education, health and in access to jobs and livelihoods. More countries than ever guarantee women and men equal rights under the law in such areas as property ownership, inheritance and marriage. But feminist scholars such Christina Hughes in her works she states that when women ask for equality, the measure of normative standard of that equality is

men's lives, therefore, despite the advances of equality in the world, there is still a search for equal rights that pertain to men and somehow not accessible to women.

As human beings women are the same as men therefore equal treatment. Women also should be equally entitled to the same pay for the same work and same levels of access to education. When women's labor is underused or misallocated because they are face discrimination in markets or societal institutions that prevent them from completing their education, entering certain occupations and earning the same incomes as men, economic losses are the result.

In the history of the United States during the 19th century, the country had a farm economy, where it was based on men labor in the farms and women at the house. Men typically did heavy fieldwork, woodwork, always outside the home, whereas women did food and clothing preparing. In our society the sexual division of labor is hierarchical, with men on top and women on the bottom. In the beginning of time, men hunted, and women had children. Women were absorbed in pursuing goals such as childcare, women were limited to a state of immanence having their goals given to them by their bodies rather than creating their own goals. With changes in the U.S economy becoming a market economy, things done by women such as clothing became available to purchase, and women's work became less valuable. Gender roles became well-known in society and some would argue that women should concentrate on the home, that women had an specifically loving and gentle nature suited to child care which is a huge factor that contributes to the disparities in pay between men and women.

So what are the factors that contribute to the disparities in wages between men and women? The United States Accountability Office in their 2011 report found that women are more productive and better educated than they have ever been, but their pay hasn't yet caught up. Gender is the most important social factor in the pay gap between men and women, more than race, education or social-economic status. The United States Accountability Office also found that the pay gap affects women at all income levels and across a wide range of occupations and it widens as women grow older and in the cases of women with advanced degrees. Even though research is well documented about the gender pay gap, some will still debate the causes of it, claiming is not only gender that causes these disparities. In fact some researchers claim that 7 % of the gap is still unexplained.

Throughout my sources, authors state that one of the main factors that afflict women when it comes in

obtaining a good paying job is their responsibility of taking care of their children. Women are statistically far more likely than men to be primary childcare providers, this should not be anything new to anyone as it has been like this throughout time, is something that society has established. Jennifer Saul a writer in philosophy of language and feminism who is the Director of the Society for Women in Philosophy UK and Co-Chair of the British Philosophical Association's Women in Philosophy Committee, writes in her book *Feminism: Issues and Arguments* that due to this kind of socialization of having women as first childcare providers reflects traditional views of women's place in society and perpetuates gender inequalities. She also states that in our society as it currently stands the best paid and most secure jobs have requirements that are difficult to meet for anyone who is the caregiver for small children. The patriarchal society in which we live may harm women's attainments and goals. Expectations that society overall has about a woman make it difficult for women to liberate themselves and try different or innovative experiences when it comes to their professional lives. Traditional female roles and images may influence women's perceptions of their abilities and undermine their self-efficacy and potential. Since women so often have household responsibilities, the selection procedure of hiring only those who can fulfill the responsibilities of the job will have the result that far more men than women get jobs with good pay and benefits (Saul, 2003).

From another perspective, authors Mandel and Semyonov address the issue of the gender pay gap blaming it to the cluster of policies targeted to aid families are often viewed as the major mechanism through which welfare states reduce the conflict between women's aspirations to achieve economic independence and their traditional family roles. These policies benefit families with children. Maternity leave benefits for example may harm women's income attainment by having them too much time out of the workforce. Long parental leaves are also examples of family policies, reduced working hours and tolerance toward absenteeism from work. These friendly women family policies may be more pronounced in some occupations than in others. As we can see these policies intent to help women but at the same time it keeps them out of the workforce for a long time. Gender occupational segregation and the exclusion of women from lucrative jobs have long been viewed in the sociological literature as core determinants of the gender wage gap (Mandel and Semyonov, 2005). Occupations where the family policies are more available those occupations would have more women, creating a segregation between occupations and having most women working in the public sector, where this policies exist the most.

