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Accounting and Nursing remaining gender specific

Introduction

In the past few years, women have increasingly made more of a presence in the workplace. Women find there to be more professional options but find it difficult to decide what best suits them. The challenge arises because professions remain gender-dominated or segregated. For example, accounting has been and continues to be a male dominated field, while nursing is female dominated. This paper will explore why seemingly similar professions, accounting and nursing, remain gender specific. I will begin my argument by explaining women's preferences for their professional and family life. Which will then be followed by the outlining of requirements and the process of entry into each profession. I will then explain the nature of the work and summarize why more women aren't entering the accounting field. Following my argument, I will then use the nursing profession as a contrast to explain why it is a woman dominated field. In this paper I will be arguing, that given accounting's current structure and nature of work, it will likely never be a woman-dominated profession.

Women's professional and family preferences

This section of the paper is going to outline women's preferences of their professional and family lives. Global trends found women's participation in the labor force from 1990-2010, remained steady around 50% compared to men at 75% (Homewood, 2016). Women's statistics have increased when compared to the last fifty years, but there still remains a gap between gender at all stages of life (Homewood, 2016). A common factor that causes the difference between men and women, is that women can't find the balance between personal and professional life. Linkdin, a global business site, found that 63% of women are trying to find the balance between work and their personal life (Ngaire, 2013). "For mothers who are homemakers, it is the center of their identity and they want to fulfill that" (Giele, 2008).

Mothers want to be involved at home and the demand of a high-power profession makes that difficult. World's Women 2010: Trends and Statistics explains that concept. The study found, "women spend twice as much time compared to men on domestic work, meaning longer hours of work" (United Nations, 2010). Having long hours in professional and family lives, has caused the trend of women looking for flexible hours or part-time work to increase. The study by Linkdin found that, "86% of women want a more flexible work environment because it will allow more time on important aspects of their life" (Ngaire, 2013). Flexibility can happen from shorter daily hours, or days off. World's Women 2010: Trends and Statistics found "part-time employment is increasing across the world and becoming more common". Research found that 80% of women found the ideal situation for them was to be working part-time or not working at all who had young children (Parker, 2015). "They welcome new experience and look for flexibility to pursue both work and family" but when that can't happen, women leave the profession (Giele, 2008).

"Women have a pattern of putting family needs ahead of their own" (Giele, 2008). It is a decision based on each family, but the trend of women being at home with children hasn't changed drastically from high percentages. The Huffingtonpost did a study and found one of the top reasons that women leave their job is because of maternal instinct. "I remember crying because there was no way I could leave my child, I need to be available" (Partridge, 2017). Journal of Family and Issues surveyed 250 women to understand why they were unemployed. The results found, 180 women were due to caring for children (Ciciolla, Curlee, & Luthar, 2017) Women find stress managing motherhood and career. There's a positive percentage of women at home with children that are satisfied with their life compared to women working for money (Ciciolla, Curlee, & Luthar, 2017). They prefer to end or put their career on hold because after carrying their child for nine months, "I wasn't going to miss out on anything of my child's life" (Slide, 2018). "They don't prepare you for that feeling of leaving a baby when you had been career-oriented" (Giele, 2008). It is a decision that all families make but it has been a common trend that women have the preference to be with family. They do not have to worry or stress about and can have fulfillment

with family life. Following this section, the process of entering accounting and requirements of the field are discussed.

Accounting: Process of Entry

From this section, the understanding of the process of entry into accounting and the requirements needed to become an accountant will become clear. This is important because it lays the foundation for how the nature of accounting is. The field of accounting attracts a small pool of students because of the tedious-multi step process to become an accountant. When a student decides they want to become an accountant, they begin networking with The Big Four Public Accounting Firms: Deloitte, EY, KPMG, and PW. Recruiting with accounting firms begin a students' junior year, by applying for company's leadership programs. The process of getting accepted into a leadership program requires interviewing of: phone, video recording, and on-campus. These programs are highly competitive as only a small percentage of people are accepted, because "public accounting firms provide a great first entry level job" (Dunn & Hooks, 2009). After completing the two-day leadership program before senior year, students are offered an internship for the following year. After completion, the student receives a full-time offer that is waiting for them once they complete their master's degree. The following section is going to provide information about the Certified Public Exam.

