

California Women at Work

Jenny Zorn
CSU San Bernardino

Since 1950 the women of California have followed the national trend of entering the paid labor force at increasing rates. Despite this greater presence in the paid labor force for fifty years, they still earn less than their male counterparts. A close examination of the factors associated with gender income gaps reveals how the experiences of women in California are similar to the nation as a whole and how they differ.

This research examines the patterns of paid labor force participation, educational attainment, and income differentials in California in 1990. The historical trends since 1950 give the background for the study. The regional patterns of these factors are investigated and the resulting spatial impacts are revealed.

Previous research on women in the paid labor force has focused on paid labor force participation (Kessler-Harris, 1981; Spain, 1992), occupational sex segregation (Beller, 1984; Blau, 1984; Reskin, 1984a; Reskin, 1984b) and gender wage gaps (Barnett & Rivers, 2000; Becker, 1964; National Committee on Pay Equity, 1998; Reskin & Ross, 1995; & Zorn, 1990). A great deal of research has examined these trends and the complex factors affecting them nationally (Bergmann, 1986; Rothenberg, 1998). This study will also examine those trends, but focus on the state of California.

Trends in Paid Labor Force Participation in California

In California women moved into the paid labor force somewhat faster than the country as a whole. In 1990 57.7% of Californian women worked in the paid labor force while the U.S. participation rate was lower at 56.8% (1990 Census of Population and Housing, Summary Social, Economic, and Housing Characteristics, United States). Gender Income Gaps are narrower for California women than for women across the country. The gender income gap in the United States was \$0.62, meaning women earned 62 cents on the male dollar. In California women fared better with a 64 cent gender income gap. Therefore, women in California were earning 64 percent of the income levels of their male counterparts (1990 Census of Population, Social and Economic Characteristics, California).

Since the 1950s increasingly more women with children have been entering the paid labor force. Initially the large influx of women into the

paid labor force was dominated by older women entering or returning to the paid labor force. However, in the past three decades younger women have dominated the influx nationwide. Even women who had children of school age or preschool age were entering the paid labor force. In the U.S. 62% of all women with children younger than 6 years of age were employed outside the home. In California that trend was much smaller. Less than half of all women (46.3%) with preschool aged children were working in the paid labor force.

Recent data from the Bureau of Labor Statistics reveal that women in the U.S. earned 76.5 cents on the male dollar in 1999. While that gap has diminished over the past 50 years, parity has not been attained. A glass ceiling is still prevalent. Indeed, Lopez (1998) describes a glass wall too, where women have difficulty moving laterally. The occupational sex segregation, she argues, emerges at earlier levels than the higher rungs of the ladder.

More women are entering the higher paying managerial and professional jobs. In 1983 40.9% of these jobs were held by women and by 1999 they reached near parity with 49.4%. However, they are not receiving comparable pay in these jobs. The gender wage gap for financial managers is 60.9% and 62.4% for doctors (San Bernardino Sun, May 26, 2000).

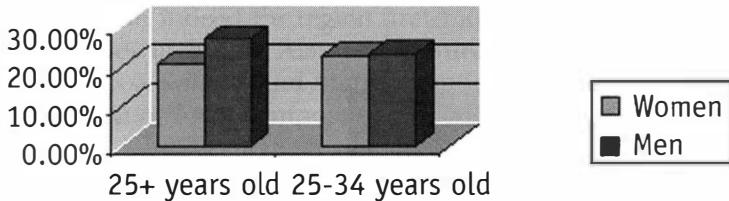
Other high paying occupations such as doctors have seen an increase in the number of women graduating from medical school. Reports from the American Medical Women's Association and the American Medical Association reveal in 1960 only 5.7% of all medical school graduates were women. However, by 1998 that had increased to 41.5%. With more and more women graduating from medical school, expectations are that incomes for women should begin to approach their male counterparts. However, a comparison of the occupational category of doctors reveals occupational sex segregation is helping suppress female doctors' incomes as compared to male doctors' incomes. Women are not reaching the top academic ranks, and they are under-represented in certain lucrative specialties. Three out of ten dermatologists are female, nearly one third of all obstetricians are female (32%), and almost half of all pediatricians are female (46%). However, these are lower paying specialties. The higher paying specialties are dominated by men. Only one fifth of Anesthesiologists are women and a mere 9% of general surgeons are women (Marquis, 2000).

