Gender in Everyday Interactions/
Male-Female Pay Gap

April 18, 2005

http://www.iastate.edu/~soc.134
Gender in everyday interactions

In our everyday interactions we “do gender”—act to support and bring into creation our belief that men and women are different.

Some examples:
- Establishing gender of interaction participants is crucial
- Self-segregation
- Using gendered terms as negative or positive labels
- Jokes about the differences between men and women
- Attributing success, failure or preferences to gender
Language and gender

✓ Our beliefs about gender are built into the way we use language. Some examples:

• Men and women are “opposite sexes”
• English uses male generic language, e.g., freshmen, mankind, “he” meaning “he or she”
• Spotlighting: unnecessarily highlighting a person’s gender, e.g., “lady doctor” and “woman lawyer” define women professionals as exceptions
• Women’s names and titles draw attention to their relationships with men, e.g., Mrs., Miss, Mrs. John Smith
• Many words for women, including “girl,” “gal,” “lady,” “female,” “Ma'am,” even “woman,” have ambiguous connotations.
Gender in the dictionary

✓ Manly: having the qualities generally regarded as those that a man should have; virile; strong, brave, resolute, honorable, etc.
✓ Womanly: like a woman, womanish
✓ Masculine: having qualities regarded as characteristic of men and boys, as strength, vigor, boldness, etc.; manly; virile
✓ Feminine: having qualities regarded as characteristic of women and girls, as gentleness, weakness, delicacy, or modesty
✓ Effeminate: 1. having the qualities generally attributed to women, as weakness, timidity, delicacy, etc. 2. characterized by such qualities; weak; soft; decadent, etc.
The gender pay gap

✓ 2001: Women made $752 dollars for every $1000 made by men
  • Median weekly earnings for all full-time workers: $606; men $683; women $517
✓ Gap has closed—1950: $486; 1970: $594; 1990: $716
✓ Gap holds for different races and education levels
Median weekly pay by gender and race, 2001

- Total: $683 (Male $517, Female $566)
- White: $703 (Male $533, Female $533)
- Black: $450 (Male $525, Female $425)
- Hispanic: $437 (Male $398, Female $437)

Total: $757
Avg. earnings by gender & education, 1998
Why are men paid more than women?

1. Different work patterns
   - Home-work conflict creates seniority gap
   - Although women may choose different work patterns, their choices are constrained (e.g., by family wage gap and lack of child care)
   - However, after accounting for work patterns, women make around 80% of what men do

2. Comparable-worth discrimination (women are paid less for comparable jobs)
   - The “family wage” vs. “pin money”
   - Women’s work is devalued

3. Pay discrimination (women are paid less for the same jobs)

4. Promotion gap
   - Job ladders (gendered internal labor markets)
   - “Glass ceiling” vs. “glass escalator”