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Women in the Workforce Final Paper

How much do sports leagues contribute to the gender wage gap in professional sports from a financial perspective, given they preserve and promote male performance as top viewership? Many of today's top female athletes are significantly more athletic and financially deserving than many of the male athletes we see: Such as Serena Williams and Hope Solo, for example. Both women are role models for the next generation of female athletes, not only for their team and on the field, but also for the entire sport. Even though they play the same sport, their pay does not reflect this when compared to male sports leagues. Performance, revenue streams, and the wage gap all demonstrate how unjust the comparison between males and females in sports is. Furthermore, when considering the income difference and the standard for males to be superior to women in sports, it has an impact on the next generation's perceptions of girls versus boys in school. This stunts the girls' growth where they feel that at a young age, they are equal with the boys when they play sports, whether at recess or in their games, and if the people that they look up to set bad examples of how much more men make than women, it will not help the next generation reach their dreams.

As the men of each major sports team continue to play and contribute to America's athletic success, women continue to do the same in their shadow. Diving into where the male performance is overseen compared to the women can be exemplified by the US women's soccer

team. The women's soccer team has been very vocal on the matter of equality and taking ownership in being the ones to lead the way for women. For example, Sunil Gulati, the president of the women's soccer team until 2018, said during the declaration to the equal pay lawsuit: "One thing I do know, I never would have authorized offering or accepting, and never would have recommended to the board agreeing to, the same bonuses for Women's World Cup play that were contained in the MNT's agreement for their World Cup play for very simple reasons." Without a movement, there will be no change seen. Equal pay in sports refers to the same compensation for performing the same sport. The bottom line is that we all, men, and women, need to do more to promote gender equality. When it comes to male performance on the field versus female performance, the US soccer team is the perfect example of superior performance not being related to greater compensation. The US women's soccer team is widely acknowledged to be superior to the men. In 2015, the women won the World Cup and took home a bonus of \$1.73 million. The year before, the men lost in the 16th round while still taking home \$5.38 million based on performance. Furthermore, they did not even make the World Cup in 2018. With the women's team and their recent success comes fame and viewership, as their ratings continue to grow. The lawsuit allegations against unequal pay continued to push for their equality as each season went on. The girls also play 19 more games than the men in each season, which disregards the fact that the media doesn't have the chance to put them on the big screen. When we look at other sports that have the similar problem, we can see the WNBA and the wage gap that they have with NBA players. Many sports fans and NBA fans can name a handful of players and have seen a decent amount of games. However, it's difficult to talk about top athletes without mentioning Sue Bird. Many fans have never attended a WNBA game in their lives, but they are aware of Sue Bird's talent and how difficult it would be to defend her on the court. Of course, on

a different court, people are here to defend her so that she can play on an equal level with her opponents and not be judged solely based on her gender. In a recent interview on the gender wage gap, she touches on the subject where the male athletes in the NBA make more than her, and no one in the league is fighting for the WNBA as much as they should be: "These are businesses, and none of us are out there saying we want to be paid the exact same as the men. When I think of pay equity, I think of the opportunity that the NBA and other male sports leagues have to be successful," (Sue Bird, 2020). Say the WNBA and other pro women's sports leagues are given a chance by the media to be better promoted and proved to be viable competitors for television time versus the big-name men's sports organizations. In that situation, revenue streams will increase, and women's sports will be considered as another league rather than a female version of men's sports. We need to pave the way for the next generation of women. Gender equality requires more effort from both men and women. Leaders in sports must pave the way for the next generation of female athletes. In sports, business, and life, there should be no discrimination. In every regard, all athletes should be appreciated and treated as equals. Gender should not be a factor that defines us or divides us from our peers in athletics.

