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The Way Women Work

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**Abstract**

Literature reviews will establish the general culture surrounding women's experiences in the workforce. Looking to the history of women as a part of the workforce, this paper will attempt to explain how popular opinion in the United States has progressed over time. Then, we will examine the current status of working women in the United States. Research includes insight to the wage gap, negotiations, the hiring process, career disruptions, discrimination, and harassment while examining how gender affects these aspects of working life. At the end, I will make recommendations based on my findings that I believe would benefit working women and help to achieve gender equality in pay and in the workplace as a whole.

### **Introduction**

Despite advances over the last several decades, women continue to face unequal conditions in the workplace. This is often not overt, but comes in the form of passive acts which prevent women from moving up in their areas of responsibility and negotiating for raises and promotions. The role of women in the workplace has changed over time and new policies have been put in place to protect the rights of working women. This paper will look through history to explain the ways in which women's role in the workplace has evolved over time as well as how societal perspectives have changed.

When people worked in the home and in subsistence farms, families were mainly self-sufficient. It was expected of women to do physically laborious work, in addition to nursing and raising multiple children. Only once men and women started working outside of their household did concerns arise about what jobs were appropriate for women or whether it was appropriate for women to work outside the home at all. As the nation's culture changed, so did the perception of women working. Wartime offered a "cultural permission" for women to maintain the jobs left vacant by men who were serving in the armed forces, though once the war ended, women were expected to return to life as it was before (Gini, 1998). The women who fought to keep their jobs faced unfair treatment and considerably lower pay than men working in the same job. The media depicted working women as "despicable" and framed it as though there was something wrong with women who wanted to work.

Even looking in more modern times, women are still restricted by what society considers to be appropriate professions for women to hold. Women are the majority of college graduates,

though they are more likely than men to work part time and to be underpaid in their profession (Women's Bureau). This paper looks to examine what factors have contributed to the culture regarding working women today. In addition, it will look into what working women face today as a result of the cultural stigma that still exists in the United States, then look to make recommendations that could improve the conditions for working women.

## **Section 1: History**

### **Pre-Industrialization**

Historically, women worked the same way men did. In pre-industrial America, work was expected of every able-bodied person (Prieto-Carrón, 2008). Every working person, including children, had economic value. This led to families having as many children as they could. Most women would spend the majority of their adult lives pregnant or nursing an infant that was entirely dependent on its mother and women would still work around the household, including farming and light manufacturing duties (Prieto-Carrón, 2008). Homes were mostly self-sufficient, subsistence farming was the social norm and each household would be responsible only for their own needs. The poorest white women were often indentured servants, while African Americans worked as slaves (Prieto-Carrón, 2008).

### **Industrialization**

Industrialization reduced the number of households reliant on subsistence farming and brought men, women, and children into the workplace. The transition from working at home to

working in factories was natural (Prieto-Carrón, 2008). Jobs in factories required similar work to what was done in the home before; spinning thread, weaving, candle making, soap making, and sewing (Prieto-Carrón, 2008). The majority of working women in the industrial age were young, single women who would work to supplement their family's income and to save up for a more desirable dowry (Prieto-Carrón, 2008). Ordinarily, women would stop working in factories to maintain their household after marriage. Lack of workplace regulations allowed employers to dismiss women who were pregnant (Prieto-Carrón, 2008). However, if they were particularly poor, both the husband and wife might work outside their home. Women worked "unskilled" jobs and were paid less than men, with the justification that women only worked to supplement their husbands' incomes (Prieto-Carrón, 2008). It was more common for immigrant women to work outside of the household than a white New England woman. While only about 3 percent of married white women worked outside the home, 23 percent of married African-American women worked outside the home (Prieto-Carrón, 2008). A significant portion of work done by women was not counted in statistics, since it was done in the home. Likewise, there was a particularly small number of women who held "careers" or lifelong vocations and the number of women with university education was even fewer (Prieto-Carrón, 2008).

### **World War I**

During the first World War, women were recruited to take over for the men who were sent to fight in the war (Anitha and Pearson, 2013). Women who were wives, mothers, and homemakers were trained in jobs traditionally only held by men, including manufacturing for the

military and producing necessary domestic goods to keep the nation running. Women worked in public service, manufacturing, management, and financial positions (Anitha and Pearson, 2013). Munitions factories became the biggest employer of women in 1918 (Anitha and Pearson, 2013). During the war, however, the working women were paid less than when men held the same positions. Thus began some of the earliest demands for equal wages (Anitha and Pearson, 2013). Following the end of the war, the men returned home and returned to their jobs (Gini, 1998). Some women were relieved to go back to life as it was, however, many women were resistant to give up their newfound responsibility and independence. Women were either removed from their positions outright or allowed to work alongside men, but made considerably lower wages (Anitha and Pearson, 2013). This soon led to strikes for equal wages. The war acted as a sort of “cultural permission” for women to hold jobs outside the home (Gini, 1998). During the war, the media depicted women working as the honorable and necessary thing to do while the men were at war. After the war ended, however, media called women back home to be wives and mothers. “*Esquire* magazine called working wives a “menace,” and *Life* termed married women’s employment a “disease,”” (Gini, 1998).