Radical Feminist writers Kristin Aune and Catherine Redfern in their book *Reclaiming the F Word: The*

New Feminist Movement address the issue from the same perspective of segregation but in a “radical” way. They claim that one important factor that affects women when it comes to obtaining a good paying job or moving up in the latter of their particular job position is the segregation of gender in the work sector. Women tend to work in the public sector, in administrative positions, retail, and personal service, part-time, and flexible work. Women often enter part-time jobs to be able to balance work and caring responsibilities, which most of the time responsibilities are children and home. Men are much more likely to be in construction and manufacturing jobs which pay more than female-dominated jobs with comparable skill levels. Managerial jobs are often sex segregated; women predominate in the lower paying professional jobs like teaching, nursing and social work, while men predominate in higher paying architecture, engineering, and computer occupations. Women have to deal with everything from subtle bases to acts of discrimination relating to gender stereotypes about hiring, pay raises, promotions, pregnancy, and care giving responsibilities (GAO, 2011).

Throughout works of different authors it was clear stated of how women overall tend to work in part-time occupations, and this is an obvious cause of why they will earn less than their men coworkers. A study done by the United States Government Accountability Office in 2011 shows that women tended to work in industries and occupations that had lower wages than the industries and occupations in which men worked. Then again in this same study the issue of “women’s responsibilities” such as taking care of children and their home, squeeze women’s work time and preclude them from taking and keeping jobs that make few accommodations for those responsibilities.

These are the reasons of why women earn less than men, and according to the World Development Report of 2012, observable differences in worker and job characteristics, a significant fraction of the gender wage remains unexplained. If we had a more diverse workforce where men and women were employed in different sectors and not having only women or men in a particular one, then the pay would be more well distributed.

Theory

It is important to look at social issues afflicting women from women’s perspective. Women have been written out of history and presented from a male perspective. In order to understand women’s issues we must hear from us and create our own understanding of social issues from our standpoint, and do not let someone else tell us

how to feel, how we should act, or in this case what is it that is afflicting us and why. We have heard enough of “his” story (history) the great figures of history and methodology are always male. Therefore to understand and explain the differences in pay between men and women, it must be from a feminist perspective because no one else can better explain the social afflictions of women but women themselves.

Feminist theory is a generalized, wide-ranging system of ideas about social life and human experience developed from a woman-centered perspective. It is centered in two ways, 1st the starting point of all its investigation is the situations and experiences of women in society, 2nd, it seeks to describe and critically evaluate the world from the distinctive vantage points of women (Ritzer, 2009). The social situation of women and the way in which we learn to be feminine is peculiar to women. Men do not share it; consequently we cannot simply include under the general heading of “mankind” (Rowbotham, 1974). Throughout history women have gained power in society and done improvements to end gender inequality. From the early building of our nation, brave women stood up for what they believed to be wrong in society, brave women such as Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Susan B. Anthony who were some of the creators of the Declaration of Sentiments where they declared women’s rights.

Women should have the same rights as men in every aspect because men are no more intellectual than women, they are not born with any special capability that will say they are better than women and therefore get paid more. Both genders have the same capability and potential to succeed in society, is society who has decided that women should be treated less than men, feeding it with stereotypes and gender bias that has come throughout history. Traditional female roles and images may influence women’s perceptions of their abilities and undermine their self-efficacy and potential. Masculinity and femininity are social positions or roles, and they are defined by a set of norms about those occupying this role should behave. Individuals are not only expected to perform the actions appropriate to their gender, they are also expected to identify, or understand, themselves as members of that gender (Stone, 2007).

Feminism and its different waves through history have done improvements to increase women’s wellbeing. The first wave of feminism took place in the late 19th early 20th century. These women were advocating for their right to vote and rights of property. During the second wave of feminism which took place in the 1960s and continued into the 1990s women were asking for the rights and equality in education, pay, and employment, the third and for now the last wave of feminism which is the one we are still in, women search equality for all of those

who are not only women but marginalized people who are forgotten in this society, and the empowerment of womanhood and our openness to end stereotypes of what a woman should or should not be. Feminism theories help explain the phenomenon of inequality between genders and also offer a possible solution for this social problem.