How the Certified Public Exam is structured and importance of it, assists in the understanding of accounting as a profession. Accounting has requirements before being eligible to be certified and capable of promotions/bonuses. After completing 150 credits, an accountant can begin preparing for the Certified Public Exam (CPA) that companies now push for students to take. It is being pushed because the CPA license "allows members to provide and maintain high levels of accounting service" (Dunn & Hooks, 2009). "The test is made up of four different parts covering all aspects of accounting: 1) auditing and attestation, 2) business environment and concepts, 3) financial accounting and reporting, and 4) regulation (AICPA, 2018). A student must pass all four sections with a 75% or better in an 18-month time span before a license can start to be issued (AICPA, 2018). An accountant must have 3 years of work

experience before receiving the license and title of Certified Public Accountant (CPA) (NASBA, 2018). The next section is going to go over the steps needed to pass the exam because it is important to understand how passing is similar to the nature of the profession.

Having the certification has become important in the accounting profession, and this section is going to explain how passing it can be possible. The amount of studying time varies for each section and person, but on average the amount of study time to pass the CPA exam is 400 hours (Boyd, 2018). The 400 hours corresponds to about 10 weeks of working full-time (40 hours a week). Due to that amount of time, countless accountants will take time to complete it during their 5th year (master program) (Boyd, 2018). Having the classwork slightly correspond to the CPA test material can allow for students to not have to carve out extra time for studying. “They show higher passing rates among candidates after completing school” (Dunn & Hooks, 2009). It also makes for a better starting point at their job, because “after passing the CPA exam, on average, an accountant gets a bonus of \$5,000 (KPMG, 2018). Though many accountants have and are capable of completing the test while working full-time, it makes for a busier schedule especially when engulfed in deadline season. “Barriers of entry being limited causes a negative view on the profession” (Dunn & Hooks, 2009). The next course of action for this paper is discussing the make up of accounting and job opportunities because the types of jobs make up the accounting profession.

Accounting: Scope of Profession

The following paragraphs are going to discuss the two major positions in accounting and the nature of their work. Accounting is divided into three categories, but the majority is divided between tax and audit. Tax accountants, “work with corporations or individuals to handle their taxes, financial records, and audits” (Top Accounting Degrees, 2018). Tax accounting follows strict rules and regulations that must meet Government Accepted Accounting Principles (GAAP) before being able to prepare the tax return for deadline dates (Accounting, 2018). The prepared returns are filed with the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) to determine if a client owes the government money (Top Accounting Degrees, 2018). The following of

strict regulations and reviewing of information, makes for it to be a very specialized, detail-oriented profession. Reviewing the important details of financial statements everyday by themselves, makes for a quiet and isolating time in the office. Having silence is needed so one is able to focus and not cause errors of one extra zero, or a different number. The circumstances of the job being less social, and isolated is needed to operate successfully.

An audit accountant is going to have a general understanding of the clients' business and prepare the financial information that will be sent to tax accountants for review (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2017). Audit accounting is, "examination of various books to verify all information is recorded" (Economic Times, 2018). In simpler terms, auditors are focused on the financial record-keeping process of the business by examining how and where a company is getting their numbers (Economic Times, 2018). Verifying that there is no false information being provided, requires auditors to be traveling constantly to the clients' location for their records. It can range from days to months that an auditor doesn't step foot into the office or sit at a desk in the accounting firm. Having to find and prove the financial information, requires multiple people from different places of authority (associate, manager, associate) to complete it (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2017). All the steps in completing the audit of a company means there is personal contact and interactions. The nature of auditing requires a lot of time spent traveling and countless hours spent each day completing the work.

Why Accounting Does Not Appeal to Women

The following sections of the paper are going to contain the factors supporting the argument of accounting not being a woman-dominated profession because of the nature of the job. The factors that will be used to support the argument are: the requirement of time, individual responsibilities, lack of fulfillment, and difficulty finding a balance of professional and family life.

