

Gender Discrimination in the Workforce

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by

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Workplace Discrimination Towards Women

The United States of America was once known throughout the world as a land filled with opportunity for all who are willing to work. However, this dream has never been equally attainable for some groups as it has been for others. This can be seen in the discrepancy in opportunity between men and women in the workforce that spans this nation's history. Throughout the years, state and federal government have created legislation in a series of attempts to mitigate the gendered gap in opportunity. However, discrimination has continued to be prevalent and is now apparent in new ways that did not exist decades ago. Gender continues to be a key determinant in employment opportunities available to women due to the rampant and complex discrimination that still exists today. A poll conducted by The Wall Street Journal found that 46% of women said they have experienced discrimination as a result of being female, an increase from a survey previously (Nelson, 2013).

Gender discrimination can be defined in a variety of ways, but is most commonly identified as making decisions based on aesthetic or ascriptive perceptions of one's sex or sex. In the workforce, discrimination can be analyzed and recognized in any decision related to wages, terminations, promotions, hiring, leaves, and benefits. Any of these major decisions made on the basis of sex or gender are illegal under both state and federal law, with past trials and case law building their strength. There is still, however, a significant amount of inequality of opportunity and discrimination that women face today as they strive to not only become a part of the workforce, but to advance within it. Many of these issues are much more deeply rooted in societal norms and acculturation.

Society's views and expectations of women influence how she is perceived and treated in the workplace.

History

The long history of gender-based inequality is critical to understanding the high levels of discrimination that we see in all industries today. Through the 18th century, white middle class women's role in society was restricted to the home and contributions within the family. This limitation slowly began to change when women became central contributors to the economy during the early 19th century. At that time, mechanized industry was expanding, especially in the new urban areas. Mechanized industry was important because the work could be done by anybody regardless of strength, gender, or education. This industrialized and mechanized economic model served to create opportunities for more sectors of society to gain employment, including women and children. For the first time, women were able to make a wage for themselves and contribute to the family in non-traditional ways. Although this was a revolutionary new beginning for women, the many issues faced continue to be prevalent in today's society, hindering the opportunities for women within the workforce.

Despite women gaining employment opportunities, they were still openly viewed as inferior employees in comparison to men well into modern society. This lack of confidence in the work of women comes from the broader societal belief that they are incapable of highly skilled labor, and expanding their skills beyond the household. The influence of this belief that women's work was less valuable than that of men has wide reaching effects on their treatment as employees, their opportunities, and resulting compensation. This socially accepted viewpoint was openly expressed throughout the

nineteenth and much of the twentieth centuries, although it is demonstrated in less obvious ways today.

Influence of War

Much of the history of women in the workforce is related to their roles in the economy, military, and community during times of war. During the American Revolution, Mary Ludwig Hays (nicknamed Mary Pitcher) famously operated her husband's cannon when he was injured, exemplifying a woman's equivalent capability to that of men. Although she had not been invited to take on a role in the military, she took a great risk and was able to prove her capability in a traditionally male role (WIC, 1994). This and other similar examples of women taking initiative and being successful in informal ways allowed the military to look at more structured ways that women could be involved in the future. These instances directly set the stage for greater established involvement by women during the Civil War. Women were given roles gathering intelligence, nursing wounded soldiers, and other specialized jobs during the Civil War. These opportunities allowed women to prove that they were far more capable and steadfast than they had been viewed as before.

As time went on, women were able to join more and more sectors of the military and many war related fields. During World War II, women responded to the nation's needs in a wide variety of ways. Rosie the Riveter symbolized the enhanced role and responsibility that women achieved during that time. She was seen as an ideal woman for that time in the United States: a woman that is patriotic, strong, independent, and skilled. The women who worked as Women Air Service Pilots (WASPs) and the Women's Army Corps (WAC) had direct impact on the success of the United States

military in World War II. In addition to direct military involvement, the women also benefited from opportunities to join the traditional workforce. The jobs that women took at that time were high paying and highly skilled jobs that had been previously held by men. It was not until men were shipped to war during the 19th and 20th centuries that women began to incorporate themselves into the skilled workforce, due to a rise in demand for labor. While men were away, it was women who continued to keep the industries afloat. However, as soon as the men returned home, most of the women in factories and other industries were immediately fired. Many of the women were incredibly disappointed that their economic contributions did not lead to immediate social change. The idealization of the Rosie the Riveter quickly faded as the nation shifted away from valuing the independence and strength of the female workforce.

Joining the Workforce

While women's contributions to the economy had, finally, become acknowledged, inequality and perceived inability were both promoted and widely accepted. This is exemplified in an article written in the July 1943 issue of *Transportation Magazine* titled, "Eleven Tips on Getting More Efficiency Out of Women Employees." This article illustrates the mentality towards women employees that has taken decades to overcome (Melymuka, 2013). Included in the eleven "rules" are things such as, "Give every girl an adequate number of rest periods during the day. You have to make some allowances for feminine psychology. A girl is more efficient if she can keep her hair tidied and apply fresh lipstick" and "Retain a physician to give each woman you hire a special physical examination. This reveals any female weaknesses which would make her mentally or physically unfit for the job" (Melymuka, 2000). We see here a clear perception of

women's capabilities as not acting as efficient contributors to a profitable workforce. Rather, this and other disinformation perpetuate the idea that female employees must be cared for and are dependent on their male supervisors. In turn, this instilled the idea that female employees require more effort and resources compared to their male counterparts, and are therefore less desirable for profitability. While this article was published decades ago, this idea that women are inferior to men in the workforce continues to play a large role in women's opportunities.