Gender Differences in Educational Attainment

The differing educational attainment levels of men and women have

accounted for gender variations in income in the U.S. as well as in California. Men have a longer history of earning college degrees than women do. In California however 76.9% of men and 75.5% of women earn high school degrees, revealing no gender education gap at the high school graduation level. The gender education gap widens when examining college degrees. In California, 26.8% of males have earned college degrees, while only 20.1% of females have college diplomas. This results in a gender education gap of 75%. The amount of degrees women earn is 75% of the amount of degrees men earn. However, the gender education gap is shrinking because today colleges have more women than men on their campuses. An examination of the proportion of college-educated rates by age reveals age variations in these rates. The gap for 25-34 year olds is nearly gone as demonstrated in Graph 1. The gender education gap is near equity at 98% for this youngest age cohort (1990 Census of Population, Social and Economic Characteristics, California).

Graph 1
1990 California
College Education



Spatial Patterns

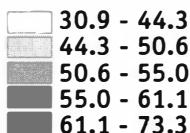
In California, most women are working for pay outside the home and nearly half of all paid workers are female. The trends for paid labor force participation, educational attainment levels, and resulting incomes are spatially variant in California. The spatial patterns of labor force participation, education, and income in California reveal some significant trends for women in the workforce.

Spatial Patterns in Labor Force Participation Rates

In California 57.7% of women work outside the home. However, the paid labor force participation rates vary widely from county to county. The range of the participation rates is quite wide: 73.3% in Mono county and 30.9% in San Francisco county. Map 1 shows the paid labor force participation rates of women in the 58 counties in California. The highest rates are in Mono county with 73.3 % of women working in the paid

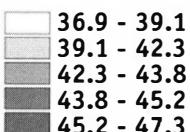
**Map 1
1990
Women in the
Paid Labor Force**

**Female in Paid Labor Force /
All Females**



**Map 2
1990
Female Paid Labor Force**

**Females in Paid Labor Force/
All Persons in Paid Labor Force**



labor force. The rates are also high in Alpine county; the Los Angeles suburban counties of Ventura and Orange; and the San Francisco suburban counties of Alameda, Contra Costa, Santa Clara, Santa Cruz, and Solano.

However, in San Francisco county only 30.9% of women work and the participation rates are also low in the rural counties of Calaveras, Lake, Tehama, and Trinity.

Therefore, women in California are working at higher rates (57.7%) than the nation as a whole (56.8%), but the diverse nature of California is revealed by the variation in participation rates at the county level.

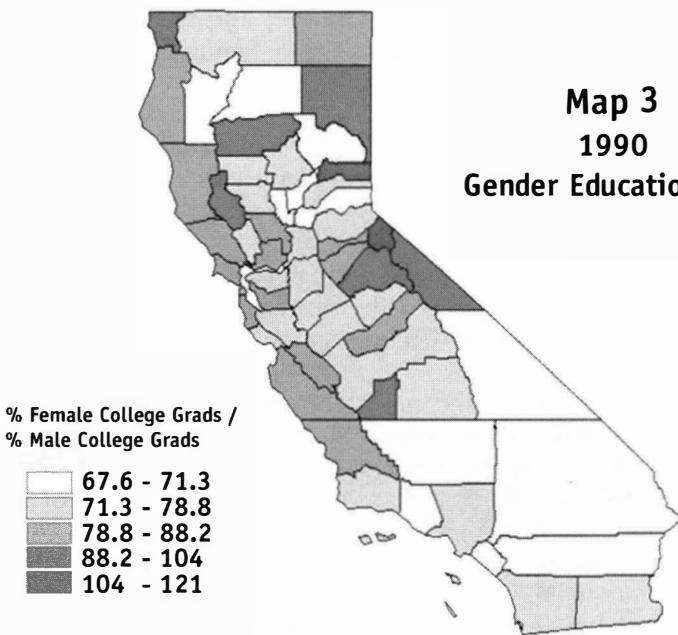
The gender composition of the paid labor force in California varies slightly from the trend in the U.S. In California 44% of paid workers are women, while the U.S. is higher at 45.3. The range of these rates in California counties is a high of 47.3% in Marin county to a low of 36.9% in Tulare county. Map 2 displays these rates by county. The northern counties of Tulare, Colusa, Sierra, Stanislaus, Sutter, Tehama, Trinity, Tulare, and Yuba have a smaller female paid labor force. However, in Marin county the paid labor force is almost equally balanced where 47.3% of its workers are female. Indeed, the region stretching from San Luis Obispo to Sonoma counties including Alameda, Contra Costa, Monterey, San Francisco, San Mateo, Solano, and Marin counties have higher proportions of the paid labor force composed of women.

San Francisco county reveals an interesting pattern. While its gender composition of the paid labor force is nearly balanced at 45.7%, the percentage of women who work is the lowest in the state (30.9%). If more of the women who are not in the paid labor force were to move into it, it could easily have a paid labor force, which had more women than men. San Francisco county does have a higher proportion of older women over 70, and a larger proportion of working age women who have chosen not to work in the paid labor force, perhaps because they live with men who earn the high incomes found in San Francisco.

