

Work

Today's women are giving men a run for their money. Two-thirds say a high-paying job is important to them, compared with 56 percent of men.² And yet, in early 2018, the median weekly income for women with college degrees was \$1,022; for comparable men, it was \$1,358.³ Even among the most high-achieving young people, men's pay outpaces women's. A study of Harvard grads, for example, found that men entering the finance industry were four times more likely than women to report a starting salary of more than \$110,000.⁴ Likewise, among Harvard grads going into technology and engineering jobs, 79 percent of men reported a salary of more than \$90,000, compared with 44 percent of women. This gap in pay only gets wider over time: women in their early twenties earn \$0.96 for every dollar earned by men, but by the time they're in their fifties and sixties, they're earning just \$0.74.⁵

This difference in male and female earnings persists despite women's eagerness to earn and federal laws designed to guarantee equality, which led us to ask:

Q+A

If women now have equal rights in the workplace, why aren't they as successful as men at work?

I'm Cheryl. Fly me to the Sunshine States of America.

You think I'm just another pretty face? I'm not.

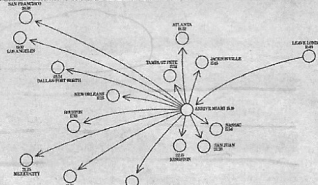
I'm a fresh attitude towards air travel to the States. A refreshingly honest definition of who we are, why we're special, and what we're doing to be even better.

Here's who we are: We're Cheryl (me), and Margie and Linda and Laura and Jo. And a lot of people behind the scenes, like Bob and Tom and Ron and Lee. (They're not just pretty faces either.)

And here's what we're doing (and why we're special): We're helping nice people (hopefully you) go to nice places in the Sunshine States of America, like Miami and other warm places in Florida and the Caribbean and Latin America, plus New Orleans and Houston and Los Angeles and San Francisco. We're helping nice people have fun en route, too: with movies* and stereo* and delicious meals, and just being left alone, if that's what you want.

The way we figure it: the more we like you, the more you'll like us. It's that simple.

So we're not just a bunch of people. We're an airline. And you can call us by our first name: National.



Fly Cheryl. Fly National Airlines.

For reservations call your travel agent or National Airlines, 51 Piccadilly, London, W1. (01 639 8171).

*Movies and stereo by the Flight Motion Picture, Inc. Available at reduced charge. *National licenses American Express, Barclaycard, Carte Blanche, Diners Club, UATP, our own card and cash.

This ad for National Airlines of London from the 1960s invites readers to "fly Cheryl."

This chapter gets up close and personal with occupations and earnings. Drawing on data from the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, it explains how paid work is gendered in ways that affirm difference and entrench inequality. It considers how the U.S. economy is specifically structured to produce big winners and big losers, and how this model hurts people of all genders, but carries an extra punch for women. Some of the disadvantage, we'll see, is due to simple discrimination against women, but it also involves the tendency for jobs to be predominantly male or female, the different value attributed to men's and women's work, the challenge of being both a good parent and a good worker, and employers' beliefs about mothers and fathers.

So buckle up, put your seatbacks and tray tables in their full upright and locked position, and direct your attention to the flight attendant.

THE CHANGING WORKPLACE

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"Next to being a Hollywood movie star, nothing was more glamorous," said a starry-eyed stewardess in 1945.⁶ World War II was over and women were being pushed out of the workforce, but flight attendants were embarking on a new adventure. Only about 10 percent of Americans had ever flown and most were afraid to do so.⁷ Stewardesses were certifiably adventurous. They took risks, saw the world, and rubbed elbows with the elite: their passengers. As historian Kathleen Barry contends: "Few women journeyed as regularly or as far from home, or came into contact with the rich and famous as often, as a typical stewardess did."⁸

Airlines hired women whom they believed represented ideal femininity. Chosen for their beauty and poise, and almost exclusively from among the white, educated, and slender, they were as much of an icon as Miss America.

The promise of a fresh-faced, kind, and accommodating stewardess was a staple of airline advertising. As one of America's sweethearts, she also appeared in commercials for products from soft drinks to cigarettes.

By the 1960s, airlines were in the "business of female spectacle," unabashedly selling women's attractiveness to customers.⁹ Perhaps most famous was the National Airlines campaign in which stewardesses saucily invited passengers to "Fly Me."¹⁰ Their advertising included the guarantee "We'll Fly You Like You've Never Been Flown Before." Feminists later replied, "Go Fly Yourself, National!" *KEY**

The strategy of sexual objectification was industrywide: Continental stewardesses pledged, "We Really Move Our Tails for You"; Air Jamaica promised, "We Make You Feel Good All Over"; Air France replied, "Have You Ever Done It the French Way?"; Braniff Airlines asked their male passengers, "Does Your Wife Know You're Flying with Us?"; TWA offered flights with stewardesses of exotic nationalities; and Pacific Southwest Airlines riffed on their acronym, having flight attendants wear buttons that said "Pure, Sober, and Available."¹¹ Uniforms followed suit: mini-skirts, short shorts, and go-go boots.

Still, it wasn't all fun and hot pants. Standards of appearance were strict.¹² Disqualifications and dismissals were issued for big feet, chubby legs, poor posture, the wrong haircut, glasses, acne, short nails, imperfect teeth, not wearing makeup, or any supposed flaw the recruiters identified. They claimed their objections to broad noses, coarse hair, and full lips were race-neutral, but, of course, they were not.¹³ When first hired in the 1970s after multiple court battles, African American flight attendants were expected to straighten their hair. A ban on "hook noses" was used to exclude Jewish women.

Women were required to wear girdles and submit to routine weigh-ins and measurement of their busts, waists, hips, and thighs. They were fired if they gained weight. "You run a \$1.5 billion business," said a United Airlines official, "and it boils down to whether some chicks look good in their uniforms. If you have fat stewardesses, people aren't going to fly with you."¹⁴ Airlines also terminated the employment of women who got married, became pregnant, or reached *KEY**



In the 1960s and 1970s, airlines sexualized their stewardesses to attract a mostly male customer base. As part of this effort, Southwest Airlines flight attendants were required to wear hot pants and leather go-go boots.

Gendered discrimination

their early thirties. A manager once told a group of flight attendants: "If you haven't found a man to keep you by the time you're twenty-eight, then TWA won't want you either."¹⁵

* Stewardesses also faced routine sexual harassment. Airlines marketed them as available sex partners and then instructed them that the customer was always right.¹⁶ African American flight attendants faced their own unique version; some of the overwhelmingly white customers were hostile racists, but others would proposition them for a "black experience."¹⁷

Meanwhile, female flight attendants were among the most poorly paid employees in the airline industry. They were paid a third of what pilots earned and two-thirds the wages of the mostly male ground workers. They were also paid significantly less than the few male flight attendants; at Pan Am, for example, men earned 140 percent of a female flight attendant's salary. Men also enjoyed promotions, more responsibility, nicer accommodations on layovers, larger pensions, greater scheduling flexibility, and more sick leave. Plus, they didn't face weigh-ins, girdles, or forced retirements.

KEY Then 1964 happened. Stewardesses filed a case against the airline industry on the first day the government began considering violations of the new Civil Rights Act.¹⁸ Flight attendants would initiate one hundred lawsuits in eighteen months. Over the next sixty years, women across the occupational spectrum would follow suit, aiming to gain access to essentially all occupations. Companies no longer had the right to pay women less, deny them promotion, or otherwise discriminate based on gender. As companies faced potential lawsuits, their overtly discriminatory practices slowly eroded.

Yet, men—especially class-privileged white men—continue to have substantial advantages in the workplace today. Men are more likely to engage in paid work than women and work more hours per week and more weeks per year. They get better benefits (like health insurance, unemployment coverage, vacation and sick days, and retirement plans) and are more likely to get on-the-job training. They are more likely to have jobs considered "skilled" and to be in management. They unquestionably dominate the highest rungs of corporate ladders: 75 percent of executive and senior-level managers, 80 percent of board members, and 95 percent of the CEOs of Fortune 500 companies are men.¹⁹ Men outnumber women so overwhelmingly that there are more CEOs named James than there are women CEOs.²⁰

KEY Perhaps the most succinct measure of men's advantage in the workplace is the gender pay gap, the difference between the incomes of the average man and woman who work full time. In 2017, the median earnings of American men working full time were \$941 per week.²¹ Comparably, full-time working women earned \$770, or 82 percent of men's wages. To put it another way, among workers employed full time, women earned \$0.82 for every dollar a man made.