The following information is going to support the argument of accounting being a male-dominated profession based off of the amount of time required not meeting women's preferences. When provided

information regarding the nature of accounting as a profession, women become hesitant. In 2016 statistics found that there is only 40% of women working in the field of accounting in the United States (Catalyst, 2017). “The employment trends of women decline as the progression of job responsibilities progress to positions of authority” (Barcelona, Lelievre & Lelievre, 1975). A major reason for the decrease in percentages is the hours spent working. The typical work week for an accountant is averaged at 50-55 hours in the office or out at a client (Ramos, 2017). When deadline season is approaching, the preparation of materials requires increased hours for 10-12 weeks until the date (Fontinelle, 2018). The typical accounting workweek, especially during deadline season, is the first reason used for why the profession does not attract women. Accountants begin to put in 60 to 70+ hour weeks three months prior to the deadline to get everything completed (Fontinelle, 2018). The necessity for extra time can cause job burnout, and it is more significant on women than men “(Guthrie & Jones, 2012). Women feel a responsibility and pressure to be assisting domestically and the increased hours does not allow them to be fulfilled because they don’t have the capability to reach a balance point (Weeks, 2009).

The requirement of extra time throughout the year is difficult on women, but especially when trying to start or while raising a family (Guthrie & Jones, 2012). USA Today found the average hours a week at a paying job was 42 hours for men compared to women 21 hours (Jayson, 2013). It then found families with children younger than 18, have women at home for 32 hours compared to men at 10 hours (Jayson, 2013). The time women spend at home supports my argument of accounting not being a woman dominated profession. This is because the preference of women being at home doesn’t balance with the hours that the profession requires (Weeks, 2009). Accounting doesn’t have the capability to allow women to work the average amount of hours and meet their family life preferences. “Women have a stronger family preference when compared to their professional drive” (Guthrie & Jones, 2012) Those tendencies have allowed a study time.com did, to find results that 56% of women would prefer to work from home with their children and 39% choosing to not work at all. The nature of accounting doesn’t correlate to being able to work at home or spend more hours at home than the office. This then leads women to

leaving the profession because the time becomes too much stress and work isn't fulfilling anymore (Guthrie & Jones, 2012). The amount of time having to work during the week and preparing for deadlines isn't going to change because it is the nature of the profession. The following section is going to explain the factor of accounting being individually based and how that deters women from entering the field.

The nature of accounting can be stressful on a woman when it comes to going on maternity leave. Going on maternity leave has women being out of the office for an extended period of time, 10 weeks or more (Andres, Baird, Bingenheimer, & Markus, 2016). Before being able to leave, women have to find workers to cover clients, projects, returns, meetings, etc., because of the nature of accounting being isolating and specialized. This factor supports my arguments because their individual responsibilities of their work makes taking time away and return difficult. Finding coverage on all their work can be tough because other coworkers have their own tasks to take care of especially during deadline season when everyone has more work than hours in a day (Aitken, 2017). Along with the demand of accountants at a high, there isn't a lot of free time for other accountants to take on returns (Baysden, 2013). Women find it difficult returning back after just focusing on their child for a period of time. They look for more time and want to ease back into work, but accounting doesn't allow for that. They have to take back all their responsibilities of work and especially if it is before a deadline, they are held accountable. Womens health issues found women experience postpartum depression when going back to work less than 12 after birth (Kornfeind, & Sipsma, 2018). The increase number of hours spent working can increase those symptoms and the missing of their child. "I don't want to miss out on key moments in my child's life and its difficult juggling employment with those emotional changes" (Kornfeind, & Sipsma, 2018). As much as a father never wants to miss out on their child's milestones, after carrying a child for 9 months mothers create a strong maternal bond (Partridge, 2017). This is an important factor in my argument because women realize the nature of the individual work in accounting is putting a strain on their return and their feelings.

An important characteristic of accounting is that once the work/return is completed the focus then just shifts onto another project. There is no sense of fulfillment or indication of the work benefitting someone.

