

American dream for women- yes or no

[Art & Culture](#), [American Dream](#)



Gender- Inequality in labor force The American Dream, one of the most attractive things which draw thousands people to the United States, is just a simple promise: equality. This is where people can work hard and expect to gain from their effort. This is where opportunities are equally provided for anyone who has determination to improve his or her life. Anyone can have equal access to the American Dream. However, it depends. If you are White, you can dream that dream. If you are non-White, you cannot.

If you belong to the middle and upper class, you have the right to dream. If you find yourself struggling to have daily meals, you do not have that right. Similarly, if you are male, go ahead, but if you are not, you have to step back. Gender has always been a big problem with the American Dream. Women cannot move themselves to better lives in the same way that men are able to. Gender creates deep-rooted inequality against women in the labor force, through the social construction of gender roles and femininity.

Inequality between two genders shows up as early as in the beginning of one's career. Influenced by gender roles, women and men tend to choose jobs that can help them fulfill their social expectations (Weisgram, Dinella, and Fulcher 245). For example, men would prefer jobs with high monetary reward to fulfill their breadwinning roles, and women would choose jobs which allow them to have time with their family as they are supposed to be the main caretakers.

Women, raised with the idea of femininity, would choose careers related to caring or serving such as teachers and nurses, while men would be more attracted to careers in technology and management fields, which require the supposedly masculine characteristics such as decisiveness. As a result,

<https://assignbuster.com/american-dream-for-women-yes-or-no/>

women have a tendency to choose their careers in female-dominated fields, whose monetary reward generally is lower than those of male-dominated fields. This division of the work force also influences women's expectation of their future salaries.

Research shows that men overall have higher pay expectation than women, and people intending to work in male-dominated fields have much higher pay expectation than those who want to work in female-dominated fields (Hogue, DuBois, and Fox- Cardamone 222). Low pay expectation can result in receiving lower pay offers in an equally qualified pool of job applicants, and starting wages can affect one's career in his or her long term payment (Hogue, DuBois, and Fox-Cardamone 215). This reflects that in reality women who work in male-dominated fields earn 26% more than other women who have female-dominated jobs, as the U. S. Department of Labor reported in 2008 (qtd. in Hogue, Dubois, and Fox-Cardamone 215). Women, influenced by their gender roles and the concept of femininity, experience inequality in their work choices and pay expectations. Women face difficulties during their careers because of their traditional gender roles as main family caretakers. Wives, not husbands, are generally the ones who have primary responsibilities in domestic work, either household chores or child care.

In dual-earner families, men usually share housework with their partners, yet women still have the main responsibility in organizing family life (Rubin 247). Most people used to consider women entering the work force as expanding their traditional role without men changing theirs (Gilbert and Rader 164). Women were seen as being in conflict between outside work and family; the more time they spent on working outside, the more they would neglect their

supposedly main role. Questions were then raised about whether working mothers had negative effects on their children as well as the family as a whole.

Although research showed that having dual-earner families had no effect on preschool-age children, especially if additional income was used in daily childcare, this whole viewpoint discouraged women from working outside for a long time (Gilbert and Rader 164). Even though our society is now more accepting toward working mothers, women still cannot have the same opportunities as men when it comes to careers, which involve more commitment than jobs. (Jobs vs careers) Women are encouraged to have paid jobs to balance their families'finance, to better their children's and husbands' lives.

In other words, women's working outside is seen as part of their traditional role, or part of their femininity: supporting men. Women who want to pursue their professional careers especially those in high levels, have to spend a lot of time working just like their male colleagues. However, unlike men, they are usually criticized as not fulfilling their traditional role. Women who challenge the idea of gender roles are facing a lot of pressure, both from the work place and from their families.

As women's major career is family work, they will not be considered successful if they fail as wives and mothers. Their occupational success will not be viewed seriously as it is still their secondary role. These negative effects of gender cause a lot of difficulties for women who want to seriously pursue their careers, and create a deep inequality between women and men in the labor force. Although there are more and more women working in <https://assignbuster.com/american-dream-for-women-yes-or-no/>

male-dominated jobs, it is not the case for the most male-dominated field: leadership.

Only 21% of women hold middle management positions, and just 15% can be senior level managers (Sipe, Johnson, and Fisher 340). Only 1.2% of Fortune 500 CEOs are women, according to a Catalyst study (Gorski). Leadership positions have much better monetary awards than other positions; they can be indications of one's expertise and success in his or her job and can promote self-esteem as well as confidence. Even though women now have chances to work in diverse fields, they are not given equal opportunities to take leadership roles, which perpetuates the inequality in the workplace.

