

Campus Voice

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Shattered? Glass ceilings are hard to break

Women still unable to crack through obstacle of discrimination in America

Women, even with similar credentials as men, earn lower salaries.

Equality? No.

Discrimination? Yes.

UNC Asheville women constitute twice the population of men, according to university statistics.

Also, women graduate from college at higher rates and with similar credentials as men, according to the U.S. Census Bureau.

Higher credentials should entitle anyone to a higher salary. Unfortunately, for women, this is not the case.

The salary of women compared to men decreased since 1980, according to the national census.

"A lot of people don't realize how detrimental this statistic is to women," said Cynn Chadwick, literature lecturer. "As long as women are not in charge, there will continue to be an inferiority."

She also said she found it to be an issue that is almost ignored in our generation.

"I noticed when I tried to discuss the inequality of women in work and education in my literature classes, fewer women were willing to speak on this issue," Chadwick said.

What does this say about our generation of young women? Even though the percentage of women in colleges continues to increase, inequality of women in the workplace should not be ignored.

"In my classes, I've found women who attended co-ed high schools were less willing to speak up in class, and women who attended female-dominated high schools were more willing to speak up in class," Chadwick said.

Young women in college should be aware of the possible discrimi-



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nation that may occur in their future careers.

These women may be considered privileged to obtain a college degree compared to women who are faced with other responsibilities.

Consider the scenario of a single mother with three children.

If this mother attended college, the possible responsibilities could include her children, bills and academics.

Aside from her many responsibilities, the mother will also deal with the fact that she will not receive the same salary as her male counterparts.

"Being a single mother in college is a sacrifice a lot of mothers have to make," Chadwick said. "They try to get part-time jobs and classes so that they can make it home by the afternoon when their child gets off the bus."

Women's roles, until the 1970s, were to support the family and to tend to the duties in the home, according to the American Union Movement.

Could the previous expectations of women in the home influence the discrimination of women on the job today?

Two discriminating factors seem present in the workforce: lower salaries and sexual harassment.

According to the American Union Movement, 31 percent of women today in male-dominated

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careers claim to be sexually harassed.

"Discrimination could occur because women were once not expected to work," Chadwick said. "I remember when I graduated from high school, a lot of my female classmates were planning their weddings and wanted to have children."

The closest thing to a higher education for women back then was going to secretarial school, and you were really ambitious if you wanted to go to a community college, Chadwick said.

Just because women were not expected to work in the past doesn't mean they aren't expected to work today.

"Today you find more men that make the sacrifices of quitting their jobs and staying at home to take care of their children," Chadwick said. "It's becoming less to do with gender and more to do with finances, especially in an economy with fewer job opportunities."

If gender roles continue to change, then why do lower salaries and sexual harassment still exist for women?

"The gender roles of women have not completely changed. There are still women today who decide to get married and have children out of high school," Chadwick said.

Once there was a dispute between working women and housewives, she said. Working women wondered why the housewives wouldn't want an education and housewives wondered why working women did not want to tend to the family.

Some people may argue that discrimination cannot always be the determining factor with women in the workplace.

"What about women on the job who have to take maternity leave when they have children?," Chadwick said. "While these women are gone, this could allow men a greater opportunity to obtain a promotion."

Although this is a possibility, it does not justify the lower salary of women.

"Some women don't have children until after their 20s," Chadwick said. "Even once they have children and decide to go back to work, they end up going back to college."

The birth rate has decreased since the 1980s, according to the national census.

Since, biologically, women are the only sex with the ability to have children, this factor should be taken into consideration in the workplace.

This notion is not to be taken as a sexist viewpoint; if men experienced the same degree of discrimination, there should be a push for equality for them, as well.

Instead of ignoring these facts, a close analysis helps prevent domination based solely on gender.