Although all women found it challenging to enter the workforce, it was especially difficult for women of color. Even though slavery had been abolished in 1833, African American women still struggled with even more prejudices that prevented them from gaining acceptable employment. These prejudgments continued to limit their opportunities. The discriminatory intersection that stemmed from being both a woman and an African American individual created exponentially more obstacles than those that came solely from being female. African American women continue to face these challenges today, both in the hiring process and after they have gained employment.

Although some women were finally able to enter the skilled workforce, most women continued to seek out jobs in textile mills and garment shops. This divide is mainly because these occupations were seen as similar to the stereotypical domestic work that they were accustomed to fulfilling in the household. Especially during the twentieth century, women were encouraged to pursue roles that aligned with traits of being a good mother, wife, or homemaker. This very much limited the opportunities available to them. Society was more likely to accept the new role of women if the responsibilities were in alignment with their stereotypical expectations as mothers and homemakers. This

perpetuated a perception that the roles that these women were allowed to take on were still less significant and valuable than the work that men were promoted and compensated for.

The lack of women's perceived significance and value took form in pay differences as well as social appreciation and validity. An example of this can be seen in the retail world. At one point, retail work was predominantly male. At this time, this occupation was highly respected and well paid. After women began to dominate the field, its significance and value plummeted. This perception of women as less valuable employees was and still is reflected in the pay gap between men and women.

Legislation

Over the course of history, there have been several laws passed with the purpose of alleviating the effects of gender discrimination. These policies, laws, and standards have been many attempts to help level the playing field for women and men among several aspects of employment. These laws can be categorized into a few groups: reducing wage gaps, eliminating hiring prejudice, protecting pregnant women or mothers, and a few that reach more specific needs. As time goes on, these laws have become more specific in order to not only protect the women, but also to make policies more clear for companies to follow.

The 1960's were an important time in American history because of the radical movements towards equality for many segments of society, many of which affected legislation of that time. During this decade, several laws were passed to reduce the gap in the pay scale of women in comparison to men. The first of these was the Equal Pay Act of 1963. This statute "prohibits sex-based wage discrimination between men and women

in the same establishment who perform jobs that require substantially equal skill, effort and responsibility under similar working conditions” (Equal Pay Act of 1963). Essentially, this was the first major attempt to ensure that companies were not discriminating against one gender over the other in setting wages.

However, courts had a difficult time filing charges against companies under the Equal Pay Act of 1963 because the regulations left too much room for interpretation. Additionally, the Equal Pay Act of 1963 did not offer the same protections as similar laws based on race and national origin. These laws allowed for victims of racial discrimination to seek compensatory and punitive damages, a right that was not granted to women under the Equal Pay Act of 1963. In essence, this legislation granted women the right to sue but did not provide them with the ability to come to equal footing, even if their case was granted.

Soon after the enactment of the Equal Pay Act of 1963 came the passing of the historic Civil Rights Act of 1964, which broadly outlawed major forms of discrimination in many arenas, including the workforce. Title VII of this statute prohibits employers from discriminating among several aspects of an employee’s term. This Act built more specific terms that qualified as discrimination. Employers are prohibited from discriminating against job seekers or employees based on race, religion, sex, pregnancy, and national origin. This applies to “compensation, terms, conditions, or privileges of employment” (Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964). A vital element of Title VII is a discharge clause, stating that it is illegal to discriminate against individuals when dissolving their role in the company. This Civil Rights Act of 1964 created a foundation

from which individuals could have a voice and understand what qualified as discrimination and act against it, claiming their rights and equality.

Early legislative actions such as the Equal Pay Act of 1963 and Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 were landmark pieces of civil rights legislation because they philosophically cemented the United States as a country of equal citizens with equal opportunities. At the time that they were created, it was believed that they would be able to solve the structural and institutional barriers faced by women. However, there were functional challenges related to prosecution that emerged over time. These challenges became more and more clear as the judicial and legislative branches of government learned of holes within these acts that only allowed employees a restricted amount of freedom when fighting for their given rights.

Limitations of Legislation

The case of Lilly Ledbetter v. Goodyear Tire & Rubber Company exemplifies the discrepancy between the philosophy of equal employment and the applicability of early legislation in the United States. This case involved a Goodyear Tire & Rubber Company employee of management level, Lilly Ledbetter, who came to discover that she was not being compensated equally as compared to men in her same position. After nineteen years of employment, an anonymous coworker informed Ledbetter of the difference in pay between her and men at her same employment level. Lily took action by using this finding to file a sex discrimination case against Goodyear Tire & Rubber Company. Ledbetter initially won her case against the large company. However, she ultimately lost her civil case on appeal. Over the course of eight years, Lily Ledbetter's case went as high as the Supreme Court, where she lost, yet again. The court ruled that

Lily Ledbetter needed to have filed her case within 180 days of her first unequal paycheck, despite the fact that she had not learned of this unequal treatment for several years (Lily Ledbetter).

The unrealistic and often unclear expectations of women seeking retribution have been known to create further barriers for women that are already taking a risk by filing suit. A few years after her second loss on appeal, the Lily Ledbetter Act of 2009 became the first significant piece of legislation signed by President Obama. This new statute “restores longstanding law and helps to ensure that individuals subjected to unlawful pay discrimination are able to effectively assert their rights under the federal anti-discrimination laws,” in which every new paycheck resets the 180 day limit for victims to file a claim (National Women’s Law Center). These modifications that have been created in this Act allowed for employees to have the appropriate amount of time to build and develop their case, without the pressure of filing suit within an unrealistically short span of time. The prominence of discrimination is difficult to precisely determine because of the subtlety of some forms, which is one factor in the common lack of reporting.

Theories

Clearly, the history behind gender discrimination in the workforce is critically important in theorizing and understanding how we arrived at the extremely high levels of gender discrimination in the workforce. In addition to these historical explanations, there have been many sociologists and other researchers who have attempted to explain gender gaps in the workforce with factors outside of history. There are a few sociological theories that have been developed over the years to provide justification and explanation as to why women are inferior employees in comparison to their male counterparts. These

theories exist to legitimize the inequality that we see today. Unfortunately, these theories have been used in court and among legislative bodies many times in order to justify discrimination in the workforce.

