

Why Women Earn Less Than Men: The Cost of Gender Discrimination in U.S. Public Relations

David M. Dozier, Ph.D., Bey-Ling Sha, Ph.D., APR and Hongmei Shen, Ph.D.
School of Journalism & Media Studies, San Diego State University
5500 Campanile Drive, San Diego, CA 92182-4561

This study provides a comprehensive theoretical model to account for the persistent pay inequity between men and women in public relations. Surveying a random sample of public relations professionals, we shed light on the various factors giving rise to gendered pay disparity, including gender, professional experience, career specialization, manager role enactment, and participation in management decision-making. We found that pay inequity exists between male and female practitioners because of their gender, after controlling for all the other identified influencers. Also, gender leads to gendered salary differences through professional experience, manager role enactment, participation in decision-making, and career specialization.

Around the world, women on the whole earn less than men. This phenomenon has been documented from Andorra to the United Kingdom. The most recent figures from the United Nations indicate that women in manufacturing out-earn men in only 3 of 66 countries (Isle of Man, Paraguay, and Qatar). In the remaining 63 countries, women face a gendered pay gap that ranges from Panama's 97 cents on the dollar to Nepal's 45 cents on the dollar (*Statistics and Indicators*, 2011).

In the United States in 2010, women on average earned 81 cents on the dollar earned by men, although this inequity ratio varied by occupation. For example, for "combined food preparation and serving workers," women earned \$1.12 on the dollar earned by men, but women "personal financial advisors" earned only 58 cents on the dollar earned by their male counterparts (*Women at Work*, 2011). In public relations in 2010, women earned 78 cents on the dollar earned by men (Sha & Dozier, 2011). When income was statistically adjusted for professional experience, the gendered pay gap narrowed to 86 cents on the dollar. When income was further adjusted for enactment of manager and technician roles, women in public relations still earned only 87 cents on the dollar earned by men (Sha & Dozier, 2011).

As Sha and Dozier (2011) lamented, their findings "confirm[ed] a 30-year history of empirically documented disparities in income between men and women in public relations" (p. 17). Indeed, the gendered pay gap in public relations has been documented since the 1980s (e.g., Dozier, Chapo, & Sullivan, 1983; Hunt & Thompson, 1988; Mathews, 1988), through the 1990s (e.g., Serini, Toth, Wright, & Emig, 1997; Toth, Serini, Wright, & Emig, 1998; Wright,

Grunig, Springston, & Toth, 1991), and into the 2000s (e.g., Aldoory & Toth, 2002; Anderson, 2006; Dozier, Sha, & Okura, 2007; Sha, Dozier, Toth, & Aldoory, 2007; Toth & Aldoory, 2001). The most recently available scholarly research on salaries in public relations confirmed the continued existence of the gendered pay gap (e.g., Dozier & Sha, 2010; Sha & Dozier, 2011; Sha, Rayburn, & Ward-Johnson, 2011).

Less well documented than the persistent pattern of gendered pay inequity in public relations have been statistically sound explications for the phenomenon. Of course, anecdotal explanations abound for why women earn less than men. But those explanations – however well-meaning, logical-sounding, or instinct-affirming – do not always hold up when examined through the lens of concrete data and appropriate statistical analysis.

Thus, the purpose of this study was to apply rigorous statistical analysis to robust data collected from public relations practitioners about gender, income, and a thorough list of possible variables that could explain why women in public relations earn less than men. Our hope was to be able to answer, at last, that niggling question: Why do women earn less than men in public relations?

SIGNIFICANCE

Why does gendered pay inequity matter? On the one hand are philosophical arguments about fairness and justice, i.e., equal pay for equal work. On the other hand are more practical arguments, related to economic and social reality. Among the latter, women's participation in the labor force is projected to increase by 9.0% between 2008 and 2018, to nearly 6.5 million women workers (*Women at Work*, 2011). Thus, as increasing numbers of women participate in the labor force, continued gendered pay inequities constitute a growing problem. Already, 13.0% of U.S. adult women (over age 18) live in poverty, compared to only 9.6% of adult men (*Women's Health USA*, 2010).

Furthermore, lower pay rates for women affect not only those individuals, but also their families and households. Among married adults living in families, 5.5% lived below the poverty level in 2008. But, 25.7% of adult women living in families with no spouse present lived in poverty, compared to 11.9% of adult men living in families with no spouse present (*Women's Health USA*, 2010). Consistently, U.S. census data show that households headed by women are significantly more likely than other kinds of households to be living below the federal poverty level. In 2008, about 12% of U.S. women aged 18 and over were "heads of households," meaning that they had primary responsibility for children or other family members living with them, but no spouse (*Women's Health USA*, 2010). Paying women less than men only exacerbates these social problems; thus, the gendered pay gap affects U.S. families and households, as well as society at large.

For the public relations profession, the confluence of the gendered pay gap and the increasing numbers of women practitioners means that average salaries in the field are depressed. This, in turn, has implications for the profession and our ability to attract the best and brightest professionals; in short, the gendered pay gap is an "issue of competitiveness for

our field as a whole” (Sha, 2011b, n.p.). After all, why would people choose to enter a profession whose salaries appear lower than they should be?

In short, we believe that a gendered pay gap in public relations harms not only the individual women who are underpaid compared to their male counterparts, but also their families and households, as well as our professional field and society as a whole. But, before we can discuss ways to eliminate the gendered pay gap, we first must explain why it exists.

EXPLAINING THE GENDERED PAY GAP

Over the decades, researchers have investigated a variety of reasons why women in public relations earn less than their male counterparts. In this review of the literature, we provide an overview of this body of scholarship, which undergird the hypotheses we test in our study. Based on the literature review, we produce a theoretical model to explicate the gendered pay gap in public relations, after which we test the model using multivariate statistical analyses.