From Simone de Beauvoir we get the theory of women as being “other”; other as the other of men. Men have constantly defined woman not in terms of herself but in relation to him. He is the subject, he is absolute, she is the other. Women have let men define them as beings with an essence woman’s-nature rather than as subjects who exist, that is who are responsible for choosing the course of their own lives (Stone, 2007). Judith Butler calls that the social relation between the sexes is organized so that men may dominate and women must submit.

The division of labor by sex appears to have been universal throughout human history (Hartmann). Before capitalism, a patriarchal system was established in which men controlled the labor of women and children in the family, and that in so doing men learned the techniques of hierarchical organization and control. According to Heidi Hartmann the first process, sexual stratification, occurred together with the increasing productiveness, specialization, and complexity of society. How labor worked and was transformed from beginning of time has shaped how labor is view now, and in particular women’s labor. A direct personal system of control was translated into an indirect impersonal system of control, mediated by society and wide institutions. From this, the mechanism available to men were (1) the traditional division of labor between the sexes, and (2) techniques of hierarchical organization and control (Hartmann). These mechanisms were crucial in the second process the extension of a sex-ordered division of labor to the wage –labor system, during the period of the emergence of capitalism in Western Europe and the United States. According to feminist scholars, due to both the sexual division of labor and male domination are so long standing; it will be very difficult to eradicate them.

Methodology

From a sociological perspective I will be using qualitative methodology. I will be using archival research and existing sets of data to compare, analyze and describe the differences in pay between men and women.

Scholarly materials are the main foundation of my research and also statistical reports in income done by the United States Bureau of Labor Statistics, which proved my hypothesis statement that is; women earn less then men.

Obtaining data from the U.S Bureau of Labor statistics provided me the opportunity to use statistical models,

showing the difference in pay between men and women. These statistical models are of a great help in proving my hypothesis statement stated at the beginning of my Capstone project. In particular, I am using the results of the Current Population Survey (CPS) of the year of 2013. These surveys are jointly done by the U.S Census Bureau and the U.S Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS), and is the primary source of labor force statistics for the population of the country. The Census conducts surveys to individuals, households, and businesses to gather information about people's salaries and other earnings. These surveys and the data gathered from them will help me in my research to present the clear differences in pay between men and women. The CPS is the source of numerous high-profile economic statistics, including national unemployment rate, and provides data on a wide range issues relating to employment and earnings.

From books mainly written by feminist scholars I obtained the main factors that contribute to the gender pay gap. All of the authors referring to the causes of the differences in pay between men and women agree that the main reason of this social problem is the segregation in the work force. The books I read from feminist scholars about this topic, I obtained them from the CSUMB library and also from its website that has a feature that gives students like me the opportunity to read online books.

I used the databases on the U.S Bureau of Labor Statistics website, and was able to obtain charts and tables. I search through the databases by key terms such as "women's income", "earnings", "occupations", and "pay inequality". These key words were also important in finding scholarly articles in reference to the topic, some of these scholarly articles I have used them in my literature review where I mainly describe the reasons of the gender pay gap.

I am presenting contemporary examples of how the differences in pay in women and men exist in the United States and based on my theory and literature review hypothesized why is it that these differences exist.

Findings

On this section I am presenting contemporary scenarios of the existence of difference in pay between men and women. I am comparing them and also presenting the possible reasons for these differences. The information presented comes from the United States Bureau of Labor Statistics, United States Census Bureau, and latest evidence that introduce specific cases of the gender pay gap; this data is gathered from the year 2013.

The Census Bureau conducts surveys (Current Population Survey) to individuals, households, and

businesses to gather information about people's salaries and other earnings, and I am using data obtained from these conducted surveys. My stated hypothesis is that women earned less than men and that in today's date women still struggle to obtain pay equity, and the data obtained from the Current Population Survey (CPS) will test my hypothesis to be true.

The gender pay gap has narrowed throughout time, in 1979 the first year of which comparable earnings data are available, women earned 62 percent of what men earned, and according to the White House in today's date women earn 77 percent of what their male counterparts earn. Notice the gap has narrowed but not close enough.