The original theory to be used had biological foundations, stating that men deserve higher earnings and roles with more authority because of their heightened physical strength. Burnette cites evidence from the late 20th century that claims that in many cases, there is a direct tie between workplace success due to upper body strength and compensation (Burnette, 2009). However, Burnette's work has been criticized for relying too heavily on this data. Additionally, sociologists have criticized this argument as citing causation in a relationship that was more likely caused by correlative elements. Most sociologists and economists would agree that success the majority of jobs in modern, fully industrialized societies is not dependent upon the upper body strength of employees, but rather on factors such as education, experience, and personal characteristics.

A later explanation for the gap in opportunity and success between males and females is related to women's role as child bearers. Individuals have stated that this role as a child bearer leads to a lower productivity level in the workplace and therefore worthy of lower compensation. Clearly, this is a very unfair practice because there is no consideration of the woman's success while she is at work, level of involvement of fathers, or the woman's ability to complete a job. Anti-discriminatory laws previously mentioned have been passed in the past few decades to protect women from these discriminatory practices. These protective laws are intended to protect women from

discrimination during all parts of childrearing- from periods of bed rest, maternity leave, and often health insurance to cover.

Although citing physical strength and childbearing needs as limitations for women in the workforce are the most common theories to justify gender discrimination, there are a few others that have come up over the years. In court, individuals have made arguments about discrepancy between intellectual capacity between men and women, stated that women do not want to work, and many other unfounded claims. Most of these justifications have been dismissed, allowing for the creation of protective policies and laws, through both state and federal legislation (Burnette, 2009).

Much of the discrimination and inequality that women face when entering, maintaining, and progressing through the work force is directly related to the hegemonic masculinity phenomenon. This can be defined as “the form of masculinity which is culturally and politically dominant at a particular time and place” (Scott-Samuel, 2009). Essentially, hegemonic masculinity is a practice of legitimizing the unequal power of men compared to women by normalizing masculinity as the dominant position, and manufacturing consent among men and women that this is the way it should be. This idea has come to include a gender hierarchy, which maintains the subordinate social position of women, and dominant position of their male counterparts, resulting “in a relatively specific form of gender relations has for many years remained globally dominant” (Scott-Samuel, 2009).

The concept of hegemonic masculinity has an effect on societal expectations of everyone in the workforce. The dominant position of masculine traits plays a role in defining its female counter position, by setting standards of what is perceived as

“feminine” in society. The dominant role of masculinity pertains to the workforce as well as the family. The belief that it is the male’s role to be the “breadwinner” affects the jobs that they pursue as well as the ones that are seen as appropriate for women to pursue. The breadwinner concept is still widely believed and is far from being overcome and restructured. This idea of hegemonic masculinity and the inequalities and society structuring it causes can be seen as a cyclical cycle, with a continuation and sustainability, resulting in a continuation of gender roles and inequality.

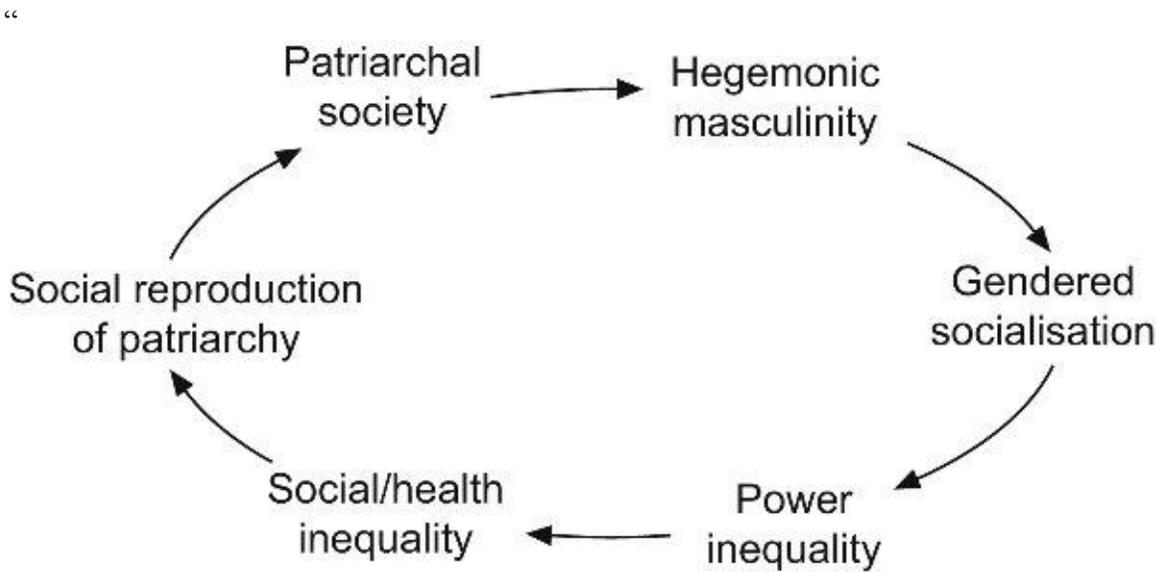


Figure 1. The dynamics of gender inequality.
 (Scott-Samuel, Alex. Patriarchy, masculinities and health inequalities.)

Forms of Discrimination

Gender discrimination in the workforce takes many different forms as it exists on an individual as well as a structural level. The discrimination that takes place on individual levels are much more difficult to identify, but there are many ways to analyze the aftermath of unequal treatment and opportunities between the genders.

