

The Gender Wage Gap

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Lesson Plan Overview

Unit Topic: The Gender Wage Gap

Lesson: A presentation of the research affirming the wage gap's existence and its complexities. Following this will be the steps recommended to bridge that gap over time.

Rationale for the Lesson:

By discussing the gender wage gap, we get students to think about and discuss a human rights issue that is more tangible to them. Gender bias is as prevalent as ever in the workplace and American students will eventually be a part of that workforce, probably sooner rather than later. It is critical for one, the female students know what sort of challenges women are facing today and might still be facing later on, and two, that the male students have this opportunity to learn for themselves about inequality in the workplace they might otherwise be oblivious to. By raising awareness about important issues there is a higher likelihood that people will try to make positive changes. In following with this, hopefully by engaging the students in this discussion, it will cause them to think more critically about the world around them and maybe even take an interest in advocating for women's rights at work.

Standards:

- **RH. 9-10.4**
Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including vocabulary describing political, social, or economic aspects of history/social science.
- **RH 9-10-.7**
Integrate quantitative or technical analysis (e.g., charts, research data) with qualitative analysis in print or digital text.
- **RH 9-10.8**
Assess the extent to which the reasoning and evidence in a text support the author's claims.

Essential Questions/Guiding Questions:

What are some of the some of the factors that contribute to the gender wage gap? What are some of the ideas regarding how to decrease the gap?

Objectives:

- Students will be able to analyze ideas about the wage gap using the sources provided in the lesson
- Students will be able to identify and understand the relevance of the issues that contribute to the wage gap and know some of the ideas about how to decrease the gap moving forward.

Lesson Opener/Anticipatory Set/Lead-In/Do Now:

- Introduce myself and what the topic of the lesson is
- Write terms for the students to define on the board and allot the students time to write down their answers.
 - **Feminism:** the theory of the political, economic, and social equality of the sexes; also organized activity on behalf of women's rights and interests.
 - **Sexism:** Prejudice and/or discrimination against people based on their real or perceived sex. It's based on a belief (conscious or unconscious) that there is a natural order based on a person's sex
 - **Discrimination:** The denial of justice and fair treatment by both individuals and institutions in many arenas, including employment, education, housing, banking and political rights. Discrimination is an action that can follow prejudicial thinking.
 - **Implicit bias:** the unconscious attitudes, stereotypes and unintentional actions (positive or negative) towards members of a group merely because of their membership in that group.
- Discuss the definitions as a class and ask the class whether they think sexism still plays a role in society today? Allow them to discuss any examples of implicit biases and sexism they may know as well as of any personal experiences they may want to share. Then ask them if they have heard the commonly quoted statistic, "Women make 77 cents to every man's dollar.?" Introduce the gender wage gap lesson for the class.

Step-By-Step Procedures:

- Step 1: Write the terms to define on the board and hand out a piece of paper plus the writing utensils to the class. Ask them to define what they think the terms mean on their paper. Discuss the definitions as a class (**Do now activity: 5-10 min**).
- Step 2: Ask the class if they think that sexism is in the past. Discuss examples of sexism or implicit biases they may know of or even experienced firsthand. Afterwards, ask if they have heard the commonly quoted statistic, “Women make 77 cents to every man’s dollar”? Do they think this statistic is accurate or fair? What do they think might account for this? Introduce and define the gender wage gap issue (**10 min**).
 - The gender wage gap: The gender wage gap is a measure of what women are paid relative to men. It is commonly calculated by dividing women’s wages by men’s wages, and this ratio is often expressed as a percent, or in dollar terms.
 - **Ask why should this matter to you?** Assuming 77 cents to every man’s dollar is the correct statistic, women are losing approximately 10,000 dollars a year. This means over her lifetime the average woman loses about 400,000 dollars she would’ve earned if she were paid the same as her male counterpart. For women with advanced degrees this amount just about doubles.
 - This affects all kinds of women, and if the inequality of this matter doesn’t already bother you, this doesn’t just affect women. When women get married and begin a life with their families, this automatically effects the overall household income. This is a lot less money that could’ve been put towards essential things like a housing, food, a child’s education,...
- Step 3: Class discussion: There are a lot of people who say that the gender wage gap doesn’t exist or that it has nothing to do with the inequality of men and women. I will identify some of the opposition’s arguments on the board. Have students try to identify some of the ways these

arguments are problematic. Discuss their answers and go into the research mentioned in the presentation after each one.

- The wage gap has nothing to do with sexism; it has to do with differences in individual career choices that men and women make.

Discuss Speer's research on pre-college factors that help explain the reason men are overrepresented in the higher paying majors like the math and sciences while women are overrepresented in the lower paying majors such as healthcare and social work. Boys are testing higher in science, math, and other mechanical fields very early on in their academic careers. Over the years, girls have bridged some of this gap and scores, thus the disparity in college major decisions between men and women have somewhat decreased. However, despite the progress, Speer suggests that remaining gaps may be due to discrimination and culture.

