

SHEPICTIONS: BARRIERS TO WOMEN'S ADVANCEMENT IN THE WORKPLACE AND THE  
GENDER PAY GAP BASED ON STEREOTYPES, MYTHS AND BIASES

HONORS THESIS

Presented to the Honors Committee of  
Texas State University  
In Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements

for Graduation from the Honors College

by

Randi Berkovsky

San Marcos, Texas  
December 2014

SHEPICTIONS: BARRIERS TO WOMEN'S ADVANCEMENT IN THE WORKPLACE AND THE  
GENDER PAY GAP BASED ON STEREOTYPES, MYTHS AND BIASES

Thesis Supervisor:

---

Katherine Peirce-Burleson, Ph.D.  
School of Journalism and Mass  
Communication

Second Reader:

---

Shirley M. Ogletree, Ph.D.  
Department of Psychology

Approved:

---

Heather C. Galloway, Ph.D.  
Dean, Honors College

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I want to thank everyone for their support throughout my research: Dr. Kate Peirce for long phone calls on Friday afternoons and unending confidence boosters; Dr. Shirley Ogletree for her keen eye, psychological perspective and the constant push to keep being better; the Honors College for allowing me to have this amazing journey; my friends and family for their endless love and support - ears for listening and essential feedback; and especially my mother for always being the strong female role model I needed and constantly pushing me to pursue my dreams. This thesis is dedicated to the women who have fought long and hard for equal rights and to those who have been victims of the gender pay gap and societal stereotypes. Your stories will not go untold. This is for you.

## ABSTRACT

Gender inequality in the modern workplace is a persisting issue that directly affects the salaries, position placements and employment rates of women. This inequality occurs due to stereotyping, prejudice and discrimination (Stockdale and Nadler, 2013). This thesis explores the human capital variables and other barriers to women's advancement in the workplace that contribute to the gender pay gap including stereotypes, myths and biases and uncovers if they really make a difference. In addition, several studies on gender discrimination will be reviewed and the results discussed. This research seeks to determine whether or not stereotypes, myths and biases about women in the workplace directly contribute to the gender pay gap and the barriers women face every day.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION .....	1
EXPLAINING THE GENDER PAY GAP .....	2
INDIVIDUAL VARIABLES CONTRIBUTING TO THE GENDER PAY GAP .....	5
Examining Human Capital Variables .....	6
Education Level.....	6
Women’s Career Choices.....	8
Work Experience and Hours .....	10
Women and Workplace Barriers .....	11
Societal Gender Roles.....	11
Decision for Marriage and Family.....	12
Negotiation .....	14
Low Self-Confidence and Personal Value .....	15
DISCRIMINATION IN THE WORKPLACE: PERSISTING SOCIETAL STEREOTYPES, MYTHS AND BIASES .....	17
THOUGHTS FOR THE FUTURE .....	23
WORKS CITED .....	25

## INTRODUCTION

For centuries, women have been viewed as second-class citizens unworthy of most of the privileges awarded to men. Even as we move into the year 2015, it is still evident in the United States that gender can be a major determining factor when running for public office, choosing an undergraduate college major and entering the job market. Gender is a powerful determinate of placement in any area of society, even in a time when women are perceived to be making some large advances. Barriers to women's advancement in the workplace appear in various forms including strict gender roles, family planning and women's self-confidence. One main problem, however, is that there seems to be a lack of awareness and knowledge of these barriers, along with acknowledgment of the existence of a gender pay gap. This will be discussed later in the explanation of the gender pay gap and its causes.

Women have also experienced various obstacles including gender stereotypes, myths and biases, and it is these preconceived notions about women that are directly affecting their future employment including their salaries and upper-level position placement. It is a combination of all these factors that may be determining why, even in fields dominated by women, they are still treated unequally. These stereotypes, myths and biases will be researched in order to estimate their effect on women's ability to excel against their male competitors as well as their overall effects on women in general. After review, the findings will be used to draw direct conclusions about the amount of influence these stereotypes, myths and biases have on women in the workplace.

## EXPLAINING THE GENDER PAY GAP

According to the Cambridge Business English Dictionary, the gender pay gap is described as “the difference between the amounts of money paid to women and men, often for doing the same work” (Cambridge Dictionaries Online, 2014). This wage differential is a true and continuous reminder of gender inequality and economic injustice for females around the world (Stockdale & Nadler, 2013). Bredtmann and Otten found that “the main difficulty in explaining the gender pay gap is to separate the discrimination part of the wage differential from the part that results from differences in human capital endowment, occupational segregation and attitudes toward career development and promotion between men and women” (2014, p.292). Alksnis, Desmarais & Curtis (2008) stated that, after the long-term study of wage trends, the wage gap has two main causes: occupational segregation and the idea that women are responsible for childrearing and its effects.

Even today, there are still critics of the existence of a gender pay gap and the “debate continues to swirl, not only around the size of the gap, but around whether the gap is fair or unfair” (Lips, 2012, p.169). There is no denying the existence of a gender pay gap; however, with the many advances of women over the years combined with lack of education about the gender pay gap and workplace biases, many people still believe it is not a real and pressing issue. A Gallup poll in 2005, following the economic recession of the early 2000’s, found that 53 percent of Americans thought that women had achieved equal opportunities in the workforce (Alksnis, et al., 2008). Lips (2013) also stated that there are several indicators to the continuing lack of pay gap awareness and its severity among employees and employers alike. Many still see the gap as justifiable because of differing male and female attitudes, behaviors and choices.

There is a gender pay gap, according to annual statistics from the United States Department of Labor Women's Bureau, because "women earn about 81 cents on the dollar compared to men — a gap that results in hundreds of thousands of dollars in lost wages" (2013). For minority women such as Latinas and African Americans, that number gets slightly lower. In 2013, women's overall earnings compared to men of the same race were 82.1 percent.