Wage Gaps

Today, one of the most prevalent forms of gender discrimination is in the practice of wage gaps. Wage gaps describe the discrepancy between the salary and benefits given to men compared to those given to women for the same level and quality of work. While women in the U.S. “compare favorably” to those in other countries with respect to skills, the U.S. has had a longer and stronger dedication to equal pay and equal employment policies as compared to other industrialized countries. While this may be true, however, it has been found that this very pay gap is larger in the United States than in most other industrialized countries (Blau and Kahn, 1994).

The U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics released information showing that females working 41- 44 hours per week are compensated at an income that only reaches 84.6 percent of that which men working for the same number of hours earn. This calculation was figured by comparing the earnings of all women who work full time with the earnings of all men in the United States who work full time. Although this is better than the 1979 statistic that showed that women were making 62% of their male counterparts, showing advancement in the wage gap, it is evident that there is still much work to be done.

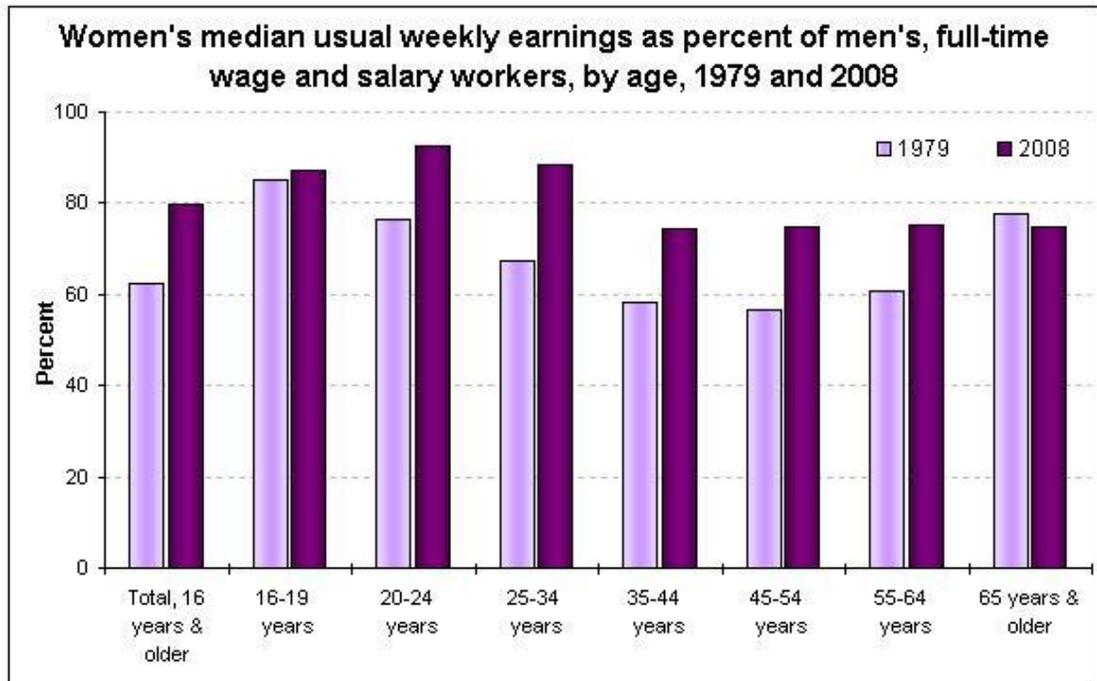


Figure 1. Women's weekly earnings as compared to men over the years.
Wolgemuth, L. Young Women Closing in on Gender Wage Parity.

The wage gap that we currently experience is a result of a variety of factors ranging from broad societal influences to individual discrepancies in compensations amongst equivalent employees. Even more surprisingly, it becomes even more grave as female employees work longer hours. The same study showed that female employees working for over 60 hours per week earn only 78.3% of what men in the same category earn. The roots of this enormous gap are difficult to determine, as there are many historical and social factors that play into the unfortunate practice of wage gaps.

The explanations behind the discrepancies between the wage gap between male and female annual earnings range from sociological to economic factors. When collectively considered, these perspectives come together to help explain and determine the reasoning behind the differences in chosen careers and gender wage gap discrepancies.

Sociological Perspective: When the roles of women are evaluated from a sociological point of view, the most prominent explanation for “occupational sex segregation” lies in perceived roles. This stems from cultural stereotypes of attributes and roles each gender is presumed to occupy relative to the other. These stereotypes help lead men and women to their “respective” fields. Because women are seen as compassionate and nurturing, women continue to assume these roles by pursuing careers such as social work and teaching, which tend to have lower paying salaries than those professions typically associated with male traits.

An interesting theory noted within this sociological perspective was the Expectations States theory, which states that certain traits typically associated with men and women are taken into consideration by hiring managers. Traits like competence and authority are typically affiliated with those of higher status, and because cultural and stereotypical beliefs have lead us to associate these with men, there is a correlation between gender and higher positioning within organizations. Essentially, employers’ expectations of an employee based on status, gender, or role shapes the chances of that employee’s opportunities to take on greater and “valuable” responsibility (Correll and Ridgeway, 2003). These cultural stereotypes are communicated to men and women from early childhood and become embedded in their behaviors. It is this socialization that mold the ideas and minds of children, hinting at who they should be and what roles they should take on as they evolve into adulthood. These beliefs become internalized and become part of the child’s identity, which subconsciously shape their beliefs about career options.

Economic Perspective: From an economic perspective, one of the main assumptions is that women, as opposed to men, consider the time allotted work roles as

compared to non-work roles more strongly when choosing a career path, opting for one with more flexibility. These jobs are typically found to be those that are lower paying, and lack much skill updating. Because of this, the United States wage gap can be seen as a “catch twenty-two.” Because women typically work in lower paying and valued sectors of the labor market due to making more family oriented decisions, they are in turn “penalized” for this as those skills men are associated with become more “highly valued.” This segregation of gender occupations is known as “labor market discrimination”, and in turn causes employers to treat women “as if they have lower unmeasured skills”, causing “downward pressure” on female wages when the “prices” of unmeasured skills increases. Women have been “swimming upstream in a labor market that [is] growing increasingly unfavorable to low wage workers”, and it’s surprising that this women have worked to close this gap as much as they have over the year in such an adverse environment (Blau and Kahn, 1994).