## **World War II**

With the start of the second World War, women picked up men’s jobs as they did in the first. Also, approximately 350 thousand women served in the armed forces during World War II (Anitha and Pearson, 2013). The start of the war changed the type of work and the amount of work women did, with 5 million women entering the workforce between 1940 and 1945 (Gini,

1998). Prior to World War II, only about 25% of American women worked outside the home, and the start of the war allowed for women to work in traditionally male fields (Gini, 1998). The war also opened up opportunities for employment to married women and women with children, who would ordinarily only work at home. To aid the balance of working life and motherhood, per the recommendation of the First Lady, President Franklin Delano Roosevelt approved the first US government childcare facilities under the Community Facilities Act of 1942 (Michals, 2017). Though these centers did not meet the needs of working mothers, they were the beginning of discussions that would make working parenthood possible.

### **Post-WWII**

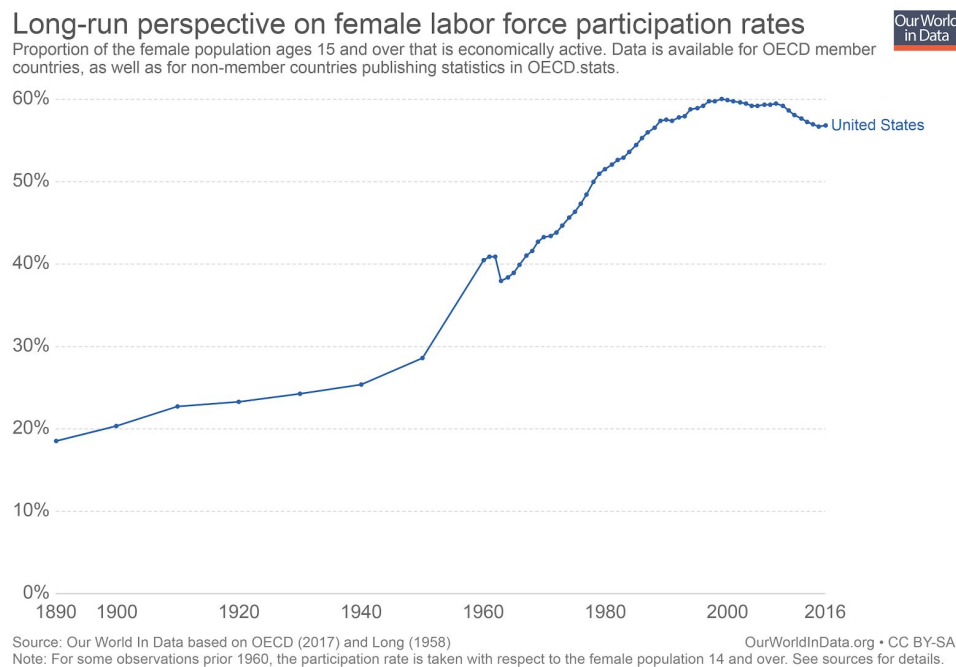
After the war, women were pushed back into their roles in the home (Anitha and Pearson, 2013). Even after the layoffs following the war, approximately 32 percent of women were working outside of their homes by 1950, about half of those were married women. Following the war, birth rates soared far beyond what was expected. Adults who were in child-bearing age after World War II and had survived the Great Depression and the second World War turned to family for a sense of normalcy and hope for the future (Goldin, 1991). May (1988) points out "Americans turned to the family as a bastion of safety in an insecure world... cold war ideology and the domestic revival [were] two sides of the same coin." Gender roles ruled cultural norms in the mid-twentieth century. From popular culture to psychologists, women who wanted to work were referred to as "unlovely women," "lost," "suffering from penis envy," "ridden with guilt complexes," and "man-hating," according to Cowan (1983). In the 1960s, the American economy

was doing so well it was possible for most middle class families to live comfortably on a single income. Despite this, figures show that more married women were in the labor force than ever before (Goldin, 1991). Women in the mid-twentieth century struggled to find their place in the workforce. Though legislation for equal pay passed in 1963, that did not solve the problem of low wages and stigma surrounding what jobs were considered to be “feminine” (Walsh, 2010).