Professional Experience

When women first began entering the public relations profession in the late 1970s, they had on the whole fewer years of professional experience compared to the men who had already been in the field (Cline et al., 1986). Although researchers at the time believed that women would eventually “catch up” to men in years of public relations experience, it has not been the case. On the contrary, one longitudinal study found that men in public relations had more years of professional experience than did women in 1979, 1991, 2004, and 2006 (Dozier & Sha, 2010). Even in 2010, men continued to have more years of experience than did women in public relations (Sha & Dozier, 2011; Sha et al., 2011).

Professional experience is related not only to gender, but also to income. In one of the earliest studies on income disparities in public relations, Dozier, Chapo, and Sullivan (1983) found that years of professional experience was significantly and positively correlated with salaries. This finding was replicated by much subsequent research spanning more than three decades (e.g., Aldoory & Toth, 2002; Dozier & Sha, 2010; Dozier et al., 2007; Hutton, 2005; *Profile*, 2000; Russell, 1988; Serini et al., 1997; Sha & Dozier, 2011; Sha et al., 2007; Sha et al., 2011; Wright et al., 1991). In short, years of professional experience has proven to be one of the strongest predictors of income.

Thus, we pose the following hypotheses:

H_{1a}: Women practitioners have significantly fewer years of professional experience men.

H_{1b}: Years of professional experience is significantly and positively related to income.

Although some prior scholarship included practitioner age when examining years of professional experience, we have chosen to exclude that variable because prior research also consistently found age and professional experience to be highly correlated (e.g., $r(1,500) = .81, p < .001$, in Sha et al., 2011). Secondary analysis of Broom’s data (1982)

showed a similar correlation between age and professional experience, $r(440) = .76, p < .001$; secondary analysis of Dozier and Broom's data (1995) also indicated a high correlation, $r(207) = .78, p < .001$; Okura, Dozier, Sha, and Hofstetter (2009) posted a similar correlation, $r(449) = .71, p < .001$. Thus, inclusion of both age and years of professional experience in a statistical model would be inappropriate, given the multi-collinearity issues involved.

Prior research indicates that professional experience is related not only to gender and to income, but also to two other oft-studied concepts in public relations – role enactment and participation in management decision-making.

Role Enactment

For decades, researchers have distinguished between public relations managers and public relations technicians (Broom, 2009), not only in the United States, but also in Africa (Van Heerden & Rensburg, 2005), Brazil (Molleda & Ferguson, 2004), Canada (Piekos & Eisiendel, 1989), and Mexico (Johnson, 2005), among other countries. Professional experience is related to manager role enactment in that technicians represent the entry-level public relations function, whereas public relations managers usually attain those positions after several years of work experience (Broom, 2009). Prior research has indicated that increased years of professional experience is significantly related to enactment of the manager role (Broom, 1982; Broom & Dozier, 1986; Dozier & Broom, 1995).

Thus, we pose the following hypothesis:

H_{2a}: Years of professional experience is significantly and positively related to manager role enactment.

Prior roles research has shown that women in public relations tend to disproportionately enact the technician role, as opposed to the manager role, enacted usually by men (cf. Broom, 1982; Broom & Dozier, 1986; Cline et al., 1986; Dozier & Broom, 1995; Grunig, Toth, & Hon, 2001; Moss, Warnaby, & Newman, 2000; Toth & Cline, 1991; Toth et al., 1998; Wootton, 1997). In 2010, however, researchers found that, for the first time ever, women and men were enacting the manager role at the same rates (Sha & Dozier, 2011). Although Sha and Dozier (2011) cautioned that only subsequent research could show whether the glass ceiling was truly broken or only cracked for that year, we feel that, given this latest research, it may no longer be appropriate to hypothesize that gender is directly related to manager role enactment.

Participation in Decision-Making

Closely related to manager role enactment is participation in management decision-making. Prior research has indicated that practitioners enacting the manager role are significantly more likely to participate in decision-making by the dominant coalition (Broom & Dozier, 1986; Dozier, 1986; Dozier & Broom, 1995). Furthermore, participation in management decision-making has been found to relate strongly with practitioner salaries (Broom & Dozier, 1986; Dozier & Broom, 1995). For example, secondary analysis of a Public Relations Society of

America (PRSA) survey in 1979 (Broom, 1982) indicated that practitioners reporting high levels of participation in management decision making (above the median on a 5-item measure of management decision-making participation) earned \$39,450 annually. Practitioners reporting low levels of management decision-making participation earned \$30,000 annually, a significant difference, $F(1, 404) = 27.60, p < .001$. In a secondary analysis of survey data collected from PRSA and IABC members in 1991 (Dozier & Broom, 1995), practitioners reporting low levels of management decision-making participation earned \$47,950 annually. Those reporting high levels of management decision-making participation earned \$66,630 annually, a significant difference, $F(1, 279) = 11.77, p < .001$.

Thus, we hypothesize that:

H_{2b}: Manager role enactment is significantly and positively related to participation in management decision-making.

H_{2c}: Participation in management decision-making is significantly and positively related to income.

Career Interruptions

Conventional wisdom suggests that women earn less than men in public relations because they take time off from their careers to bear children. Dozier et al. (2007) examined mid-career interruptions among public relations practitioners and found that, indeed, women were significantly more likely than were men to take a temporary break from their careers upon the birth of a baby into their families. With respect to income, these researchers found that men earned more than women, even when income was controlled statistically for years of professional experience and for baby-related career interruptions. Furthermore, among women practitioners, the salary “penalty” or differential was only \$148 per year for those who experienced a baby-related career interruption (Dozier et al., 2007, p. 10).

This prior research leads us to question whether career interruptions for non-baby-related reasons would have different impacts on salary. After all, practitioners may interrupt their careers for a variety of reasons unrelated to childbearing, such as illness, relocation, termination, or the pursuit of higher education.

Thus, we pose the following hypotheses:

H_{3a}: Women are significantly less likely than men to experience income-enhancing interruptions.

H_{3b}: Income-enhancing interruptions are significantly and positively related to income.

H_{4a}: Women are significantly more likely than men to experience income-suppressing interruptions.

H_{4b}: Income-suppressing interruptions are significantly and negatively related to income.