* As revealed in Figure 12.1, the gap has been steadily shrinking for nearly 200 years. Much of this is due to women's rising wages, but about a quarter of

FIGURE 12.1 | VARIATION IN WOMEN'S EARNINGS FOR EVERY DOLLAR OF MEN'S FOR FULL-TIME WORKERS

Comparison	Cents/Dollar	Comparison	Cents/Dollar
<i>By state in the United States</i>		<i>By education (United States)</i>	
California	\$0.88	Less than high school	\$0.77
Florida	\$0.87	High school graduate	\$0.78
New Jersey	\$0.80	Some college or associate's degree	\$0.77
Texas	\$0.82	Bachelor's degree and higher	\$0.75
Washington, D.C.	\$0.88		
Wyoming	\$0.72		
<i>By country</i>		<i>By race or ethnicity (United States)</i>	
Germany	\$0.79	Black women, men	\$0.93
Ireland	\$0.86	Black women, white men	\$0.68
Italy	\$0.95	Asian women, men	\$0.75
Poland	\$0.93	Asian women, white men	\$0.93
Sweden	\$0.87	Hispanic women, men	\$0.87
United Kingdom	\$0.79	Hispanic women, white men	\$0.62
		White women, men	\$0.82
<i>By year (United States)</i>		<i>By age (United States)</i>	
1820	\$0.35	16–24	\$0.95
1890	\$0.46	25–34	\$0.89
1930	\$0.56	35–44	\$0.83
1960	\$0.61	45–54	\$0.78
1970	\$0.60	55–64	\$0.74
1990	\$0.72	65+	\$0.76
2000	\$0.74		
2010	\$0.81		

Sources: European Commission, "Gender Pay Gap Statistics," March 2018. Retrieved from http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/Gender_pay_gap_statistics#Gender_pay_gap_levels_vary_significantly_across_EU; Bureau of Labor Statistics, "Highlights of Women's Earnings in 2016," August 2017. Retrieved from www.bls.gov/opub/reports/womens-earnings/2016/home.htm; Bureau of Labor Statistics, "Labor Force Statistics from the Current Population Survey: Table 37: Median Weekly Earnings of Full-Time Wage and Salary Workers by Selected Characteristics," January 2018. Retrieved from www.bls.gov/cps/cpsaat37.htm.

the narrowing since 2000 represents declining wages for working-class men, which have fallen by almost 7 percent.²² Women's wages have similarly been harmed by the overall economy, but women have also been increasing their education, shifting into better-paying jobs, and working more. Conversely, the things that used to protect men's wages, like labor unions and manufacturing jobs, have been on the decline.²³

Women of all races make less money than their male counterparts, but the size of the gap differs. It's smaller among groups that have overall lower wages, mostly because racial minority men, with the exception of some Asian groups, earn especially low incomes. Notice that the gap varies both among American states and among different countries. Governments that keep most women out of the labor force typically show smaller wage gaps, since the women who do work full time are more educated and less representative of the population. This

is why the wage gap in Italy, where women are less often employed, is so much smaller than in Sweden, where nearly all women are working. The wage gap also increases, if unevenly, across the life cycle.

ref * Perhaps surprisingly, the gap is largest among men and women who earn professional degrees in fields such as law and medicine.²⁴ Mean earnings of women and men managers with MBAs, for example, are fairly close directly after graduation, but nine years later the gap has grown (from \$15,000 to \$150,000).²⁵ At the very top, the wage disparities just get bigger. Among mid-career MBAs in the top 10 percent of earners, men earn over \$1 million and women earn less than half that.

ref * All told, because of the gender wage gap, the average American woman will earn \$439,958 less in her lifetime than the average man.²⁶ Compared to white non-Hispanic men, African American and Native American women will be out almost \$900,000 and Latinas almost \$1.1 million. This harms women's economic stability in old age directly (it helps to have an extra half-million or more upon retirement) and also indirectly (women's average Social Security retirement benefit is about 75 percent that of men's, mostly thanks to the wage gap).²⁷ Not only do women have less than men when they retire, they need more because they tend to live longer. As a result of these disparities, retired women are twice as likely as retired men to be living in poverty.²⁸

This chapter explores the gendered forces behind this inequality: job segregation, gender discrimination, and the practice and ideology of parenting. It'll also look at how work experiences are shaped by class, race, gender, sexuality, and age. It concludes with some observations about the current economy and both men's and women's opportunities within it.

JOB SEGREGATION

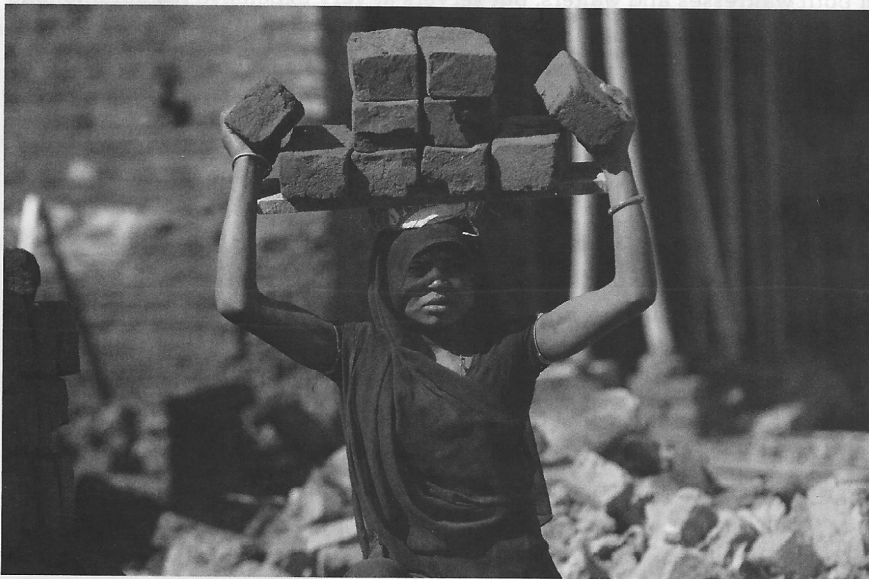
A licensed pilot, Ellen Church could have been the first female commercial pilot when she was hired by Boeing in 1930, but the company didn't allow women in the cockpit.²⁹ So, she became the first female flight attendant instead. A different woman would be hired as a pilot a few years later, but she would be the exception that proved the rule.³⁰ It would be four decades before we would see another. In 1978, when the International Society of Women Airline Pilots was founded, it boasted only twenty-one members.³¹

Women and men attracted to the excitement of air travel have pursued their dreams largely through two very different avenues. Men have become pilots and women have become flight attendants. Today, 73 percent of flight attendants are female and 94 percent of pilots are male.³² This is **gendered job**

segregation, the practice of filling occupations with mostly male or mostly female workers. Just as we gender all kinds of things, we gender jobs. Collectively, we understand certain jobs as somehow for women (like nursing and teaching) and others as for men (construction work and computer programming).

Gendered job segregation doesn't reflect inherent masculine or feminine qualities of a job; instead, occupations are socially constructed to suggest they're best suited for stereotypical women or men, while features that would undermine the idea are ignored.³³ For example, male insurance agents describe successful colleagues as men who love competition and possess a "killer instinct."³⁴ In reality, an insurance salesperson also needs to be able to communicate trustworthiness, quickly forge bonds with strangers, and read emotions. If the job were gendered female, we would probably see more emphasis on interpersonal skills.

Because jobs are not naturally gendered, we find great variation across cultures. Medicine is a female job in Russia and Finland, as is dentistry in Latvia and Lithuania.³⁵ In Iran, Uzbekistan, Azerbaijan, and Saudi Arabia, women earn the majority of science degrees.³⁶ In Armenia, half of computer science college professors are women.³⁷ Women dominate computer science in Malaysia, too, where abstract thinking and office work are seen as feminine compared to more "physical" labor.³⁸ Likewise, Malaysians see chemical engineering as feminine



A female laborer in the Indian state of Gujarat carries bricks needed for a construction site. Construction is gendered female in India and male in the United States.

because it involves working in a lab, but civil engineering as masculine because it involves going to worksites and overseeing construction. In contrast, in India, women make up a large share of the construction industry; it makes sense to them because Indian society holds women responsible for the home.³⁹ We make work meaningful in gendered ways and slot men and women into occupations accordingly.

How Much Job Segregation Is There?

Figure 12.2 presents data for some of the most gender-segregated occupations in the United States. Overall, about four in ten American women work in jobs that are at least 75 percent female and men work in even more gender-segregated environments.⁴⁰ To achieve perfect integration in the United States, 34 percent of workers would have to switch to a differently gendered job. Internationally, the amount of gender segregation in jobs varies; the United States is in the middle of the pack.⁴¹ Among developed countries, the percentage of people who would have to switch jobs varies from 23 percent in Japan to 45 percent in Luxembourg.

We see gender segregation not just between occupations—between nursing and car repair, for example—but within them. Consider that there are lots of both waitresses and waiters, but servers at very expensive restaurants tend to be both male and female, while lower-priced restaurants tend to employ women.⁴² Among doctors, gender correlates with specialty: Women make up 62 percent of pediatricians but only 5 percent of orthopedic surgeons.⁴³ The skills and responsibilities of barbers and hairdressers, for instance, are more alike than different, but men and women tend to get different job titles and work in different establishments serving different customers.

Gender intersects with other characteristics to stratify the workforce. Depending on what part of the United States we're in, the (likely female) housekeeper at our local motel will be white, Latina, or African American.⁴⁴ The janitor or maintenance worker will probably be the same race but the other gender. African American women make up only 6 percent of the general population but represent nearly a third of active-duty enlisted women in the military.⁴⁵ Fully 99 percent of New York City's nearly 40,000 taxi drivers are male and 96 percent are immigrants; 24 percent are from Bangladesh alone.⁴⁶ Jobs are segregated by sexual orientation, too. Lesbian and bisexual women are ten times more likely than heterosexual women to work as police officers.⁴⁷ And, while not all male flight attendants are gay, gay and bisexual men are overrepresented compared to the overall population.⁴⁸

What causes this divvying up of men and women into different kinds of jobs?

FIGURE 12.2 | SOME OF THE MOST GENDER-SEGREGATED OCCUPATIONS

Female-dominated occupations	How female is it?
Speech-language pathologist	98%
Preschool and kindergarten teacher	98%
Dental hygienist	95%
Secretary and administrative assistant	95%
Dietician and nutritionist	94%
Childcare worker	94%
Hairdresser, hairstylist, and cosmetologist	93%
Medical record and health information technician	92%
Medical assistant	92%
Receptionist and information clerk	91%
Registered nurse	90%
Nursing, psychiatric, and home-health aide	89%
Male-dominated occupations	How male is it?
Roofer	99%
Automotive service technician and mechanic	98%
Carpenter	98%
Firefighter	97%
Construction laborer	97%
Crane/tower operator	96%
Maintenance and repair worker	96%
Welder	96%
Truck driver	94%
Grounds maintenance worker	94%
Pest control worker	94%
Mechanical engineer	91%

Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics, "Labor Force Statistics from the Current Population Survey: Table 11: Employed Persons by Detailed Occupation, Sex, Race, and Hispanic or Latino Ethnicity." Retrieved from www.bls.gov/cps/cpsaat11.pdf.