### 1970s to 1990s

**Figure #1**

*Long-run perspective on female labor force participation– OurWorldinData.org (2017)*



As seen in Figure 1, during the 1970s, many women joined or returned to the workforce and the numbers have climbed since then (EEOC, 1972). With urbanization, as technology improved, the requirements of maintaining a home was changed (Blau, Ferber, and Winkler,



2014). Groceries were purchased at a store and the food would be cooked in a gas or electric oven (Blau, Ferber, and Winkler, 2014). Expectations for how a home should be maintained evolved as well (Blau, Ferber, and Winkler, 2014). Additionally, technology like vacuum cleaners and washing machines made the work to be done easier and more time efficient (Blau, Ferber, and Winkler, 2014). By the 1970s, improvements to technology reduced the number of hours spent on housework each week, which had been relatively unchanged from the early 1900s to the 1960s (Blau, Ferber, and Winkler, 2014). The evolution to the way housework was done gave many women more time and enabled them to join the workforce in a way they had been unable to before.

The Equal Employment Opportunity Act of 1972 gave the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) authority to press charges in federal courts when there is reason to believe that there has been employment discrimination based on race, color, religion, sex, or national origin (EEOC, 1972). “From 1972 to 1985, women's share of professional jobs increased from 44 to 49 percent and their share of "management" jobs nearly doubled growing from 20 to 36 percent,” (Guilder, 1986). Professional careers like lawyers and financial management saw an increase of women from 9% in 1960 to 39% in 1983. Similarly, blue-collar work saw an increase in female employment by the 1980's, with more women choosing to work jobs like bartenders and butchers (Guilder, 1986). Likewise, occupations that were traditionally feminine experienced a shift that brought in more male workers. For example, reports by The Atlantic state that by 1970 there were 10 thousand male flight attendants working (Guilder, 1986). By 1985, half of the college graduates were women, with close to one third of all degrees

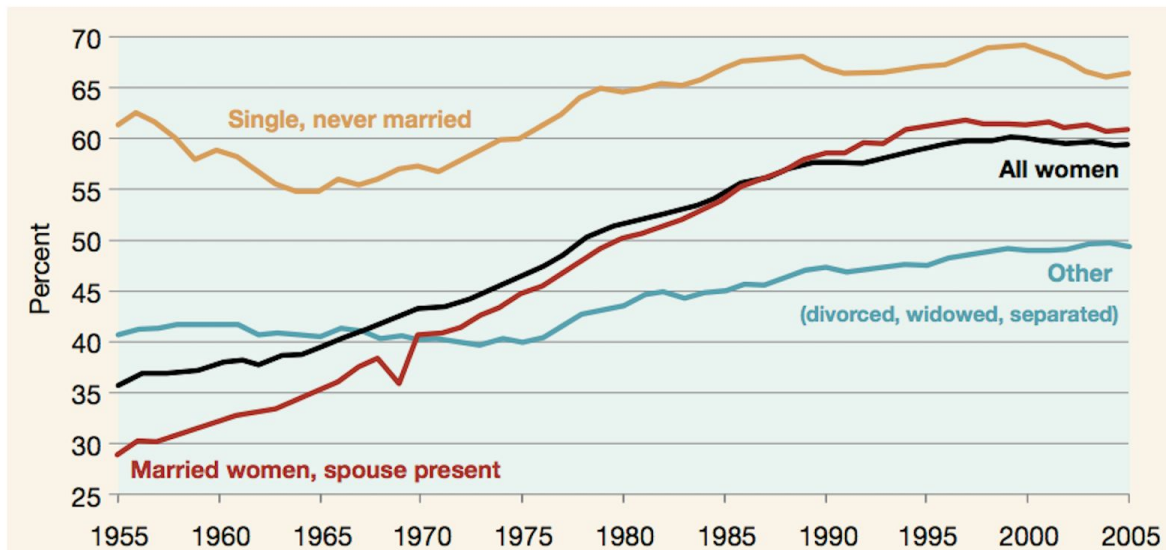
held by women in law, business, accounting, and computer and information sciences. (Guilder, 1986). Though work-force participation by married women ages 25 to 44 increased dramatically—from 26 percent in 1950 to approximately 67 percent in the mid-1980s, the number of working single, never married women in this age range did not change significantly since the 1950s. As of 1984, only 37% of all women between the ages of 20 and 64 and 29% of married women held year-round, full time jobs. Married women contributed only about 18% of their family's income (Guilder). These statistics likely represent women holding jobs that allow them to schedule around a family, exemplifying how the job preferences of married women at the time was considerably different than married men. Working women expressed a preference for part-time over full-time work, according to a poll in 1980 (Guilder). Guilder says:

The gap in earnings between married men and women still widens dramatically as age and schooling increase. As of 1983 married women with a graduate education earned 11 percent less than married men with a high school education. However, single women who work full-time year-round have long earned about as much as their single male peers. Therefore, the pattern of low earnings by highly qualified wives seems a reflection more of personal choice than of discrimination against women (par. 13).

