

# Analysis on gender discrimination

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Do you ever wonder why your parents never make your sister cut the lawn or maybe if you are a female, your parents automatically make you wash dishes? Moms get their girl's ears pierced at age two yet will not let their sons get their ears pierced until they are out of the house. What gives?

These are examples of how decisions are based on whether you are male or female, otherwise known as gender bias. Because of their sex, people do not get jobs they are well qualified for, are paid lower wages, and are overlooked for job promotions and many other opportunities. Gender discrimination is all around us; you can find it everywhere. Gender discrimination is an ongoing problem in the Fox Valley, the state of Wisconsin, and the United States.

Samantha Miller and Mark Dagostino report an example of this discrimination at Boston College. They explain that for the past twenty-five years, Mary Daly, 70, has barred men from her classes, insisting that her female students learn better without male distractions. "The point of my class is that there be a space where women can create our thoughts and our own philosophy, unencumbered by patriarchal invasions," Daly stated. "It's not about discrimination at all."

Boston College recently fired Daly when she rejected the school's ultimatum to admit men after a male student threatened to sue the school claiming Daly was violating federal law. Boston College officials maintain Daly's stance violated the landmark 1972 Title IX legislation that bars gender discrimination at schools receiving federal funds (1). She may have good reasons for wanting an all-female class, but the law states everybody is entitled to an equal opportunity for education.

Gender discrimination dates back as far as Adam and Eve. Can you imagine the world starting out with a woman in control? As gender discrimination continued to invade all aspects of life, the government began to step in. Laws were passed so women could vote and become public officials. President Richard M. Nixon signed Title IX of the Federal Education Law in 1972 that banned gender discrimination in classes.

Barbara Bitters reports there are schools in Wisconsin that are not complying with the law because they still have separate boys' and girls' choirs. Little Chute High School, a small community located in northeastern Wisconsin, has a women's choir. Are they in compliance? Jean Beschta, an Appleton high school guidance counselor, remembers when the law was passed in the seventies. "There were a lot of nervous fathers who were worried what would happen to their boys if someone introduced them to cookbooks, recipes, and dish towels."

Some of Wisconsin's well-known colleges are also battling with gender bias. Julie Sneider from the Business Journal Serving Greater Milwaukee reported a study done in 1998 that shows only twenty-five percent of Marquette's full-time tenure track faculty are women, and only six of the school's one hundred and fourteen faculty members with full professor status are women. The federal government has criticized UW-Madison for not bringing the number of female faculty closer to the number of female students who constitute more than half of the student body. Gwen Carleton from the Capital Times reports part of the problem is that many of the deans and

administrators making hiring decisions continue to believe women are unqualified or uninterested in faculty positions.

How are we doing as a nation? The Capital Times, cites a study released by the AFL-CIO, indicating that Wisconsin is among the worst states for a gender pay gap among full-time workers. " Across the nation, women earn 74 cents for every dollar earned by men. A typical woman in Wisconsin earns 69 cents for every man's dollar, or \$193 less per week," (1). The U. S. President Bill Clinton said, " Equal pay is not a political issue. It is not even a gender issue. It is, at heart, a national issue, a family issue, and a matter of principle – a question of what kind of country we want America to be today, and in the twenty-first century," (Zadrozny).

If our own president thinks equal pay among both sexes isn't a political problem, whose problem is it? Gender bias is seen at all levels but without the support of laws to enforce equality between the sexes, what can be done? Each of us as individuals needs to do our part. Vote to keep politicians in office that favor equality for men and women in all aspects of their lives – equal employment opportunity, equal rights to a good education, equal pay for the same job, and so on. Support schools that offer equal opportunities for their teachers and students regardless of their gender. Teach your children to keep open minds and not judge people and their capabilities by whether they are male or female. Most importantly, base your decisions without letting bias interfere with your outcome.