

## PO133: Foundations of Political Economy

### Week Nine – Gender

Gender can be understood either as an empirical category or as an analytical lens. The former treats gender as a binary trait and uses it to divide populations into subgroups (usually only two), to address the systematic inequalities that exist between them. The latter treats gender as a governing code and seeks to reveal and subvert binary stereotypes that limit our thinking and our potential to act. Both understandings are present in today's readings. Marilyn Waring's study 'If Women Counted' powerfully challenges the untroubled ease with which Economics has been able to narrow down the *empirical* focus to the experience of men – men in businesses, men in governments, men in unions, men on Wall Street, and so forth. She urges us to account for the experiences of women – women working at home, women providing care, women working in factories – to make visible the structural divide between genders and close it. Elias' tile 'Care' and Gunawardana's tile 'Clothing' both support this view. But they also use gender *analytically* to challenge powerful social norms. Gunawardana points out how women's concerns about marital status can force them to tolerate and endure sexual harassment, verbal abuse and physical insecurity. Elias emphasizes how care jobs are 'feminised', i.e. devalued economically because they are considered to be 'women's work'.

# 10,109

companies have reported gender pay figures

Fri 6 April, 11:00 am

← Women paid more

1,400 employers report a higher median salary for women

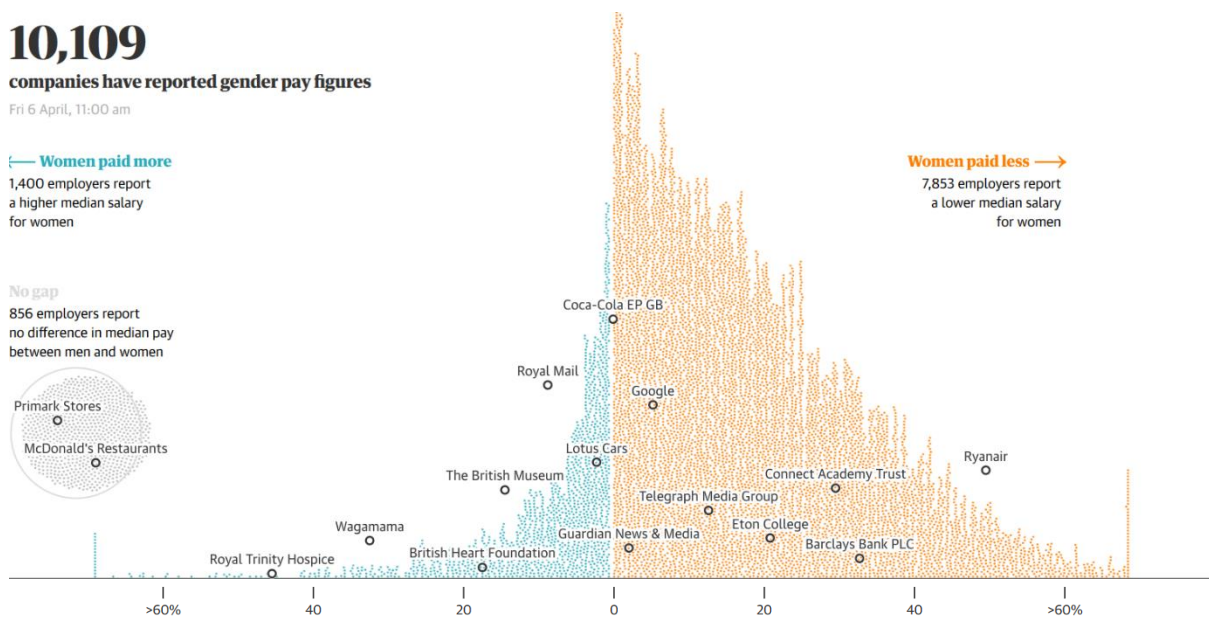
No gap

856 employers report no difference in median pay between men and women



Women paid less →

7,853 employers report a lower median salary for women



Source: <https://www.theguardian.com/news/ng-interactive/2018/apr/05/women-are-paid-less-than-men-heres-how-to-fix-it>