Organizational Type

Common types of organizations for which practitioners might work include corporations, public relations firms, non-profits and other associations, and government (cf. Broom, 2009). Some public relations scholars have argued that organizational environment affects the experiences of women practitioners (Grunig et al., 2001; O'Neil, 2003; Serini et al., 1998; Toth et al., 1998). But, scant research has examined whether gender is related to organizational type, i.e., whether men and women differ significantly in the types of organizations for which they choose — or are forced by market pressures — to work.

One study found that corporations had a higher percentage of male practitioners than did public relations agencies or non-profits (Hutton, 2005, p. 80), although the statistical significance of these differences was not articulated. A more recent study found that women were significantly more likely than were men to work in non-profit and association public relations, whereas men were significantly more likely than were women to work in public relations firms (Sha et al., 2011).

Although two studies do not necessarily document a pattern or trend, we hypothesize that:

H_{5a}: Men are significantly more likely than women to work for higher-paying types of organizations.

H_{5b}: Organizational type is significantly and positively related to income.

Career Specialization

Public relations practitioners can specialize in a variety of functional areas, such as public affairs, lobbying, issues management, community relations, employee relations, crisis management, or investor relations, among others (cf. Broom, 2009). Although Broom (2009) indicated that “investor relations practitioners are among the highest paid in public relations” (p. 22), we found almost no scholarly research that correlated career specialization with either gender or income. One exception was Hutton (2005), who stated that “type of PR practiced” explained 2% of the variance in practitioner salaries (p. 78), although his article was unclear as to whether the salary variance in question was between men and women.

Even though Hutton (2005) asserted that “both ‘type of organization’ and ‘type of PR practiced’ are relatively minor factors in predicting salaries” (p. 81), we hypothesize that:

H_{6a}: Male practitioners are significantly more likely than women to work in higher-paying career specializations.

H_{6b}: Career specialization is significantly and positively related to income.

One recent study examined public relations “work categories,” which is related somewhat to career specialization in that there is overlap of the functions in question. Sha (2011a) examined differences between public relations accreditation status and 12 work categories: account/client management, strategic planning, public relations program planning, project management, media relations, social media relations, stakeholder relations, issues management, crisis management, employee communications, special events, and community relations. Years of experience (along with accreditation status) was related to differences in

frequency of engagement in four of the 12 work categories: account/client management, project management, issues management, and crisis management (Sha, 2011a, p. 8).

Thus, we hypothesize that:

H_{6c}: Years of professional experience is significantly and positively related to career specialization.

Hours Worked Per Day

Only one published study has argued that women in public relations work fewer hours per day than do men, which supposedly explains why women earn less overall (i.e., Hutton, 2005). But Hutton's study did not provide direct statistical support for its claims. No data were presented indicating the numbers of hours worked by gender, and no statistical information was presented comparing salaries by gender while controlling for hours worked. The only "finding" offered regarding hours worked per day was a bar chart showing that men who worked more hours per day earned higher salaries (cf. Hutton, 2005, p. 79). No gendered comparisons were presented.

Furthermore, the research did not account for the fact that most public relations practitioners work for set salaries, not hourly wages. Even practitioners working in agencies that bill work by the hour are themselves paid monthly or annually. Thus, the argument about hours worked per day as an influence on annual income is applicable only to independent consultants who bill by the hour and part-time workers who are paid hourly.

Nevertheless, in the interest of accounting for all possible explanations for the gendered pay gap in public relations, we pose the following hypotheses:

H_{7a}: Men practitioners work significantly more hours per day than do women practitioners.

H_{7b}: Hours worked per day is significantly and positively related to income.

Educational Attainment

Few public relations studies have examined the relationship between gender and practitioners' education levels. One recent study (Sha et al., 2011) reported that men in public relations were significantly more likely than were women to hold a master's degree, whereas women were significantly more likely than were men to hold a bachelor's degree. But, when these researchers collapsed their categories of educational attainment into three levels (lower than bachelor's degree; bachelor's degree; master's degree or higher), the findings were no longer statistically significant (Sha et al., 2011).

With respect to a relationship between education and practitioner income, one early study (Dozier, Chappo, & Sullivan, 1983) did find a weak relationship between educational attainment and salary, but those findings were not replicated by subsequent scholarship. A 1999 salary survey of members of the PRSA and of the International Association of Business Communicators showed a positive correlation between educational attainment and median salary, but not between educational attainment and mean salary (*Profile*, 2000). Thus, given

the inconclusive nature of prior research on the relationships among gender, education, and income, we did not include educational attainment as a variable in our model.

SUMMARY HYPOTHESIS

As discussed, the purpose of this paper is to determine why women in public relations earn less than men. Our review of the literature yielded several possible mediating factors that may explain why women practitioners earn less than men. Arguably, the residual variance in income between men and women, after controlling for theoretically and empirically relevant mediating variables, may be due to gender discrimination.

Thus, we pose the following hypothesis:

H₈: Gender is significantly related to income, after controlling for the influence of all mediating variables

THE THEORETICAL MODEL

Given the hypotheses presented above, we built a theoretical model to explain not only how practitioner income in public relations vary by gender, but also how that direct relationship is mediated by professional experience, manager role enactment, participation in management decision-making, career interruptions, organizational type, career specialization, and hours worked per day. Our theoretical model is presented in Figure 1.

METHOD

To test our hypotheses and our theoretical model, we conducted an online survey in December 2010 and January 2011 with 4,714 randomly selected members of the PRSA. The response rate was 18.6%.