For young women however, the pay gap is smaller. The Pew Research Center found that young women earn 93 percent of what men earn, or 93 cents to the dollar (Patten, 2014). Despite this advancement, the Pew Research Center found in its October 2013 study that included 810 millennials, or persons with birth years ranging from the 1980's to 2000's, that "in spite of the dramatic gains women have made in educational attainment and labor force participation in recent decades, young women view this as a man's world—just as middle-aged and older women do" (2013). The study also found that about 51 percent of millennial women and 55 percent of older women still say society favors men over women; only 6 percent overall said that society favors women over men.

The U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, in its May 2014 report "Women in the Labor Force: A Databook," showed that in 2012, 57.7 percent of women were in the labor force compared with the higher men's rate of 70.2 percent. Of those 57.7 percent, women who worked in salary and wage jobs full time had usual weekly median earnings of \$691. This constitutes only about 81 percent of men's weekly median earnings, \$854 (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2014). Unfortunately, labor participation rates for men and women overall are expected to decrease by 2022, and women will then only represent 46.8 percent of the labor force (U.S. Department of Labor Women's Bureau, 2013). According to the Institute for Women's Policy Research, "in 2013, the ratio of women's to men's median weekly full-time earnings was 82.1 percent, an increase of more than one percentage point since 2012, when the ratio was 80.9 percent (but still slightly lower than the 2011 ratio of 82.2 percent)" (March 2014).



In its August 2014 study, Catalyst published a list of women who currently hold CEO positions. The study found that women in Fortune 500 CEO positions currently account for only 4.8 percent while women with Fortune 1000 CEO companies possess only 5.2 percent of CEO positions. Of these women CEOs in the Fortune 1000, the most commonly held college major was engineering, 9 out of 51 (Fairchild, 2014). According to Facebook COO Sheryl Sandberg, men still run our world. In her book "Lean In for Graduates," Sandberg states that despite slow and steady gains, women still constitute only 17 percent of company board seats and 15 percent of executive officer positions and make up a mere 19 percent of our elected congressional officials (Sandberg, 2014). Despite these statistics, Kay and Shipman (2014) found that in six global studies conducted by sources such as Columbia University and Goldman Sachs, companies with a large number of female employees outperform their competition on every profitability measurement.

Women need to continue to ask themselves why these huge gaps between weekly median earnings, cents to the dollar and upper-level position placement are occurring, and what is their true cause. As we take a closer look at the gender wage gap, it is important to see where the gender divide begins and the separation between "women's choices" and discrimination is occurring. Could women be contributing to their own pay gap?

## INDIVIDUAL VARIABLES CONTRIBUTING TO THE GENDER PAY GAP

The gender pay gap is a complex issue made up of a number of variables including human capital variables and women's personal choices. Believe it or not, women can also create several personal barriers to their own workplace advancement. Although there are a variety of these factors that could affect the wage gap, one major argument presented against gender bias in explaining the gender pay gap suggests that "gender differences in pay rates are due to human capital variables ( e.g., such as education level, work schedule, experience and career choice), rather than discrimination" (Nadler & Stockdale, 2012, p.282). Education, work experience and job training can increase the productivity of a company's employees and can be thought of as human capital investments. (Olson, 2013). These variables, however, can still become subject to gender discrimination. Despite many of women's advances, "(especially full-time work and experience) and women's movement into previously male-dominated occupations, the gender wage gap has been fairly constant in recent years" (Olson, 2013, p. 194). According to Lips (2013), however, some of these human capital variables are used to cover up the real problem such as when the U.S. Department of Labor commissioned a report in 2009 rationalizing almost the entire gender wage gap and attributing it to women's time out of the labor force, family-friendly workplace policy favoritism and women's tendency to work part-time.

Along with the slender narrowing of the gap in women's to men's median weekly earnings mentioned above, another "narrowing has occurred between men and women in labor force participation, paid hours of work, hours of work at home, life-time labor force experience, occupations, college majors, and education, where there has been an overtaking by females" (Goldin, 2014, p.1091).

Since women seem to be outperforming men in all these areas, what does this mean for the argument concerning human capital variables?

### Examining Human Capital Variables

#### Education Level

According to the 2014 report by the U.S. Department of Labor Statistics Women's Bureau (2013), of the 64,421,000 women participating in the labor force at 25 years of age and older in 2013, only 37.8 percent had a bachelor's degree or higher. Next, only 12.7 percent had an associate's degree and 25.3 percent had a high school diploma or no college education, while 6.7 percent had less than a high school diploma.

The National Center for Education Statistics found that "differences in educational attainment by sex have shifted over the past few decades, with female attainment rates higher than male attainment rates at each education level since 2000" (2014). Between 1975 and 2000, the number of women ages 25 to 34 who had completed at least four years of college grew from 18 to 30 percent while the number of men with the same level of education only increased up three points to 29 percent (DiNatale & Boraas, 2002). In 2013, the percent of males earning a bachelor's degree or higher was seven points lower than females, 30 percent to 37 percent (National Center for Education Statistics, 2014). However, one major difference appears when comparing education level and labor force participation. In 2000, 86 percent of women with college degree ages 25 to 34 were in the labor force, compared about 95 percent of men the same age with college degrees. The difference between the percentage of these women with college degrees and those with less than a high school diploma was 31 percent while men's labor force difference between the same groups was only 9 percent (DiNatale & Boraas, 2002).