Though Guilder qualifies the wage gap as being a personal preference, this does not reflect the cultural norms, which still supported that males should be the primary earner in a family. A study in 1979 by the Brookings Institution showed that women in their prime earning years were eleven times more likely to leave the workforce voluntarily than men were (Blau, 2016). Data from the Bureau of Labor Statistics in 1986 indicated that women work only 70 percent as long

for a given employer as men did (Institute for Women's Policy Research, 2014). Maternity plays some part in this, however, it cannot account for every case. Guilder's 1986 article says that it is the choice of women to leave their occupations, if for any reason other than temporary maternity leave. The phrasing in the 1986 article reiterates the popular sentiment of the times, which was to explain away any gender inequalities as personal choice, rather than looking into the culture that guided women toward staying home after their children were born, calling it tradition and enforcing the gender roles that had existed for generations. As seen on the next page, Figure 2 shows the discrepancies in the amounts of working women by their marital status, from 1955 through 2005. There are consistently more single, never married women working, though around 1970 the gap began to narrow when more married women began working as well (Engemann and Owyang, 2006).

Labor Force Participation of Women in the USA, 1955-2005



Data source: Data from 1955 to 1975 come from the US Census Bureau, Statistical Abstract of the United States, 2003. Data from 1976 to 2005 come from the Bureau of Labor Statistics

Figure #2

*Labor force participation of women in the US, by marital status – Engemann & Owyang (2006)*

## **Section 2: Current Status for Working Women**

Popular sentiments about women working in the United States are largely divided. Research by the Pew Research Center shows that the division in opinion can be correlated to a person's political perspective. Their 2017 study shows that 69 percent of Democrats interviewed believe that more should be done to help women achieve equal rights to men, while 54 percent of Republicans thought that enough has been done already. "Among Democrats and Republicans, more see an upside for women than for men as women have taken on a greater role in the workplace and men have assumed more responsibility for child care and housework, but Democrats are far more likely than Republicans to see benefits flowing from this societal shift," (Horowitz, Parker, and Stepler, 2017). Data from the United States Department of Labor shows that as of 2016, women make up 46.8 percent of the civilian labor force (US Department of Labor, 2019). This number has increased over time from 1948, when census data showed only 28.6 percent of the workforce being made up of female employees (Department of Labor, 2019). Data also shows that women whose youngest child is under three years old make up the smallest amount of working mothers, and women with school-age children, six to seventeen years old, make up 75 percent of working mothers (Department of Labor, 2019). The annual averages of numbers of working parents in 2016 show that women are over five times as likely to be employed part time if they have a child under the age of 18 years old, with 4.4 percent of fathers employed part time and 23.7 percent of mothers employed part time (Department of Labor,

2019). Data from 2018 measuring the gender-based ratios of median weekly earnings based on full-time workers found that female employees are earning 81.1 percent of what male employees earn (Department of Labor, 2019). In 2016, data from the US Bureau of Labor Statistics found that most families in the United States (64.7 percent) have both parents working and it is four times more likely that if only one parent is employed, it is the father (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2017). Women tend to be the primary parent to care for children and men are more frequently the primary earner in the family. This unequal sharing of responsibility is limiting women in their careers and reducing their earning potential once they rejoin the workforce.

### **Section 3: Current Issues**

In this section, we discuss current issues, starting with the wage gap. Next, we will look at several factors that may contribute to the unexplained portion of the gap, including the confidence and ability to negotiate, the hiring process, career disruptions, and discrimination and harassment. Figure 3 shows a breakdown of known causes for the wage gap. Some of the biggest differences in pay can come from occupation and industry categories. Wage discrepancies from industry and occupation can be seen in the tradition of women working in administrative and supportive positions or service jobs (Blau and Winkler, 2018). Women, however, are becoming less concentrated in administrative roles that are traditionally considered feminine; numbers have declined from 31 percent of women held administrative jobs in 1970 to 20 percent in 2011 and 18.5 percent in 2015 (Blau and Winkler, 2018). Additionally, while education has had an impact

on reducing the gender wage gap, labor force experience accounts for over 14 percent of the gap in wages (Blau and Winkler, 2018).