Figure 1 graphically summarizes the various bivariate hypotheses stated above. Analysis of the data involved five sequential processes. First, we tested the bivariate hypotheses. With respect to the path analysis, we note that the classic mediation test by Baron and Kenny (1986) and Judd and Kenny (1981) prescribed establishing correlations between the independent and dependent variable, between the mediator and the independent variable, and between the mediator and the dependent variable as the first three steps of the four-step mediation test. These sets of significant correlations constitute a necessary (but not necessarily sufficient) condition to mediation, whether partial or complete mediation. For this reason, our hypotheses test all three sets of relationships to determine whether a particular variable should be included in the final path model. Second, we eliminated variables that failed to qualify as mediating variables, as described above. That is, we removed mediating variables that were not significantly related to gender and to income. Third, we constructed a parsimonious model suitable for testing with path analysis. Because one key mediating variable was binary, that variable was not included in the path model analysis (see discussions of biased fit indices, parameter estimates, standard errors, and normality assumption violation as a result of using binary mediators in Finney & DiStefano, 2006). Fourth, we evaluated the path model for goodness of fit. Fifth, we conducted analysis of

variance with multiple classification analysis, inclusive of all covariates, to generate estimates of the net differences in income between men and women practitioners, after controlling for all significant covariates (H_8).

INSTRUMENTATION

A single item indicator was used to measure gender. Income, hours worked per day, and professional experience were measured at the ratio level (e.g., annual salary in dollars, work hours estimated to the nearest hour, and number of years of public relations work). Manager role enactment was measured using a valid and reliable index adapted from Broom and used in several subsequent studies (Broom & Smith, 1979; Broom, 1982; Broom & Dozier, 1986; Dozier & Broom, 1995). Cronbach's reliability coefficient was .76. Participation in management decision-making also used a valid and reliable index adapted from Broom and used in several subsequent studies (Broom & Smith, 1979, Broom, 1982; Broom & Dozier, 1986; Dozier & Broom, 1995). Cronbach's reliability coefficient was .92. Formal education was measured at the ordinal level, ranging from some college but no degree (1) to doctorates (6).

Various organizational types were classified into five groups, based on *a priori* assumptions about lower-paying organizations (e.g., nonprofits) and higher-paying organizations (e.g., corporate) and then verified using analysis of variance, with income as the dependent variable. The goal was to develop a rank-ordered list of organizational types, with higher-ranking organizations associated with higher levels of income. Organizational types were classified as follows: nonprofits (1), educational organizations (2), government and military (3), public relations firms and solo practitioners (4), and corporations (5). Analysis of variance verified a significant, positive, and linear relationship with income (H_{5b}). Average income ranged from \$62,275 for nonprofit organizations to \$88,823 for corporations. The test for linearity was significant, $F(1, 435) = 28.42, p < .001$. The test for deviation from linearity was not significant, $F(3, 425) = .20, p = .90$.

Career specialization was also classified *a priori* based on presumed differences between lower-paying specializations (e.g., community relations) and higher paying specializations like financial relations. Career specializations were classified as follows: community relations (1), media relations (2), government relations and public affairs (3), internal communication and employee relations (4), and financial relations, investor relations, crisis communications, and reputation management (5). Analysis of variance verified a significant, positive, and linear relationship with income. Average income ranged from \$63,437 for the community relations specialization to \$117,233 for financial relations, investor relations, crisis communications, and reputation management specializations. The test for linearity was significant, $F(1, 452) = 13.10, p < .001$. The test for deviation from linearity was not significant, $F(3, 452) = 1.71, p = .17$.

Career interruptions were classified *a priori* as either income enhancing or income suppressing. Each type of interruption was correlated with income (r) to test for directionality. Table 1 displays the lists of income-enhancing and income-suppressing interruptions, as validated by the correlation between such interruptions and income. The occurrences of

income-enhancing interruptions (IEI) or income-suppressing interruptions (ISI) were counted to generate indices. For counts of income-enhancing interruptions, less than 1% of respondents ($n = 6$) reported one such interruption. None reported two or more such interruptions. Thus, little variance was reported for income-enhancing interruptions. For counts of income-suppressing interruptions (ISI), 7% of all respondents reported one such interruption ($n = 57$), but less than 1% ($n = 6$) reported two interruptions. Nobody reported three or more such interruptions. The ISI index was collapsed into a binary variable.

Analysis of variance was used to validate IEI and ISI as predictors of income (H_{3b}). Average income was higher among those reporting income-enhancing interruptions ($M = \$110,200$, $SD = 19,776$), when compared to respondents with no such interruptions ($M = \$77,651$, $SD = 41,294$). The income difference was statistically significant using a one-tailed test, $F(1, 458) = 3.09$, $p = .04$. Average income was lower among those reporting income-suppressing interruptions ($M = \$68,414$, $SD = 25,118$), when compared to those respondents who had not experienced such interruptions ($M = \$79,148$, $SD = 42,645$). The income difference was statistically significant using a one-tailed test, $F(1, 458) = 2.98$, $p = .04$.

To examine H_{1a} , H_{1b} , H_{2a} , H_{2b} , H_{2c} , H_{6a} , H_{6b} , H_{6c} , and H_8 , we performed a path analysis with the EQS 6.1 program. Data-model fit criteria established by Hu and Bentler (1999) were followed: Comparative Fit Index (CFI) $\geq .96$ and Standardized Root Mean Square Residual (SRMR) $\leq .10$ or Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA) $\leq .06$ and SRMR $\leq .10$.

RESULTS

In testing the individual bivariate hypotheses (using statistical tests appropriate for the levels of measures involved), we found support for years of professional experience, manager role enactment, participation in management decision-making, income-suppressing interruptions, and career specialization as mediating variables between gender and income (see Table 2). However, income-enhancing interruptions (H_{3a} , H_{3b}), organizational type (H_{5a} , H_{5b}), and hours worked per day (H_{7a} , H_{7b}) were dropped from further analysis as mediators, because those variables were not significantly related to gender. That is, H_{3b} was confirmed using one-way analysis of variance but H_{3a} was rejected using the Chi-Square statistic. H_{5b} was confirmed using one-way analysis of variance but H_{5a} was rejected using one-way analysis of variance. H_{7b} was confirmed using the Pearson correlation coefficient but H_{7a} was rejected using one-way analysis of variance. Income-suppressing interruptions (H_{4a} , H_{4b}) were confirmed, using the Chi-Square test and one-analysis of variance respectively. However, because income-suppressing interruptions is a binary variable, that mediating variable could not be included in the path analysis; see Finney and DiStefano (2006).