**Task 1 - Gender as an empirical category:** There have been huge changes in the composition of the workforce in the past decades, with women entering paid employment outside the home in large numbers, experiencing the liberating impact of regular wages in ways that their grandmothers and even their mothers could only have dreamt of. Yet, the graph above reveals but one of many aspects of gender inequality, observable not only in the UK economy but in almost all economies world-wide. So, though more women are working, they are regularly paid less than men, they are more likely to be in part-time or informal work and they are overrepresented in sectors with little protection and few rights. And whilst there are some high-profile women CEOs and female head of states, the very top of industries and governments, remain firmly male. What can be done?

- 1.1. Whilst clearly unjust, gender inequality is often presented as a women's problem that can only be resolved at the expense of men. Against such a view, can you think of ways in which the gender pay gap may be a men's problem, too? Think of three examples for how gender equality could improve the economic lives of men!

- 1.2. Gender diversity in firms' top pay band is positively correlated to smaller gender pay gaps. Should governments introduce mandatory quotas for women on the boards of directors of their nations' largest companies?

**Task 2 - Gender as an analytical category:** In addition to an empirical concept of gender which serves to highlight the structural inequalities between women and men, we may also use gender analytically, to start questioning the constitution of gendered divisions in the first place; this means thinking about the way binary or gendered conceptions of particular roles – workers, consumers, entrepreneurs, and so on – define how we think and act in the economy.

2.1. What problematic gender stereotypes were flagged up by the readings?

2.2. What gendered assumptions are put forward by the ads below? Do you think there is a hetero-sexist bias in advertising? Do you know of other ads that promote problematic stereotypes?

2.3. Are adverts responding to these stereotypes or are they complicit in creating them?



## Assessment Advice

### *References and citations*

Referencing is absolutely necessary on three occasions. You must give your sources for:

- all statements of 'fact'
- all opinions and arguments that are not your own
- direct quotations (including the relevant page numbers of the original)

### *Formative Assessment*

- What does it mean to be studying political economy as opposed to economics?
- What does it mean to say markets are 'social constructions'?
- Are multinational corporations a threat to the sovereignty of states?
- Should we be concerned about growing economic inequality?
- Are environmental issues necessarily opposed to economic growth and competitiveness?

'What does it mean?' = 'What is at stake?'

No categorical answers, please. Qualify them!

The quality of argument matters, not the political views.

Use the readings. You need to show that you have read and understood them.

### *Example: What does it mean to 'gender' the study of global finance?<sup>1</sup>*

1. **Intro (1-2 sentences):** "Policy and media responses to the global financial crisis have often used domestic analogies. 'Governments', we are told, should get their 'houses in order', they should 'live within their means', 'tighten their belts', and 'make tough decisions' on spending."
2. **Argument (1-2 sentences):** "This paper argues that gendering the study of global finance reveals how the deployment of such household analogies works to legitimate (or delegitimate) financial policies. It demonstrates that the domestic analogies implicitly entail a moral valorisation of women, which has served to legitimate dominant images of Christine Lagarde and Angela Merkel after the crisis as the 'saviours' of global finance."
3. **Discussion:** An important precursor for feminist analyses of finance is Marieke De Goede's 'Mastering Lady Credit'. In that article, De Goede makes the argument that...  
While this paper is clearly influenced by De Goede's argument, it also suggests that her account of the hetero-normative politics of global finance is limited, because...  
The examples of Lagarde and Merkel implies that...
4. **Conclusion (1-2 sentences):** To conclude, gendering the study of global finance allows us to see how gendered idea about the good housewife have been mobilised by Christine Lagarde and Angela Merkel to support policies of austerity and fiscal rectitude in Germany and the EU.

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<sup>1</sup> Example inspired by but not representative of the arguments found in Brassett and Rethel, 2015, 'Sexy money: the hetero-normative politics of global finance', *Review of International Studies*, 41, p. 429-449.