The National Center for Education Statistics also found that in the United States overall, girls are beginning to outperform boys in academics by earning a total of about 57 percent of undergraduate degrees, 56 percent of master's degrees and 51 percent of doctoral degrees (2012). Also, in 2014, women's enrollment in professional and graduate law and medical programs increased to about half (Goldin, 2014). In addition, Catalyst Research Center found that in the 2009-2010 academic year, women accounted for 47.2 percent of law school students and, in 2011, made up 31.9 percent of all lawyers (March 2014). Women began earning MBAs in significant numbers in the 1970s and began to stray away from non-secretarial jobs in business (Olson, 2013). By 2010-2011, U.S. women earned 36.8 percent of MBAs (Catalyst, March 2014). According to Goldin (2014), women are leading men in several fields including pharmacy, optometry, biological sciences and veterinary medicine.

### Women's Career Choices

The American Association for University Women, in its article "Graduating to a Pay Gap: The Earnings of Men and Women One Year after College Graduation," found that an important factor in pay differences begins with college major (Corbett & Hill, 2012). It is these differences in college major selection based that create a bigger portion of male to female entry-level pay gap (Stockdale & Nadler, 2013). However, just one year after graduation, it was discovered that males and females who chose to major in the same field still had a wage gap between them as well (Corbett & Hill, 2012).

In 2012, several industry sectors including health services and education (75 percent), leisure and hospitality (51 percent), financial activities (53 percent) and other services (52 percent) found that women make up more than half of all workers (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, May 2014). In the same year, women also represented 52 percent of all professional, management and related occupations workers, slightly more than their share of total employment equaling 47 percent.

In a 2012 article from Forbes magazine, Carrie Lukas, managing director of the Independent Women's Forum, explained that men and women tend to gravitate toward different industries, where "women tend to seek jobs with regular hours, more comfortable conditions, little travel and greater personal fulfillment" (Lukas, 2012). According to Pew Research Center data on millennial women and the pay gap, women are less likely than men to work toward top management or executive positions: 34 percent of young working women said they were not interested in becoming a company boss or top executive compared to only 24 percent of young working men (2013). Cohen and Swim (1995) found that as the percentage of women increased in a certain occupation, young women interested in that area also increased while the number of young men interested in the occupation decreased. Gender statistics, though we may not know it, are key indicators of job availability in a particular field, and women will gravitate toward fields where they are not the minority.

Stockdale and Nadler (2013) define the term occupational sex segregation as the “disproportional representation of one gender or the other in the workforce in general and within individual careers in specific” (p.208). The authors found that a larger number of citizens in the U.S. workforce are employed in fields that are largely dominated by those of their own gender where male-dominated occupations are found to have higher salaries, greater benefits and better advancement opportunities than occupations dominated by females.

In April 2014, the Republican National Committee also tried to answer the question of whether women are paid less because they choose to be, by entering low-paying careers (Miller, 2014). “There’s a disparity not because female engineers are making less than male engineers at the same company with comparable experience, The Republican National Committee said. “The disparity exists because a female social worker makes less than a male engineer” (Miller, 2014).

The committee may make a point, but “the majority of the current earnings gap comes from within occupation differences in earnings rather than from between occupation differences” (Goldin, 2014, p.1097). Goldin, a Harvard University labor economist and a leading scholar on women and the economy, said that “what happens within each occupation is far more important than the occupations in which women wind up” (Goldin, 2014, p.1097). It has also been discovered that upon entrance into the labor force, men and women’s psychological attitudes differ in regards to the type of employment contracts they favor (Understanding the Gender Pay Gap: What’s Competition Got to Do with It?, 2010). According to the article, Goldin said that even if women were rearranged into higher-paying occupations, only 15 percent of the pay gap for all workers would be erased, while only 30 to 35 percent of the pay gap would be erased for college graduates (Goldin, 2014 as cited in Miller, 2014).

### Work Experience and Hours

Another contributor to the pay gap can be varying work-experience levels, years in the field and hours worked per week. The U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics found that 26 percent of employed women in 2012 worked less than 35 hours per week or part time compared to 13 percent of men (2014). According to the American Association of University women, after being out of college just one year, men working full-time jobs reported a total average of 45 hours per week while women worked around 43 (Corbett & Hill, 2012). In general, then, men work more hours per week than women. When comparing hours per week, the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics found that, on average in 2012, men worked 40.8 hours to women's 35.8 hours (2012).

According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, workers pay for having a lower level of training by receiving a lower wage compared to someone who has received more training (Veum, 1995). Training is positively correlated to wage growth and is estimated to have additional effects such as motivation and ability.

However, even when controlling for college major, number of hours worked per week, occupation and work experience, the American Association for University Women found that American women will still earn less one year after graduation compared to men (Corbett & Hill, 2012). In the teaching field, women made 89 cents to every male dollar while women in business and management made 86 cents to the dollar and women in sales made 77 cents to the dollar. In addition, an analysis from the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics and U.S. Census data also showed that even among single workers aged 22 to 30 with no children, women earned less than men in every job category (Cohen, 2012).

## Women and Workplace Barriers

There are also still several barriers to women's advancement in the workplace including long-standing societal gender roles, the decision to pursue marriage and a family, the ability or lack thereof to negotiate a pay raise or promotion and low self-confidence or personal value. It is important to note that these barriers are not only imposed upon women from the outside, but they are also internalized by women themselves, likely related to gender-role socialization. This is where the gap between women's so-called "choices" and discrimination occurs. Many women are still choosing to reinforce societal gender roles, choosing to take on the extra position of wife and mother, choosing whether or not to negotiate employment salaries and benefits and choosing to cripple their potential with negative self-confidence and perceived low personal value. According to Sandberg (2014), all these internal barriers need to be eliminated in order for women to gain power. All these choices women make can fuel negative stereotypes, myths and biases from employers and society and ultimately contribute to the gender pay gap as well.