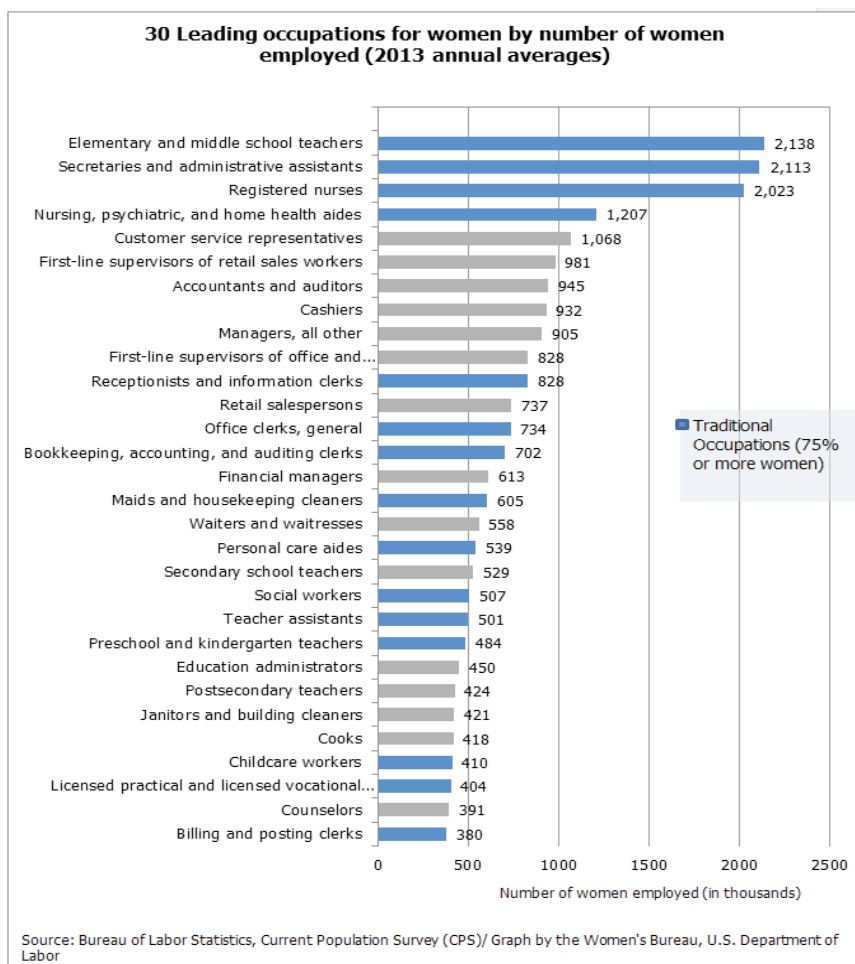
The differences in pay between men and women vary in every occupation. According to the Current Population Survey (CPS) in 2013 women who are full-time wage and salary workers had median usual weekly earnings of \$706. On average, women made 82 percent of the median weekly earnings of male full-time wage and salary workers, which was \$860. Something interesting from this survey results is that median weekly earnings were highest for women age 35 to 64 and also men from 45 to 64 also had the highest earnings. Also, earnings differences between women and men were most pronounced for Asians and for whites than for any other ethnicity as Chart 1 shows below. Black and Hispanic community are the ones closest to the gap in earnings between men and women of their respective ethnicity. Overall, in the chart we see how the gap is persistent between men and women, where men have the highest earnings.

Chart 1



According to the research I have done it seems that the main factor contributing to pay inequality is the occupation segregation that exist in the workforce. Women are more likely than men to go into teaching and teachers tend to be paid less than other type of occupation (AAUW, 2015). Women are more likely to work in low-wage jobs and this has been stated throughout my research. As this graph below (Chart 2) shows how many women are employed in what type of occupation we see that there are more women employed as elementary and middle school teachers, secretaries and administrative assistants, and registered nurses. Also the graph highlights in blue what are consider to be traditional occupations for women which these hold up 75 % or more of employed women.