**Figure 3**

**TABLE 10-1** CONTRIBUTION TO THE WAGE DIFFERENTIAL BETWEEN MEN AND WOMEN OF DIFFERENCES IN MEASURED CHARACTERISTICS, 2010

CHARACTERISTICS	PERCENT EXPLAINED
Educational Attainment	-5.9
Labor Force Experience	14.1
Race	4.3
Region	0.3
Occupational Category	32.9
Industry Category	17.6
Union Status	-1.3
Unexplained	38.0
Total	100.0
[Wage Differential (%)]	[20.7]

Source: Francine D. Blau and Lawrence M. Kahn, "The Gender Wage Gap: Extent, Trends, and Explanations," NBER Working Paper 21913 (January 2016) [*Journal of Economic Literature*, forthcoming], Table 4.

### The Wage Gap

As of 2018, 58.9 percent of women were in the United States workforce (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2019). The gender earnings ratio (women's earnings as a percentage of men's) for full-time, year-round employees has improved from 60.2 percent in 1980 to 80 percent in 2017 (American Association of University Women, 2018). Women make up 62 percent of minimum wage earners (US Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2019). Women's earnings have generally increased since 1980, narrowing the gender wage gap, largely due to increased levels of education and professional experience (Women's Bureau). According to the Institute for Women's Policy Research, in 2017, the median annual earnings of women working full-time,

year-round were \$41,977 compared with men's \$52,146 (2018). This means that women earned only 79.6 cents for each dollar earned by a man for full-time, year round work, corresponding to a gender wage gap of 20.4 percent (Department of Labor). Studies by the US Department of Labor show that though men's median earnings have been relatively constant since 1980, women's median earnings have been rising, reflecting increased labor-force participation and higher levels of education. Women's higher earnings also reflect improvements in access to better jobs, which may be due in part to changes in federal laws, including Title VII of the Civil Rights Act and Executive Order 11246, Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972, the Pregnancy Discrimination Act of 1978, and the Family and Medical Leave Act of 1993 (Women's Bureau). Figure 4 shows a breakdown of the gender wage gap by education level, as found by Payscale (Payscale, 2018). Even after controlling education levels, the wage gap exists. Men and women with equal education are still found to be paid unequally, both in data that is controlled for job title and number of years experience and in the uncontrolled data, which looks at the education level as a whole (Payscale, 2018). The gender wage gap does not reduce as one's education increases, though education on a whole is helping to reduce the gender wage gap.

**Figure 4**

*Pay Gap by Education Level– PayScale.com (2018)*

EDUCATION LEVEL	UNCONTROLLED GENDER PAY GAP	CONTROLLED GENDER PAY GAP
No Degree	\$0.827	\$0.971
High School Diploma or GED	\$0.813	\$0.978
Associate's Degree	\$0.836	\$0.977
Bachelor's Degree	\$0.888	\$0.982
Master's Degree (non-MBA)	\$0.770	\$0.978
Master of Business Administration (MBA)	\$0.741	\$0.964
Law Degree	\$0.870	\$0.967
Health Professional	\$0.765	\$0.968
Doctorate	\$0.801	\$0.971

Studies have identified a number of factors that account for some of the difference in women's and men's earnings. These factors include women's greater likelihood to reduce or leave paid work to care for children or adult family members (Mandel, 2014). A recent study of income followed a cohort of women and men across a 30-year period from 1980 to 2010 (Women's Bureau). The study found that differences in occupations and industry of employment explained nearly all of the difference in women's and men's earnings (Women's Bureau). In other words, nearly one-third of the gap in earnings is due to the tendency for women to work in different occupations from men, and that the occupations which have higher numbers of female workers have lower earnings than those in which most workers are male (Women's Bureau). For instance, while both are supervisory positions, a corporate manager in human resources would likely earn more than a restaurant manager (Women's Bureau). Discrepancies in time spent out of work was found to account for 14.1 percent of the overall gap in earnings (Women's Bureau). Still, after identifying differences like industry, occupation, and education differences, as seen in Figure 3, 38 percent of the wage gap is unaccounted for (Blau, Ferber, and Winkler, 2014).



Next we turn to a detailed investigation of factors which may account for the unexplained portion of the wage gap.