### Societal Gender Roles

Women have long been told that their place is in the home. In her chapter on the leadership ambition gap, Sandberg (2014) stated that "how individuals view what they can and should accomplish is in large part formed by our societal expectations (p.24). According to Perrone-McGovern, Wright, Howell and Barnum (2014), personal values, the current economic situation and workplace characteristics can also influence decision-making in regard to family, career and other roles. Vella (1994) explains that women's expectations of unequal treatment in the workplace can result in the development of gender roles, and these attitudes can develop from other forms of discrimination. It was also found that women's traditional attitudes do have an effect on their occupational choices whereas male traditional attitudes play no such role.



Kay and Shipman (2014) said that work and home lives can become complicated due to the emotional tug of maternal instincts. This explained tug, however, is not as strong for most men. Perrone-McGovern, et al. (2014) also explained that in a study of 120 millennial men and women between the ages of 18 and 32, women exuded more concerns related to family obligations undermining work opportunities while, on the other hand, men expressed greater concern that career obligations would conflict with family.

#### Decision for Marriage and Family

The U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (2014) found the 2012 labor participation rates for married men and women differed drastically. For married women, the labor force participation rate was 59.5 percent while married men had the highest rate of all groups studied, 74.6 percent.

According to Bredtmann and Otten (2014), a big section of the gender wage gap can be attributed to variations in career interruptions between women and men. Because of long-standing gender roles, where women are responsible for housework and childcare, women are significantly more likely to temporarily remove themselves from the work force due to childbirth than men. According to Labaton (2014), the more children a male employee has, the higher his salary while the more children a woman employee has, the lower her salary for each child. This was described as the “motherhood penalty” and resulted in mothers receiving 7 to 14 percent less than other female workers who did not have children for equivalent work.

Data from the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics showed that in 2000 women 25 to 34 years of age were less likely to be married and be mothers than women in 1975. By 2000, the proportion of this age group who were married had dropped to three out of five compared to 25 years earlier when it was likely that more than three out of four women were married (DiNatale & Boraas, 2002).

From 1975 to 2000, the labor participation rate for women with children under age 18 grew by about 25 percent to 70 percent while the rate for women with children under three years of age almost doubled, growing 33 percent to 63 percent (DiNatale & Boraas, 2002). The U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (2014) also found the labor force participation rate for mothers with children ages 6 to 17 was higher (76 percent) than those with younger children (64.7 percent). Unmarried mothers, however, had much higher labor force participation, 75.8 percent as of March 2012. This high rate of participation could be because single mothers must account for the absence of a secondary form of income, most likely gained from a spouse.

## Negotiation

Bussey, in his October 2014 article in the *Wall Street Journal*, brought up the idea of an “ask gap,” or the rate in which men and women ask for a raise in their current jobs. He stated that the “ask gap’ between men and women is somewhat reflective of the wage gap. This is because when women do ask their boss for more money, an overwhelming percentage appear to get it” (Bussey, 2014). *Glamour Magazine*, in its 2014 Salary Survey, found that “overwhelming percentage” stated by Bussey to be 75 percent (Maltby, 2014).

According to *The Huffington Post*, the 2014 Salary Survey asked 2,000 men and women to explain what they thought the average woman was being paid and how the wage gap is affecting women across the United States (Vagianos, 2014). The article, titled “7 Things Every Woman Should Know When It Comes To Being Paid What You're Worth,” broke down the findings of *Glamour’s* Salary Survey and found the survey revealed that 54 percent of men reported they would try to negotiate their salary at the start of a new job compared to only 39 percent of women. Out of all the participants, only 43 percent of women surveyed by *Glamour Magazine* had asked for a pay raise over the full course of their careers. The survey also found that 44 percent of women respondents believed that their salary would be higher if they were a man and that an overwhelming 89 percent of women respondents said that better work hours and job flexibility were more valuable than salary (Vagianos, 2014).

A similar article from *The Washington Post* stated that women are less likely to ask for a raise, but not because they are less-capable negotiators (Labaton, 2014). Rather, they don’t ask because of fear of consequences such as being characterized as unthankful or pushy. According to the article, Harvard researcher Hannah Riley Bowles said that “women are still expected to fulfill prescriptions of feminine niceness” and that could be why some do not wish to work alongside females who initiate discussions regarding salary and benefits.

### Low Self-Confidence and Personal Value

According to Kay and Shipman (2014), there is a large confidence gap that separates genders and creates a crisis for women. Women generally underestimate their abilities, consider themselves less ready for a promotion and predict they'll do more poorly on tests compared to men.

Research by Cohen and Swim (1995) found that based on research on self-confidence, women overall are less self-confident than men. In Fortune 500 companies where women make up 15 percent or less of the total employees, women's differences were more likely to be highlighted and their characteristics were manipulated in order to meet a certain stereotype. These pressures caused many of these women, also known as tokens, to respond by overachieving in hours worked or by withdrawing socially. Women may be more threatened by token situations and experience a larger self-esteem drop after being negatively evaluated from a group of men.

Kay and Shipman (2014) also found that even when interviewing some of the most powerful women in the nation, there are still zones of female self-doubt. They explained that "in studies, men overestimate their abilities and performance while women underestimate both" (p. 58). Despite these estimations, there was no difference in the quality of their performances.

A study by Ehrlinger and Dunning (2003) brought together male and female Cornell University students to study self-perceptions based on scientific ability and the completion of a science-based quiz. All participants were asked to guess how many of the questions they believed they had answered correctly and estimate their rank based on the performance of other Cornell University students. As predicted, women held higher negative ideas about their abilities in science and therefore estimated their quiz performance to be more negative in terms of both the raw-score and percentile measure. Both genders underestimated their scores on the test, but it was discovered that women did so to a larger degree than men. Despite this negative self-assessment, however, female participants scored just as high as male participants on the quiz. In conclusion, the study found a link between gender and

estimated performance where self-perceptions directly affected performance estimates. In other words, women who had more negative self-perceptions also viewed their abilities in science to be lower and predicted they would do more negatively on the quiz.

