

1970s and 1980s but has declined more slowly since then (England 2011).

Women with college and graduate degrees have entered traditionally male occupations much more frequently than women graduating only from high school. In the United States, as well as most countries, the male jobs not requiring a college degree—such as carpenter, welder, electrician, or truck driver—have seen only small numbers of women join their ranks. In less affluent, developing nations than the United States, college women are more likely to choose traditionally male majors like natural science and engineering (Charles and Bradley 2009).

Despite some integration, jobs remain quite sex segregated. This is partly because socialization still encourages young men and women to aspire to different jobs. Another factor is hiring discrimination. Although it has been illegal to refuse to hire people for a job because of their race or sex since the Civil Rights Act was passed in 1964, the law has not entirely ended discrimination.

Women's earnings have also increased relative to men's. Figure 12.6 shows the median women's earnings as a percent of the median men's earnings for each year. (The median for either sex is the level where half the people of that sex are below it and half are above.) The figures include only those who worked full-time the whole year. Women earned about 60 to 65 percent of what men earned from the 1950s to the 1980s. After 1980, this began to equalize so that by about 2000, women earned 76 percent of what men did. Since 2000 there hasn't been much more progress toward equality.

Why do women still earn less than men? A number of explanations have been proposed, starting with the simple fact that some employers still pay women less than men in the same job. This has been strictly illegal since the passage of the Equal Pay Act in 1963, unless the difference is based on seniority, performance, or some factor other than sex itself. But it sometimes happens. Because of cultural messages that women should be modest while

men should promote themselves, women may negotiate less strongly for pay (Babcock and Laschever 2003). Other times, employers simply offer women less. Another explanation is that employers pay people more when they have more years of experience, and women are more likely than men to have dropped out for a time to take care of children.

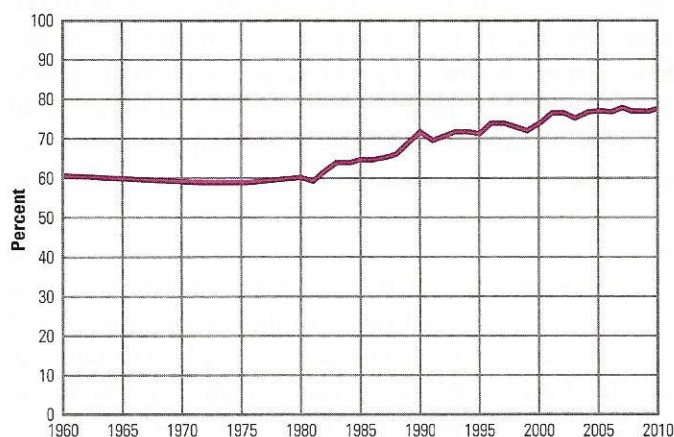
Another key factor in the pay gap is that women are concentrated in lower-paying occupations. Some of this is because women choose occupations—for example those helping people—that pay less than other jobs requiring the same amount of education. This may reflect different socialization by gender. Another part of the concentration of women in lower-paying jobs is that, as mentioned earlier, some employers discriminate against women when hiring in higher-paying jobs, leaving the women no choice but to seek lower-paying jobs (Reskin 2000).

Additionally, employers often set lower pay rates in jobs filled mostly by women than in different jobs requiring the same amount of education but filled mostly by men (England 1992; Levanon, England, and Allison 2009). For example, secretaries (mostly women) in some organizations earn less than assembly workers on the factory line or janitors (mostly men) even though the secretaries need as much education and as much (though different kinds of) skill.

Why do employers fail to pay mostly female jobs as much as comparably demanding yet different male jobs? Research that I conducted some time ago convinced me that employers often do this out of a biased perception that whatever is done by women must be easier and not as important for the company. Often the bias is unconscious, but many researchers see it as a form of discrimination. While this is not recognized as illegal discrimination in U.S. federal law (England 1992), it is in some other nations. If an employer won't hire someone into a particular job because she is female, or pays a woman less than a man in the same job when their seniority and performance are equal, the employer is violating U.S. law. But American laws do not cover setting lower pay levels in particular jobs because they are filled largely with women, even though there is evidence that employers do this.

Some employers discriminate against women simply because they are mothers, although in most cases this is illegal. One study investigated this type of discrimination by sending fake résumés to real job ads. Two identical fake résumés were developed that showed the same credentials and experience except that, in the section of the résumé where many people list their hobbies or community activities, one résumé said the woman was an officer in the Parent Teacher Association (revealing that she is a mother), while the other résumé said the woman was an officer in some other community club. Just this difference resulted in a significant difference in how many calls for interviews were received. Interestingly, the same manipulation to fake men's resumes showed no fatherhood penalty (Correll, Benard, and Paik 2007).

Figure 12.6 Median Women's Annual Earnings as a Percent of Men's



SOURCE: Institute for Women's Policy Research (2011).