Also **Title IX** a law passed in 1972 states: "No person in the United States shall, on the basis of sex, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any education program or activity receiving Federal financial assistance." This basically requires that women and men be treated equally in federally funded institutions, like this one. However, this law was passed only 45 years ago. In terms of history, that is fairly recent. Like other movements, this means that women has some catching up to do in terms of achieving full equality.

- The gap decreases the higher the level of education women have.

Pull up the WSJ graphic: <http://graphics.wsj.com/gender-pay-gap/> Discuss both ends of the scale.

Students on the lower side since they've just begun to work. Talk about how the pay gap increases the higher your education level. (5 min)

- Men are more willing to work long hours without advance notice

Workplaces are generally unaccommodating of women's outside responsibilities. What happens in a woman's life general around 20s and 30s? Women generally have children and start families around

their 20s and 30s. It is still true today that women generally take on more of the home and family responsibilities in their households than men. This is often referred to as unpaid work. Working hours are usually inflexible and don't allow women the ability to arrange her schedule around her other personal responsibilities.

In addition, right now in the U.S eligible employees (in the case we are talking about, mothers) are allowed 12 weeks unpaid leave. This includes fathers as well, but if the family in questions can't afford to not be making any income for 3 months, it is common for fathers to continue working. This allows their careers to go uninterrupted.

Mention that people who oppose the wage gap as an issue say that no one knows for sure the reason for the gender wage gap

It is difficult to quantify discrimination and culture in a study, but that doesn't eliminate it as a major source of this problem **(15-20 min)**

- Step 5: Continue into the last part of the lesson that discusses the possible ways to close the wage gap in the future at the institutional level.
 - Eliminate pay secrecy
 - Eliminating pay negotiation
 - Having employers not rely on previous salaries when determining the salary for a new employee
 - Making work easier on mothers such as with: affordable child care, paid parental leave, more flexible hours.

(5-10 min)

- Step 6: In small groups, have the students think of 1-3 ways that they personally can apply this lesson to address the issues surrounding the wage gap now or in their future careers.

Lesson Closure/Closing Activity

Have the students take a couple of minutes to individually reflect on what they've learned. Each student should write at least one comment or question on their second index card. Afterwards, have an open dialogue/forum where they can ask questions, voice their opinions and their final thoughts about the lesson. **(5-7 min).**

Materials and Equipment Needed:

- Lined Paper
- Pencils
- Internet access
- White board/chalk board
- Access to computer and projector
- Handouts

Assignment:

The students, after having listened and interacted with me during the power point presentation should take the time to think about the factors that cause the gender pay gap and why it is important they are addressed. In their small groups the students should discuss and write down the ways that the lesson may pertain to them or the people around them. I'd also like them to discuss and write down ways they, as individuals and, can help pursue closing the gap.

Assessment:

The Do Now and informal discussion at the beginning of the lesson will inform me how much the students know. Their answers to the questions I provide and their ability to provide examples will serve as an assessment of their understanding the lesson.

Modifications for diverse learners (how does this lesson make accommodations?)

The lesson includes visual, auditor, and written components to accommodate different kinds of learners in the classroom. Those who are not comfortable participating in the discussion will still be able to take part in the lesson by way of the small group work.

Annotated Bibliography

Gould, Elise, Jessica Schieder, and Kathleen Geieroc. "What Is the Gender Pay Gap and Is It Real?: The Complete Guide to How Women Are Paid Less than Men and Why It Can't Be Explained Away." *Economic Policy Institute*, <<http://www.epi.org/publication/what-is-the-gender-pay-gap-and-is-it-real/>>. Accessed 19 Feb. 2017.

This article published by the Economic Policy Institute is a great source in terms of how it breaks down the gender wage gap issue into digestible pieces and sheds some light on its complexities. The article begins by addressing that although different research methods for studying the wage gap yield different numbers, this doesn't necessarily make the research unreliable. Regardless of the source, the findings are consistent across the board: the gap exists. Throughout the article, the authors shed light on some of the confusing aspects of the wage gap by providing the key questions followed by the direct answers. These observations allow for the understanding of why some people would be inclined to disagree with the gender wage gap's existence at first, but then clarifies why the issue is more complicated than it seems initially.

Kim, Marlene. "Policies to End the Gender Wage Gap in the United States." *Review of Radical Political Economics* 45.3 (2013): 278-83. Web. 26 Feb. 2017.

This review by Marlene Kim begins with a summary that explains the wage gap and repudiates the claims against its existence. According to Kim, women continue to be paid less on average compared to men. This fact is in large part because women are over-represented in lower paying fields and under-represented in higher paying ones. The article mentions that neoclassical economists believe this is explained by women being less productive than their male counterparts as well as women are more prone to choose lower paying careers with less hours for the sake of their future caretaking responsibilities.