### **Negotiation**

Research shows that behaviors surrounding negotiation may explain some of the 38 percent of the wage gap which is currently unaccounted for (Blau, Ferber, and Winkler, 2014). Women are less likely than men to negotiate or question salaries suggested to them by their employer or manager when individual wage negotiations are not explicitly encouraged (Women's Bureau). However, when women negotiate more aggressively, so as to equal their male counterparts, they may be viewed more negatively (Bowles, 2007). Bowles (2007) shows that the social cost of negotiation is statistically significant for women, while it is not significant for men (Bowles, 2007). It has been found that, socially, it is preferred when women advocate assertively for others and research shows that women perform better by negotiating higher salaries on behalf of others than themselves (Bowles, 2007). Negotiation is an especially important skill to have and feel successful when using, since the effects of a low salary can be felt even after changing jobs, as many jobs have used an applicant's last salary as a reference point when making an offer (Women's Bureau). This practice has been made impermissible by the Supreme Court ruling on *Yovino v. Rizo* on April 9th, 2018 (National Law Review, 2019). Six judges supported the stance that employers should not pay female workers less than their male counterparts just because the women earned lower wages in their previous jobs (National Law Review, 2019). The ruling now leads to questions about the Equal Pay Act, which permits pay disparities if they are based on a factor other than sex (National Law Review, 2019).

Hopefully this ruling will lead to continued discussion and updates to legislation regarding equal pay in the United States.

### **Hiring Process**

One of the most significant areas of gender inequality during the hiring process is that men tend to approach the hiring process with more confidence than women. Men will often apply for a position if they meet 60 percent of qualifications, while women typically will not apply unless they meet 100 percent of listed qualifications (Coffman, Exley, and Niederle, 2018). When an applicant is confident in their experience and abilities, they are more likely to present as competent and qualified, where an applicant that feels they are underqualified will be more likely to underrepresented themselves (Coffman, Exley, and Niederle, 2018). This can lead to the more timid applicant being passed over for more senior positions, while a self-assured applicant with equal qualifications would be more likely to get the job and a higher paying salary. Research shows that anxiety is more likely to manifest in females and that females are likely to have difficulty controlling negative emotions (McLean and Anderson, 2009).

The study found that traditionally masculine fields have job descriptions with more male-centered phrasing and that the percentage of males working in the industry positively correlated to the amount of masculine phrasing in job descriptions (Gaucher, et al, 2011). This study also found that regardless of whether an occupation was traditionally held by males or females, women found the job posting more desirable when the description used less male-centric phrasing (Gaucher, et al, 2011). This can be seen in the industries and occupations

with higher concentration of women. For instance, in 2018, only 4.8 percent of Fortune 500 chief executive officers were female, which is even lower than 2017, when that number was 6.4 (Zarya, 2018). On average, women are perceived as more communally oriented and relationship based than men, whereas men are more frequently attributed to have traits associated with leadership (Gaucher, et al, 2011). Women prefer to see phrasing relating to soft-skills, like the word “dedicated”, in job postings and job listings that use gender-neutral phrasing have been found to receive more applicants than postings with gendered wording (Coffman, Exley, and Niederle, 2018). When interviewing, women who describe themselves with traditionally feminine attributes are often seen as less qualified, for instance, men are more likely to say they are assertive, while women are more likely to say they are supportive (Coffman, Exley, and Niederle, 2018). In addition to the words men and women choose, candidates often show differing body language when interviewing. Typical masculine posture, such as the self-assuredness to take up more space, may tell the interviewer that the candidate is more confident and more competent to do the job, though it is entirely unrelated to one’s actual qualifications (McLean and Anderson, 2009). The effects of the gap in confidence between genders can also be seen in a woman’s likelihood to receive promotions and negotiate successfully. Because males tend to present more confidently, it can be challenging for females to present themselves in a way that showcases their abilities for promotions (McLean and Anderson, 2009).

### **Career Disruptions and Parental Leave**

According to PayScale (2018), women who experience career disruptions tend to be more negatively impacted than men. Likewise, the reasons for taking a break from the workforce are usually different for men and women (Payscale, 2018). The longer the career disruption, the greater the penalty to their wages. Women more likely take longer breaks from employment than men, both to care for children as well as other family members (Payscale, 2018). Payscale also found that women are also more likely to be unemployed due to a relocation, which reinforces Guilder's (1986) statement that women place priority on their spouse's job above their own careers (Payscale, 2018). Women are five times more likely than men to take breaks from working for child rearing, and these breaks in employment are more likely to last more than a year, leaving women particularly hurt by the unemployment penalty which is reflected in the gender pay gap (Payscale, 2018).