Causes of Job Segregation

Men and women usually end up in gender-stereotypical jobs through a complicated congruence of socialization, employer selection, and selective exit. The **socialization hypothesis** suggests that men and women respond to gender stereotypes when planning, training, and applying for jobs.⁴⁹ We are socialized to be interested in and prepare for different kinds of jobs, while also reading the signals sent by occupations and the people in them. In one study, for example, psychologists invited students into a classroom and asked them to fill out a questionnaire regarding their interest and perceived ability in computer science.⁵⁰ One set of people entered a room covered in "computer geeky" things: a *Star Trek* poster, comic books, video game boxes, empty soda cans and junk food, and technical

magazines. The other group entered a room without these objects. Men were unfazed by the geekery, but women who encountered the geeked-up room were significantly less likely to say they were considering a computer science major. Whether it's the "macho" image of the construction worker or the "bro" image of the tech guy, the message to women is "no girls allowed."⁵¹

KEY The **employer selection hypothesis** proposes that employers tend to prefer men for masculine jobs and women for feminine jobs, slotting applicants into gender-consistent roles during hiring and promotion. Certain kinds of factory work, for example, are heavily female because employers prefer to hire women. As one manager at a high-tech manufacturing company told a researcher: "Just three things I look for in hiring: small, foreign, and female."⁵² Hiring in Silicon Valley in the 1960s and 1970s, by contrast, was driven by employers' belief that nerdy male misfits made the best computer programmers.⁵³ Once a job is dominated by men or women, employers assume that it's for a good reason and select new employees accordingly.⁵⁴

* The **selective exit hypothesis** highlights workers' abandonment of counter-stereotypical occupations. One study found that 61 percent of women in male-dominated occupations leave their job within ten years, compared with less than 30 percent of their male colleagues; half of these women switched to a female-dominated occupation.⁵⁵ In engineering, for example, 35 percent of women, but only 10 percent of men, either never enter the field after getting their degree, or leave it sometime after they do.⁵⁶ Among those female engineers who leave, a majority blamed its hypermasculine work culture.⁵⁷ Sometimes women enter male-dominated occupations but have negative experiences that push them to leave.

KEY All three of these factors—socialization, employer selection, and selective exit—are sources of job segregation, with socialization and selective exit likely the most substantial contributors. Gendered job segregation in itself, however, isn't sufficient to explain the pay gap. It's only the start.

Different and Unequal

A Floridian Cuban named Celio Diaz was the first man to use the Civil Rights Act to sue for gender discrimination.⁵⁸ In the 1960s, only 4 percent of flight attendants were men and most airlines refused to hire them. Pan Am, for example, who rejected Diaz's application, argued that men simply couldn't "convey the charm, the tact, the grace, the liveliness that young girls can."⁵⁹ Or, if they could, Pan Am claimed, it might "arouse feelings" in a male passenger "that he would rather not have aroused."⁶⁰

Pan Am appealed all the way to the U.S. Supreme Court, but they lost. Beginning in 1971, airlines were forced to begin hiring men alongside women. The

media had a field day. The *Miami Herald* ran a story with a picture of a stocky, hairy-legged man in a miniskirt and knee-high socks, a purse hanging from his cocked arm. It read: "Here's the worst thing that could happen to commercial airlines."⁶¹

It's funny that the American media thought the idea of a "he-stewardess" was absurd because the word "stewardess" is a feminized version of the word "steward." In fact, early stewardesses *were* stewards and the job was almost exclusively male for some time.⁶² Pan Am, the airline Diaz sued, had itself maintained an all-male steward workforce for sixteen years. It integrated in 1944, as did many other airlines, because of the shortage of men on the home front during World War II. By 1958, Pan Am had entirely reversed its policy. Soon American flight attendants were almost all female. One advertising executive in 1967 explained: "When a tired businessman gets on an airplane, we think he ought to be allowed to look at a pretty girl."⁶³

The occupation's "sex change" is a great example of the gendered social construction of jobs; it also reveals how prestige and pay tend to follow sex. Early airlines hired white male flight attendants in order to assure passengers that they would be safe.⁶⁴ Ocean liners and train cars, the models on which airlines built their businesses, largely employed black men, but airlines believed their overwhelmingly white passengers wouldn't feel comfortable placing their lives in the hands of a black person. So they hired white men to ensure that the occupation carried a degree of gravitas. Stewards embodied professionalism and dignity, wearing military-inspired uniforms and changing into white sport coats and gloves to serve dinner. They were chaperones of the sky but also capable crew.

When the aisle was turned over to women, the role was reimagined. As the occupation was feminized, the seriousness of the job was downplayed and the subordinate role of supportive and sometimes sexually playful service was emphasized. As one flight attendant described it, the job

Think of her as your mother.

She only wants what's best for you.
A cool drink. A good dinner. A soft pillow and a warm blanket.
This is not just maternal instinct. It's the result of the longest
Stewardess training in the industry.
Training in service, not just a beauty course.
Service, after all, is what makes professional travellers prefer American.
And makes new travellers want to keep on flying with us.
So we see that every passenger gets the same professional treatment.
That's the American Way.

Fly the American Way
American Airlines



Although the text of this ad for American Airlines presents its flight attendants as both motherly and professional, the picture tells a very different story of women's service work.

became “part mother, part servant, and part tart.”⁶⁵ Just like with cheerleading, there was a decline in status.

We have seen such changes in response to the feminization or masculinization of many different occupations. Clerical work in the United States, for example, was almost exclusively male until the late 1800s. Typing was considered “too strenuous for women.”⁶⁶ Later, as it became associated with women, the necessary qualification would be shifted from “arduous labor” to “dexterity.”⁶⁷ Today most people don’t think much of “secretaries,” but they were respected enough at one time that we still use the term to refer to high-level government positions like secretary of state.

During World War II, women’s support roles as typists funneled them into early computer programming.⁶⁸ The government employed women in top secret positions as “compute-ers,” workers who operated and supervised computing machines.⁶⁹ They were preferred because it was believed that the work required patience, something women supposedly had thanks to “maternal instinct.” “It’s just like planning a dinner,” explained the pioneering programmer Grace Hopper to *Cosmopolitan* in 1967; it “requires patience and the ability to handle detail. Women are ‘naturals’ at computer programming.”⁷⁰ As late as the mid-1980s, computer science was more gender-integrated than other science, technology, and engineering fields. Women made lots of important contributions to computer science during this time, but as the value of computing rose and women were pushed out, their contributions were made invisible. Reimagined as a nerd’s playground, computer science today is among the least sex-integrated occupations and, not coincidentally, highest in prestige and pay.

Other occupations have also changed gender and, when they do, we see a similar shift in value.⁷¹ Since 1970, for example, enrollment in veterinary college has gone from 11 percent to over 80 percent female.⁷² Wages have correspondingly stagnated compared to similar professions like medicine and law, which have seen less overall feminization. Generally, the rule is clear: As women enter an occupation, status goes down; as men enter it, status goes up. It’s as if men’s social status rubs off on the work they do.⁷³ In one study, for example, ten- and eleven-year-olds were asked to rate the status of fake jobs like “cilpster” and “heigist.”⁷⁴ The children who were told that these jobs were performed mostly by men gave them higher status rankings than the children who were told they were done primarily by women. In other studies, college students asked to rank the prestige of jobs will rank them lower if they are told that the occupation is feminizing and higher if they’re told it’s masculinizing.⁷⁵

We call this the **androcentric pay scale**, a strong correlation between wages and the gender composition of the job.⁷⁶ Even when we hold things like education, skill, and experience constant, the gender composition of a job plays an important role in determining wages. In fact, according to a study by the Bureau of Labor



These IBM computers look unusual and outdated for modern eyes, but the female technicians may also seem surprising, given our myth of progress on all fronts for women. The rising status of computer sciences is associated with a falling share of women in this field.

Statistics, the gender composition of a job is the *single largest contributor* to the gender wage gap.⁷⁷ It is more important than level of unionization, industry, supply and demand, the safety or comfort of the work, and workers' education, marital status, and experience. Even controlling for all these things, "women's work" pays, on average, anywhere between 5 and 21 percent less than "men's work."⁷⁸ The effect grows larger as occupations become increasingly male or female dominated.

If there is an androcentric pay scale, then we should expect male-dominated jobs to be among the highest paying. They are. Consider Figure 12.3, which lists all American occupations (with reliable demographic data) that pay over \$100,000 a year.⁷⁹ In the rightmost columns, we include the gender and race composition of these high-paying jobs. Since men make up 53 percent of the workforce, any job that is more than 53 percent male is disproportionately so, or more male than we would expect by chance alone. Likewise, since 63 percent of the workforce identifies as non-Hispanic white, any job that is more than 63 percent white is disproportionately so.

Figure 12.3 shows that sixteen of the twenty-five highest-paying occupations are more than 53 percent male and six are more than 75 percent male. All but two of these occupations—computer hardware engineer and software developer—are disproportionately white.

