

ROBERT J. SAMUELSON

What's the real gender pay gap?

The gender pay gap is back in the news — and it may become a major issue in the presidential campaign. It seems an open-and-shut case of job discrimination. Women earn only 79 percent of men's average hourly wages. Who could favor that? Actually, the comparison is bogus. A more accurate ratio, after adjusting for differences in gender employment patterns, is closer to 92 percent. Even the remaining gap of 8 percentage points may not stem fully from discrimination.

What's worth recalling (especially for anyone under 40) is that the flood tide of women into the labor force represents one of the great social and economic upheavals of the post-World War II era. In the early postwar years, gender roles were stark. Once women married, they mostly stayed home and took care of the kids. In 1947, women's labor-force participation rate was 32 percent. Female college graduates were a tiny minority, and few women were doctors, lawyers, accountants, newspaper reporters, police officers or business managers.

This world is unrecognizable today. By 2013, women's labor-force participation rate had nearly doubled to 57 percent. Women also earned 57 percent of the bachelor's degrees in 2011 and half the PhDs and first professional degrees. Women's entry into some occupations has been huge. In 2014, there were 251,000 female lawyers (34 percent of the total), 284,000 doctors (37 percent) and 134,000 marketing analysts (61 percent), reports the Labor Department.

The vast transformation had many sources: the spread of household appliances (washers, dryers, dishwashers, microwave ovens), which saved time; the advent of the birth control pill, which made it easier for couples to plan pregnancies; the opening of college to more women, which expanded job opportunities; and the rise of feminism, which challenged prevailing stereotypes.

Of course, not all conflict has vanished. There has been resistance from some male-dominated job bastions. Similarly, companies that don't modify employment practices court discrimination. The gender pay gap is often taken as evidence of this. But the real story is more complicated, as a recent paper by Cornell University economists Francine Blau and Lawrence Kahn shows. (Note: Blau and Kahn are married; also, much of the data in this column comes from their study.)

For starters, the gender wage gap has narrowed significantly. Until the late 1970s, it hovered around 60 percent or a little less. Now, it's that oft-quoted figure of 79 percent. As women move into more occupations and stay longer on the job, their wages are becoming more like men's.

Still, if women were paid a fifth less for doing the same work as men, there would be pervasive discrimination. That's how the pay gap is interpreted by many. They demand "equal pay for equal work." But that's not what the pay gap shows. It's simply the ratio of women's average hourly pay to men's average hourly pay. The jobs in the comparison are not the same, and when these differences are taken into account, the ratio of women's pay to men's rises to almost 92 percent from 79 percent, say Blau and Kahn.

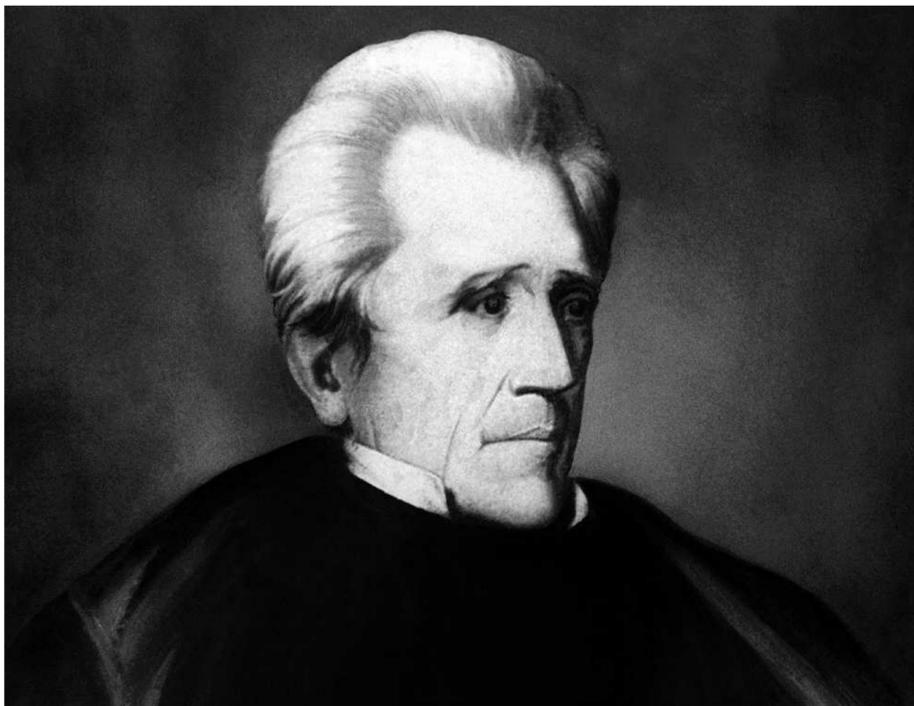
Specifically, they identify two major differences between women's and men's employment patterns. First, despite advances, women remain more concentrated than men in lower-paying industries and occupations. They work disproportionately as health-care aides, receptionists, cashiers and food servers. This drags down women's average wages. The second big difference is that women still have slightly less on-the-job experience than men. This, too, lowers their average wages.