Another factor that supports my argument of accounting not being a woman dominated profession, is because accounting isn't fulfilling enough. This is the case because there is no capability to acknowledge the effort put into the work was important. Application of accounting doesn't provide an outcome of fulfillment (Ho, & Lin, 2008). Women look for social environment conversions to improve their personal feeling of happiness (Kim, 2012). Women feel best after "a rewarding experience that came from working with people and satisfying/caring for them" (Seppala, 2013). Those feelings won't be met because the act of paperwork and numbers isn't going to get a reaction from a client that can allow contentment. There isn't a way to make the nature of the work feel rewarding and allow for the connection in an environment to reach fulfillment. Fulfillment plays an important factor in women choosing the profession because their natural tendencies of assisting others leads them to other options.

Due to the world we are living in today, it makes it difficult to separate from work because of the technology we have. Accountants will bring work home so they can continue projects but that separates them from their families/activities around them (Hamblin, 1995). There isn't a line where the office work ends, and family life begins because of the easy accessibility to communicating with clients and completing work. This is the final factor being used to discuss why accounting is not a woman dominated profession. The factor of technology is used because women find it necessary to be involved to get everything done for the family and work. With new accessibility to technology there isn't the balance or capability to do it all. The evolution of technology has taken a dramatic change causing increase competition among workers and competitors (Ho, & Lin, 2008). It has become a belief to continuously be working because of the accessibility. That can be difficult for anyone to keep up with but for women they feel compelled to multitask being fully there for work, children, and the house which causes life to be extra stressful (Hamblin, 1995). "Getting the job done was about giving everything to the job but that didn't work for me once I had children" (Light, 2013). Doing 70-hour workweeks and the take home work couldn't happen after children (Light, 2013). Technology reached a point where it makes work take priority, and women feel that pressure.

This section of, “Why Accounting Does Not Appeal to Women” provides the understanding of the factors that have caused accounting to not be a woman dominated field. The factors discussed were the requirement of time, individual responsibilities, not fulfilling, and difficulty finding a balance of professional and family life. Time applied to the argument because expectations of the profession require countless hours working on projects. The extra hours needed before a deadline create a strain on their family life. The factor of individual responsibilities applies because the nature of the work is isolating so it requires the need of one person to work on it. That becomes difficult when beginning a family because projects could go unfinished or lost. During maternity leave, they have the hope someone is covering their tasks which they had to orchestrate. The factor of not being fulfilled enough from the work applies because there is no representation of the work being important. Women’s natural tendencies lead to being involved in a social environment that brings about satisfaction from their assistance, and accounting doesn’t provide that. Finally, the balance of professional and family life becomes difficult. With new development in technology there is more of an incline to have professional life take over. Women have the desire and preference to be with family and working in accounting can make that difficult.

This next section of the paper is going to explore another profession that people can find similar to the nature of accounting; Nursing which is a woman dominated profession. The following sections are going to provide background information on the process of entry into the nursing profession and the requirement needed to become registered. Following that information, the scope of the profession will be discussed. This is a foundation for different job opportunities in nursing, and education needs. Finally, the section of, “Why Nursing Appeals to Woman” will provide the counter to explain a woman dominated field. This will assist in the argument because it will provide women’s preferences and examples that will further show why accounting isn’t a woman dominated field.

Nursing: Process of Entry

This section is going to provide information to understand the different requirements that need to be done to become a licensed nurse. The profession of nursing has different requirements for the different

specialties of work in nursing. For a student attending a four-year college, students begin working in the hospital by sophomore year. Clinicals, rotation shifts in a hospital, are requirements to graduate as they are classes. It is the opportunity to begin practicing work with patients and using techniques they learned during class.