In a similar gender self-confidence study conducted by Kukulcu, Korukcu, Ozdemir, Bezci and Calik (2013), 231 undergraduate nursing school students in Turkey completed a questionnaire along with a 'Self-Confidence Scale' created by researchers in January 2010. The study, overall, uncovered that male nursing students were enormously more confident than female students. The data collected showed that high-confidence levels were found in 78.6 percent of female students compared to a rate of 92.3 percent of male students. Self-confidence played a key role in the students' abilities to ask their patients questions, communicate effectively in a group or endure questioning from a lecturer. Generally speaking, the study found that low self-esteem negatively impacted patient care, and ultimately predicted that higher self-confidence is needed to fill healthcare demands.

## DISCRIMINATION IN THE WORKPLACE: PERSISTING SOCIETAL STEREOTYPES, MYTHS AND BIASES

According to simplypsychology.org, a stereotype is a set, over-simplified beliefs about a particular group of people (McLeod, 2008). Stereotypes are deeply embedded within social institutions and wider culture. These stereotypes, if overlooked, can result in personal biases, a false evaluation of a group rather than the group individual's true traits (Koch, D'Mello & Sackett, 2014). According to the American Association for University Women, the "explainable" portion of the gender pay gap can be attributed to both discrimination and cultural gender norms (Corbett & Hill, 2012). Lips (2013) said that "one way to resist acknowledging that the pay gap is a problem that requires serious attention is to keep searching for explanations for it other than pervasive, often implicit, unacknowledged and unintentional, discrimination against women" (p.228).

Koch, et al., (2014) also found that when focusing on discrimination "one proposed explanation for gender bias in the workplace is a role congruity theory, which explains bias in terms of the congruence between stereotypes held about job requirements and stereotypes held about gender groups" (p.2). An example of this is when a company is hiring for their CEO position. The characteristics needed to fill that position could be associated with the stereotypes held about the necessary skills a person must hold to qualify. It is these necessary skills, such as emotional toughness, quick decision-making and dominance, which are more firmly linked to males rather than females (Koch, et al., 2014). This perceived contrast can create workplace expectations that women will perform more poorly than men in certain positions, and this idea that they "just don't fit" creates more negative female expectations (Lyness & Heilman, 2006).

According to Kusterer, Lindholm & Montgomery (2013), women in manager positions were more negatively evaluated than men in the same types of jobs. This was perceived as a disconnect between traditional female gender roles and the stereotypically masculine-oriented job position. Congruent with this reasoning, “women are not expected to succeed in management, because characteristics associated with good leadership qualities are associated with men and what is labeled masculine characteristics, and disassociated with women and what is labeled feminine characteristics” (Kusterer, et al., 2013, p.561). Lyness and Heilman (2006) also found that a manager’s performance evaluation can be influenced by the position the manager held and their gender. Female managers saw more direct career consequences from low performance evaluations, and women’s high performance ratings were more likely to result in promotions. In addition, the common stereotype that males are generally more competent than females can be added to societal stereotypes about women’s physical, emotional and cognitive abilities that ultimately influence employer perceptions about the positions suited for women and if they are capable of filling those types of jobs (Alksnis, et al., 2008). Research from Stockdale and Nadler (2012) also found that people use gender stereotypes most often when evaluating strangers, and these “stranger-to-stranger” studies usually discover male favoritism in workplace evaluations when work and gender roles seem incongruent.

Heilman and Eagly (2008) stated that after using data from 489 upper-and-senior-level managers from a large financial-services organization, it was discovered after controlling for education, organizational level, age, etc. women in masculine-typed employment positions were given lower performance ratings than women in feminine-typed employment positions and men in either position.

In an article in Forbes magazine from October 2011, the world’s most powerful women and career and gender experts were asked to weigh in on the various ideas and notions about female success and how these stereotypes can become collective universal ideologies (Goudreau, 2011). With their input, Forbes presented the 10 worst stereotypes about powerful women:

- No. 1: Ice Queen
- No. 2: Single and Lonely
- No. 3: Tough
- No. 4: Weak
- No. 5: Masculine
- No. 6: Conniving
- No. 7: Emotional
- No. 8: Angry
- No. 9: A Token
- No. 10: A Cheerleader

One major problem with these stereotypes is that they are not just from men. Women also perceive other women negatively. Gourdeau also stated that “while male leaders are allowed to have complex personalities, powerful women are often summed up by hackneyed stereotypes that undermine them and their power” (2011, p30).

These commonly held stereotypes, myths and biases about women, though believed by the general public to be unconscious and ultimately harmless, can directly influence real-world decision-making. Johnson and Cochran (2008) stated that “gender stereotypes therefore appear to contribute to the ‘glass ceiling’ hindering women from reaching higher levels of management” (p.425). In their study, the authors found that the potential effects of bias would directly equate to more promotions for men over women despite no contrast in overall performances. The conducted study on gender stereotypes was done using a survey completed by 101 individuals studying or practicing industrial and organizational psychology. These individuals were asked to rate the masculinity and femininity of performance dimension definitions with each of the dimensions falling under either masculine, feminine or gender neutral. According to the findings, “interestingly, women received significantly higher ratings than men on most performance dimensions but received significantly lower ratings on advancement potential across rating perspectives” (Johnson & Cochran, 2008, p.425).

In a 2012 study, 127 scientists, both male and female, at six universities were asked by Yale University researchers to review seemingly identical male and female job applications, and the findings came as a surprise (Hathaway, 2012). Male students who applied for the position were consistently



chosen over female applicants by both men and women scientists on several criteria including competency. Most were more likely to choose the male candidate for the position. These results came as a surprise to the scientists because scientists and researchers are supposed to be unbiased. In this study, however, they were not.

