

“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 EHRC: 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 that 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](#))