With the mediating variables confirmed, we then created a parsimonious model suitable for path analysis. Path analysis results (see Figure 2) demonstrated excellent overall data-model fit (CFI = .98, SRMR = .04, RMSEA = .06). Model $\chi^2 = 14.95$ ($df = 6$). An examination of all path coefficients found that all hypotheses in the path model were supported.

H_{1a} anticipated gender significantly influencing years of professional experience. A significant and negative path (path = $-.19$, $p < .05$) was identified between gender and years of

professional experience, meaning that female practitioners had significantly less professional experience than their male counterparts. H_{1a} was supported. H_{1b} 's prediction of a significant linkage between professional experience and income was also supported (path = .40, $p < .05$), implying public relations practitioners with more extensive professional experience are more likely to be paid more.

H_{2a} predicted significant association between years of professional experience and manager role enactment, which was supported by a significant and positive path coefficient (path = .23, $p < .05$). This suggests that the more experience a professional has, the more likely he or she will enact a managerial role.

Similarly, path analysis results identified a significant and positive path between manager role enactment and participation in management decision making (H_{2b} : path = .51, $p < .05$) and between participation in management decision making and income (H_{2c} : path = .20, $p < .05$). These findings indicate that the more public relations professionals enact the managerial role, the more likely that they will participate in management decision-making and as a result have higher income.

The association between gender and career specialization (H_{6a}) was found to be negative and significant (path = -.13, $p < .05$). Given that our categorization of career specialization was based on the income differences between different specialization groups, this finding suggests that women in public relations are less likely to be employed in high-paying specializations. Among women, for example, 16% are employed in the lower-paying specialization of community relations, compared to only 10% among men. Among women, only 6% are employed in higher paying specializations of financial/investor relations, crisis communication, and reputation management, compared to 15% among men. The significant and positive path (H_{6b} : path = .19, $p < .05$) between career specialization and income tells us that public relations practitioners in financial/investor relations, crisis communication, and reputation management earn higher salaries than those in community and media relations.

Perhaps most important, gender had a significant direct impact on income as well (H_8 : path = -.10, $p < .05$), meaning that female public relations practitioners are paid significantly less than their male counterparts, even after taking into account all the other influencers of income. However, since income-suppressing interruptions (H_{4a} , H_{4b}) could not be included in the path analysis model, analysis of variance with multiple classification analysis was utilized (1) to provide an approximate control for the mediating effects of all covariates (including income-suppressing interruptions) and (2) to generate unadjusted and adjusted income estimates for men and women. This provides a more complete test of H_8 . As with the path analysis, the main effect of gender remained statistically significant, $F(1, 436) = 4.19$, $p = .04$, after controlling for the covariates of work experience, career specialization, manager role enactment, participation in management decision making, and income-suppressing interruptions.

Adjusted income for men was \$84,368; for women, adjusted income was \$76,063, an \$8,305 difference. The unadjusted difference in income was \$21,595, meaning that \$13,290 (or 62%) of the income difference between men and women is due to the influence of mediating

variables identified and tested in this study. Arguably, the remaining 38% (\$8,305 a year) may be attributed to gender discrimination. Over a 40-year career, women are penalized \$332,200 due to gender discrimination alone, even after controlling for all known qualified mediators that might explain income differences due to non-discriminatory factors.

DISCUSSION

We set out to learn why, after three decades of empirical research, women are still paid less than men in public relations. The theoretical model tested in our study provides a more complete account of influencers of practitioners' income and the interrelationships among them. Our findings indicate five indirect routes that contribute to gendered pay inequity, as well as strong empirical evidence of direct income gender discrimination.

The first route begins with gender, which leads to career specialization, and eventually to gendered salary differences. This tells us that women work in lower-paying specializations such as media and community relations, which contributes to lower income. This leads us to further unanswered questions: Do women choose lower-paying specializations? Or do they encounter a "glass ceiling" with regard to mentoring and promotional opportunities that favor men for coveted, higher-paying specializations? These questions point to important avenues of future research.

The second route involves a chain of interrelated variables from gender, through professional experience and career specialization, to gendered income disparity. Women tend to have fewer years of professional experience. Less experience is related to working in lower-paying specializations. This contributes to women earning lower salaries than men in public relations.

The third route involves income-suppressing career interruptions. Women experience income-suppressing career interruptions more frequently than do men. These interruptions, in turn, contribute to lower income for women, when compared with men.

The fourth route involves professional experience. Lack of professional experience contributes directly to lower income for women. The first three routes suggest that women earn less, not because they "choose" to have less experience, or they "choose" to work in lower-paying specializations. Social structural factors may combine to reduce the professional experience of women practitioners — when they sacrifice their careers for families, for example. Additional research is needed to further investigate these problems.

The fifth route also involves gender and professional experience, but follows a different chain of variables from gender to income disparity. Practitioners with less professional experience are less likely to play the managerial role. Lower manager role enactment reduces participation in management decision making. Reduced participation in management decision making reduces income. Again, these findings challenge arguments that "blame the victim," that women choose to play the technician role as opposed to the managerial role and chose not to participate in management decision making. The empirical evidence here suggests that the roadblock for women to manager role enactment and management decision-making participation is lack of professional experience. Because professional experience is directly

related to income and indirectly related to income through career specialization, manager role enactment, and management decision-making participation, further research is needed to better understand why women have less professional experience than men.

Finally, women are paid less than men because they are women. That is, women earn significantly lower salaries than men, even after the influences of the five indirect routes discussed above are controlled for. Our research continues to confirm what the past three decades of empirical studies have shown us: women earn less simply because of their gender. The next important question then is: what can be done to change this?

LIMITATIONS

This study utilized a random sample of PRSA members. The PRSA membership has a higher percentage of women than does the U.S. public relations labor force (see Hazleton & Sha, 2011). Therefore, the population of study is not statistically representative of the universe of public relations practitioners in the United States. The construction of indices for career specialization and organizational type utilized *a priori* assessments of career specializations and organizational types as they relate to income. Then income was used to verify these scales and fine-tune the *a priori* ranking of specializations and organizational types. Thus, the confirmation of H_{5b} and H_{6b} are largely artifacts of index construction. These measures should be replicated in future research to determine if these rank orderings of career specializations and organizational types provide robust linear predictors of income or are simply idiosyncratic to this study.