Glass Ceiling

There is much evidence to show that although women may have remotely equal opportunity in obtaining jobs, rising through a company or workplace is much more difficult for women than it is for men. The glass ceiling is a metaphor used to describe this phenomenon. Of course, there are exceptions. Females that do occupy prestigious, professional jobs, tend to be found in the least powerful and lowest paying of these. This is considered to be vertical segregation in the workforce. Rather than divisions between genders based on the profession, there is a clear divide between men and women at varying levels of responsibility and pay within the workforce. Women have been built as a result of structural bias in society.

The glass ceiling is one of the most widely used and recognized metaphors used in analyzing inequality between various genders within the workplace. The glass ceiling hypothesis states that it is more difficult for women to be promoted upward once they have been employed within a company. Also, once women have reached a certain level, they plateau, and are restricted from elevating themselves within their workplace. Additionally, it states that as a woman continues to be in higher levels of authority, she will continue to face proportionally more obstacles compared to her male counterparts. According to the glass ceiling hypothesis, women may be able to enter companies or even acquire management positions. However, at some point they will hit an invisible barrier that will prevent them from having the ability to progress further within the organization. Research has shown that “women managers are more likely to be promoted into positions when a greater proportion of women are already there, highlighting the difficulty in gaining entrance into these positions in the first place” (McLaughlin, 2009). These obstacles create a cyclical cycle that creates a difficult environment for women to progress and advance within their organizations.

There are, however, women who have been able to break through the glass ceiling. Interestingly enough, it has been found that Fortune 500 companies with most female representation on their boards have, on average, significantly higher financial performance as compared to those companies with the lowest amount of female representation (Blau and Kahn 1994). It has been theorized that these companies are more successful because their boards represent a more diverse perspective from the women in leadership (Brown, Brown, Anastasopoulos, 2002). Although this success of companies with women leaders is proven, the United States still shows a slim percentage of women

present in executive positions. “Of the 500 largest U.S. companies, only four are led by female CEOs. Of 2,249 top corporate officers, 114, or 5.1%, are women”.

Because there is such a slim percentage of females as corporate officers and executives, there are organizations that work and advise to help advance women in business. One such business, Catalyst Inc. conducts research, holds events, and provides services to connect women with professional opportunities. Founded in the 1960's, Catalyst is one of the leading organizations that has truly impacted the movement for gender equality in the workplace. The success that Catalyst Inc. has impacted is due to the multidimensional approach of looking at inequality through extensive research and following through over many decades. Organizations such as these aim to level the opportunities available for all professionals, regardless of gender. Most of these organizations are most successful by examining the sociological and structural reasons for the current levels of inequality.

Literally taken, modern sociologists are suggesting that there is an impermeable barrier preventing any woman at any time to rise to the top. The metaphor, therefore, is not meant to be taken literally but rather to show that women have a much more difficult time rising to the top than their male counterparts. Gender based discrimination is present across all levels of authority and increases in intensity at higher levels of the workplace. Reskin and Padavic (1994, 84) report that “although women held half of all federal government jobs in 1992 and made up 86 percent of the government's clerical workers, they were only a quarter of supervisors and only a tenth of senior executives” (Reskin 1994, Padavic, 1984) Clearly, there is a barrier that cannot be seen by just examining the

sheer number of women in the workforce. Within the workforce, there are opportunities that are not equally available to women.

Pregnancy Discrimination

Although blatant and outright discrimination can be prevented through legal protections, there are other forms of discrimination that are related to gender and slightly more difficult to address. Certain aspects of the life cycle affect women in different ways than they affect men. This discrepancy between how life events affect genders differently can influence their success in the job market. For example, pregnancy discrimination is directly related to gender based discrimination, due to the obvious factor that it can only be experienced by women. Pregnancy discrimination charges are the fastest growing complaints being filed with the Federal Equal Employment Opportunity Commission.

Pregnancy discrimination is most prevalent in the hiring process of corporations; the likelihood that her pregnancy will count against her is extremely high. This discrimination not only affects the women themselves, but also employers and legislatures. Organizations feel as though hiring a woman that is pregnant or could possibly be pregnant in the coming years will result in high expenditures, stemming from medical costs, reduced productivity, and the finding and hiring of temporary workers to fulfill the duties while she is out on maternity leave, that is, if she decides to come back.

The biased hiring and attitudes toward pregnant and possibly pregnant women in the workforce still occurs, even after the passing of laws to help diminish the unfairness seen in the workplace today. The first is the Pregnancy Discrimination Act (PDA), which is an amendment added in 1968 to the Civil Rights Act of 1964, which states that discrimination of pregnant employees is against the law. Employers are expected to base

employment and disciplinary actions and decision on the employee's actions and qualification, without taking her pregnancy into account. Several court cases have used a court's interpretation of this law to decide the outcome of a lawsuit. For example, in 1997, actress Hunter TyIo won her case in which she was awarded \$4,000,000 for emotional distress and \$894,600 in lost wages when she claimed she was fired from *Spelling Entertainment* as a result of being pregnant. While the defendant claimed that the role TyIo had been hired to play could no longer be successfully played by TyIo as a result of her pregnancy, the courts sided with the plaintiff. A second regulation passed is the Family Medical Leave Act (FMLA), which grants both men and women to take time off when necessary to care for a family member. This can include children as well as elderly parents who also need care. With the FMLA, a woman or a man is granted twelve weeks of unpaid leave.