FIGURE 12.3 | GENDER AND RACE COMPOSITION OF THE HIGHEST-PAYING JOBS IN THE UNITED STATES

Occupation	Avg. Annual Wage	% Male	% White
Physicians and surgeons	\$214,700	60%	66%
Chief executives	\$196,050	72%	86%
Dentists	\$180,010	64%	77%
Computer and information systems managers	\$149,730	71%	72%
Architectural and engineering managers	\$146,290	91%	74%
Financial managers	\$143,530	44%	73%
Lawyers	\$141,890	63%	84%
Marketing and sales managers	\$140,600	55%	77%
Aircraft pilots and flight engineers	\$138,690	94%	88%
Public relations and fundraising managers	\$127,690	37%	85%
Personal financial advisors	\$124,140	68%	80%
Advertising and promotions managers	\$123,880	47%	78%
Human resources managers	\$123,510	29%	75%
General and operations managers	\$123,460	66%	75%
Purchasing managers	\$121,810	48%	76%
Pharmacists	\$121,710	43%	64%
Judges, magistrates, and other judicial workers	\$121,050	72%	81%
Computer hardware engineers	\$119,650	83%	48%
Optometrists	\$119,100	50%	89%
Training and development managers	\$117,690	40%	81%
Aerospace engineers	\$115,300	91%	74%
Chemical engineers	\$112,430	83%	87%
Software developers	\$111,780	81%	54%
Medical and health services managers	\$111,680	30%	70%
Industrial production managers	\$110,580	74%	81%

Sources: Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2018, "Labor Force Statistics from the Current Population Survey," Employed Persons by Detailed Occupation, Sex, Race, and Hispanic or Latino Ethnicity." Retrieved from www.bls.gov/cps/cpsaat11.htm; Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2018, "May 2017 National Occupational Employment and Wage Estimates." Retrieved from www.bls.gov/oes/current/oes_nat.htm.

In the last chapter we introduced the idea of the feminization of poverty; we might call the concentration of men in high-earning occupations, and their resulting ability to accumulate savings, investments, and assets, a **masculinization of wealth**.⁸⁰ Believe it or not, this accumulation of money starts when men are boys. Sons are 15 percent more likely than daughters to get an allowance in exchange for doing chores; even when daughters get paid, sons get paid more.⁸¹ In other words, boys spend fewer hours on chores than girls, enjoy more leisure time, and still end up with more money in their piggybanks.

The Value of Gendered Work

In 2013, an Asiana flight crash-landed at San Francisco International Airport. While the survival of all but two of the 307 passengers was called a "miracle," it was in no small part thanks to the flight attendants on board. They successfully enacted the protocol for a ninety-second evacuation, despite two slides

that didn't correctly deploy. As passengers were fleeing the wreckage, some flight attendants fought the rising flames while others hacked trapped passengers out of their seatbelts with knives. They carried injured passengers out on their backs. "I wasn't really thinking, but my body started carrying out the steps needed for an evacuation," explained Lee Yoon Hye, one of the flight attendants. "I was only thinking about rescuing the next passenger."⁸² Later she learned that she'd sustained a broken tailbone.

The top five news stories at the time used passive language that made the work of the flight attendants invisible: "slides had deployed" and passengers "managed to get off."⁸³ Instead of being described as the first responders they were, flight attendants were portrayed as just a special kind of passenger. The crash forced "frightened passengers and crew to scamper," read one article; another reported that "passengers and crew were being treated" at local hospitals. Only one of the five stories acknowledged that the sixteen flight attendants worked through the crash and its aftermath.

Which leads us to ask: Do flight attendants have skills?

They do. Flight attendants learn hundreds of regulations and the safety features of multiple types of airplanes. They know how to evacuate a plane on land or sea within ninety seconds; fight fires 35,000 feet in the air; keep a heart attack or stroke victim alive; calm or restrain an anxious, aggressive, or mentally ill passenger; respond to hijackings and terrorist attacks; communicate effectively with people who are frozen in fear; and survive in the case of a crash landing in the jungle, sea, desert, or Arctic. As one flight attendant said: "I don't think of myself as a sex symbol or a servant. I think of myself as somebody who knows how to open the door of a 747 in the dark, upside down, and in the water."⁸⁴

Flight attendants are doing a job that's supposed to remain invisible unless needed. "I have an outer appearance of calm and reserve," explained one flight attendant.⁸⁵ But she is alert and prepared. "You always have to be ready for an emergency—something with another crew member, passenger has an epileptic attack, emergency landing. I could go on and on." Even when survival is unlikely, many flight attendants take their job gravely seriously. As one flight attendant said:

*If we were going to make a ditching in water, the chances of our surviving are slim, even though we know exactly what to do. But I think I would probably—and I think I can say this for most of my fellow flight attendants—be able to keep [the passengers] from being too worried about it. I mean my voice might quiver a little during the announcements, but somehow I feel we could get them to believe . . . the best.*⁸⁶

Many lives have been saved, and many final moments have been less filled with sheer terror, thanks to well-trained and effective flight attendants who are committed to doing their job well—if necessary, until the bitter end.

Airlines, though, are loath to reveal the intense and ongoing emergency, security, first-aid, combat, and survival training that flight attendants receive. Talking about the “live fire pit” and “ditching pool” used for training might remind passengers of the potential dangers of air travel.⁸⁷ It’s much better for airlines if we think flight attendants are just “sky waitresses” and, if we’re lucky, we’ll never be in a situation in which their skills and knowledge become suddenly and terrifyingly apparent.

So, many of the skills flight attendants have are invisible to most of us most of the time, both by circumstance and design. Meanwhile, we tend to dismiss the work we see as unskilled. Early airlines hired women for their extraordinary beauty, grace, and charm. They were to have a “modest but friendly smile,” be “alert, attentive, not overly aggressive, but not reticent either,” “outgoing but not effusive,” “enthusiastic with calm and poise,” and “vivacious but not effervescent.”⁸⁸ No problem, right? All women *don’t* naturally have these skills; that’s why flight attendants were valorized as the perfect women.

This part of the job is referred to as **emotion work**, the act of controlling one’s own emotions and managing the emotions of others. Flight attendants are tasked with seamlessly performing the proper emotions in interaction with an impossibly wide range of people who bring their own, often negative emotions to the moment. And, thousands of feet up in the air, there is no manager to ask for help or call for backup. Trying to summarize the job, one flight attendant said:

*[It] requires judgment, ingenuity, skill, and independence in an area of the most difficult sort—not handling inanimate and usually predictable machinery—but large numbers of human beings of all ages, walks of life, varied national and racial backgrounds, under panic conditions.*⁸⁹

And one has to be nice about it. One stewardess working in the 1960s described having to “force a drunk passenger in the back of the cabin to sit down and stop throwing cigarette butts on the floor *with gentleness*.”⁹⁰ In 2001, another explained how she managed the problem of sexual harassment without offending her customer: “If someone puts their hand on your bottom, you should say, ‘Excuse me, sir, but my bottom accidentally fell into your hand.’”⁹¹

These are impressive interpersonal talents. “Even when people are paid to be nice,” wrote one scholar studying this kind of emotion work, “it is hard for them to be nice at all times, and when their efforts succeed, it is a remarkable accomplishment.”⁹² Or, as one flight attendant put it: “We, basically, are the best actors and actresses in the world.”⁹³

Undeniably, these skills are also *valuable* resources for the airlines. Yet airlines have historically framed their flight attendants’ performances as “natural.” As historian Kathleen Barry explains:

[A]irlines' favorite metaphor for stewardesses' work was that they were playing gracious hostess to guests in one's own home, which suggested their efforts were a natural, voluntary expression of female domesticity and of social rather than economic value.⁹⁴

The work of flight attendants, in other words, was defined as *outside the realm of work*. If being nice just comes naturally, then the flight attendants are just being themselves. Being oneself is not a *skill* and, therefore, it shouldn't be compensated as one. The benevolently sexist idea that women are naturally gracious causes us to dismiss the work of female flight attendants as nothing special.

In fact, lots of the work women disproportionately do is framed as natural to the female sex. In contrast, "men's work" is usually considered skilled almost by definition. Stereotypes of men include being good with their hands, talented at understanding how things work, and steadfast behind the wheel. If we were inclined to devalue these skills, we could argue that it was only natural that men would become surgeons, engineers, and truck drivers. Given the opportunity, the logic would go, they would do these things anyway because that's just how they are; we'll pay them for their time, but it's ridiculous to argue that these are *skills*. That is, in fact, exactly how "women's work" is frequently understood.

Traditional women's work—like soothing an autistic child, organizing twenty kindergarteners, making middle school kids care about literature, ensuring a boss's day runs smoothly, or carefully monitoring the health of an elderly patient—all require knowledge, concentration, effort, creativity, problem solving, practice, and emotion work.

So does responding to sexual harassment in ways that are effective but not explosive. In a 2017 article about sexism in the tech industry, entrepreneur and investor Susan Wu discusses

*the countless times I've had to move a man's hand from my thigh (or back or shoulder or hair or arm) during a meeting (or networking event or professional lunch or brainstorming session or pitch meeting) without seeming confrontational (or bitchy or rejecting or demanding or aggressive). . . . [It's] a pretty important skill that I would bet most successful women in our industry have.*⁹⁵

Women are still apologizing for their bottoms falling into men's hands, and we continue to devalue women's work as unskilled and unworthy of the compensation awarded to men's work.

If jobs filled by women are devalued, then we should expect these jobs to pay less than jobs filled by men. They do. Consider Figure 12.4, which lists all American occupations (with reliable data) that pay under \$25,000 a year.⁹⁶ In

FIGURE 12.4 | GENDER AND RACE COMPOSITION OF THE LOWEST-PAYING JOBS IN THE UNITED STATES

Occupation	Avg. Yearly Wage	% Female	% Minority
Cashier	\$22,130	73%	47%
Dishwasher	\$22,210	20%	57%
Host and hostess	\$22,290	86%	41%
Counter attendant	\$22,530	62%	47%
Dining room cafeteria attendant and bartender helper	\$23,050	46%	49%
Entertainment attendant	\$23,480	43%	41%
Lifeguard/ski patrol	\$23,570	50%	20%
Childcare worker	\$23,760	94%	43%
Laundry and dry-cleaning worker	\$23,770	68%	69%
Food preparation worker	\$23,900	59%	52%
Gaming services worker	\$23,950	47%	64%
Home health aide	\$24,280	89%	59%
Personal care aide	\$24,100	84%	57%
Food server, non-restaurant	\$24,150	70%	50%
Hotel, motel, and resort desk clerk	\$24,250	61%	51%
Parking lot attendant	\$24,330	17%	67%
Grader and sorter, agricultural products	\$24,620	67%	64%
Maid/housekeeper	\$24,630	88%	70%

Sources: Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2018, "Labor Force Statistics from the Current Population Survey," Employed Persons by Detailed Occupation, Sex, Race, and Hispanic or Latino Ethnicity." Retrieved from www.bls.gov/cps/cpsaat11.htm; Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2018, "May 2017 National Occupational Employment and Wage Estimates." Retrieved from www.bls.gov/oes/current/oes_nat.htm.

the rightmost columns, we include the gender and race composition of these low-paying jobs. Since women make up 47 percent of the workforce, any job that is more than 47 percent female is disproportionately so. Likewise, since 63 percent of the workforce identifies as non-Hispanic white, any job that is more than 37 percent minority is more so than we would expect by chance alone.