CONCLUSION

This study sought to determine why women earn less than men in public relations. The short answer is that the gendered income disparity in public relations can be attributed to years of professional experience, manager role enactment, participation in management decision-making, income-suppressing career interruptions, and career specialization. However, even with all these mediating variables accounted for, the average income was \$84,368 for men and \$76,063 for women, a difference of \$8,305. With no other mediating variables tested that can account for this residual income difference, we argue that \$8,305 annually (or \$332,200 over a 40-year career) is the concrete cost of gender discrimination in public relations.

Gender discrimination cannot be measured by directly asking respondents in a survey if they systematically discriminate against women with regard to salaries. Since such conduct is illegal, that question would yield only normative responses. Thus, we are left with the somewhat unsatisfactory methodology of testing any variables that might mediate the relationship between gender and income. We treat the residual variance as a quantified estimate of gender discrimination. This will displease those convinced that gender discrimination is a myth generated by feminists for ideological reasons. Whatever our ideological predispositions, we chose in this study to let the empirical evidence speak for itself.

REFERENCES

- Aldoory, L., & Toth, E. L. (2002). Gender discrepancies in a gendered profession: A developing theory for public relations. *Journal of Public Relations Research*, 14(2), 103-126.
- Anderson, J. (2006). Pink collars, high heels and the glass ceiling: Feminism in the field of public relations. *Public Relations Quarterly*, 51(3), 30-31.
- Baron, R. M., & Kenny, D. A. (1986). The moderator-mediator variable distinction in social psychological research: Conceptual, strategic and statistical considerations. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 51, 1173-1182.
- Broom, G. M. (1982). A comparison of sex roles in public relations. *Public Relations Review*, 8(3), 17-22.
- Broom, G. M. (2009). *Cutlip & Center's effective public relations* (10th ed.). Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson Prentice Hall.
- Broom, G. M., & Dozier, D. M. (1986). Advancement for public relations role models. *Public Relations Review*, 7(1), 37-56.
- Broom, G. M., & Smith, G. D. (1979). Testing the practitioner's impact on clients. *Public Relations Review*, 5(3), 47-59.
- Cline, C. G., Toth, E. L., Turk, J. V., Walters, L. M., Johnson, N., & Smith, H. (1986). *The velvet ghetto: The impact of the increasing percentage of women in public relations and business communication*. San Francisco: International Association of Business Communicators Research Foundation.
- Dozier, D. M. (1986, July). *The environmental scanning function of public relations practitioners and participation in management decision making*. Paper presented at the meeting of the Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication, Norman, OK.
- Dozier, D. M., & Broom, G. M. (1995). Evolution of the manager role in public relations practice. *Journal of Public Relations Research*, 7(1), 3-26.
- Dozier, D. M., Chapo, S., & Sullivan, B. (1983, August). *Sex and the bottom line: Income differences between men and women in public relations*. Paper presented to the Association for Education in Journalism, Corvallis, OR.
- Dozier, D. M., & Sha, B.-L. (2010, August). *Delusions vs. data: Longitudinal analysis of research on gendered income disparities in public relations*. Paper presented to the Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication, Denver, CO.

- Dozier, D. M., Sha, B.-L., & Okura, M. (2007). How much does my baby cost? An analysis of gender differences in income, career interruption, and child bearing. *Public Relations Journal*, 1(1), 1-16.
- Finney, S. J., & DiStefano, C. (2006). Nonnormal and categorical data in structural equation modeling. In G. R. Hancock & R. O. Mueller (Eds.), *Structural equation modeling: A second course* (pp. 269-314). Greenwich, CT: Information Age Publishing.
- Grunig, L. A., Toth, E. L., & Hon, L. C. (2001). *Women in public relations: How gender influences practice*. New York: Guilford.
- Hazleton, V., & Sha, B.-L. (2011, March). *Generalizing from PRSA to public relations: How to accommodate sampling bias in public relations scholarship*. Paper presented to the International Public Relations Research Conference, Miami, FL.
- Hu, L., & Bentler, P. M. (1999). Cutoff criteria for fit indexes in covariances structure analysis: Conventional criteria versus new alternatives. *Structural Equation Modeling*, 6, 1-55.
- Hunt, T., & Thompson, D. W. (1988). Bridging the gender gap in PR courses. *Journalism Educator*, 43(1), 49-51.
- Hutton, J. G. (2005). The myth of salary discrimination in public relations. *Public Relations Review*, 31(1), 73-83.
- Johnson, M. A. (2005). Five decades of Mexican public relations in the United States: From propaganda to strategic counsel. *Public Relations Review*, 31(1), 11-20.
- Judd, C. M., & Kenny, D. A. (1981). Process analysis: Estimating mediation in treatment evaluations. *Evaluation Review*, 5, 602-619.
- Mathews, W. (1988). Women in PR: Progression or retrogression? *Public Relations Review*, 14(3), 24-29.
- Molleda, J.-C., & Ferguson, M. A. (2004). Public relations roles in Brazil: Hierarchy eclipses gender differences. *Journal of Public Relations Research*, 16(4), 327-351.
- Moss, D., Warnaby, G., & Newman, A. J. (2000). Public relations practitioner role enactment at the senior management level within UK companies. *Journal of Public Relations Research*, 12(4), 277-308.
- O'Neil, J. (2003). An analysis of the relationships among structure, influence, and gender: Helping to build a feminist theory of public relations. *Journal of Public Relations Research*, 15(2), 151-179.