One of the major reasons for this discrepancy between the hiring and promotion of women versus men is the perceived difference in effect on the genders when they become parents. Women, unlike men, are perceived to trade competence for warmth, as shown by the stereotype content model (SCM). Essentially, the study demonstrates a phenomenon that has been widely discussed but never proven. It shows that women are discriminated against in the way they are stereotyped as soon as they become pregnant. This study explains for an even more extreme difference between male and female adults with children than those who do not have children. As a result of this unfortunate practice, women who show evidence of having children have an even lower chance of finding work, receiving equal compensation, or becoming promoted than men, including those with children.

Additionally, women have experienced harsh bias in the evaluation of the quality of their work. A 1993 study by Halpert asked undergraduate students in the United States to assess the work of either a pregnant or non-pregnant woman who was completing an evaluation related exercise (Halpert, 1993). Although the recorded performances were identical, the pregnant woman was stereotyped more negatively and discriminated against in comparison to her non-pregnant peer.

The definite differentiation between positions predominantly occupied by men as compared to women seen throughout history continues to be apparent today. The gender composition of jobs today can be related to the common historical notion that women are inferior and less than capable than their male counterparts, resulting in common gender “roles”. Because women have been placed in this category of skill lacking, the positions typically occupied by them have been seen as lacking importance, and almost disposable. Positions typically held by women have come to be called “pink-collar jobs”. These gender-segregated jobs, often secretarial and clerical work, tend to be associated with less power, compensation, and prestige. Not only are these female dominated jobs lacking the power and prestige that come with those professional occupations typically performed by men, they also do not allow for much advancement in the field, often seen as a “dead end” for promotional opportunities.

There is a misconception that the only major ramification to a company that engages in discrimination would be a pricy lawsuit. However, there are many other serious repercussions that come along with this practice. One of the most common consequences of a company that discriminates is the morale of the employees at large. Studies have shown that gender discrimination seriously affects the three major

components of employee behavior that are correlated to job performance: job satisfaction, organizational commitment and citizenship behavior. Not to mention when you discriminate against women and pay women less, it disproportionately affects children as well. An employee's satisfaction with the job is severely damaged in a discriminatory environment, which in turn makes the employee far less productive and may even affect his or her health. Organizational commitment refers to one's loyalty and bond to the company, which is negatively affected when seeing others treated unfairly. Citizenship behavior, or the creation of informal relationships and voluntary participation, is damaged in companies that discriminate. The lack of desire to participate in a higher capacity will damage

One enormous challenge in combating gender discrimination in the workforce is the lack of knowledge on the topic because it has built into our social fabric. Many find it hard to recognize things like "pink collared jobs" as true discrimination. However, the impact of this and other forms of discrimination are undeniable- creating the largely segregated workforce that seems to conflict with the dream of equality and opportunity for all. There is hope for the future of equal employment in our education of the topic. By addressing discrimination for what it truly is rather than just as a phenomenon or coincidence, we can continue to work against it. In addition, the future of our next generation of employees can make an enormous difference if they are educated before entering the workforce. Even at a young age, individuals can understand the harm of discrimination and build careers that will work against this longstanding practice. Increased awareness and resources against gender discrimination can reduce the effects for the next generation.

Sexual Harassment

Once women have successfully found their way into the workforce, and landed a position in their desired organization, other types of discrimination become apparent. Sexual harassment is a very prominent yet under considered example of such discrimination. Coined in the 1970's, sexual harassment can be defined as "unsolicited verbal or physical behavior of a sexual nature...considered offensive by the recipient". The vagueness of this definition, which has been altered due to legislation has led to discrepancies in personal and legal definition. It has been overwhelmingly agreed upon that "sexual harassment is less about sexual desire than about control and domination"(McLaughlin, 2009). Because of this, while a majority of is unreported, most victims of harassment are women, with 84 percent of the 13,867 cases reported to the EEOC in 2008 filed by women (McLaughlin, Uggen, and Blackstone, 2009). Furthermore, a 2009 study by McLaughlin, Uggen and Blackstone found that "the strongest and most consistent finding concerns the greater risk of harassment for women in authority positions (McLaughlin, Uggen, and Blackstone 2009). Women supervisors had the greatest likelihood of experiencing any harassing behaviors, multiple harassing behaviors, and subjectively defining their experiences as harassment". Women with authority and supervisory status were found to be more susceptible to harassment, with their ability to supervise having been questioned by male counterparts. This also comes as a result of hegemonic masculinity, a phenomenon previously mentioned.

Under Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, sexual harassment is considered a form of sexual discrimination. Such harassment on the basis of sex is a violation of Section 703 within said Title VII. Since the previous coining of the term, the United

States Equal Employment Opportunity Commission has come to specify that this “unsolicited verbal or physical behavior” may only be considered sexual harassment if and when it “explicitly or implicitly affects an individual’s employment, unreasonably interferes with an individual’s work performance, or creates an intimidating, hostile, or offensive work environment” (EEOC). This has come to pose issues in considering what determines a “hostile or offensive work environment,” with the requirement of said environment to be “severe or pervasive” to be actionable. Those who file suit and fight for justice are forced to prove that such claimed advances indeed created such an environment. It has been found to be difficult, for one’s definition of such an environment is different, creating subjective opinions. Such a lack of definition only creates an uphill battle for women who are attempting to prove their case and let themselves be at peace knowing that justice was served.

