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Gender-Based Pay Inequalities among Professionals in America

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Gender-Based Pay Inequalities among Professionals in America

The article that I picked for analysis focuses on the pay gap that exists between male and female workers in the US. It points out that in 2011, only three percent of full-time working women would claim to have equal or more pay compared to their male counterparts in similar job positions. The latterly expressed figure is very low considering the talks and reforms that have been established to address the issue of unequal pay among American professionals. The pay gap seems to vary based on profession differences meaning that women in certain professions are likely to earn significantly less compared to others. An example would be the chief executive job position where there is a pay difference of 31% between the earnings of men and women. With that regard, women experience a notable pay gap of averagely six hundred and fifty-eight dollars weekly. The Bureau of Labor Statistics revealed that in 534 professions, only seven of them pay women more than men, a figure would translate to 3% of the female workforce in the country. However, the extra earnings that the women get are relatively low compared to the gap between men and women in the professions that pay men more than women.

Sarah Glynn, who works at American Progress as a policy analyst reveals that sorting the pay gap according to the profession, disproves the theory that women earn less than men by choice. The conjecture is that women normally choose low paying jobs which require less energy and effort so that they can stay at home more and raise their kids. Glynn discredits the theory by pointing out the wage gap in the chief executive positions. She states that to occupy such positions, one must have invested heavily, regardless of their gender, in terms of time, dedication, and money. Therefore, one cannot claim that the gap exists because women often stay at home with their kids as the women in the senior position work as hard or even harder than their male counterparts to achieve professional success. Sarah believes that a cause of the current pay dynamic is that women

rarely broker their starting salaries, a factor that has been proven, by research, to affect their income in the future (Fairchild, 2017). Therefore, I am going to discuss how Erving Goffman and Nancy Chodorow would explain the gender pay gap in America.

Erving Goffman would major on symbolic interactionism and his stigma theory to explain the gender pay gap. Symbolic interaction suggests that social processes emerge from human interaction. Thus, it judges an individual based on his or her ability to adapt into and cope with society. In this case, both gender types are perceived as having a role to play in the pay gap issue that has led to the current outcome. Interactionism states that symbols and their interpretations are very important in any setting with an emphasis on relationship changes and the fact that relationships can be negotiated (Appelrouth & Edles, 2015).

Women were and still are perceived as the primary caregivers in a family or home setting. Therefore, they are expected to be more involved with raising a family and focusing more on the kids than their work. This makes them select less demanding jobs translating to lower payment rates despite their seniority (Fairchild, 2017). However, while the scenario above may have been the case, with time, women have been empowered and can manage to focus on both the job and the family or purely on work. Consequently, women are currently employing the principle that relationships can change or be negotiated to achieve equal pay with their male counterparts. Unfortunately, the process of adaption of the latterly expressed changes is slow because of the preceding idea, embedded in people's minds and the society, indicating that men are more viable for certain job positions compared to women because they do not have to focus on their personal lives as much. Therefore, Goffman would suggest that women work on changing the norm first, which would resultantly change people's perception on the pay issues thereby allowing women to earn as much as men.

Erving's stigma theory depicts stigma as a behavior, attitude or reputation that contributes to social discrediting thus, causing an individual or a group to be rejected hinged on stereotypical associations that prevent their normal acceptance into society (Appelrouth & Edles, 2015). In this case, Goffman would point out that society considers men to be more hardworking and corporate centered while viewing women as family oriented individuals with a lesser work ethic. The stigma associated with the latterly expressed stereotype would affect how women are paid in corporations. When scheduling the pay list, one is likely to award the man a higher salary as they believe that he works harder and has more potential than a woman. The woman will be awarded a lower compensation package due to the perception that she may not bring in as much as the man because of her presumably divided focus. Erving would resolve that women should work on eliminating the stigma thereof to be able to address the gender pay gap issue.

On the other hand, Nancy Chodorow would use the perspectives of childhood experiences and intrinsic individual drives to explain the cause of the gender pay inequality. In her theory, she focuses on motherhood as a time to teach and nurture children and to aid them in establishing a belief system to determine right from wrong, and vice versa, which is expected to guide them throughout their lives. With that regard, Nancy would point the blame for the current pay inequalities to the mothers of the previous generation who were influenced, at the time, to incline their children to the belief that male children are better than female ones, especially in carrying out certain tasks that may define professions. Generations have influenced each other until this point where women stand up for their right to equality and demand for equal pay. Chodorow would encourage people, especially the mothers of the current generation, to treat their children equally enabling them to view both genders as equals even in their adulthood.

When raising children, they are bound to learn from childhood experiences which end up shaping their perspectives and opinions on different aspects of life. When a generation grows up under the same condition, the habits and behaviors that are picked up define the social norms (Appelrouth & Edles, 2015). For example, in the past, in most families, children grew up with their mothers as the primary caregiver while the father was the primary breadwinner. Therefore, more women took on jobs that were less demanding compared to their spouses allowing them time to cater to the needs of their children and families. That norm was adopted and established to become a social practice. On that account, women are automatically viewed as people who will do less work and therefore should receive a lower pay. Hence, Nancy's view would suggest that mothers and women, in general, should expose the younger generation to a different set of experiences thereby changing the current norms. New experiences create new intrinsic drives which aid in formulating different perspectives.

I believe that both Erving Goffman and Nancy Chodorow are right to make the assumptions that they do especially after applying their perspectives on the issue discussed above. Erving's symbolic interactionism and stigma theory point out that there has been an ongoing perception created on the matter that has finally translated into unequal pay. His method suggests that the women before our generation played a role in setting up circumstances for women to receive less pay than men. The act translated into the reduced earnings of women who put in equal or more work effort when compared to their male colleagues. However, it is fortunate that Erving clarifies that change can be made by redefining the present societal rules. In order to achieve the much-desired change, the women must be ready for the uphill task of going against societal norms that define them as primary caregivers. They must create new interactions that will allow people to

notice their efforts at the workplace to an extent that they equate their work to that of men which is likely to facilitate the establishment of non-biased pay structures.

Also, Nancy suggests that most of the attitudes expressed by members of society are rooted in childhood experiences and intrinsic motivations. Training children during their formative years on matters regarding equality of both genders would translate into having equal pay for both men and women in future. Unfortunately, the concept that men are better candidates for white collar jobs and women are better off with less demanding jobs is deeply embedded in the society. This might be the reason why women find it harder to negotiate their starting salaries, especially for white collar jobs, a decision that costs them in future (Fairchild, 2017). According to Nancy, it would require generational transformation first, then the appropriate teaching of children to effect the needed change. The children should be nurtured and treated as equals regardless of their gender. If both Chodorow's and Goffman's perspectives are used to understand the reason (s) behind the pay inequality issue, it would be easier to fully understand and remedy the situation.

References

Appelrouth, & Edles, L. D. (2015). *Classical and contemporary sociological theory: Text and readings 3rd Edition*. Pine Forge Press.

¹ Fairchild, C. (2017). *Nearly 100 Percent of American Women Stuck in Jobs That Typically Pay Men More*. *HuffPost UK*. Retrieved 18 November 2017, from https://www.huffingtonpost.com/2013/04/09/women-earn-less-than-men_n_3046461.html

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