- Okura, M., Dozier, D. M., Sha, B.-L., & Hofstetter, C. R. (2009). Use of scanning research in decision making: An examination of the environmental imperative and power-control perspective. *Journal of Public Relations Research*, 21(1), 51-70.
- Piekos, J. M., & Einsiedel, E. F. (1990). Roles and program evaluation techniques among Canadian public relations practitioners. *Public Relations Research Annual*, 2, 95-113.
- Profile 2000: A survey of the profession. (2000). *Communication World*, 17(6), 21-28.
- Russell, V. (1988, June). Salary survey. *Public Relations Journal*, p. 28.
- Sha, B.-L. (2011a). Does accreditation really matter in public relations practice? How age & experience compare to accreditation. *Public Relations Review*, 37(1), 1-11.
- Sha, B.-L. (2011b, March 8). PR women: New data show gender-based salary gap is widening. *Ragan's PR Daily*. Retrieved October 27, 2011, from http://www.prdaily.com/Main/Articles/PR_women_New_data_show_genderbased_salary_gap_is_w_7468.aspx
- Sha, B.-L., & Dozier, D. M. (2011, August). *Women as public relations managers: Show me the money*. Paper presented to the Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication, St. Louis, MO.
- Sha, B.-L., Dozier, D. M., Toth, E. L., & Aldoory, L. (2007, August). *From Baby Boomers to Generation X: What has changed and what hasn't for women in public relations*. Paper presented to the Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication, Washington, D.C.
- Sha, B.-L., Rayburn, J. D., & Ward-Johnson, F. (2011, May). *Gender in U.S. public relations practice: Men & women practitioners in 2010*. Paper presented to the 9th International Symposium, Communication in the Millennium, the Association of Turkish and American Communication Scholars, San Diego, CA.
- Serini, S. A., Toth, E. L., Wright, D. K., & Emig, A. (1997). Women, men and job satisfaction in public relations: A preliminary analysis. *Journal of Public Relations Research*, 9, 99-118.
- Serini, S. A., Toth, E. L., Wright, D. K., & Emig, A. (1998). Power, gender, and public relations: Sexual harassment as a threat to the practice. *Journal of Public Relations Research*, 10, 193-218.
- Statistics and indicators on women and men*. (2011, June). United Nations Statistical Division. Retrieved October 27, 2011, from <http://unstats.un.org/unsd/demographic/products/indwm/tab5e.htm>

- Toth, E. L., & Aldoory, L. (2001, March). *Year 2000 Gender Study Report of the Committee on Work, Life, and Gender Issues to the Public Relations Society of America*. Unpublished manuscript available from the PRSA.
- Toth, E. L., & Cline, C. G. (1991). Public relations practitioner attitudes toward gender issues: A benchmark study. *Public Relations Review*, 17(2), 161-174.
- Toth, E. L., Serini, S. A., Wright, D. K., & Emig, A. (1998). Trends in public relations roles: 1990-1995. *Public Relations Review*, 24(2), 145-163.
- Women at Work*. (2011, March). Spotlight on Statistics. U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, U.S. Department of Labor. Retrieved October 26, 2011, from <http://www.bls.gov/spotlight/2011/women>
- Women's Health USA*. (2010). Maternal and Child Health Bureau, Health Resources and Services Administration, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. Rockville, Maryland: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.
- Van Heerden, G., & Rensburg, R. (2005). Public relations roles empirically verified among public relations practitioners in Africa. *Communicare*, 24(1), 69-88.
- Wootton, B. H. (1997). Gender differences in occupational employment. *Monthly Labor Review*, 120(April), 15-24.
- Wright, D. K., Grunig, L. A., Springston, J. K., & Toth, E. L. (1991, November). *Under the glass ceiling: An analysis of gender issues in American public relations, 1*. The Public Relations Society of America Foundation, New York City.

Table 1.

Types of Career-Enhancing and Career-Suppressing Interruptions

Income-enhancing career interruptions

Become an independent consultant

Military service

Income-suppressing career interruptions

Illness, injury

Child-bearing, child-rearing

Move to new location (no reason given)

Followed spouse to new location

Relocate closer to family

Management shake-up, wrongful termination, fired

Employer firm went bankrupt

Table 2.

Test of Hypotheses for Mediating Variables

Test	Independent Variable	Dependent Variable	Inferential Statistic	Sig. (1-tailed)
H _{1a}	Gender	PR Experience	$F(1, 556)=19.21$	<.001
H _{1b}	PR Experience	Income	$r(460)=.50$	<.001
H _{2a}	PR Experience	Manager Role	$r(546)=.22$	<.001
H _{2b}	Manager Role	Decision Making	$r(671)=.52$	<.001
H _{2c}	Decision Making	Income	$r(454)=.32$	<.001
H _{3a}	Gender	Enhancing Interrupt	$\chi^2(1, N=558)=.06$.80
H _{3b}	Enhancing Interrupt	Income	$F(1, 458)=3.09$.04
H _{4a}	Gender	Suppressing Interrupt	$\chi^2(1, N=558)=5.47$.02
H _{4b}	Suppressing Interrupt	Income	$F(1, 458)=2.98$.04
H _{5a}	Gender	Org. Type	$F(1, 529)=.73$.20
H _{5b}	Org. Type	Income	$r(440)=.25$	<.001
H _{6a}	Gender	Specialization	$F(1, 552)=8.42$.002
H _{6b}	Specialization	Income	$r(457)=.31$	<.001
H _{6c}	PR Experience	Specialization	$r(554)=.19$	<.001
H _{7a}	Gender	Work Hours	$F(1, 556)=1.51$.11
H _{7b}	Work Hours	Income	$r(460)=.10$.02