Chart 2



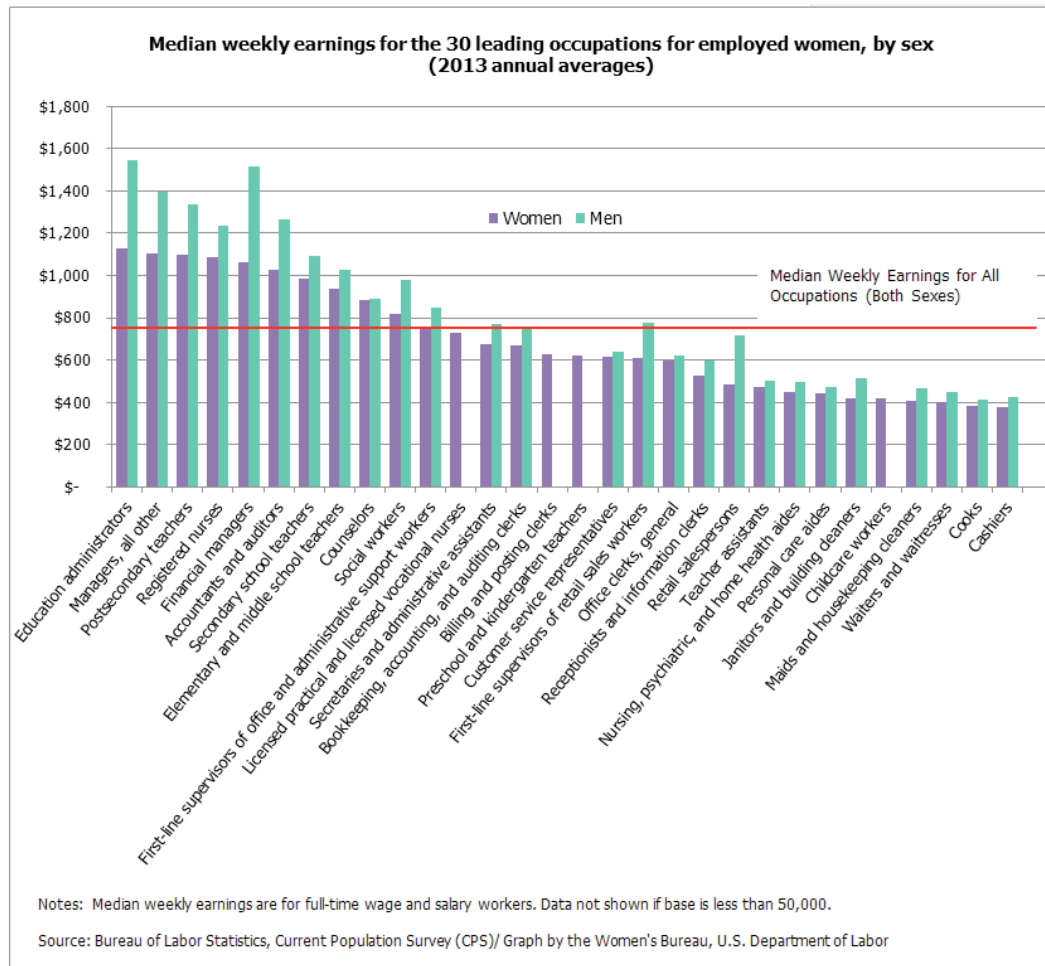
Going back to the Current Population Survey (CPS), in 2013 among both women and men median weekly earnings for those working full time in management, business and financial operations jobs were higher than in any other major occupational category. For women's weekly earnings were \$1,049, and \$1,412 for men. Also, women chief executives earned \$1,811 and system managers \$1,549 weekly, whereas men chief executives \$2,266 and system managers had a weekly earning of \$1,898. Even though women may hold high ranking occupations there is still a difference in pay between them and men holding the same occupation.

The second highest paying major occupational category for women and men was professional and related occupations. For women, they had a weekly earning of \$944, and men having the relatively the same occupation they had a weekly earning of \$1,295.

The occupational distributions of female and male full-time workers differ considerably compared with men, quite few women work in construction, production, or transportation occupations, and women are fare more

concentrated in office and administrative support jobs. This phenomenon can be best explained by the traditional occupations that women and men take which is society that has constituted these “rules” since beginning of time when women worked only at home and men were the breadwinner.