More than two-thirds of the lowest-paying occupations (thirteen of eighteen) are disproportionately female; five are more than three-fourths female. The remainder of the jobs—the ones not disproportionately held by women—are filled by men, but not white men. Black men are twice as likely as white men to work in feminized industries and Latino and Asian men are one and a half times as likely.⁹⁷ This is partly because racial discrimination gives men of color fewer options than white men, but also possibly because men of color are more likely to adopt feminized qualities like care and kindness as valued personal characteristics.⁹⁸ With few exceptions, the lowest-paying jobs in America are disproportionately staffed by racial minority women (in twelve occupations) or, barring that, mostly women or racial minorities (in one and five occupations, respectively).

The devaluation of feminized occupations is especially acute for **care work**, work that involves face-to-face caretaking of the physical, emotional, and educational needs of others: children, the elderly, the sick, and the disabled. These jobs are paid even *less* than other feminized jobs, holding education and training constant.⁹⁹ Consider the job of childcare worker. In 2017, the average yearly income for childcare workers was \$23,760.¹⁰⁰ You know who's paid more than the people who are taking care of children? People who take care of coats in the coat check, parked cars, broken bicycles, dry cleaning, motel reservations, and roadkill.

Job segregation contributes to the gender pay gap because we attribute more value to "men's work" than "women's work." An occupation disproportionately filled by women is seen as *legitimately* lower paid than an occupation dominated by men. Because of this, job segregation doesn't just create a differentiated workforce; it creates an unequal one. This means that both men and women can lose prestige and income when they enter a feminine occupation. Women working in predominantly female occupations earn 26 percent less than women working in mostly male ones; men pay a similar price.¹⁰¹ It also explains the pay gaps between heterosexual and homosexual women and men.¹⁰² Openly gay and bisexual men are more likely to go into feminized occupations and openly gay and bisexual women into masculinized ones. Gay and bisexual men earn about 30 percent less than heterosexual men, whereas gay and bisexual women earn about 20 percent more than their heterosexual counterparts.

Job segregation, then, explains a large part of the pay gap. But it doesn't explain all of it. Women are not just paid less than men overall; they are also paid less than men *in the same occupations*. What is going on?

DISCRIMINATION AND PREFERENTIAL TREATMENT

Thanks to the Civil Rights Act of 1964, it's no longer legal to discriminate based on gender, but discrimination didn't simply vanish. Enforcing the new law meant going to court, proving the existence of discrimination and the intent to discriminate, and creating consequences. It took decades for the hundreds of cases filed by flight attendants, for example, to make their way through the courts. The last marriage ban was struck down in 1970; routine weigh-ins for female (but not male) members of the cabin crew were standard as late as the 1990s.¹⁰³

Today, flight attendants still deal with sexual objectification from coworkers and passengers as well as bosses who police their bodies.¹⁰⁴ Sexual harassment from passengers is just a "hazard of the job," according to one flight attendant.¹⁰⁵ Some pilots also continue to see flight attendants as a source of sexual titillation

FIGURE 12.5 | WOMEN'S EARNINGS FOR EVERY DOLLAR OF MEN'S IN THE 20 MOST COMMON OCCUPATIONS FOR WOMEN AND MEN*

Occupation	Cents/Men's Dollar
Registered nurse	\$0.91
Cook	\$0.91
Customer service representative	\$0.90
Elementary and middle school teacher	\$0.87
Secretary and administrative assistant	\$0.86
Cashier	\$0.86
Nursing, psychiatric, and home health aide	\$0.85
Laborers and freight, stock, and material mover	\$0.84
Janitor and building cleaner	\$0.84
First-line supervisor of office/administrative support workers	\$0.83
Software developer	\$0.83
Chief executive	\$0.80
Sales representative	\$0.78
Manager, all other	\$0.77
Accountant and auditor	\$0.77
Retail salesperson	\$0.74
Driver/sales worker and truck driver	\$0.73
First-line supervisor of retail sales workers	\$0.72

*Some of the most common occupations for men are also the most common for women, so the total number of occupations is less than 20.
 Source: Institute for Women's Policy Research, "The Gender Wage Gap by Occupation 2017 and by Race and Ethnicity," April 2018.
 Retrieved from <https://iwpr.org/publications/gender-wage-gap-occupation-2017-race-ethnicity/>.

and pleasure to which they're entitled. In 2011 a pilot hoping to "get lucky" on his layover was caught on tape complaining to his copilot that the flight attendants assigned to his flight were "eleven f***** over-the-top f*****, ass-f***** homosexuals and a granny."¹⁰⁶

And, yes, there is a pay gap in this profession today: Female flight attendants make \$0.82 for every dollar made by their male counterparts.¹⁰⁷ The gendered pay gap isn't just true overall, it's true for almost every occupation in the United States. Figure 12.5 shows the wage gap in the most common occupations for men and women, ranked from smallest difference in pay (among registered nurses and cooks) to the largest (among retail salesperson supervisors).

Gender discrimination accounts for some of the wage gap within occupations: Men are seen as better workers and supervisors no matter what qualities are considered ideal for the job. In one study, participants rated two hypothetical candidates for the job of police chief: one named Michael and the other Michelle.¹⁰⁸ When Michael was described as "streetwise" and Michelle as "formally educated," participants recommended hiring Michael on the basis that he was tough, a risk taker, and physically fit. When Michelle was the one described as streetwise, however, they *still* recommended Michael, this time on the basis that he was well educated, able to communicate with the media, and politically

connected. In other words, participants moved the goalposts in order to ensure that, whatever the qualifications, Michael was seen as more qualified than Michelle. Both men and women exhibited this bias, but men more than women.

If this sounds implausible, consider the stories of people who have been both a man and a woman in the workplace. In a study of twenty-nine trans men, two-thirds reported that they received a post-transition advantage at work. This was especially true if they were white and tall. Crispin, for example, worked at Home Depot; he said customers had often dismissed his expertise when they perceived him as a woman, but now heartily welcomed his advice. Henry said he was suddenly “right a lot more” than he had been before.¹⁰⁹ Trans men said they got more credit for less work and, if they wanted, they could be less nice and suffer no consequences. Keith said that behavior perceived as overly “assertive” when he was seen as a woman was now “take charge.”¹¹⁰ Preston explained that before his transition, his bosses and coworkers were rarely helpful, but things changed after: “I swear it was like from one day to the next of me transitioning, I need this, this is what I want and [snaps his fingers]. I have not had to fight about anything.”¹¹¹ Thomas, who previously went by Susan, told a story that sums it up: After his transition, a client commended his boss for firing “Susan” and hiring the “new guy” who was “just delightful!”¹¹²

Because of discrimination of this sort, women and men continue to turn to the courts for justice. Many American companies and public service sectors have lost or settled gender-based class action lawsuits in the last fifteen years, including Abercrombie & Fitch, Albertson’s, Bank of America, Best Buy, Boeing, Coca-Cola, Costco, the FBI, Goodyear, Heald College, Hewlett-Packard, Home Depot, the International Longshoremen’s Union, LexisNexis, Los Alamos National Laboratory, Merrill Lynch, Metropolitan Life Insurance Company, Mitsubishi Motors, Morgan Stanley, Novartis Pharmaceuticals, Outback Steakhouse, Publix Supermarkets, Qualcomm, Smith Barney/Citigroup, State Farm Insurance, Tony Roma’s, Uber, Union Pacific Railroad, United Airlines, the U.S. Mint, Wachovia, Walmart, and Wells Fargo.

Clearly, sexism is still prevalent in the workplace. Scholars have identified three forms it takes: men’s hostile and benevolent sexism, women’s double binds, and employers’ preferences for men.

Hostile and Benevolent Sexism

Most men do not exhibit sexist behavior at work and, even among those who do, some are more aggressive or persistent than others, but it only takes one or two sexist people in a workplace to create a hostile environment. Recent high-profile cases—like those against the actor Kevin Spacey, the mega movie producer Harvey Weinstein, the comedian and producer Louis C.K., and the television

hosts Bill O'Reilly and Matt Lauer (all credibly accused of patterns of sexual harassment of multiple women)—reveal that just one person can do a lot of damage. Even in less lofty and visible workplaces, a few particularly sexist superiors can do significant harm, even if the employees targeted are generally surrounded by supportive colleagues of all sexes. On average, traditionalist men with homemaker wives are more likely to be discriminatory; unfortunately, it is exactly these kinds of men who are disproportionately bosses, officers, and managers.¹¹³

When asked, 22 percent of men and 42 percent of women reported being the victim of gender discrimination at work, with women in male-dominated workplaces most likely to say so.¹¹⁴ The discrimination includes being treated as incompetent; passed over for good assignments or promotions; and silenced, slighted, or isolated; as well as receiving less support from superiors. Some of this discrimination takes the form of overtly hostile sexism, including sexual harassment and violence, and some of it comes in the form of benevolent sexism.