The test a graduating nursing student with a bachelor will take is the National Council Licensure Examination (NCLEX) (NCSBN, 2018). There are two different versions of the exam: NCLEX-RN for a Registered Nurse and the NCLEX-PN for a Practical Nurse (All Nursing Schools, 2018). On average, a student will take it right after graduating college with a bachelors. Classes provided senior year by universities have “had success, which contributes to first-time success” (Oermann & Gaberson,2014). The average of nurses passing the NCLEX exam in the United States is 91% (All Nursing Schools, 2018). Passing the NCLEX requires “answering the medium difficult questions correctly at least 50% of the time” (Kaddoura, Flint, Van Dyke, Yang, & Chiang, 2017). During the time of studying, and completing the test a nurse must have done 120 hours of clinical time (All Nursing Schools, 2018). Once these requirements have been met, they receive the license from their working state. The following section is going to provide in depth details about the NCLEX exam and its format.

The NCLEX is made up of four major categories: 1) safe, effective care environment, 2) psychosocial integrity, 3) health promotion and maintenance, and 4) physiological integrity (Schwarz, 2005). Under each major category are 2-4 subcategories which go into in depth specifics (All Nursing Schools, 2018). A nurse has up to 5 hours to complete the test but there is an “interactive system called Computerized Adaptive Testing (CAT)” which views their competence after 75 questions (All Nursing Schools, 2018). If the test taker is passing or failing the test will end there, but if they are border-line they continue taking until the maximum questions of 205 (All Nursing Schools, 2018). This test is important because it covers all matters “a patient will need” and allows them to become licensed with the state (Kaddoura, Flint, Van Dyke, Yang, & Chiang, 2017). The next section of this paper is going to discuss the job opportunities in nursing and education requires for such positions.

Nursing: Scope of Profession

Nursing has different entries that are based on the amount of schooling they receive. Attending school for two years, allows a student to become a nursing assistant (BLS, 2017). They have the basic knowledge of patient care and work closely to provide patients help with daily living tasks (Walker, Clendon, & Nelson, 2015). Responsibilities include: checking patients vitals, paperwork, and/or changing beds. Job opportunities would be: care taker, nursing anesthiologist, school nurse, nurse practitioner, and many more (Walker, Clendon, & Nelson, 2015). Another entry method is becoming a Registered Nurse by attending four years of school (BLS, 2017). Starting as early as sophomore year, allows students to meet different doctors and nurses to understand the scope of profession. Their responsibilities are “knowing all scopes of the profession to provide specific skills and administration of medications safely to patients” (Ulrich, 2014). Different tasks include: coordinating with physicians, diagnosing patient’s symptoms, maintaining, carrying out treatments, administering medication, etc (Registered Nurse, 2018). Finally, another option is getting a master’s degree or even further, a doctorate in nursing (Nursing, 2018). With such degrees they will be advanced registered nurses, become nursing professors, or be on a special track of nursing (forensic, clinical, etc.) (ANA, 2018). In each variation of work the foundation includes relationships built with doctors, nurses, and patients and allows for success.

Why Nursing appeals to Women

The following sections are going to provide the counterexamples to further explain the argument that accounting’s structure doesn’t allow for it to be a woman dominated force. Nursing is a woman-dominated force because it has a different appeal and nature of work than accounting does. The reasonings for nursing being more woman dominated is: shift/time flexibility, coverage capability and the fulfillment of helping someone.

The factor of working in shifts causing nursing to be more woman dominated is going to be discussed in the following section. A typical shift in a hospital for a registered nurse is 12 hours for 3 days

during the week (Young, Albert, Paschke, & Meyer, 2007). “Hospitals also offer a variety of work options to create flexibility and meet the needs of nurses” (Young, Albert, Paschke, & Meyer, 2007). The flexibility of shifts allows nurses to organize their schedule, so they can balance work and family. “I enjoy making my own schedule” (RNAO, 2018). Though working 12 hours in a row can be strenuous, the nature of the profession allows nurses to have time off during the week. Getting time off 4 days during a week makes it easier on family because it creates more opportunity for a parent to be home. Comparing that to accounting, there is not the opportunity of flexibility to have time off every week. This can lead nursing to be woman dominated because it is meeting their preferences of having balance in their life.