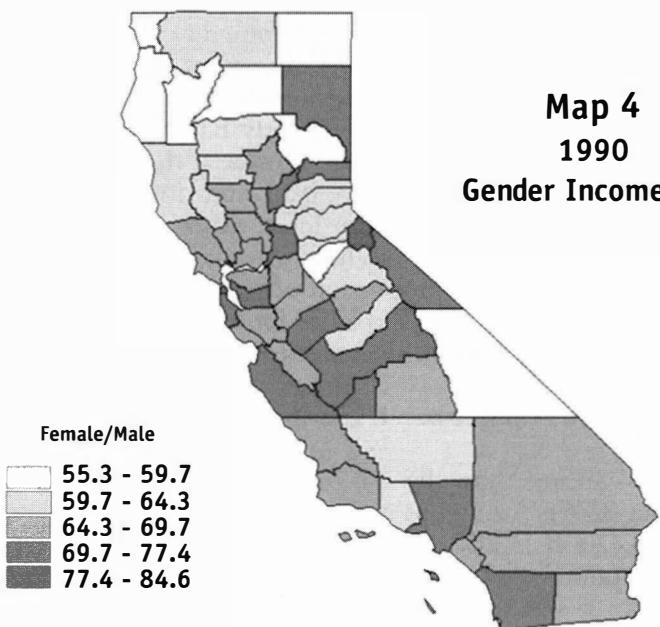
Spatial Patterns in Income Distribution

California is wealthier than the nation as a whole. The per capita income for the state is \$16,409 as compared to the national per capita income of \$14,420. It is also a remarkably diverse state with some counties much poorer than others. The lowest per capita incomes are found in the north and the central valley, but Imperial county on the Mexican border is the lowest with \$9,208.

Map 3
1990
Gender Education Gap



Map 4
1990
Gender Income Gap



The highest per capita incomes are found in San Francisco and its surrounding counties as well as Los Angeles and its surrounding counties. Marin county has the highest per capita income with \$28,381. Quite a difference from the \$9,208 in Imperial county.

The richer counties also have higher rates of women working than other counties in the state. The pattern is a higher percentage of women are working in those higher income counties.

Spatial Patterns in Gender Education Gaps

Historically men have earned higher degrees than their female counterparts. Men stayed in school longer and earned more degrees than women ever did. However, those patterns are changing as universities across the country are reporting more women than men enrolled on their campuses. Female high school graduation rates have climbed to parity with males' rates. Overall women are increasingly becoming just as educated as men. However, gender education gaps still persist in some regions. This parity hasn't occurred uniformly across the landscape.

In California the gender education gap for college graduates is 75%. Overall the educational attainment levels of women is 75% of their male counterparts. A significant spatial variation in gender education gaps is revealed in Map 3. In fact, in three counties the gender education gap favors women and not men. In Sierra county women enjoy a 122% gender education gap, in Alpine 120%, and in Mono 104%. In Kings county there is no gap. The gap is widest in Ventura (67.6%), Shasta (67.9%), Orange (68.1%), and Placer (68.3%).

Sierra county has a gender education gap that favors women (122%). A closer examination of Sierra county reveals only 39% of their paid labor force is composed of women. Therefore, the few women who are working in Sierra county are highly educated. Sierra county also is predominantly white (95.7%). This affects its gender education gap because those gaps are wider for whites than for nonwhites. Historically white males have higher college graduation rates than white females. However, the gender gap for nonwhites is not as large because nonwhite males college graduation rates are low. Therefore, it is easier for nonwhite females to approach the graduation rates of nonwhite males.

Spatial Variations in Gender Income Gaps

The gender income gap (median income) for full-time workers in California is 72.3%. It also is spatially variant with a range of 55.3% to 84.6%. Map 4 shows some counties where women are making little more than half of the income their male counterparts earn. While in other counties

they are comparatively better off than the national average.

The gender income gap is best for women in the larger metropolitan areas of Sacramento, Oakland, San Francisco, San Jose, Fresno, Los Angeles, and San Diego. In San Francisco women earn 84.6 on the male dollar. The diverse opportunities in the larger metropolitan areas enable women to command higher incomes.

Alpine county has the second narrowest gender income gap of 84.3. They also have the second highest gender education gap (1.20). The higher educational attainment levels of the women in Alpine county are rewarded with higher incomes. Even so, they are more educated than their male counterparts, yet they still can't out-earn them.