However, even controlling for those factors, the fact remains that women earn less than men. In addition to explaining the gap, it also offers solutions. Solutions offered to close the gap include: enforcing existing equal opportunity statutes, developing family-friendly policies that don't require women to choose between their career and their families, encouraging women to unionize, prohibiting pay secrecy in the workplace, and getting states becoming more proactive in finding and fixing gender wage issues rather than waiting for national level legislation.

Speer, Jamin D. "The Gender Gap in College Major: Revisiting the Role of Pre-college Factors."

Labour Economics 44 (2017): 69-88. Web. 26 Feb. 2017.

Using statistics, Speer researched pre-college factors, which he defines as test scores taken before pre labor market entry. These include tests such as the SATs, ASVAB, and other examinations carried out as early as the age of 15. What he found is that there is a gender disparity in the test scores, even at that age, and it continues to grow as they get older. Boys are testing higher in science, math, and other mechanical fields very early on in their academic careers. Over the years, girls have bridged some of this gap and scores, thus the disparity in college major decisions between men and women have somewhat decreased. However, despite the progress, Speer suggests that remaining gaps may be due to discrimination and culture. These findings are hard to dispute because they are heavily statistically based.

Lam, Bourree. "What Gender Pay-Gap Statistics Aren't Capturing." The Atlantic. Atlantic Media

Company, 27 July 2016. Web. 26 Feb. 2017.

<<https://www.theatlantic.com/business/archive/2016/07/paygap-discrimination/492965/>>.

In his article in The Atlantic, Lam focuses her attention on the argument that the gender wage gap doesn't exist because once it is accounted for that women and men tend to choose different career paths (this is

called occupational segregation) resulting in the difference in pay, the gap shrinks. Though the article concedes that this is true, it then goes into detail about how gender occupational segregation is too simply explained by personal choice. There are many factors that go into why women choose the careers that they do. One of the main factors that is hard to quantify with data are the societal factors that pressure women to make certain choices about their career. For example, a mother is more likely to work a lower paying job because they will more commonly offer flexible hours.

"What's Your Pay Gap?" The Wall Street Journal. Dow Jones & Company, n.d. Web. 26 Feb.

2017. <<http://graphics.wsj.com/gender-pay-gap/>>.

This graphic provided by the Wall Street Journal illustrates the gender pay gap by listing the statistics of median salary for men and women in the same career gathered from the Census Bureau. It shows that women earn less than men in 439 of 446 major U.S. occupations and earn more in only seven. The blue dots represent men and the purple dots represent women. By hovering over the dots, the viewer can see how wide the gender wage gap is for that particular profession. This graphic also highlights how the wage gap increases exponentially when the profession in question is a highly specialized and requires a great deal of education. For instance, at the far left end of the scale median earnings for men working as counter attendants, cafeteria, food concession and coffee shop workers are \$18,998 while for women it is \$16,800. Here women are earning 88% of what men are earning. However on the far right of the scale, the median earnings for men working as physicians and surgeons is \$209,596 while for women the median earnings are \$135,169. The gap here has increased so that women in this highly specialized field now earn only 64% of what their male counterparts are earning.

Miller, Claire Cain. "How to Bridge That Stubborn Pay Gap." The New York Times. The New

York Times, 15 Jan. 2016. Web. 26 Feb. 2017. <https://www.nytimes.com/2016/01/17/upshot/how-to-bridge-that-stubborn-pay-gap.html>>.

This particular article, presented by the New York Times, is one of the few and far between sources that focuses more on what can be done to bridge the gap rather than making the case for its existence. It quickly asserts that the gender wage gap exists in the beginning of the article by informing the readers that even after measuring workers' education and experience, the jobs they choose, the hours they work, and the time they take off, the gap remains and is largely unexplained. This leaves other factors like discrimination and women's perceptions of the career choices available to them. Some of the ways this article says workplaces can combat the pay gap is by, publishing everyone's pay, eliminating pay negotiation, having employers not rely on previous salaries when determining the salary for a new employee, Making work easier on mothers such as with affordable child care and paid parental leave, allowing for more flexible hours, and lastly, changing the law to require all of these things.

"The Wage Gap: The Who, How, Why, and What To Do." *NWLC*. N.p., n.d. Web. 2 Apr. 2017.

<<https://nwlc.org/resources/the-wage-gap-the-who-how-why-and-what-to-do/>>.

This fact sheet published by the National Women's Law Center provides insightful statistics about how heavily the wage gap influences all people. On average, woman lose about \$10,000 dollars a year to the wage gap. At the end of working a full 40 year long career, a woman loses about \$400,000 in her lifetime. This article also goes over some of the causes for the pay gap as well as some of the ways to address the issue to achieve equal pay in the future.