In 2013, 29 percent of women work in professional and related occupations, compare with 19 percent of men. 9 percent of women in professional and related occupations were employed in the relatively high-paying computer and engineering fields, compared to 44 percent of men. Women in professional and related occupations were more likely to work in education, and healthcare jobs in which the pay is generally lower than that for computer and engineering jobs.

Chart 3

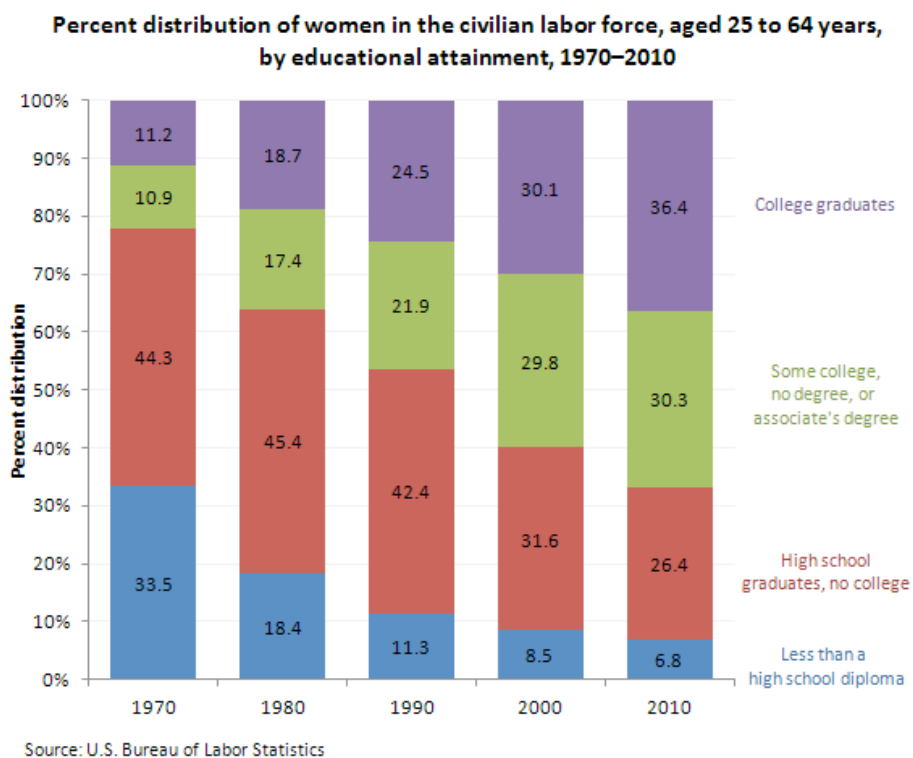
The questions that can arise from these statistics is why is it that women tend to work in these particular occupations that pay less than the ones that men work in? As I have stated in my literature review, authors such as Hadas Mandel and Moshe Semyonow state that women tend to work in these occupations because of the friendly family policies that they have. It means that these occupations work fine with women when it comes to maternity leave, request time off which is usually because of their children, and flexible schedules such as working part time or less than 40 hours a week. These factors are important when it comes to women's earnings.

Education

It is important to stand out that women more than ever are more educated and more involve in the workforce. It is well know that the better education one has the better opportunities there will be to obtain a good

paying job. In today's date it is very important for women to obtain pay equity because equal pay is not simply a women's issue it's a family issue. Over the past 40 years, the educational attainment of women aged 25-64 in the labor force has risen substantially. In 2010, 36 percent of these women held a college degree, compared with 11 percent in 1970 (U.S BLS).

Chart 4



Between 1967 and 2012 the percentage of mothers who brought home at least a quarter of the family's earnings rose from less than a third (28 %) to nearly two-thirds (63 %) (AAUW, 2015). With this stated families now depend on the mother's income, is no longer the male breadwinner. The gender pay gap can contribute to poor living conditions, poor nutrition, and fewer opportunities for their children.