Benevolent sexism is discrimination in the form of chivalry. In this case, men attempt to protect women from unpleasant, dirty, confrontational, dangerous, or otherwise unfeminine activities and, in doing so, end up undermining women's career trajectories. Cynthia, a construction worker, described how her coworker behaved toward her at work and what she did about it:

One journeyman treated me more like his wife because he pampers his wife. [He would say:] "Don't carry this and don't carry that." I started getting in this rut of standing at the bottom of the ladder handing him tools. So one day, I said this is such crap, I've got to do something. I just started doing everything before he had a chance. I'd grab the ladder and make him do the light work. I said, "Let me do some work, I'm an electrician."¹¹⁵

In another occupational context entirely, researchers found that tech industry managers give women less concrete negative feedback than men because they don't want to hurt their female employees' feelings.¹¹⁶ Without straightforward critique and clear ideas for improvement, women are at a disadvantage compared to men, who are better positioned to know how to improve their performance. Benevolent sexists may be trying to be "nice," but they hurt female employees when "protection" prevents them from learning their job, demonstrating their skills, or becoming better and more effective employees.

Discrimination against women also comes in the form of hostile sexism. Especially in some occupations, some men feel strongly that women should stay in the home or shouldn't be doing men's work, so they isolate women or put them in dangerous situations. Female construction workers, for example, report being forced to do "two-man" jobs all by themselves just to prove they can.¹¹⁷ Such women are in lose-lose situations: If they try to prove they can "work like

a man," they end up doing the dirtiest work or getting hurt. If they refuse to do that kind of work, they get accused of demanding "special treatment."

Sometimes hostile sexism is also sexual. In Chicago, for example, the city's Fire Department is currently facing a lawsuit brought by five female paramedics.¹¹⁸ They allege sexual comments and texts from several male coworkers and superiors (e.g., "What kind of panties do you wear at work?"), requests for sexual favors (e.g., asked for sex in exchange for a schedule change), sexual threats (e.g., cornered in a private sleeping space by a superior), and physical violations (e.g., kissed and licked against their will and having their hands placed on men's genitals). At least one woman was retaliated against for reporting the harassment to the city's Equal Employment Opportunity Commission.

Sexual harassment is sometimes argued to be a harmless show of attraction, but these are not clumsy attempts at flirting. They're reassertions of dominance in response to the entrance of women into jobs to which men feel entitled.¹¹⁹ In these instances, women are a **symbolic threat**; their presence potentially degrades the identity of the dominant group. Female construction workers, tech workers, firefighters, and other women in masculinized occupations present a symbolic threat to men in their trades insofar as the men's self-esteem comes, in part, from being a man doing men's work. As long as men's esteem rests on being different from and better than women, men will likely resist women's entry into male-dominated jobs.

Interrupting the idea that some kinds of work are for "manly men" can be good for both men and women. In 1997, Rick Fox, a man in charge of the operation of the then-deepest offshore oil well ever dug, embarked on an unusual experiment.¹²⁰ Working on an oil rig ranks among the ten most dangerous jobs, and Fox figured that men's concern with showing weakness, fear, or ignorance—violations of core tenants of masculinity—was part of why. If men were averse to asking questions when they didn't know something, admit nervousness when something seemed dangerous, or show weakness if they couldn't handle a task, accidents were going to happen.

So, Fox collected his men and brought in a facilitator to get them thinking about, and sharing, their fears and insecurities. In front of their coworkers, men confessed to losing loved ones, drowning their sorrows in alcohol, worrying about being a good husband and father, and more. In the end, they felt much more comfortable asking for help, listening, and cooperating—core tenets of femininity—and this transformed the workplace. Over the next fifteen years, Fox's company implemented this training across all its oil platforms. The accident rate declined by 84 percent and productivity increased.¹²¹

When men embrace elements of femininity as job skills, they become more accepting of women, trans men and women, and less masculine men as coworkers. Anthropologist Jessica Smith, for example, studied the expansion



Women of color are disproportionately well represented in male-dominated physical jobs.

of a Wyoming coal mine as it began incorporating female miners to meet labor demand.¹²² Instead of reacting to the symbolic threat to their individual interest, the miners were encouraged to think of their crew as a family. "A good miner was someone who cared for their coworkers," wrote Smith.¹²³ They were responsible not just for themselves but for their whole crew-family. Because care was considered a female strength, it was easy for men to imagine that their new female coworkers would be excellent coal miners.

Men's workplace discrimination against women and other men isn't inevitable. It can be interrupted, especially when employment opportunities are expanding and men aren't worried about losing their jobs.¹²⁴ When it is, hegemonic masculinity, compulsive heterosexuality, and the gender binary may lose, but most everyone else wins. And when women are successfully integrated into workplaces, their mere presence further appears to reduce sexist beliefs and behavior.¹²⁵ The presence of high-status female managers also makes a difference, decreasing the pay gap between men and women in their companies.¹²⁶

Hostile and benevolent sexism limit career choices, create hostile and dangerous workplaces, and harm career trajectories. Women pay more of these costs. In male-dominated occupations, though, women not only have to deal with sexism; they also have to contend with the idea that women aren't as suited as men for these occupations, a sentiment often shared by men and women alike.

The Double Bind

Women in masculine occupations often suffer from the perception that they're not quite right for the job. Some attorneys, for example, will describe litigators in gendered terms. Being a lawyer is a "male thing," they say; it's "men beating each other up."¹²⁷ Ineffective attorneys are described as "impotent" or needing to "man up." Women in these jobs, then, experience a tension between being a worker and being a woman. This is the double bind discussed in the "Women and Femininities" chapter: To be successful at her job, a woman needs to do masculinity, but to be accepted by her boss, colleagues, and clients, she needs to do femininity.¹²⁸ Each undermines the other. Feminine women are seen as likeable but incompetent, while women who do masculinity are seen as competent but not likeable.

Many women workers experience this kind of impossible balancing act. "I'd rather act feminine and friendly and cute than get harassed, ignored, or treated worse," said one lesbian-identified woman in this position.¹²⁹ She worked in construction and understood quite well that performing a feminine apologetic was required to avoid being the target of hostile sexism. She also understood, though, that being too feminine would undermine her credibility as a worker. "It's like I have to be careful that I don't act overly feminine," she continued, "because they'll think I can't work." Her male coworkers didn't believe that women—feminine women, anyway—could do the job, but they also didn't tolerate women who weren't feminine. She was stuck.

Because both men and women tend to dislike women who act "like men" at work, those who act confident in their abilities, ask for raises and promotions, and negotiate with their bosses are evaluated less positively than women who don't and men who do. It doesn't matter if they demand or ask nicely.¹³⁰ One study, for example, examined how people responded to hypothetical men and women who expressed anger or sadness after losing a client because a colleague was late to a meeting.¹³¹ The angry male was evaluated most favorably, followed by the sad female, the sad male and, lastly and least, the angry female. They saw the angry woman as "out of control" but considered the angry man to be legitimately upset. Asked to attribute a salary to each, participants offered the angry woman \$0.62 on the angry man's dollar.

All too often, in all too many spaces, women are damned if they do and damned if they don't.

Invisible Obstructions and Opportunities

WOMEN IN MALE-DOMINATED OCCUPATIONS Together, these findings—the costs of hostile and benevolent sexism and the double bind—are behind the

idea of the **glass ceiling**, an invisible barrier between women and top positions in masculine occupations. Most women simply don't get the training, mentorship, or promotions received by many men.¹³² Men, on average, enter the workforce at a higher rank with a better salary and then advance and see their pay rise more quickly. These findings are true even when researchers account for the number of years in the workforce, the industry, geographical location, parenthood status, women's level of ambition, and the strategies they use for advancement. Even very successful businesswomen feel the strain: nearly three-quarters of successful female executives at Fortune 1000 companies agree that gender stereotypes are a barrier to women's success.¹³³

For black women and Latinas, the proper metaphor may not be glass but concrete.¹³⁴ Such women are even less likely than white and Asian women to hold jobs in the top ranks of professions.¹³⁵ Stereotypes such as the "angry black woman" and the "hot-blooded Latina" doubly penalize women of color for not living up to expectations for white femininity. This requires them to put even more energy into their feminine apologetic.

When women do break through a ceiling, they often encounter a **glass cliff**, a heightened risk of failing, compared with similar men.¹³⁶ This is not because women are unsuited for leadership; rather, it's because women tend to be promoted during times of crisis and given jobs with a higher risk of failure. This phenomenon is found in contexts as wide-ranging as funeral homes, music festivals, political elections, and law. Because of the glass cliff, the average tenure of female CEOs is just half that of male CEOs.¹³⁷

If women are seen as less capable than men, why would companies promote them in times of crisis? The answer has less to do with how managers feel about women than it does with how they feel about their male coworkers. When decision makers are predominantly male, they may make efforts to ensure that men with whom they feel chummy get the better positions. The bad jobs are then given to whomever is left over: typically women and racial minorities of both sexes.¹³⁸ This was the experience of one female Marine Corps officer: "It's the good old boys network. The guys helping each other out and we don't have the women helping each other out because there are not enough of us around. The good old boys network put the guys they want to get promoted in certain jobs to make them stand out, look good."¹³⁹

When women succeed in precarious positions, and they often do, their reward is often to be put in charge of yet another fragile project. Many women, faced with a revolving door of failing assignments, eventually do fail. Or they burn out from stress. In fact, while we often hear the claim that women "opt out" of high-pressure jobs because they want to spend more time with their families, in real life women cite this as the reason for leaving their jobs only 2 to 3 percent of the time (that is, no more often than men). Dissatisfaction, feelings of underappreciation, blocked opportunities, discrimination, and harassment are much

more significant factors.¹⁴⁰ If women seem to be less ambitious than men, then, this can be at least partly explained by the fact that they face barriers at work that men, all things being equal, do not.

This resonates with research on work more generally: People in jobs with a **sticky floor**, ones with no or low opportunity for promotion, tend to limit their aspirations.¹⁴¹ Women, more often than men, find themselves in a position where it doesn't make sense to be ambitious, and this is even more true for women of color and immigrant women. In contrast, both women and men in high-mobility positions with a significant chance of promotion tend to be correspondingly motivated.