After all the adjustments, the remaining 8-percentage-point unexplained gender gap could reflect discrimination, write Blau and Kahn, pointing to academic studies. In one, when five symphony orchestras shifted to blind auditions, with candidates' identities unknown, women's success rates shot up. In another study, men and women with similar résumés applied for waitstaff jobs at high-priced restaurants; women's job offers were 50 percent lower than men's.

But the persisting gap could have other causes. There's "the motherhood wage penalty": Women bear the greatest responsibilities for child-rearing. Careers are interrupted; even when employers allow greater job flexibility, incomes and advancement prospects suffer.

Men can continue climbing career ladders, while many women are stalled or stopped. That's one reason wage gaps between men and women are greatest among the best-paid workers, say Blau and Kahn. It also helps explain why there are so few female chief executives: about 4 percent of Fortune 500 firms employ them. On the other hand, the pleasures and duties of being a parent often dwarf on-the-job rewards. Either way, hard economic and emotional choices often can't be avoided.

Women's entrance into the labor force has created new issues: the work-family balance; sexual tensions at work; lingering discrimination; the debate over family leave and affordable day care. But we shouldn't exaggerate these difficulties. On the whole, this historic transformation has gone remarkably smoothly.



Andrew Jackson, the seventh president of the United States, shown in an undated portrait.

Respect Tubman — and Jackson

BY JIM WEBB

One would think we could celebrate the recognition that Harriet Tubman will be given on future \$20 bills without demeaning former president Andrew Jackson as a "monster," as a recent Huffington Post headline did. And summarizing his legendary tenure as being "known primarily for a brutal genocidal campaign against native Americans," as reported in The Post, offers an indication of how far political correctness has invaded our educational system and skewed our national consciousness.

This dismissive characterization of one of our great presidents is not occurring in a vacuum. Any white person whose ancestral relations trace to the American South now risks being characterized as having roots based on bigotry and undeserved privilege. Meanwhile, race relations are at their worst point in decades.

Far too many of our most important discussions are being debated emotionally, without full regard for historical facts. The myth of universal white privilege and universal disadvantage among racial minorities has become a mantra, even though white and minority cultures alike vary greatly in their ethnic and geographic origins, in their experiences in the United States and in their educational and financial well-being.

Into this uninformed debate come the libels of "Old Hickory." Not unlike the recently lionized Alexander Hamilton, Jackson was himself a "brilliant orphan." A product of the Scots-Irish migration from war-torn Ulster into the Appalachian Mountains, his father died before he was born. His mother and both brothers died in the Revolutionary War, where he himself became a wounded combat veteran

by age 13. Self-made and aggressive, he found wealth in the wilds of Tennessee and, like other plantation owners such as George Washington, Thomas Jefferson and James Madison, owned slaves. He was a transformational president, hated by the reigning English American elites as he brought populist, frontier-style democracy to our political system.

As president, Jackson became the very face of the New America, focusing on intense patriotism and the dignity of the common man.

On the battlefield he was unbeatable, not only in the Indian Wars, which were brutally fought with heavy casualties on both sides, but also in his classic defense of New Orleans during the War of 1812. His defense of the city (in which he welcomed free blacks as soldiers in his army) dealt the British army its most lopsided defeat until the fall of Singapore in 1942.

As president, Jackson ordered the removal of Indian tribes east of the Mississippi to lands west of the river. This approach, supported by a string of presidents, including Jefferson and John Quincy Adams, was a disaster, resulting in the Trail of Tears where thousands died. But was its motivation genocidal? Robert Remini, Jackson's most prominent biographer, wrote that his intent was to end the increasingly bloody Indian Wars and to protect the Indians from certain annihilation at the hands of an ever-expanding frontier population. Indeed, it would be difficult to call someone genocidal when years before, after one bloody fight, he brought an orphaned Native American baby from the battlefield to his home in Tennessee and raised him as his son.