This research has proved my hypothesis stated that women earn less than men. Despite these statistical findings, the lack of wage negotiation skills women have, and individuals personal decisions there is still a percentage of the gender pay gap that remains unexplained. The empowerment of women is crucial to end the pay inequality and any other type of social inequality afflicting women. Advising women when it comes to negotiating their salary for those that are able to do it is very important. Also providing information on laws that secure them

their rights should be every woman's knowledge to end the rule of patriarchy and empower women in every social aspect.

Pay Gap in California

According to AAUW's research report "Graduating to a Pay Gap", women only one year out of the college, working full-time were paid on average 82 % of what their male counterparts were paid. Records of 2013 in California, median earnings for men were \$50, 268 compared to women's earnings of \$42, 199. The city of Salinas, which is where I live, belongs to the California's 20th Congressional District in which it has an earning ratio of 99 %, where men in 2013 had median earnings of 41,536 and women earned 41, 235.

Conclusion

The pay gap shrinks but does not disappear. Throughout my different sources, researchers claim that 7 % of the gap cannot be explained despite factors such as hours worked, occupation, college major, and employment sector which are explained in my Capstone. It is true that women are better educated then they have ever been. More women opt to go further in their schooling such as obtaining more than just a bachelor's degree. Women's attainments in society have increased and thanks to social justice awareness and all those individuals that contribute to our society to be a better one things have gone better and not just only for women, but to everyone. Even though we have gotten changes, women are still struggling to obtain equal pay, and in 2013 women working full-time year round, were paid 78 cents on average for every dollar men got paid. We as a society need to come together in an effort to end some of the factors that contribute to the disparities in pay between men and women. As I have presented, this issue is not a woman's issue but a family issue. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, out of about 12 million single parent families in 2014, more than 80 % were headed by single mothers. From this statistic we can clearly see the possible consequences of women not earning what they are supposed to.

What has been done and what still needs to be done in order to reach equal pay? It goes from both legislative and executive action. Bills that have been passed such as the Lilly Ledbetter Fair Pay Act, which as signed by President Obama in January 2009 gives protection against pay discrimination, it makes clear that pay discrimination claims on the basis of sex, race, national origin, race are against the law. The Act restores longstanding law and helps to ensure that individuals subjected to unlawful pay discriminatory paychecks receive compensation.

The Equal Pay Act of 1963 prohibits sex-based wage discrimination between men and women in the same

establishment who perform jobs that require substantially equally skill, effort and responsibility under similar working conditions. This bill was signed in 1963 but needs some amendments or introduce new bills that will guarantee equal pay for women, somehow the establishments on The Equal Pay Act are not being respected and the discrimination in pay against women still continues. The American Association of University Women calls for a Fair Pay Act (S.168/H.R 438), which would require employers to provide equal pay for work of equal value, provide equal pay for jobs that are comparable but identical and jobs requiring comparable education skills responsibilities and working conditions. Also with this proposal the gender-based job segregation would be addressed because as we have seen, the segregation in the workforce that has most of women working in the low-paying jobs are affecting women the most having them with low wages.

Despite the changes in law that could guarantee women equal pay I believe the empowerment of women is truly needed. Empowering women to negotiate their pay it's a critical aspect that each and every women should have. All women in our country and in every place in the world where they might have employment should know their rights, and that they should have the opportunity to negotiate their pay. Women's work is more valuable now, more women join the workforce, and more women are heads of their household and sustain their family. Ending the long-standing stereotype of women and how a woman should act or should work at also needs to end; women must be encouraged to seek self-fulfillment as human beings rather than merely as females, end with the strictly enforced sex roles that at times affects women the most instead of benefit them. All human individuals are equal in moral worth and deserve to be treated as such; women are no exception to this. Women want the joys and rewards of work as much as we want men to share the joys and rewards of childcare or home making (Redfern, Aune).

The awareness of social justice needs to live in every individual, the patriarchal society in which we live will never end since it has been for so long standing this way that it will be difficult to end it, however, if in every individual the glint of social justice exist it is possible that we as a society can make a change.

I have learned so much throughout this research. I not only learned how to do research and apply theory to it, but I learned about current social problems afflicting my world. I now feel a need to make a difference in my community. We need to construct a better society where justice and equality is reachable for everyone.

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