MEN IN FEMALE-DOMINATED OCCUPATIONS Do men in female-dominated occupations face the same struggles as women in male-dominated ones? It turns out, no. Men in female-dominated occupations are disadvantaged relative to men in male-dominated occupations, but they aren't disadvantaged relative to their female coworkers. Instead of facing glass ceilings or cliffs, they often are presented with a **glass escalator**: an invisible ride to the top offered to men in female-dominated occupations.¹⁴²

A series of studies have found that men in female-dominated occupations are advantaged in terms of pay, promotions, and support from colleagues and supervisors.¹⁴³ In a two-year study of 5,734 secondary and elementary school teachers, for example, all else being equal, men were three times more likely than women to be promoted to administrative positions.¹⁴⁴ Likewise, though women are overrepresented in fashion design, men are more likely to win accolades and awards on the assumption that their work is more inspired and artistic.¹⁴⁵ This is true especially if they're white and, in some cases, heterosexual.¹⁴⁶ Some sexual minorities report being forced to stay in a **glass closet**, an invisible place in which sexual minorities hide their identities in order to avoid stigma, suspicion, or censure at work.¹⁴⁷

Not all men, though, view the glass escalator as a blessing. Sociologist Christine Williams, who coined the phrase, described how a male librarian, six months after starting his first job, was criticized by his supervisors for "not shooting high enough."¹⁴⁸ "Seriously," he said, "they assumed that because I was a male—and they told me this . . . that somehow I wasn't doing the kind of management-oriented work that they thought I should be doing." He worked in the children's collection for ten years and had to fight the whole time to avoid being promoted; he enjoyed the job he had. Male nurses, likewise, often find themselves steered to emergency medicine, where salaries are higher.¹⁴⁹ Gender stereotypes are at work here—and not just positive ones like the idea that men are better leaders, but also negative ones like the idea that men aren't suited to working with children.

Men who pursue feminized occupations, then, may face policing from their peers and bring home lower salaries than they would if they were in male-dominated occupations but, relative to their female colleagues, they will be promoted more quickly and earn more money.¹⁵⁰ This isn't necessarily what all men want, but it does translate into advantages at work and the persistence of the pay gap.

Glass and concrete ceilings, alongside glass cliffs, closets, and escalators, conspire with sticky floors to keep (white, heterosexual) men at the top of many workplaces. Expectations surrounding parenthood contribute as well.

PARENTHOOD: THE FACTS AND THE FICTION

Today one can't read a mommy blog without encountering the problem of so-called work-life balance. Almost always considered a "women's issue," the conflict rests on the incompatibility of two hegemonic cultural ideologies: intensive motherhood, which we discussed in the last chapter, and the **ideal worker norm**, the idea that an employee should commit their energies to their job without the distraction of family responsibilities.¹⁵¹ Echoing the norm, one senior manager interviewed for a study about workplace culture explained:

*The members of the Management Committee of this company aren't the smartest. . . . We're the hardest working. We work like dogs. We out-work the others. We out-practice them. We out-train them. . . . What counts is work and commitment. . . . I don't think we can get commitment with less than fifty or sixty hours a week. . . . To be competitive, that's what we need to do.*¹⁵²

The ideal worker norm is especially strong in the United States.¹⁵³ It frames employees as less than ideal if they sometimes need time off to do family-related tasks (attend parent-teacher meetings, care for sick children or ailing parents, step in when daycare arrangements fall through) or can't always go above and beyond stated job responsibilities (work overtime and on weekends, on short notice, or relocate for the company). In Northern California's Silicon Valley, ideal workers are described as ones with "zero drag," meaning that absolutely nothing about their lives interferes with their ability to work. Po Bronson, a journalist who investigated this hypercompetitive workplace culture, wrote that

*new applicants would jokingly be asked about their "drag coefficient." Since the job is a full hour's commute from San Francisco, an apartment in the city was a full unit of drag. A spouse? Drag coefficient of one. Kids? A half point per.*¹⁵⁴

Employees who do “just” a good job are penalized; great workers go “above and beyond,” creating a cycle in which workers have to outwork each other just to stay in the game.

The ideal worker norm assumes that workers have homemaker partners or paid help to take care of any family- or house-related demands. All individuals with family responsibilities (and many without) often find themselves straining to live up to this norm, but women with children bear the brunt.¹⁵⁵ Research finds that they often suffer a **motherhood penalty**, a loss in wages per hour on the job associated with becoming a mother. U.S. mothers experience, on average, a 7 percent decline in their wages for each child.¹⁵⁶ Women married to men, poor women, highly educated women, and white women face the largest penalties. Mothers married to women are an exception; they see their wages go up.¹⁵⁷

Dads, for their part, receive a **fatherhood premium**, a wage increase that accrues to married men who become fathers.¹⁵⁸ Married fathers earn 4 to 7 percent *more* than married men without children. Stepfathers, fathers without custody of their kids, racial minorities, and less educated men see a smaller fatherhood premium or none at all. If we put the penalty and premium together, the numbers are stark: Among all full-time workers, women make 82 percent of what men do; but among parents working full time, women’s relative earnings drop to 71 percent.¹⁵⁹

The motherhood penalty and fatherhood premium are a result of both *actual* time and effort spent on work and, even more so, employers’ *beliefs* about time and effort.

Working on the Mommy Track

More than nine times out of ten, if a parent takes time off work after a child is born, it’s a woman.¹⁶⁰ If that woman has two children three years apart and takes a break from work that lasts until the second child enters preschool, she’ll have been out of the workforce for seven years. Those are unpaid years, and when she returns to work, she’ll have less work experience than a person who didn’t take time off. Most women do not take this much time out of the workforce, but they are still substantially more likely than men to take at least some, and that time makes them less competitive at work.

When women do go back to work, what happens at home matters, too. Recall that married mothers and fathers have a tendency to specialize: men do about two-thirds of the paid work and women do about two-thirds of the housework and childcare.¹⁶¹ Struggling with work-life balance, mothers may allow themselves to be put on a **mommy track**, a workplace euphemism that refers to expecting less intense commitment from mothers, with the understanding that they’re sacrificing the right to expect equal pay, regular raises, or promotions.

The mommy track sends a message: we'll let you stay, but we don't think you're an ideal worker.

In contrast, fathers often increase their effort at work. This choice likely resonates with their employers' gender ideology. Employers sometimes accept that a woman needs to respond to her children's schedule and take care of emergencies, even if they begrudge them this flexibility. Those same employers often do not accept that men have to do the same. Since there is rarely a daddy track, new fathers likely face fewer options than new mothers: be an ideal worker or get fired.

Time out of the workforce to care for children and reduced overall work hours are plausible causes of mothers' economic disadvantage. But there are reasons to question whether it's the whole story. Studies actually find that many mothers *do* put in great amounts of effort at work; some evidence even suggests they're *more* productive than non-mothers.¹⁶² This is consistent with the finding that the bigger contributor to the motherhood penalty and the fatherhood premium isn't how mothers and fathers actually perform at work, it's employers' and coworkers' *beliefs* about how they perform.¹⁶³

Beliefs about Moms and Dads

Research shows that many employers see mothers as less-than-ideal employees and fathers as especially ideal ones regardless of how much talent and effort men and women display at work.¹⁶⁴ Mothers may find themselves put on the mommy track based purely on stereotypes: sent home when others are asked to stay late, excused from important work-related travel, kept off intensive projects that require long hours. In a striking example from one study, for instance, a new mom started getting sent home at 5:30 sharp while her husband, who worked for the same person, was given extra work designed to boost his career.¹⁶⁵

As law professor Joan C. Williams describes it: "Managers and coworkers may mentally cloak pregnant women and new mothers in a haze of femininity, assuming they will be empathetic, emotional, gentle, nonaggressive—that is, not very good at business."¹⁶⁶ In fact, mothers' value at work is ranked as about equivalent to other stigmatized workers: elderly persons and people receiving welfare. Single mothers and black mothers are often judged even more harshly.¹⁶⁷ And the more motherly they are, the less we value them. One study, for instance, found that respondents judge breastfeeding mothers to be less competent workers than mothers who bottle-feed.¹⁶⁸

But, Williams continues, "If these women shine through the haze and remain tough, cool, emphatic, and committed to their jobs, colleagues may indict them for being insufficiently maternal."¹⁶⁹ What would we think, after all, of a new mother who *didn't* want to go home early? Mothers face a double bind: Their supervisors and coworkers don't take them seriously as employees; if they

shine as employees, their coworkers might conclude that the mothers shouldn't be rewarded for what is perceived to be neglectful parenting.

The belief that mothers are bad workers sits alongside the belief that fathers are the best workers. Sociologist Shelley Correll and her colleagues studied whether individuals reviewing applications for a marketing job would evaluate female and male parents and non-parents differently.¹⁷⁰ They did. Mothers were considered to be the least hireable: Only 47 percent of the mothers were recommended for hire, compared to 84 percent of the non-mothers. And if hired, mothers were offered starting salaries that were \$13,477 less per year than those of non-mothers. Mothers were rated as the least competent, committed, promotable, and suited for management training. In contrast, fathers were rated *more* favorably than non-fathers: 73 percent of fathers were recommended for hire, compared to 62 percent of non-fathers. Fathers were seen as more committed and more likely to be promoted. They were also considered to be worth \$7,351 more a year than non-fathers and \$15,927 more than mothers.

These findings hold up in the real world. Following up, Correll and her colleagues sent 1,276 fake résumés, carefully constructed to give hints as to parental status, to 638 actual employers. Mothers received fewer than half as many callbacks as non-mothers. Fathers were called back at a slightly higher rate than non-fathers. Non-mothers actually received the most callbacks. Employers generally seem to like hiring women, then, maybe even more than they like hiring men; they just don't like moms.