According to Hathaway (2012), professor and leading microbiologist Jo Handelsman also conducted her own study based on the findings to decide if this researcher bias could explain the lack of women in science-based careers. In Handelsman's study, an application was given to 200 academic researchers that seemingly belonged to a senior undergraduate student who had been randomly assigned a male or female name. It was found that in considering the applicants for a laboratory manager position, both men and women consistently judged male candidates as more competent, and therefore more likely to be hired. They were also more willing to provide male applicants with mentoring and deemed them more deserving of an extra \$4,000 pay on average over a female candidate. It is these unconscious gender biases and cultural stereotypes that caused even other women in the study to make the same judgments as the men about female candidates.

This research follows a long line of studies that show that despite government legislation and increased awareness about the importance of equality, it is not just personal or lifestyle choices that continue to prevent women from reaching the top of fields such as science. Unconscious gender bias and long-term cultural stereotypes are also affecting women when they apply for job positions.

In a similar Purdue University study by Tyler and McCullough, 120 men and 120 women were brought in to evaluate two identical resumes for a hypothetical hiring position. The study examined whether or not women were evaluated more negatively on hiring-related decisions when their resume reflected an identity image that violates gender stereotypic prescriptions. In other words, were women perceived more negatively than men with the same resume when applying for a job most likely to be held by a man? The results showed that when women violated these so called "prescriptions," men

evaluated them more negatively. These findings from 2009 provided the first evidence showing that gender bias emerges at the earliest stages of the job-seeking process, especially when a person violates gender stereotypes. This early emergence of stereotypes is preventing women from even getting their feet in the door (Tyler & McCullough, 2009). All of these studies show that gender biases and stereotypes ultimately affect women's salaries and likelihood of being hired compared to a man for the same position. This discrimination, that can often go unnoticed, needs to be eliminated so women have a fair and equal chance of being selected for employment opportunities.

Cohen and Swim (1995), whose research related to low self-confidence was previously discussed, found that tokenism can have a detrimental effect on women in the workplace. Men who enter female-dominated fields such as nursing usually do not encounter any serious employment obstacles while women (physicians, police officers, etc.) experience lower colleague acceptance rates and lower rates of promotion. In no area were women perceived as more influential than men. The authors also found that "these skewed gender ratios in traditionally male-dominated disciplines can have various implications for women that range from greater visibility and public recognition of success to excessive demands, public recognition of failures, gender stereotyping and sexual harassment" (Cohen & Swim, 1995, p.876).

Danaher and Crandall (2008) proposed a phenomenon called "stereotype threat" in regard to females and lower standardized testing scores. The researchers observed that when group members realize they are negatively stereotyped, they are more likely to perform in alignment with that stereotype. An example would be when women are asked to indicate their gender on a standardized test. The researchers, when reexamining a prior study (Stricker & Ward, 2004, as cited in Danaher & Crandall, 2008), found that the main effects for gender were significant, and girls underperformed boys on the test. Women's scores improved substantially and men's scores declined when demographic questions were asked after testing instead of before on the Advanced Placement (AP) Calculus test and

on the Computerized Placement Tests (CPT)–Reading. This small and simple change turned the difference between females and males in the passing range from 16 percent down to only 5 percent. Timing manipulation also shrunk the gender difference overall by 33 percent.

When looking closer at stereotype threats, Casad and Merritt (2014) found that there are three key concepts that can account for stereotype threat in the workplace: physiological stress response, vigilance and thought and emotion suppression. The first concept, physiological stress response, refers to a person’s physiological stimulation triggered by stress which can trigger either a challenge or threat response resulting in lower work performance. Vigilance describes that when under stereotype threat, the stereotyped person will search for pieces of information that might confirm or reject their stereotype including external cues. In terms of the third concept, thought and emotion suppression, the researcher found that employees under stereotype threat had a tendency to suppress their anxiety which ultimately led to lower performance and lower cognitive test scores.

All of these studies serve as evidence that people do possess stereotypes, myths and biases about women that are directly affecting them in the workplace. Whether these perceptions exist during the resume selection process, during an interview or when evaluating a female employee, evidence supports the conclusion that women are facing not only the odds currently against them in terms of the variables discussed, but also an unconscious threat that we all can possess. In conclusion, stereotypes, myths and biases about women can and are influencing the gender pay gap and are creating a new roadblock for those pursuing equality in the workforce.

## THOUGHTS FOR THE FUTURE

For the future, it is my hope that women employees and their employers will become more aware of the existence of the gender pay gap and do everything in their power to change it. I believe that as time passes, common stereotypes, myths and biases about women in the workplace can be erased and the wage gap eliminated. This will come with the defeat of ignorance. However, my opinion based on the research is not an optimistic one. Women have been discriminated against for years and will continue to be discriminated against for as long as society allows it to happen. I hope the gender pay gap will continue to narrow, but as of now, I don't see definite equality in the full sense of the word anywhere in our future.

I also believe that women are playing their own role in fueling the gender pay gap by creating their own barriers to advancement in the workplace. Women need to start overcoming their own issues in order for a solution to be reached. These issues include going into higher paying fields, refusing to enforce gender stereotypes in their homes, choosing to hire more women capable of the requirements for a certain position and not falling victim to their own low self-esteem. As long as women continue to perpetuate the stereotype or follow along with traditional gender roles and biases, the end is far from near.

However, society is changing and will continue to shift toward equality. Just as with the major rights movements of the past, the eradication of the gender pay gap and all its stereotypical reasoning will come. The times of middle-aged, white male power is coming to an end, but not anytime soon. The shift must come with the acceptance of what will take its place. Women are capable of the same quality

of work as men, and all people need to acknowledge this. Through all the complexity, it is evident that a gender pay gap does exist now, but with hard work and education, it will be no more.