The effects of sexual harassment are vast, spanning from psychological to financial issues. The most significant repercussions of sexual harassment have been found to be psychological. It has been found to lower women’s self-esteem, as well as their relationship with other men. A major aftermath has also been seen to be a significant increase of stress, affecting each woman’s ability to re-immense herself into the world around her. Sexual harassment also affects women’s satisfaction of her position as well as her loyalty and commitment to the organization. Previous studies have found that harassment has not only altered the way women feel about their jobs, but has also has a negative impact on their relationships and feelings towards co-workers and supervisors, now in a hostile and uncomfortable environment. These negative feelings towards the organization and its employees have been seen to create a loss of motivation and an

increase in distractions. Often times women are forced to leave their workplace in order to escape harassment, which can result in significant financial loss.

There are certain fields where this hegemonic masculinity is even more prominent than in others. For example, the military is seen as one industry that is male dominated because of the association with power and strength, traits that have traditionally been seen as masculine. Although there have been huge increases in the number of women serving in the military and military related fields, there are many barriers still faced by women who aim to serve in one of the branches. Many sociologists have studied the subculture to identify the factors that lead to the broad gaps between men and women in the service. In his study about gender divisions in the army, Morris studied the rate and correlation between rape and other violent crimes. He found that, although there were less violent crimes overall, there was a higher relative rate of those that were rape or sexual assault by individuals in the military compared to civilians. In his analysis of the causes, Morris concluded that the “relatively higher rate [of rape compared to other violent crimes] is related to a culture of hypermasculinity associated with military life that includes the objectification and denigration of women” (Rosen, 2003).

Patriarchy

The many inequalities and barriers women face within the workplace maintain a patriarchal society. This type of society is one that has been in place for centuries, in which men are the central authoritative figure, both at a micro and macro level. Literally, patriarchy means “rule of the father” (Ferguson, 1999). Historically, patriarchy was used to refer to the autocratic ruling of a family by the father, however it has evolved into defining the social systems where adult men hold power (Meagher, Michelle). This

power, at a micro level, men are seen as the head and center of a household, while at a macro level, they play the central role of political leadership and decision makers. This overwhelming male domination of our society plays into our political ideology, in which the views of those in power make all decisions and set priorities on behalf of all citizens, overwhelmingly serving the needs of men. It is the male portion of society that benefits by continuing these practices and lack of equality between men and women. Feminists consider this method of ruling as “an unjust social system that is oppressive to women” and “often includes all the social mechanisms that reproduce and exert male dominance over women...characteriz[ing] patriarchy as a social construction” (Tickner, 2001).

Most sociologists “reject predominantly biological explanations of patriarchy and contend that social and cultural conditioning is primarily responsible for establishing male and female gender roles” (Sanderson, 2001). According to sociological theories, patriarchy is a result of social and cultural conditioning, passed on from generation to generation. Men continue to remain in power, resulting in a society aimed at please the male gender. This power spans from political, to occupational and personal aspects of society. Because of this hierarchical system, it can be overwhelmingly seen that it is men who benefit from decisions made. Women must prove themselves as able and competent individuals, whether it be in the workplace or civil suits in which they are fighting for justice.

Conclusion

There are significant fallouts that result from gender discrimination in the workforce on both a macro and micro level. Clearly, practices such as wage gaps, hegemonic masculinity, and sexual assault in the workplace have enormous effects on the

individual level. However, these and other discriminatory practices have macro level effects as well. Sustainable and equal employment of women is the only viable and effective way for any economy to be successful in the global market. Such discriminatory practices not only effect the women themselves, but also effect future generations, who continue to see the inequalities faced by women, and are forced to try and put their knowledge and abilities to use within such a skewed workforce. Having women in the workforce is essential to bringing developing nations out of poverty, by providing opportunities for men and women, bringing diverse opinions to the economy, and meeting the needs of all citizens. The incorporation of women into higher levels of organizations has been proven to be widely beneficial, from the individual to the company itself. Once arriving into significant positions, however, women are constantly mistreated within their workplace. Women have the right to feel comfortable in their workplace, and receive fair pay for their work, a simple liberty that does not match the reality of the modern American economy.

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Brown, D., Brown, D., & Anastopoulos, V. (2002, March 4). Women on Boards: Not Just the Right Thing But the Bright Thing. *Conference Board of Canada*. Retrieved December 2, 2013, from www.europeanpwn.net/files/women_on_boards_canada.pdf

This article clarified the fact that the presence of women on the boards of corporations is not only beneficial to the women themselves but to the corporation as well. It has been found that organizations with more women on their boards are more financially successful than those with fewer.

Compton, M. (2007). The Gender Pay Gap. *Women In Business*, 59(6), 32-34.

This article brings to light the prevalent gender wage gap in today's workplace, which can be seen comparing men and women's salaries of equal positions. It also discusses the passing of The Equal Pay Act of 1963 which prohibited discrimination based on sex when it came to payment and wages. This article was used to help explain and understand the differences still seen in the wages and salaries of women as compared to men, helping prove and solidify our argument of gender discrimination.

Burnette, J. (2009, March 3). H-Net Reviews. *H-Net: Humanities and Social Sciences Online*. Retrieved March 12, 2013, from <http://www.h-net.org/reviews/showrev.php?id=23001>

This article helped us to understand some of the perceived reasons that people use to justify gender discrimination. There are a few theories out there to explain why there are situations like wage gaps or pink collar jobs and this article informed us on some of those.

Correll, S., & Ridgeway, C. (n.d.). Expectation States Theory. *Springer - International Publisher Science, Technology, Medicine*. Retrieved April 10, 2013, from [http://www.springer.com/cda/content/.../cda.../9780387325156-c2.pdf?](http://www.springer.com/cda/content/.../cda.../9780387325156-c2.pdf)

Dixit, S., & Kleiner, B. H. (2005). New developments concerning pregnancy discrimination in the workplace. *Equal Opportunities International*, 24(5-6), 1-14. Retrieved April 14, 2013 from doi:<http://dx.doi.org/10.1108/02610150510788105>

This article gave us an understanding of the prevalence that pregnancy discrimination has had in today's workforce. It explained its rising number of occurrences in the court system.