Gender income gaps are worst for women in the far north (Del Norte, 56.7 and Trinity, 56.8) and in the Sierra Nevada (Inyo, 55.3). Inyo county has the widest gender income disparity and the fifth worst gender education gap (68.3). The wide gender education gap is Trinity county also impacts its wide gender income gap. Therefore, the lack of education of women in Inyo and Trinity counties is paralleling their lack of income. **Findings**

This study revealed several spatial patterns of the paid labor force participation of women in California. The higher income counties tend to have higher percentages of women working for pay outside the home. In some areas with lower percentages of women working, the few women who are working are highly educated. Younger women today are just as educated as younger men. In counties with high percentages of whites, the women are more educated than in other counties. The gender income gap is narrower in counties with highly educated women and, conversely, it is wider where women are less educated. The gender income gap is narrow in larger metro areas.

This research investigated the patterns associated with labor force participation, education and income. Further research on the impacts of occupational opportunities in the counties is necessary to more fully understand the dynamics of these patterns and to begin to explore the various reasons for the resulting spatial patterns.

My thanks to Andy Copeland for map production in this paper.

References

- 1990 Census of Population and Housing.** *Summary Social, Economic, and Housing Characteristics, California.* U.S. Department of Commerce, 1990.
- 1990 Census of Population,** *Social and Economic Characteristics, California.* U.S. Department of Commerce, 1990.
- Barnett, Rosalind Hait and Caryl Rivers.** *She Works, He Works.* Harvard University Press, 2000.
- Becker, G.S.** *Human Capital: A Theoretical and Empirical Analysis with Special Reference to Education.* New York: Praeger Publishers, 1964.
- Beller, A.H.** "Trends in occupational segregation by sex and race: 1960-1981." Pp. 11-26 in B.F. Reskin (ed.), *Sex Segregation in the Workplace: Trends, Explanations and Remedies.* Washington, D.C.: National Academy Press, 1984.
- Bergmann, Barbara.** *The Economic Emergence of Women.* Basic Books, Inc., New York, 1986.
- Blau, F.D.** *Occupational segregation and labor market discrimination.* Pp.117-143 in B.F. Reskin (ed.), *Sex Segregation in the Workplace: Trends, Explanations and Remedies.* Washington, D.C.: National Academy Press, 1984.
- Goldin, Claudia.** *Understanding the Gender Gap: An Economic History of American Women.* Oxford University Press, 1990.
- Jacobs, Jerry, Ed.** *Gender Inequality at Work.* SAGE Publications, 1995.
- Kessler-Harris, Alice.** *Women Have Always Worked: A Historical Overview.* The Feminist Press, New York, 1981.
- Kobayashi, Audrey.** *Women, Work, and Place.* McGill-Queen's University Press, Montreal & Kingston, 1994.
- Lopez, Julie Amparano.** *Women Face Glass Walls as Well as Ceilings,* in *Race, Class, and Gender in the United States: an Integrated Study,* 4th Edition, Paula S. Rothenberg, Ed., St. Martin's Press, New York, 1998.
- Marquis, Julie.** *A Huge Dose of Change.* Los Angeles Times, March 10, 2000.
- Massey, Doreen.** *Space, Place, and Gender.* University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis, 1994.
- McDowell, Linda and Joanne P. Sharp, Ed.** *Space, Gender, Knowledge,* Arnold, London, 1997.
- National Committee on Pay Equity.** *The Wage Gap: Myths and Facts,* in *Race, Class, and Gender in the United States: an Integrated Study,* 4th Edition, Paula S. Rothenberg, Ed., St. Martin's Press, New York, 1998.
- "Pay disparity between the sexes persists." San Bernardino Sun, May 26, 2000.
- Reskin, B.F. (ed.).** *Sex Segregation in the Workplace: Trends, Explanations and Remedies.* Washington, D.C.: National Academy Press, 1984a.
- Reskin, B.F. (ed.).** *Women's Work, Men's Work: Segregation on the Job.* Washington, C.D.: National Academy Press, 1984b.
- Reskin, Barbara F. and Catherine E. Ross.** *Jobs, Authority, and Earnings Among Managers: The Continuing Significance of Sex,* in, *Gender Inequality at Work.* Jacobs, Jerry, Ed., SAGE Publications, 1995.
- Rothenberg, Paula S., Ed.** *Race, Class, and Gender in the United States: an Integrated Study,* 4th Edition, St. Martin's Press, New York, 1998.
- Spain, Daphne.** *Gendered Spaces.* The University of North Carolina Press, Chapel Hill and London, 1992.
- Zorn, Jenny.** *Spatial Variations in Gender Income Differentials.* The Ohio State University, 1990.