## WORKS CITED

- Alksnis, C., Desmarais, S., & Curtis, J. (2008). Workforce segregation and the gender wage gap: Is "women's" work valued as highly as "men's"? *Journal Of Applied Social Psychology, 38*(6), 1416-1441.
- Bredtmann, J., & Otten, S. (2014). Getting What (Employers Think) You're Worth: Evidence on the Gender Gap in Entry Wages among University Graduates. *International Journal Of Manpower, 35*(3), 291-305.
- Bussey, J. (2014, October). Gender Wage Gap Reflects 'Ask' Gap. *Wall Street Journal*. Retrieved from <http://online.wsj.com/articles/gender-wage-gap-reflects-the-ask-gap-1412980899>
- Cambridge Dictionaries Online. (2014). English definition of "gender pay gap". Retrieved on September 15, 2014 from <http://dictionary.cambridge.org/us/dictionary/business-english/gender-pay-gap>
- Casad, B. J., & Merritt, S. M. (2014). The importance of stereotype threat mechanisms in workplace outcomes. *Industrial And Organizational Psychology: Perspectives On Science And Practice, 7*(3), 413-419. doi:10.1111/iops.12170
- Catalyst. (2014, March). Statistical Overview of Women in the Workplace. New York: Catalyst. Retrieved from <http://www.catalyst.org/knowledge/statistical-overview-women-workplace>
- Catalyst. (2014, August). Women CEOs of the Fortune 1000. New York: Catalyst. Retrieved from <http://www.catalyst.org/knowledge/women-ceos-fortune-1000>
- Cohen, L. L., & Swim, J. K. (1995). The differential impact of gender ratios on women and men: Tokenism, self-confidence, and expectations. *Personality And Social Psychology Bulletin, 21*(9), 876-884. doi:10.1177/0146167295219001

- Cohen, P.N. (2012, September 29). Debunking the end of men, "Myth of male decline" edition.  
Retrieved from <http://familyinequality.wordpress.com/2012/09/29/debunking-end-of-men-myth-of-male-decline-edition/>
- Corbett, C. & Hill, C. (2012). Graduating to a Pay Gap: The Earnings of Men and Women One Year after College Graduation. Washington, DC: American Association of University Women. Retrieved from <http://www.aauw.org/files/2013/02/graduating-to-a-pay-gap-the-earnings-of-women-and-men-one-year-after-college-graduation.pdf>
- Danaher, K., & Crandall, C. S. (2008). Stereotype threat in applied settings re-examined. *Journal Of Applied Social Psychology, 38*(6), 1639-1655. doi:10.1111/j.1559-1816.2008.00362.x
- DiNatale, M., & Boraas, S. (2002, March). The labor force experience of women from 'Generation X'. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Labor Bureau of Labor Statistics. Retrieved from <http://www.bls.gov/opub/mlr/2002/03/art1full.pdf>
- Ehrlinger, J., & Dunning, D. (2003). How chronic self-views influence (and potentially mislead) estimates of performance. *Journal Of Personality And Social Psychology, 84*(1), 5-17. doi:10.1037/0022-3514.84.1.5
- Fairchild, C. (2014). Women CEOs in the Fortune 1000: By the numbers. Fortune.Com, 1. Retrieved from <http://fortune.com/2014/07/08/women-ceos-fortune-500-1000/>
- Goldin, C. (2014). A Grand Gender Convergence: Its Last Chapter. *American Economic Review, 104*(4), 1091-1119. doi:http://dx.doi.org.libproxy.txstate.edu/10.1257/aer.104.4.1091
- Goudreau, J. (2011). The 10 Worst Stereotypes About Powerful Women. *Forbes*. Retrieved from <http://www.forbes.com/sites/jennagoudreau/2011/10/24/worst-stereotypes-powerful-women-christine-lagarde-hillary-clinton/>

- Hathaway, B. (2012). Scientists not immune to gender bias, Yale study shows. Retrieved from Yale University, Yale News Website: <http://news.yale.edu/2012/09/24/scientists-not-immune-gender-bias-yale-study-shows>
- Heilman, M. E., & Eagly, A. H. (2008). Gender stereotypes are alive, well, and busy producing workplace discrimination. *Industrial And Organizational Psychology: Perspectives On Science And Practice*, 1(4), 393-398. doi:10.1111/j.1754-9434.2008.00072.x
- Institute for Women's Policy Research. (2014, March). The Gender Wage Gap: 2013; Differences by Race and Ethnicity, No Growth in Real Wages for Women (IWPR #C413). Washington, DC: Institute for Women's Policy Research. Retrieved on September 25, 2014, from <http://www.iwpr.org/publications/pubs/the-gender-wage-gap-2013-differences-by-race-and-ethnicity-no-growth-in-real-wages-for-women#sthash.mhUZgcG3.qDIRlJi.dpuf>
- Johnson, J. W., & Cochran, C. C. (2008). Studying the Influence of Stereotypes on Personnel Decisions in the Real World. *Industrial & Organizational Psychology*, 1(4), 423-425. doi:10.1111/j.1754-9434.2008.00080.x
- Kay, K., & Shipman, C. (2014). The Confidence Gap. *Atlantic*, 313(4), 56-66.
- Koch, A. J., D'Mello, S. D., & Sackett, P. R. (2014). A Meta-Analysis of Gender Stereotypes and Bias in Experimental Simulations of Employment Decision Making. *Journal Of Applied Psychology*, doi:10.1037/a0036734
- Kukulu, K., Korukcu, O., Ozdemir, Y., Bezci, A., & Calik, C. (2013). Self-confidence, gender and academic achievement of undergraduate nursing students. *Journal Of Psychiatric & Mental Health Nursing*, 20(4), 330-335. doi:10.1111/j.1365-2850.2012.01924.x