### **Discrimination and Harassment**

Sex or gender discrimination is treating individuals differently in their employment specifically because an individual is a woman or a man (Workplace Fairness). Pregnancy discrimination also is a form of sex based discrimination (Workplace Fairness). Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 is a federal law that protects individuals from discrimination based upon sex (Workplace Fairness). Title XII makes it illegal for an employer to discriminate against individuals in hiring, firing, and other terms and conditions of employment, such as promotions, raises, and other job opportunities because of their sex (Workplace Fairness). Title XII as well as the Equal Pay Act make it illegal to discriminate based on sex with regard to an

employee's wages and benefits (Workplace Fairness). These laws cover all forms of compensation including salary, overtime pay, bonuses, stock options, profit sharing and bonus plans, life insurance, vacation and holiday pay, cleaning or gasoline allowances, hotel accommodations, reimbursement for travel expenses, and medical benefits. The Equal Pay Act looks at the requirements of each job, not job title, with regard to determining pay. Men and women are required to be paid equally for equal work in the same position (Workplace Fairness). Equal work is defined as having substantially equal skill, effort, and responsibility in comparable positions (Workplace Fairness). While Title XII required proof of discriminatory intent, the Equal Pay Act does not require proof of intent (Workplace Fairness). Likewise, though it may cost different amounts for an employer to provide benefits to men and women, it is illegal for an employer to offer different benefits to employees based on sex (Workplace Fairness). "Employers are also not allowed to condition benefits available to employees and their spouses and families on whether the employee is the "head of the household" or "principal wage earner" in the family unit, since that status bears no relationship to job performance and discriminatorily affects the rights of women employees," (Workplace Fairness).

In 1978, the Pregnancy Discrimination Act was passed as an amendment to Title XII. Under the law, pregnancy and related medical conditions are considered a temporary disability (Workplace Fairness). Title VII prohibits employers from treating pregnant women differently from other temporarily sick, injured or disabled employees (Workplace Fairness). Parental status is not protected under federal law, however several states are making it illegal to discriminate based on an employee's parental status (Workplace Fairness).

Sexual harassment is a form of sex discrimination that violates Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 (Workplace Fairness). The Equal Employment Opportunity Commission is the federal agency responsible for investigating charges of job discrimination related to sex in workplaces of 15 or more employees (Workplace Fairness). Equal Employment Opportunity Commission guidelines define sexual harassment as unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, and other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature when employment is conditional of the victim's submission, whether explicit or implicitly stated (Workplace Fairness). Sexual harassment tends to fall in one of two categories, quid pro quo harassment and hostile work environment harassment (Workplace Fairness). Quid pro quo harassment occurs when a supervisor demands sex, sexual favors, or sexual contact from an employee as a condition of their employment (Workplace Fairness). In a quid pro quo case, the harasser must be someone in a position of authority, however, in hostile work environments, the harasser can be a supervisor, a coworker, or someone who is not an employee, like a customer or client (Workplace Fairness).

According to the Pew Research Center, 49 percent of women who say their workplace is mostly male report that sexual harassment is a problem where they work (Parker, 2018). Only 32 percent of women say sexual harassment is an issue in workplaces where there are more females than males (Parker, 2018). Women are three times as likely to report their gender has made it harder for them to get ahead at work (Parker, 2018). Of women who say they work mainly with other women, 13 percent say their gender has made it harder for them to succeed at work (Parker, 2018). However, 34 percent of women who say they work mainly with men say their

gender has had a negative impact (Parker, 2018). Among those who work in a more gender-balanced environment, 19 percent say their gender has made it harder for them to succeed (Parker, 2018). Overall, women are more likely than men to report experiencing less support from their superiors, as well as being passed over for desirable assignments, and even earning less money than a male colleague in the same occupation (Parker, 2018).

#### **Section 4: Conclusions and Recommendations**

Discriminatory practices which keep women out of higher earning positions leads to economic inefficiency in which companies are not utilizing their assets to their full potential. A company's employees are an asset and by investing in their employees' success businesses will see more positive results from their employees. When gender is not a requirement for higher level positions, the company's candidate pool increases, allowing for more competition and more options to select the best candidate for the job. With more employee satisfaction, businesses will see increases in collaboration, creativity, and company loyalty (Dimaria, Peroni, and Sarracino, 2019). On average, companies that have more diversity and manage it well tend to reach better financial results than others. Companies with the highest numbers of women on their board of directors have been found to outperform companies with the least women on their board of directors by 16 percent for return on sales and 26 percent for return on invested capital (Wagner, 2011). Likewise, companies which have had long-term high representation of high numbers of women on their board of directors outperform companies that have long-term low numbers of

women on their board of directors by 84 percent for return on sales and 60 percent for return on invested capital (Wagner, 2011).

In the workplace, women have experienced different treatment than men since people began working outside of the home at the time of industrialization. Though legislature has been improved to better protect workers and societal opinions about women working have grown more supportive over time, women continue to face unequal wages and unequal treatment at work. Controlling for certain factors can help explain some of the continued issues contributing to unequal earnings, but still, 38 percent of the wage gap is not explained (Blau, Ferber, and Winkler, 2014).