Halpert, J. (1993, November 21). Pregnancy as a Source of Bias in Performance Appraisals. *Psychology Source*. Retrieved November 14, 2013, from psychsource.bps.org.uk/details/

This was an important article in understanding the type of discrimination that comes from pregnancy. Rather than simply surveying employers or people in industry, this article demonstrated that individuals are prejudicial towards pregnant people unintentionally. Clearly, this bias will also be acted upon in the workforce.

Hunt, G. (1993, June 2). Sex Differences in a Pink-Collar Occupation; *Arudita*; *Relations industrielles* v48 n3 1993, p. 441-460. *Arudit*. Retrieved March 21, 2013, from <http://www.erudit.org/revue/RI/1993/v48/>

This article dives into what have been called “pink-collar jobs,” mainly occupied by women. The article discusses the differences in attitude of men and women that fill these positions. It highlights that pink collar jobs are less appreciated and compensated as oppose to those typically occupied by their male counterparts.

Lindberg, M. (n.d.). Overview of Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 : AAUW: Empowering Women Since 1881. *AAUW: Empowering Women Since 1881*. Retrieved May 4, 2013, from <http://www.aauw.org/resource/title-vii-of-the-civil-rights-act-of-1964/>

This website gives a detailed outline of The Civil Rights Act of 1964 and its components. Included is Title VII, its elements, as well as court cases in which it has been the basis of a litigation. This overview helped give us a foundational understanding of the passed laws helping alleviate the prevalence of workplace discrimination, and what employers are expected to leave out of the hiring and discharging process.

Lockhart, N., & Pergande, J. (2001). WOMEN WHO ANSWERED THE CALL: World War II as a Turning Point for Women in the Workforce. *Journal Of Women's History, 13*(2), 154.

Maru, J. (2012, February 3). The Prevalence of Gender Discrimination in the Workforce. *GoArticles.com*. Retrieved April 16, 2013, from goarticles.com/article/The-Prevalence-of-Gender-Discrimination-in-the-Workplace/6043364/

This article gives a broad overview of gender discrimination in the workplace, including a sweeping definition as well as the most common forms of

discrimination. This was a helpful source in beginning the research and getting a general direction.

McLaughlin, H., Uggen, C., & Blackstone, A. (2012). Sexual Harassment, Workplace Authority, and the Paradox of Power. *American Sociological Review*, 77(4), 625-647. doi:10.1177/0003122412451728

Melymuka, K. (2000). Wanted: A workplace without a `ceiling'. *Computerworld*, 34(4), 50.

Nelson, Colleen McCain. "Poll: Most Women See Bias in the Workplace - WSJ.com." *The Wall Street Journal*. N.p., 12 Apr. 2013. Web. 12 June 2013.

This article helped us to solidify the argument that discrimination against women in the workforce is a prevalent issue faced by millions of women. The article supported our hypothesis with quantitative data from national surveys.

Smith, Jester, JD. "The Prevalence of Gender Discrimination in the Workplace." *Goarticles.com*. N.p., 03 Feb. 2011. Web.

This article talked about the often unseen vast amount and types of discrimination that is present in organizations today. It will help us relate gender discrimination to that of sexual, and the hardships women often face once they have become a part of the organization. It explains that these biased attitudes and actions are not only harmful to the employee, but the employer as well.

Solomon, J. (n.d.). Lilly Ledbetter. *Lilly Ledbetter*. Retrieved April 10, 2013, from

<http://www.lillyledbetter.com/>

This website delves into the famous case of Ledbetter vs. Goodyear Tire and Rubber Co. Ledbetter's difficulty in prosecuting her employer and ineffectiveness of past legislation help to prove that there is much to be done. It discusses the Fair Pay Act and recent legislation about gender equality in the workforce.

Stockdale, M., & Nadler, J. (n.d.). Paradigmatic Assumptions of Disciplinary

Research on Gender Disparities: The Case of Occupational Sex Segregation -

Springer. *Springer*. Retrieved April 12, 2013, from

<http://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s11199-012-0228-1#page-1>

The Wage Gap by Gender & Race Timeline History (White, Black, Hispanic, Men &

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12, 2013, from <http://www.infoplease.com/ipa/A0882775>

This article shed light upon the most recent national data regarding pay gaps. It compared the wage gap by race and by gender, so we were able to compare the cross section that is faced by women who struggle with both racism and sexism.

Tickner, Ann J. (2001). "Patriarchy". *Routledge Encyclopedia of International*

Political Economy: Entries P-Z. Taylor & Francis. pp. 1197–1198.

"Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964." *Overview of*. American Association of University Women, n.d. Web. 03 Dec. 2012.

This website gives a detailed outline of The Civil Rights Act of 1964 and its components. Included is Title VII, its elements, as well as court cases in which it has been the basis of a litigation. This overview helped give us a foundational understanding of the passed laws helping alleviate the prevalence of workplace discrimination, and what employers are expected to leave out of the hiring and discharging process.

WIC - Women's History in America. (n.d.). *Women'TMs International Center* -

Honoring, Encouraging, and Educating Women Around the World at

www.wic.org. Retrieved May 10, 2013, from

<http://www.wic.org/misc/history.htm>

This website talked about the views and attitudes towards women over the years, and the steps and stages of women as they became involved in the workforce. The legal status of women over the years is touched upon as well.

This website helped us create a link from the earlier views on women to the ones still persist today.

Wolgemuth, L. (2009, July 31). Young Women Closing in on Gender Wage Parity - The Inside Job (usnews.com). *Business News and Financial News - US News Business*. Retrieved December 4, 2012, from <http://money.usnews.com/money/blogs/the-inside-job/2009/07/31/young-women-closing-in-on-gender-wage-gap>