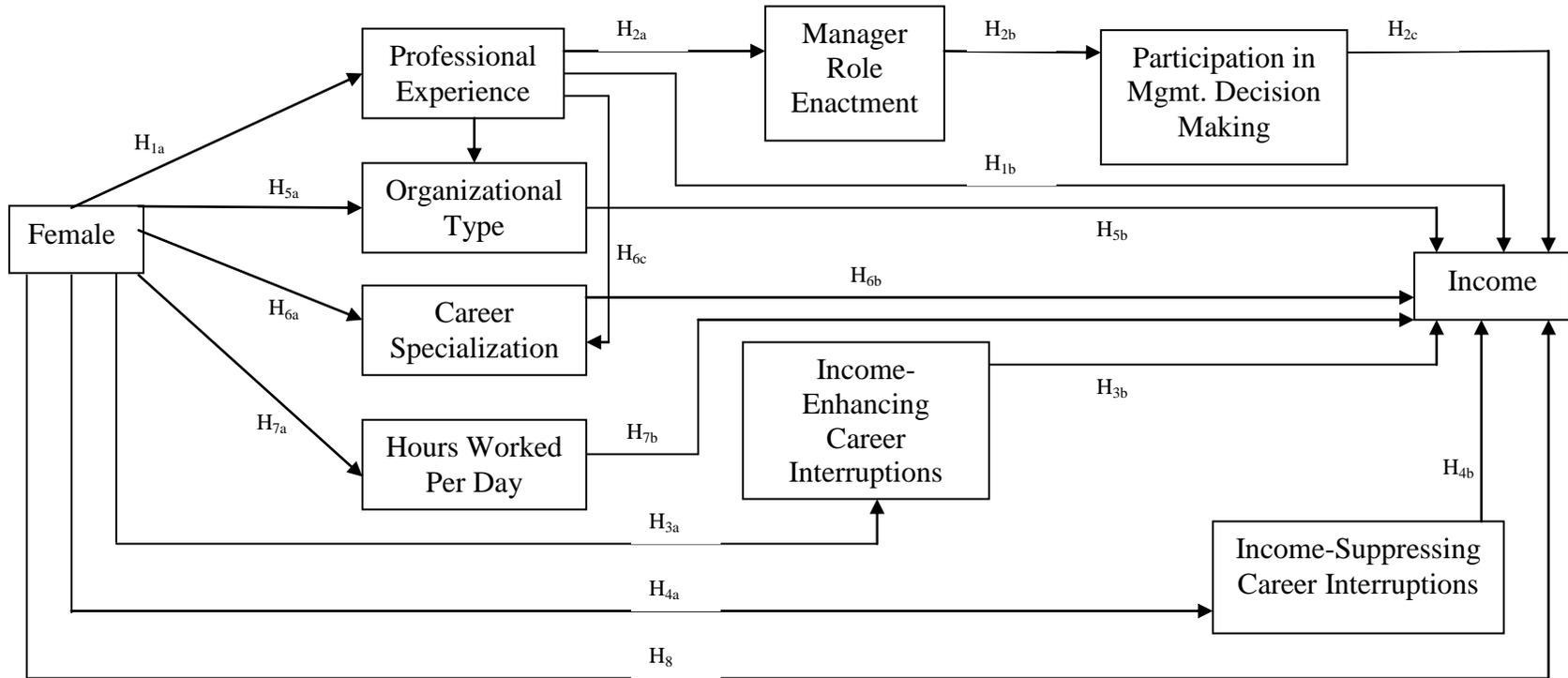


Figure 1. Comprehensive theoretical model linking income and gender.

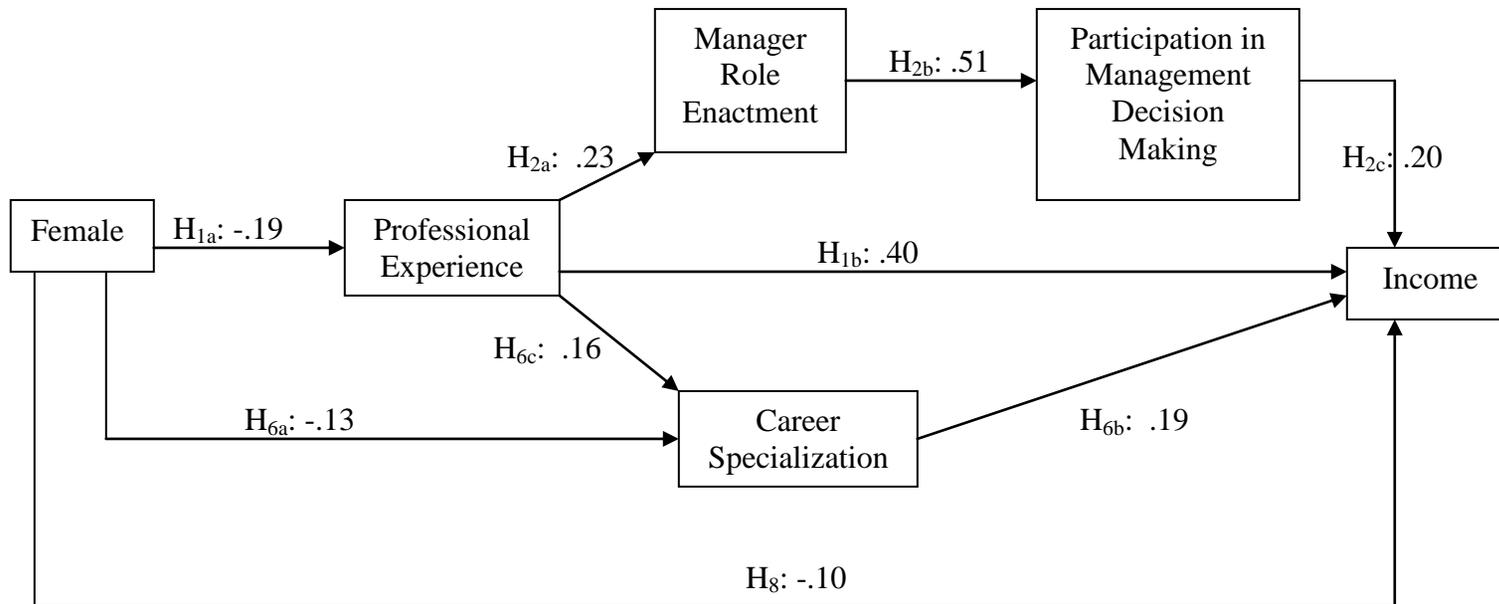


Figure 2. Parsimonious model linking income and gender.