Much of the the unexplained portion may be explained by behaviors that are typically masculine being perceived as showing an employee's competence and capability as a worker (Women's Bureau). Aggressiveness and persistence when negotiating for a higher salary or a promotion will often positively benefit a male, but can have detrimental effects for a female (Bowles, 2007). Likewise, it has been found that women are best perceived when negotiating on behalf of someone else (Bowles, 2007). These social perceptions regarding a woman's assertive behavior are only rooted in what society determines is the norm for female behavior, but this can have a negative impact on a woman's career, since she may not see positive results when advocating for herself.

Gender differences can be seen during the hiring process, as well. Men are statistically more likely to apply for a job for which they only meet some of the qualifications, while women tend not to apply unless they meet all qualifications (Gaucher, et al, 2011). Women are also more



likely to describe their “soft skills” in an interview, which may lead to them appearing less qualified (Coffman, Exley, and Niederle, 2018). Confidence plays a role in an employee’s work experience when being considered for a position, a promotion, or a raise and the gap in confidence seen between men and women may contribute to the gap in earnings.

Career disruptions are more likely to have a negative effect on women, as they are more likely to be unemployed for over a year (Payscale, 2018). Women are more likely than men to be unemployed or underemployed to care for another person (Payscale, 2018). Likewise, men are less likely than women to take the entirety of their offered parental leave (Payscale, 2018). The discrepancy in treatment regarding long-term leave and unemployment for childcare may contribute to the wage gap since women frequently put their career on hold when they become parents. Some of this is choice, however, some find it is a necessity as parents do not share responsibility in the home and at work equally.

Laws are in place to prevent gender-based discrimination and harassment in the workplace. These laws include the Equal Pay Act, which makes it illegal to discriminate based on sex with regard to an employee’s wages and benefits, and Title XII, which makes it illegal for an employer to discriminate against individuals in hiring, firing, and other terms and conditions of employment, such as promotions, raises, and other job opportunities because of their sex (Workplace Fairness). Gender discrimination can be seen in all industries, but it especially heavy in workplaces where men outnumber women (Parker, 2018). Workplace discrimination has been reported to lead to women being passed over for desirable assignments and promotions, as well

as lower wages and less support from supervisors, when compared to male colleagues (Parker, 2018).

The cultural stigma surrounding working women has become more positive over time, however equality has not yet been achieved. Based on these findings, small changes to workplace culture by employers and employees can help to improve conditions for working women. Employers should review and reassess descriptions of position requirements. Job descriptions using gendered language have been found to attract fewer applicants than one which uses gender-neutral phrasing, leading to lower diversity and inclusion (Gaucher, et al, 2011). Position descriptions are often the first communication an employee will receive from their employer. Consideration for inclusion from the beginning of the employment process will lead to employees feeling more invested in the company throughout their employment. Employers can also utilize training to help employees recognize personal biases which can interfere at work.

Diversity training elevates a person's knowledge of others. Training would give employees an opportunity to educate others about their own identities as well as learn about those that are different. By recognizing differences, the company can work toward being more understanding of those who are different. Integrating discussions about improving conditions of inclusivity would help to shape the company culture to create a lasting change.

Ensuring equal opportunities for all employees works to increase the numbers of women in higher ranking positions, reducing the wage gap, and encouraging women to return to work after an extended leave. All employees should be evaluated regularly and fairly, with

opportunities for promotion based on merit. Employees, especially in corporate positions, should be encouraged to find mentors and opportunities to do so should be equal for all employees.

Men can contribute to women achieving equality in the workplace by taking parental leave. Men and women alike are offered parental leave, but men are less likely to use all the time they are offered and are more likely to return to work after taking leave. When men utilize their leave, it normalizes women taking parental leave too. When parents of either gender are using the leave they are offered, stigma regarding women taking extended leave is lessened. Under the law, pregnancy and related medical conditions are treated as a temporary disability, though it is not always treated as such in the workplace. Subsidized child care or onsite child care would benefit working parents, women especially, as women are statistically more likely to quit their job or reduce their hours to care for a child (Payscale, 2018).

All employers are held to the same standards of preventing and handling discrimination and harassment in the workplace by Title VII and the Equal Pay Act, among other state and federal legislation. In addition to this, employers should institute company policy in regards to discrimination and harassment. Maintaining a culture in the workplace that does not tolerate discrimination empowers women and other minorities to feel comfortable at work, while also giving others the knowledge to stand up for someone rather than staying quiet about issues of discrimination.

Making gender inequality a concern for men and women encourages more discussion about improvements to be made. Education is vital to reducing exclusionary behavior. The workplace has great opportunities for education through employee orientations, training, and

professional development programs. Providing opportunities to further employees' education throughout their employment imbeds the importance of diversity in the workplace culture.

Creating a culture that is inclusive allows employees to reach their potential with the company.

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