Today's schoolchildren should know and appreciate that Jackson's July 1832 veto of legislation renewing

the charter of the monopolistic Second National Bank prevented the creation of a permanent aristocracy in our country. Jackson was virulently opposed in this decision, openly threatened by America's elites. Pulitzer Prize-winning historian Vernon Louis Parrington called this veto "perhaps the most courageous act in our political history."

Just as significantly, in November 1832, South Carolina threatened to secede from the Union. Jackson put a strong military force in position, letting it be known that if it attempted secession he would have 50,000 soldiers inside the state within 40 days, with another 50,000 to follow shortly after. Wisely, South Carolina did not call Jackson's bluff, and civil war was averted for another 28 years.

Jackson was a rough-hewn brawler, a dueler and a fighter. For eight years he dominated American politics, bringing a coarse but refreshing openness to the country's governing process. Jefferson called him "a dangerous man." Quincy Adams termed him a "barbarian." But as Parrington put it, "he was our first great popular leader, our first man of the people. . . . one of our few Presidents whose heart and sympathy . . . clung to the simple faith that government must deal as justly with the poor as with the rich."

Mark Twain once commented that "to arrive at a just estimate of a renowned man's character one must judge it by the standards of his time, not ours." By any standard we should respect both Jackson's and Tubman's contributions. And our national leaders should put aside their deliberate divisiveness and encourage that we do so.

Jim Webb, a Democratic U.S. senator from Virginia from 2007 to 2013, is the author of "Born Fighting: How the Scots-Irish Shaped America."

FRED HIATT

A father missing in China

Angela Gui, 22, a university student in England, and her father, a publisher who lives on the other side of the world, don't get to see each other as often as they would like. But they spent a happy Christmas together in 2014, and last fall Angela was looking forward to seeing her father again in November.

A month before they were to meet, he went missing.

Angela knows that her father, Gui Minhai, did some shopping on the morning of Oct. 17. A video camera in his Thai condo showed him returning home with his groceries, carrying them upstairs and then driving away again with a man who had been lurking in his garage.

Angela has not spoken with her father since, although she has received messages from him — or someone who claims to be him.

This is a mystery, then, and a missing-person story, but not of a conventional kind. Gui is missing from public view, but we can be fairly certain that he is in a prison somewhere inside China.

He was born in China, in 1964, and traveled to study at Sweden's University of Gothenburg in 1988. The following year, China's Communist Party crushed peaceful pro-democracy demonstrations in Tiananmen Square. Gui spent the next decade in Sweden, becoming a citizen, earning his PhD and having a daughter, Angela, his only child, who also is a Swedish citizen.

As the political climate in China relaxed, Gui returned, and eventually helped establish a company in Hong Kong that published gossip volumes about China's leaders. Last fall it had a potential blockbuster in the works: a biography of Chinese President Xi Jinping.

The book has never been published. All Angela knew, at first, was that her father uncharacteristically had stopped communicating.

Eventually her father's friend and colleague in Hong Kong, Lee Bo, sent her an email: "Your dad has gone missing. We're afraid he was taken by Chinese agents for political reasons. . . . That was an incredible shock," she said.

Gui's car has never been found. Thailand claims to have no record of his leaving the country. But in November, Angela received a brief text message purportedly from him. "I hope you will be fine," it said.

Angela, whose soft-spoken British-accented English carries barely a trace of her native Swedish, paused to compose herself as she recalled that time.

"He didn't respond to my messages," she said. "It was clear to me by then that somebody was controlling him."

In December came another shock: Lee also disappeared, apparently abducted from Hong Kong as Gui was from Thailand.

"I knew he had British citizenship," Angela said. "He had said, 'As long as I'm still in Hong Kong, I'll be okay.'"

It was not unheard of in years past for China's Communist rulers to reach beyond their borders to silence critics. In 2002, they kidnapped democracy activist Wang Bingzhang from Vietnam; he remains in a Chinese prison to this day.

But the brazenness and frequency of such actions have been growing. Overseas Chinese who speak out discover that relatives inside China have been jailed or threatened. And altogether, five employees of Gui's Hong Kong publishing house have been disappeared for periods of time.

Lee eventually resurfaced in Hong Kong. He delivered a bizarre statement regretting his involvement with the publishing house, praising China and refusing to provide any information about his disappearance. He then went missing again.

Gui's reemergence was even odder. In January, he appeared on Chinese television, tearfully claiming to have voluntarily returned to China to take responsibility for a hit-and-run accident in 2003.

Angela has yet to watch the supposed confession from beginning to end. "I'm trying to stay focused on getting him released," she said. "If I watched the whole thing, with my father in tears, I don't think I could go on."