Based off of the factor of time, the nature of nursing doesn’t have a deadline period where shift times will increase. The amount of time in a shift is regulated, which allows the shift time and number of hours worked in a week to remain the same (Young, Albert, Paschke, & Meyer, 2007). Once the clock strikes for the end of their shift, they have other nurses their prepared to fill in. Due to the opportunity of set start and end times, there is less stress because of the flexibility of the profession. This factor can lead to nursing being a woman dominated force because they “are satisfied with the flexible shifts as they can be away from the hospital environment” (Young, Albert, Paschke, & Meyer, 2007). Due to accounting not having that opportunity for flexible hours and choosing of shift time, it can deter women causing it to be a male dominated profession.

Taking care of children is not an easy task and every parent wants to be around their child as much as possible. Especially after having a child, a woman doesn’t want to have to leave their child and go back to work. That is why during this section, the capability of coverage/assistance of shifts will covered and explained to assist in the argument. The national maternity leave policy requires 12 weeks of time before returning back to work (Andres, Baird, Bingenheimer, & Markus, 2016).). During that time, women nurses don’t have to worry about work getting done because there is a huge supply of nurses (Truth About Nursing, 2018). It is not the case that one nurse is responsible for a patient; the working of shifts allows for multiple nurses to be familiar with a patient (RNAO, 2018). This is a benefit for women

on maternity leave, as they don't have to worry about organizing who is going to cover their work. It also allows for more leave time" because they can choose when to start working shifts again (Andres, Baird, Bingenheimer, & Markus, 2016). The time away isn't as stressful because the nature of nursing work allows for flexibility in return date and fills in for the person. The next section continues with the idea of access to coverage while absent throughout the year.

It is inevitable that a child or a nurse is going to get sick and need to take time. There does come that time in life when you need assistance on work or cover while you are at. "Mothers feel more pressure to be involved with making their child feel better" (HEUVELINE, HONGXING, & TIMBERLAKE, 2010). Due to that mindset, they are more inclined to make arrangements with work to be home. With the nature of nursing having shifts, it makes it easier to communicate with other nurses and switch work times. There isn't the concern of them missing because the work isn't based on one specific individual. Having the flexibility to miss time and not worry about falling behind is a factor that exemplifies why nursing is a woman dominated field. Accountants have to worry about the tasks they are missing working on because it is based on them completing it.

The following section is going to provide the final factor for a counterexample of accounting not being a woman dominated field. The factor being discussed is the fulfillment after a rewarding experience. Nursing is the personal contact with patients and assisting in their needs to feel better. After successful work with a patient, it is a rewarding experience that can be seen and felt (Tornwall, Alai, & Bowles, 2018). It is scientifically proven, that the hormones in women lead to more compassion and nurturing when compared to men (Seppala, 2013). Those feelings of compassion are driving women to want to aid and they want to see how their assistance helped. It is a meaningful experience that drives women into the profession knowing what they are doing is meaningful. Women feel fulfillment in their life from assisting others and that is a driving force in women becoming nurses. Accounting does not provide a similar scenario as the nature of the work doesn't have a rewarding moment.

These sections provided more of an understanding on how the nature of nursing and accounting can be viewed as differently. Accounting and nursing being gender dominated causes the discussion of why they are dominated by men and women, respectively. There are many factors that go into the decision of a major but the factors in nursing provide more of an understanding for why there's more women. The factors that had been provided in the sections were: shift/time flexibility, coverage capability and the fulfillment of helping someone. The last section being discussed is the conclusion that will reexplain the argument and the factors used to support it.

Conclusion

This paper provided an understanding of gender dominated professions and factors that cause that. The argument made was that accounting is not a woman dominated profession based on the factors of: the requirement of time, individual responsibilities, lack of fulfillment, and difficulty finding a balance of professional and family life. The counterexample to this argument, is that nursing can be viewed as similar to accounting but is a woman dominated force. The factors used to support nursing as a woman dominated force were: shift/time flexibility, coverage capability and the fulfillment of helping someone. Nursing and accounting will continue to be prominent jobs and in future years it will be interesting to see shifts or changes in those gender dominated forces. Women will continue to make a change in professional industries as they find the balance they hope for between their professional and home lives.

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