

### “The wrong way to promote women”

article from *The Economist*, July 11, 2011

Main idea: how to promote women in top positions (wrong and right ways)

Fact: too few women in corporate boards → figures / examples of countries

Measures taken: quotas (imposing a percentage of women in executive positions in companies)

Justified to some extent:

- to fight against sexism / mixed boards make better decisions

to promote role models / mentors for other women

but

not such a good idea, using gender rather than merit as a criterion leads to bad results (Norway) → merit vs gender

sexism and the lack of role models are not the main obstacles

Real problem for women: balance between family life and work life (career breaks / choices)

Other means than quotas prove more effective: corporate practices (family-friendly approach / flexibility / telecommunicating)

Female talent must be used in a better way but still problem of prejudice

### “Paying the price for women”

article from *The Economist*, September 2012

Main idea: conflicting/contradictory figures about the evolution of the gender gap in the UK (bright future or stalled evolution)

Fact: improvement since 60s and yet women still under-earn (10.5% according to latest figures)

Reasons: career breaks, part-time jobs to accommodate family life, women don't dare ask for pay rise

Reviewing the latest figures:

Article by Liza Mundy in *Spectator* suggests pay gap could be reversed in near future

Based on a number of indicators: more female graduates and professors / paternity leaves are more frequent / women's growing awareness of career paths / 9% increase in 40 yrs / women born after 1985 already earn as much as (or even more than) men / development of female-dominated sectors

but

contradictory indicators from EHRG: women earn less than men at the end of their careers / it would take 98 yrs for women to catch up

Who's right? Only time will tell

### “Gender discrimination is at the heart of the wage gap”

opinion piece from *Time*, May 19, 2014

Main idea: the root of the problem is gender discrimination and stereotypes (in the US)

Fact: even when all factors are taken into account, women still earn only 91% of what men earn - great progress in the 70s and the 80s but has now stopped

Reasons traditionally given

- traditional female occupations pay less, are more prone to budget cuts (services or government jobs vs. STEM fields)

Recession: women lost fewer jobs but recovery revealed situation hadn't changed

- (according to critics/the Right): individual choices, occupations, hours worked

→ against government/legal action (e.g. Executive Orders signed by Obama)

- women choose low-paying majors

→ failure of education system to close the gap

→ contradiction: women more educated than men and yet earn less

Deeper reasons

(according to study by Harvard economist Claudia Goldin): gender discrimination + stereotypes affect

- young girls' decision from a very early age

- value placed on female-dominated jobs

Measures to take: increase wage transparency / offer legal protection / flexible work options / fight stereotypes

**TITLE : Gender is still a factor/relevant when it comes to career / The intricacies of the gender gap / Bridging the gender gap / Levelling the playing field for women / Equal opportunities for women**

**1. (Situation) A seemingly unbridgeable gender gap (or is it?)**

- a. recent figures indicate that the pay gap now stands at roughly/approximately 10% - 10.5% in the UK in 2012 (doc 2) and 9% in the US in 2014 (doc 3) + women are still significantly under-represented in top positions in companies (doc 1)
- b. despite the progress made since the 60s (doc 2 / 3), there has been little (doc 2) to no (doc 3) evolution since the 90s – women still earn less at the end of their careers (doc 2)  
(exception: recent recession/economic crisis, but transient/temporary and only mechanical evolution – loss of jobs in the industry, a male-dominated sector of the economy)
- c. this is all the more surprising since women are more educated than men (doc 2 / 3) / the number of female professors is on the rise (doc 2) / latest figures indicate that British women born after 1985 are catching up with men (doc 2) / female-dominated sectors have developed (doc 3) but these remain undervalued (doc 3) – could this mean that the gender gap might be bridged or even reversed sooner than expected/in the near future/in the short run? (doc 2)

**2. (Reasons) Individual choices or deeply-rooted gender stereotypes: a matter of opinion.**

- a. The gender gap is traditionally accounted for in terms of individual choices
  - motherhood (children) forces women to take career breaks (doc 1 / 2 / 3) and choose part-time jobs (doc 1 / 2 / 3) which are more compatible with their family lives
  - women also tend to opt for low-paying majors that lead to low-paying jobs (doc 3) that are prone to budget cuts (doc 3) whereas men favour high-paying jobs, in particular in STEM fields
- b. studies reveal that when all factors are taken into account, all is left are deeply-rooted stereotypes and discrimination
  - they insidiously influence young girls' decisions regarding their education and affect the value attributed to female-dominated jobs (doc 3)
  - yet some completely (doc 3) or partially (doc 1) reject this conclusion (no consensus is reached)

**3. (Solutions) Agreeing to disagree on/about the most effective way(s) to address the gender gap**

- a. political / legal actions: the radical approach
  - a proactive solution is the enforcement of quotas by governments but, being too radical, they may prove to be a double-edged measure (they may end up damaging the performance of companies) (doc 1)
  - an alternative might be the strengthening of legal protection (doc 3) but such a measure is politically sensitive and strongly opposed by the American Right (doc 3)
- b. at the corporate level
  - companies could adopt family-friendly approaches, e.g. flexible working schedules (doc 1 / 3) + telecommunicating (doc 1)
- c. social measures: the softer and more comprehensive approach to address a social issue
  - make women aware of / educate women about career paths (doc 2 / 3) + extend paternity leaves (doc 2) + provide more role models (doc 1) + levelling role of the education system (doc 3) + fight against stereotypes (doc 1 / 3)