But she has watched enough to know it is false. "That's just not the way he talks," she said. She had never heard him speak of any accident.

Compounding her misgivings is one final message she received from his Skype account.

"He said he was okay, that he went back to China on his own to solve his own problems. If anyone asks about me, please keep quiet, because that's important to me."

"I replied, 'What do you mean? Where are you?'" But there was no response.

Angela, a sociology major who never expected to be an activist, finds herself knocking on official doors in Stockholm and Washington, hoping that governments eager for smooth relations with China will stir themselves to object to such egregious behavior.

"Even though he told me to keep quiet, I don't believe that's his actual wish, and I believe that if I did keep quiet, I would just be assisting in a crime against international law," she said.

"I hope that's the right thing. I don't know."

She paused again to compose herself. "It's been seven months now, and I've not heard a thing."

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2016's scrambled coalitions

Republicans belong to a more ideological party, but ideology has mattered less in the GOP primaries this year than in the race between Hillary Clinton and Bernie Sanders.

Clinton is in a nearly unassailable position to win her party's nomination. But assuming she prevails, her primary fight with Sanders has underscored weaknesses she will have to deal with to win in November.

And Donald Trump's moves toward moderation on social issues last week reflect not only his campaign's understanding that he cannot win as a far-right candidate but also his need to tread carefully to maintain the crazy-quilt coalition he has built in the GOP primaries.

New York and Massachusetts Republicans are quite different from the ones found in Alabama, Arkansas and Tennessee. Trump carried all five states, bringing together some of the most extreme voters on the right end of his party with a large share of those who consider themselves moderate.

As the 2016 primaries reach their decisive moment, the results so far point to a scrambling of alliances inside both parties.

To earn her delegate lead, Clinton has built a significantly different coalition in 2016 than she did in 2008. The most important and obvious shift is among African Americans, who formed Barack Obama's base against her eight years ago and are now Clinton's most loyal supporters. They will loom large in Tuesday's primaries, particularly in Maryland and Pennsylvania.

Clinton ran well behind Obama among voters under 30. She's doing even worse

among younger voters this year against Sanders.

She has done well among voters over 45, among those with a strong identification with the Democratic Party, and among the roughly one-third of primary voters who do not identify themselves as liberal (a group that includes many non-whites). In her New York victory, she carried moderate and conservative Democrats by 2 to 1. But even where she has lost, this group has come her way. In Michigan, for example, she carried the non-liberals 52 percent to 43 percent.

Sanders speaks of increasing participation in Democratic primaries, but turnout this year has not exceeded the admittedly exceptional 2008. He does, however, seem to have mobilized more progressive voters: A comparison of the exit polls with surveys of Democrats nationally suggests that the primary electorate this year is more liberal than is the party as a whole.

Overall, turnout patterns have been mixed. They were down in many of the earliest states, such as New Hampshire, and sharply down in some later states, including Alabama, Texas and Ohio. But 2008 and 2016 turnouts were roughly comparable in other states, including New York, Massachusetts and Wisconsin.

There is another factor in Sanders's strength that points to a Clinton problem this fall: Even where she has won, she has run poorly among white men. In New York, Sanders got 57 percent of their votes; in Michigan, which Sanders won, he got 62 percent. She has also regularly lost in rural areas.

White men as a whole would likely prefer any Republican over any Democrat this fall, but Clinton would have to

find a way to cut her losses. Against Trump, at least, polls suggest she would so overwhelm him among women that she could triumph anyway. This would be less clear if she faced a different Republican.

An awareness of his need to improve his standing among women may have prompted Trump to insist last week — to the consternation of social conservatives — that the GOP's traditional platform plank against abortion include exceptions for rape, incest and protecting a mother's life. He also spoke out against North Carolina's anti-transgender law.

Trump's willingness to part with social conservatives (for now, at least) also reflects the ways in which his vote defies the old Republican patterns.

In primary after primary, he has split white evangelical voters with Ted Cruz. At the same time, Trump has performed as well among moderates as he has among conservatives. A partial exception is New York, where Trump ran best among self-described conservatives. But even there, the exit polls still showed him defeating John Kasich narrowly, 46 percent to 42 percent, among moderates.

The failure of both movement conservatives and established Republican politicians to stop Trump so far arises from their inability to imagine that someone could appeal simultaneously to moderates — they see Trump more as a manager and leader who could get things done — and to the party's most hardcore right-wingers on immigration and race, and also in the ferociousness of his opposition to Obama.

Trump's GOP foes have six weeks to topple him from his high wire.

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