THE CHANGING WORKPLACE, REVISITED

If being a flight attendant in 1945 was almost as glamorous as being a movie star, it certainly isn't anymore. Commercial air travel today is an unpleasant form of mass transportation: more like riding a city bus than being escorted through the sky by a white-jacketed steward.¹⁷¹ While once airlines offered plenty of space, free full-course meals, and blankets and pillows, today they offer little more than the opportunity to get from one place to another safely, with a beverage and snack service sufficient to ensure that passengers literally don't pass out from thirst or hunger.

In the United States, this shift from elite to "economy class" was spurred by the federal government's decision to set fewer standards on air travel.¹⁷² Deregulation, complete by 1985, left airlines to set their own fares and routes. Without a regulatory floor, capitalist competition sent airlines into a downward spiral as they slashed costs to try to offer the cheapest fares. It was a battle for survival and many airlines at the time went bankrupt, while others saw their debt soar.

The need to reduce cost is why most airlines today offer only the most basic of amenities for non-first class passengers; it's also meant squeezing as much work out of the fewest employees for as little pay and benefits as possible.¹⁷³ Flight attendants had a strong history of labor unionization and were organized to protect their rights and interests as coworkers, but legal and illegal efforts by airlines to "bust" unions hindered their ability to collectively bargain.

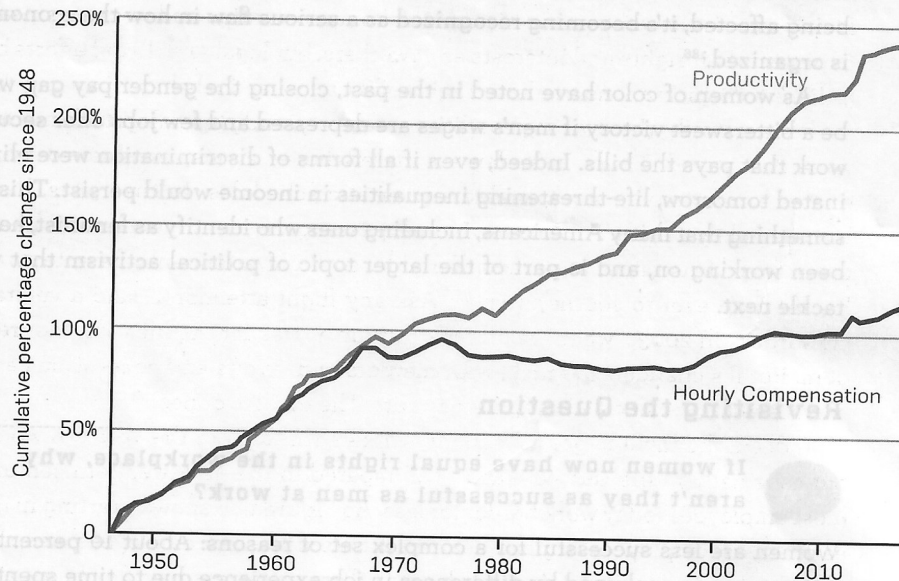
Consequently, the working conditions, security, and pay of flight attendants were devastated. Flight attendants suffered huge layoffs, heightened work demands, and more unpredictable and erratic schedules. In the 1980s, their income fell by a third.¹⁷⁴ In the meantime, passengers are now even more likely to be tired, frustrated, and uncomfortable, so flight attendants have to work harder than ever to soothe them.¹⁷⁵ "Ask any flight attendant," said a veteran stewardess in 2003, "when we all took this job, it was for the lifestyle, the freedom. But it's changed so much, with mergers and layoffs and concessions and service reductions and waiting for pay cuts. The thrill is gone."¹⁷⁶

Indeed, the thrill is gone for many workers throughout the Western world, but especially in the United States.¹⁷⁷ Compared to the mid-twentieth century, most employees today work harder for less. As Figure 12.6 shows, starting in the early 1970s, employers stopped sharing profits with their employees, keeping more and more for themselves. Today's workers enjoy less pay, flexibility, and security, and fewer benefits, even as their productivity has risen.¹⁷⁸ As the gap between the rich and poor has widened, a middle-class lifestyle has become increasingly elusive. The top 1 percent of Americans now brings home 22 percent of all income and holds 39 percent of all wealth, more than all the income and wealth enjoyed by the bottom 90 percent combined.¹⁷⁹

Like with the flight attendants, these outcomes are largely the result of a combination of governmental policies and workplace practices. Our economy is now characterized by a commitment to the "free market" at the expense of protecting workers, producing low regulation and suppression of union activity. Teachers' work conditions and pay have declined so markedly, for example, that many must take second jobs to make ends meet; companies like Uber are even actively recruiting them ("Teachers: Driving Our Future" was an actual tagline).¹⁸⁰ More than half of American workers today work "by the hour" and 6.4 million of them are working part time when they'd rather have a full-time job.¹⁸¹ The service industry now generally prefers to hire workers part time to avoid having to offer employees benefits. Part-time workers can also be denied regular work hours; they're often given shifts that vary from week to week with little to no notice, so they can't count on a steady income, even a low one.

For many other kinds of workers, too, the absence of "good jobs" has pushed them into the "gig economy," a romanticized form of self-employment that, in practice, typically means patching together a variety of dead-end jobs like driving, delivering, and walking dogs.¹⁸² But surviving on an assemblage of odd jobs

FIGURE 12.6 | THE GROWING GAP BETWEEN PRODUCTIVITY AND WORKERS' COMPENSATION



Note: Data are for compensation (wages and benefits) of production/nonsupervisory workers in the private sector and net productivity of the total economy. "Net productivity" is the growth of output of goods and services less depreciation per hour worked.
Source: Economic Policy Institute, "The Productivity-Pay Gap," October 2017, Retrieved <https://www.epi.org/productivity-pay-gap/>

brings no benefits and offers no security. This is not the kind of work that allows either women or men to support their families. Nevertheless, this is a new normal: since 2007, involuntary part-time work has increased five times faster than voluntary part-time work and eighteen times faster than all work.¹⁸³

With the decline of labor unions, employers get to choose whether to be generous with pay and benefits. Some of the highest-paying occupations treat employees quite well—the corporate giants of the tech industry, for example, famously offer benefits like egg freezing to delay motherhood and free chef-prepared meals—but most jobs are not like this. Nearly half of U.S. workers make under \$15 an hour.¹⁸⁴ Because women, especially women of color, are clustered in industries that pay at or near the minimum wage (or, in the case of tipped workers and home health aides, even less), their financial situation is especially precarious. Poverty and homelessness for families headed by women earners are rising, even as more families are depending on women's wages. Experts estimate that over a million children experience homelessness each year.¹⁸⁵

Men, though, as well as women and children, have been harmed by growing inequality in the economy. We noted earlier, for example, that a quarter of the decline in the wage gap is due to men's declining wages. The absence of

a breadwinner wage—one that is sufficient to support a family—has contributed to demoralization and family fragility in African American communities for decades. Now that white men's jobs, families, and communities are being affected, it's becoming recognized as a serious flaw in how the economy is organized.¹⁸⁶

As women of color have noted in the past, closing the gender pay gap will be a bittersweet victory if men's wages are depressed and few jobs offer secure work that pays the bills. Indeed, even if all forms of discrimination were eliminated tomorrow, life-threatening inequalities in income would persist. This is something that many Americans, including ones who identify as feminist, have been working on, and is part of the larger topic of political activism that we tackle next.

Revisiting the Question

Q+A

If women now have equal rights in the workplace, why aren't they as successful as men at work?

Women are less successful for a complex set of reasons: About 10 percent of the pay gap is explained by differences in job experience due to time spent in and out of the workforce, largely for the purposes of caregiving.¹⁸⁷ Almost half (49 percent) is explained by job segregation and the devaluation of women's work. The remaining 41 percent is likely due to discrimination against women and mothers.

Not all these factors are present to the same degree in every workplace. Discrimination against women is a larger factor in blue-collar occupations than discrimination against mothers, while the opposite appears to be true in white-collar workplaces.¹⁸⁸ Many supervisors, both male and female, go out of their way to ensure women can compete on equal footing with men. Many women are talented and dedicated enough to overcome at least some of the gendered disadvantages. Still, despite many individual and organizational examples to the contrary, women as a group still face barriers to success at work that men do not.

As a result, women who work full time earn \$0.82 for every dollar earned by comparable men. For the typical woman working fifty weeks a year, that means earning \$8,550 less each year.¹⁸⁹ This isn't just problematic *in principle*. For poor women and their families, economic disadvantage translates into *real* deprivation: an inability to pay rent, keep food on the table, or buy their children back-to-school clothes. For more financially secure women, it translates into fewer opportunities and pleasures. With an extra \$8,550 a year, a woman could pay the majority of the tuition and fees at her local state college, get a massage every two and a half days for a year, or learn how to fly an airplane.¹⁹⁰ If she invested it, experts predict it'd be worth \$46,405 twenty-five years later. If she saved for ten

years, \$85,500 would be enough to start a business or put a hefty down payment on a house. Maybe she's not interested in buying a home and settling down. She could use that money to take an entire year off work, maybe three. It's easy to think about the wage gap in purely theoretical terms, but money buys everything but happiness. It matters.

Next . . .

The last few chapters have established that gender inequality is not just a theoretical exercise but a lived experience. Sexism, androcentrism, and subordination play a role in how we understand and express our sexualities, organize and experience our home lives, and earn a living and pursue our careers. Gendered ideas, interactions, and institutions structure our lives at every turn, creating both difference and inequality. Gender inequality is clearly not good for women, but it's not ideal for most men either. This is what motivates many people to get involved in changing or conserving the social constructions, interpersonal interactions, and institutions that organize our societies. In the next chapter, we'll ask:

How do we change societies?

This is politics.

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