- Kusterer, H. L., Lindholm, T., & Montgomery, H. (2013). Gender typing in stereotypes and evaluations of actual managers. *Journal of Managerial Psychology*, 28(5), 561-579. doi:10.1108/JMP-01-2013-0012
- Labaton, V. (2014, July). Five myths about the gender pay gap. *The Washington Post*. Retrieved from [http://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/five-myths-about-the-gender-pay-gap/2014/07/25/9e5cff34-fcd5-11e3-8176-f2c941cf35f1\\_story.html](http://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/five-myths-about-the-gender-pay-gap/2014/07/25/9e5cff34-fcd5-11e3-8176-f2c941cf35f1_story.html)
- Lips, H. (2012). The Gender Pay Gap: Challenging the Rationalizations. Perceived Equity, Discrimination, and the Limits of Human Capital Models. *Sex Roles*, 68(3-4), 169-185.
- Lips, H. (2013). Acknowledging Discrimination as a Key to the Gender Pay Gap. *Sex Roles*, 68(3/4), 223-230. doi:10.1007/s11199-012-0245-0
- Lukas, C. (2012). It's Time That We End the Equal Pay Myth. *Forbes*. Retrieved from <http://www.forbes.com/sites/realspin/2012/04/16/its-time-that-we-end-the-equal-pay-myth/>
- Lyness, K. S., & Heilman, M. E. (2006). When fit is fundamental: performance evaluations and promotions of upper-level female and male managers. *Journal Of Applied Psychology*, (4), 777.
- Maltby, A. (2014). Real Women Share How Much They Earn for Glamour's 2014 Salary Survey. *Glamour*. Retrieved from <http://www.glamour.com/inspired/2014/08/glamour-salary-survey-2014/1>
- McLeod, S. (2008). Definition of Stereotypes. Retrieved on October 5, 2014 from <http://www.simplypsychology.org/katz-braly.html>
- Miller, C. C. (2014, April). Pay Gap Is Because of Gender, Not Jobs. *The New York Times*. Retrieved from [http://www.nytimes.com/2014/04/24/upshot/the-pay-gap-is-because-of-gender-not-jobs.html?\\_r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/2014/04/24/upshot/the-pay-gap-is-because-of-gender-not-jobs.html?_r=0)
- Nadler, J. T., & Stockdale, M. S. (2012). Workplace gender bias: Not just between strangers. *North American Journal Of Psychology*, 14(2), 281-292.

- National Center for Education Statistics. (2014). Fast Facts: Educational Attainment. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education. Retrieved from <http://nces.ed.gov/fastfacts/display.asp?id=27>
- National Center for Education Statistics. (2012). Bachelor's, master's, and doctor's degrees conferred by postsecondary institutions, by sex of student and discipline division: 2011-12 (Table 318.30). Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education. Retrieved from [http://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d13/tables/dt13\\_318.30.asp](http://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d13/tables/dt13_318.30.asp)
- Olson, J. (2013). Human Capital Models and the Gender Pay Gap. *Sex Roles*, 68(3/4), 186-197. doi:10.1007/s11199-012-0208-5
- Patten, E. (2014). On Equal Pay Day, key facts about the gender pay gap. Washington, DC: Pew Research Center. Retrieved on October 2, 2014 from <http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2014/04/08/on-equal-pay-day-everything-you-need-to-know-about-the-gender-pay-gap/#>
- Perrone-McGovern, K. M., Wright, S. L., Howell, D. S., & Barnum, E. L. (2014). Contextual Influences on Work and Family Roles: Gender, Culture, and Socioeconomic Factors. *Career Development Quarterly*, 62(1), 21-28. doi:10.1002/j.2161-0045.2014.00067.x
- Pew Research Center. (2013). On Pay Gap, Millennial Women Near Parity – For Now, Despite Gains, Many See Roadblocks Ahead. Washington, DC: Pew Research Center. Retrieved on October 2, 2014 from <http://www.pewsocialtrends.org/2013/12/11/on-pay-gap-millennial-women-near-parity-for-now/#>
- Sandberg, S. (2014). *Lean In for Graduates*. New York: Random House LLC.
- Stockdale, M. S., & Nadler, J.T. (2013). Paradigmatic Assumptions of Disciplinary Research on Gender Disparities: The Case of Occupational Sex Segregation. *Sex Roles*, 68(3-4), 207-215.
- Tyler, J., & McCullough, J. (2009). Violating Prescriptive Stereotypes on Job Resumes: A Self-Presentational Perspective. *Management Communication Quarterly*, 23(2), 272-287.

Understanding The Gender Pay Gap: What's Competition Got To Do With It?. (2010). *Industrial & Labor Relations Review*, 63(4), 681-698.

U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. (2014, May). Women in the Labor Force: A Databook (Report 1049). Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Labor. Retrieved from <http://www.bls.gov/cps/wlf-databook-2013.pdf>

U.S. Department of Labor Women's Bureau. (2013). Data Statistics: Latest Annual Data. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Labor. Retrieved from <http://www.dol.gov/wb/stats/recentfacts.htm#age>

Vagianos, A. (2014). 7 Things Every Woman Should Know When It Comes To Being Paid What You're Worth. *Huffington Post*. Retrieved from [http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2014/08/14/7-things-working-women-should-know-salary\\_n\\_5676096.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2014/08/14/7-things-working-women-should-know-salary_n_5676096.html)

Vella, F. (1994). Gender Roles and Human Capital Investment: The Relationship between Traditional Attitudes and Female Labour Market Performance. *Economica*, (242). 191-211.

Veum, J. (1995, November). Training, Wages and the Human Capital Model (Report 96-31). Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Labor Bureau of Labor Statistics. Retrieved from <http://www.bls.gov/osmr/pdf/nl950090.pdf>