This can be explained, again, by the idea of femininity and masculinity. Masculinity usually includes those traits such as ambitious, analytical, assertive, decisive, independent, etc., while femininity denotes characteristics such as affectionate, gentle, caring, warm, soft-spoken, etc. "The first [masculinity] expresses the intellect, the second [femininity] "the heart"; the first the "rational" faculties, the second the "intuitive" or "emotional"' (Jamieson 124).

Those feminine traits are not considered suitable for a leader or for a management position, which traditionally requires those masculine traits such as decisiveness and independence. Because of the effect of gender stereotypes, people view women as possessing the "natural" femininity, and women are often raised in a way which encourages them to develop such traits to live up to their social expectations. Not all men possess these

appreciated characteristics, and not all women are feminine in the way our society thinks.

However, women as a group have suffered from this idea of femininity as people refuse to acknowledge their strength but focus on their gender-based inability to perform leadership. As a result, in a society that considers men as natural leaders, women find it difficult to break those gender stereotypes in order to prove themselves as effective leaders. According to Noble and Moore (2006), many women who are able to achieve leadership eventually give up their positions (qtd. in Sipe, Johnson, and Fisher 340). In her book *Beyond the Double Bind*, Kathleen H.

Jamieson analyzed the gender-caused prejudice against women who were already leaders. As femininity is opposed to the traditional leadership style, women in those positions must be able to show some certain masculine characteristics. They are then perceived as not acting feminine, which is inappropriate in our gender-based society, or as not being masculine enough for effective leadership (Jamieson 121). For example, if a female leader talked assertively, she would be considered unfeminine or even rude for a woman, yet if she did not, she would be criticized as having poor leadership skills.

Women with their traditional gender role and their assigned femininity have always confronted difficulties in the workplace. The unequal process starts as soon as they begin to form their ideas about what career they want to pursue, to their lives with a double role as family caretakers and normal employees. It also affects their effort to get promoted to management level; even if they already achieve something, the process works to diminish it.

<https://assignbuster.com/american-dream-for-women-yes-or-no/>

Women have always had to work much harder than men in order to achieve equal statuses.

They have to overcome many disadvantages, as well as work against men's privilege. Men are viewed as natural leaders; women are not. In order to be equal, they have to prove themselves as effective leaders as well as better leaders than those supposedly natural leaders. Women were raised in a society which views them as inferior, and to achieve equality means to work hard to change their own minds, as well as others'. Women have never enjoyed the real equality which many politicians mentioned in their articulate speeches.

They have never had the right to dream the American Dream, which promises that everyone will have equal chances to work themselves out of poverty and live their dream lives. Works Cited Gilbert, Lucia A. , and Rader, Jill. " Current Perspectives on Women's Adult Roles: Work, Family, and Life. " Handbook of the Psychology of Women and Gender. Ed. Rhoda K. Unger. New York: John Wiley & Sons, Inc, 2001. 156-169. Print. Gorski, Paul C.. " Class and Poverty Awareness Quiz". Edchange. 2011. Web. 19 Oct. 2011.

Houge, Mary, DuBois, Cathy L. Z. , and Fox-Cardamone, Lee. " Gender Differences in Pay Expectations: the Roles of Job Intention and Self-View. " Psychology of Women Quarterly. 34. 2. (2010): 215-227. AcademicSearch Premier. Web. 19 Oct. 2011. Jamieson, Kathleen H.. Beyond the Double Bind. New York: Oxford University Press, 1995. Print. Rubin, Lillian. " Families on the Fault Line". The Social Construction of Difference and Inequality. Ed.

Tracy E. Ore. New York: McGraw Hill, 2006. 245-254. Print. Sipe, Stephanie, Johnson, C.

Douglas, and Fisher, Donna K.. “ University Students’ Perceptions of GenderDiscriminationin the Workplace Reality Versus Fiction. ” Journal ofEducationfor Business. 84. 6 (2009): 339-349. Academic Search Premier. Web. 19 Oct. 2011. Weisgram, Erica, Dinella, Lisa, and Fulcher, Megan. “ The Role of Masculinity/ Femininity, Values, and Occupational Value Affordances in Shaping Young Men’s and Women’s Occupational Choices. ” Sex Roles. 65. 3/4. (2011): 243-258. Academic Search Premier. Web. 19 Oct. 2011.