As the girls continue to play, one gender is getting far more than the other, and there is little to no reasoning behind it. A typical American woman earns 81% of what an average American male earns. And for more than a decade, this difference has remained unchanged. In a recent study at Adelphi, it was seen that since 2004, the wage gap between men and women has been between 80 and 83%. Most of what society believes women's bodies can handle is based on norms that society is used to. They all favor men performing better, and so it seems as though they're deserving of better pay. Women were not allowed to run in marathons until 1972 because people thought that they were too weak and fragile. Furthermore, in tennis, women play their

matches in 3 sets while men play 5. Whether this is because they are written off as less athletic and would be worn out after the consistency of 5 sets, or that there would be more media coverage for 5 sets rather than 3 if they played the full time on the court like the men. (Adelphi University, 2021). Continuing with the World Cup, when the US women's team beat the Netherlands, they were to win \$4 million. This does not line up with the \$30 million that the men won the year previously, back in 2018. To add on, the men did not even make it to the championship. The women outplayed the men entirely; they were marketed better through sales and are widely known for being the better soccer team yet somehow make so much less money. The girls were rightfully very angry and frustrated that they were being overlooked and stuck in the men's team's shadow and started to push for their equality. Leaders such as Hope Solo, the goalie for the US women's soccer team, spoke out to the public about the issue: "We are the best in the world, have three World Cup championships, four Olympic championships, and the men get paid more to just show up than we get paid to win major championships," Hope Solo. That same year, in 2019, all 28 athletes on the women's soccer team sued the United States for "purposeful gender discrimination". Through a long court case, the judge eventually sided with the girls and sparked the trend in the gender wage gap. Looking back, it's estimated that in 2018 alone, the US men's soccer team brought in approximately \$5.4 billion in income. Their team's record that year was 3 wins, 5 losses, and 3 ties. On the other hand, the finances show that the 2019 Women's World Cup brought in only \$131 million in total income. With stats like these, it's difficult to give women the salaries they deserve, especially when the media primarily focuses on one gender rather than the sport. It could be argued that because male sports leagues generate more revenue, there is more room to give athletes more money, which explains why these leagues bring in more revenue. For example, in the Olympics, women's sports are played on an

equal level with men's sports, and both genders get the same winnings. Implementing pay transparency is one way to close the wage gap, or at the very least keep up. This would make it easier for women to base their finances on what other players compete and earn on. This could also spark a movement to continue to push for equality.

Influential figures have criticized women's sports forever. Gender stereotypes in sports are mainly reinforced by societal institutions, like the media. Through its representation of women, and men, they have long fostered and promoted negative gender stereotypes. For example, clothing, how each gender acts, and their social norms. These gender stereotypes have a big influence on how the media portrays men's and women's sports. The media begins introducing this at a young age, with children. Children are regularly targeted by the media from an early age because they are still learning. This type of marketing often teaches children negative beliefs that have been drilled in their minds and affect their viewpoint. The way children consume sports media perfectly reflects this issue as they are presented through family, friends, and social media.

The issue that society faces with the emphasis of the media portraying this gap towards children is a big deal in a way of how the next generation of kids views themselves. If children are taught at a young age that boys are stronger and more athletic than them, then they will understand why their parents and friends only watch male sports. This is what society wants us to believe, as it is the social norm. However, if the school system continues to push the narrative that girls are just as capable as boys in athletic positioning. This, in turn, will forward the next generation of children to think outside of the social norm and look past the sexism seen in sports and the sport media channels. Diving deeper into the school system, it can be seen all across gym classes where kids are awarded by their athletic behavior and how well they perform. The issue

that is presented, however, is that there are girls' winners, as well as boys' winners. With this, there is a divide, and the children will interpret the idea that the division is supposed to be in place. Boys, in turn will also believe in the fact that they are superior and more athletic capable since their average scores tend to be higher than those of the girls.

In conclusion, sports leagues contribute to the gender wage gap in professional sports from a financial perspective, given they preserve and promote male performance as top viewership, is slowly taking a turn for the better as movements have sparked. Women are finally starting to see a change in their status, thanks to the support of some of the best athletes in the world, such as the US women's soccer team, and those in the field, as well as other leagues with a big say, such as the US Open and the National Women's Soccer League. The fight for the girls is far from over, as they continue to face discrimination in terms of wages and respect because of their gender. The major leagues and the mainstream media continue to obstruct the equality that society is trying to push as individuals understand that the social norm isn't right. The media continues to push male supremacy and blames bad reviews and low revenue on why they do not show the girls games nearly as much as the men. However, with constant pressure from leaders, the media and social norms will decrease as time goes on. As they learn and grow from these athletes, the next generation of not only girls but also boys are beginning to recognize that equality is meant for all genders, ages, and ethnicities.

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