

Studies conducted in the US in the early 1970s concluded the wage inequality between less-educated and highly-educated men actually had been growing. <sup>1</sup>The situation between the two categories among women showed similar trends, although the growth here was much smaller than for men. One reason accountable for this was that the wages of less-educated women have not declined as much that of less-educated men. The result is that the incomes of these women are much closer to their male counterparts than a decade earlier.

Education, though, has not been the only contributor to this trend. So what other factors have been significant to the improving female earnings and gender gap? Improving work experience of women is definitely a contributing factor, but not alone. Research conducted by Worlfogel J., and Mayer S., suggested that increases in single motherhood, the decline in the marriage rate, the decline in women's fertility, and the increase in <sup>2</sup>the age at which women have their first child all may affect the gender wage gap. Employment rate, according to the studies, for women rose over 22 percentage points, while the rate for men fell about 2 percent. Overall, the ratio of women's to men's annual earnings rose 7 percent from 1971 to 1980, and another 15 percent between 1980 and 1997.

The research findings, however, reveal that the shrinking gender gap among the less skilled women (with less than a high school education) was due mainly to men's losses, not to any real gains for women over the period as <sup>3</sup>some employers seem to prefer employing women at similar wage levels than their male counterparts. While <sup>4</sup>family status, marriage and having children, considerably influenced the narrowing of gender gap for the less-educated groups, it was almost not the case in the highly educated group. The article concludes that the more fairly distributed wages for low-skilled employees observed between men and women has been due to increasing similarity between the genders in areas of family status, occupation and education between 1971 and 1997.

Adapted from: [www.irp.wisc.edu/publications/focus](http://www.irp.wisc.edu/publications/focus) ...

Exercises:

Task one:

1. Choose from **a, b, c** or **d** the best title for the article.
  - a. Women's economic well-being.
  - b. Men and women in labour market.
  - c. Women's role in America's labour market.
  - d. Women's participation in labour market.

Task two:

Find a word or words of similar meanings to **a – e** below.

- a. Improvements
- b. Because of

- c. To fall (2 words)
- d. Disproportion
- e. An opposite person

Task three:

Mark these sentences *True or False* according to the article above.

- a. Increasing inequality for both men and women was the same.
- b. The rate of women annual incomes doubled from 1971 to 1997.
- c. The gender gap increased throughout the period.
- d. Marriage affected the gender gap amongst the highly-educated women group.
- e. Improved employability of highly educated men caused declines in marriages.

Task four:

Rewrite the sentences numbered 1-4 in passive voice (Transformation).

Key to exercises:

Task one: b.

Task two: a- gains; b- due to; c- decline, shrink; d- inequality; e- counterpart.

Task three: a- F; b- T; c- F; d- T; e- F

Task four:

1. Similar trends were shown in the situation between the two categories among women.
2. The gender wage gap may have been affected by the age at which women had their first child.
3. Employing women was (seem to have been) preferred by some employers.
4. Narrowing of the gender gap was considerably influenced by .....

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