

# Discrimination and Devaluation: Causes of a Time-Enduring Gender Wealth Gap

By Colleen Denmon

## Introduction

In today's society, women can work just as hard as their male counterparts, yet fall behind in wealth because of a lifetime of discriminatory wages that devalue their work.

## Analysis

### Gender, Marriage, and Asset Accumulation in the United States

*Lucie Schmidt and Purvi Sevak*

- 28% of single female-headed households have incomes below poverty line, only 13.5% of single male-headed households do
- Wealth gap emerges from uneven income

### Explaining the Gender Wealth Gap

*Erin Ruel and Robert M. Hauser*

- US gender wealth gap is caused by an income gap
- Controlling for factors only reduced wealth gap from \$94,000 to \$93,500
- Women typically employed in jobs that pay less

### The Feminization of Occupations and Change in Wages: A Panel Analysis of Britain, Germany, and Switzerland

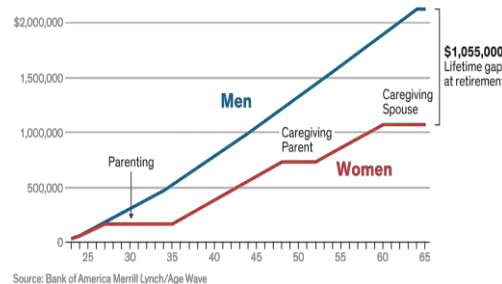
*Emily Murphy*

- Difference in earnings between entirely female and entirely male job is:
  - 13% in Britain
  - 7% in Switzerland
  - 3% in Germany
- US wages are 3-5% and 6-10% lower in female dominated jobs
- Childless women affected as well, so loss in earnings cannot be attributed to women spending more time on childcare
- Common perception that male work is more valuable → income gap → wealth gap

## Wage Gap



## Wealth Gap



## Opposing Views

There are legal protections in place ensuring wage and wealth equality, including:

- 1900 – Women earn property rights
- 1920 – Women earn voting rights
- 1963 – Equal Pay Act
- 1964 – Gender discrimination in employment outlawed
- 2012 – Paycheck Fairness Act introduced

## **HOWEVER**

These laws have not resulted in pay equality

- In the past 25 years, the pay gap has only lessened by only \$0.08
- Government has been concerned with gender equality for over 100 years, implying that it is and has been a persistent issue

## Conclusion

The gender wealth gap is driven by a gender earnings gap which is the result of discrimination and gender biases.

## Further Research Questions

- What, if not laws, can help correct the gender discrimination and biases that persist in society?
- How do we break the penalizing cycle of job feminization?
- Will we have to wait for the wage gap to decrease penny-by-penny until we can realize true gender wealth equality?

# THE VIABILITY OF THE AMERICAN DREAM

Has the growing wealth gap changed how feasible the American Dream is when dealing with policy? **Layla Ech-chaouy**

**American Dream:** the belief that America offers the opportunity to everyone of a good and successful life achieved through hard work

Source: <https://www.oxfordlearnersdictionaries.com/us/definition/english/the-american-dream#:~:text=%E2%80%8Bthe%20belief%20that%20America,life%20achieved%20through%20hard%20work>

## Introduction

The wealth gap rapidly increased over the last few decades. One major facet of wealth aggregation is the universally-held American ideal called the American Dream. As the wealth gap grows we are left to wonder if the American Dream is a viable way to approach policy solutions to the address the situation.

## Articles

**The Dynamic American Dream**

**American Public Opinion on Economic Inequality, Taxes, and Mobility: 1990–2011**

**The 'Deserving' Rich? Inequality, Morality and Social Policy**

## Issues

**Justification of policy decisions due to the principles of the American Dream**

- “people may not demand government intervention on income inequality because they believe that Americans are able to achieve a better life through their own efforts.
- “unequal outcomes justly reward different levels of hard work and aptitude”

**Lack of public confidence in the American Dream** →

Absence of social mobility

**The haves and have nots**

	Gallup 7/88 (%)	Gallup 4-5/98 (%)	Gallup 9/00 (%)	PSRA/ Pew 6/01 (%)	PSRA/ Pew 2/04 (%)	Gallup 6/04* (%)
Have	59	67	60	52	59	57
Have-nots	17	24	31	32	27	31
Neither (vol.)	15	6	n/a	10	7	6
Don't know/refused	9	3	9	6	7	6
N	1,000	5,001	1,008	1,200	1,000	2,250

	PSRA/ Pew 4-5/09 (%)	PSRA/ Pew 4/10 (%)	PSRA/ Pew 9/11 (%)	Gallup 11-12/11 (%)	PSRA/ Pew 12/11 (%)
Yes, divided	35	42	45	41	38
No, not divided	62	53	52	58	58
Don't know/refused	3	5	2	1	4
N	3,013	1,546	1,000	1,012	1,521

## Issues cont.

**Deservingness/ Tangibility**

- the public viewed the rich as “entitled to keep their wealth rather than have it taken away from them.”
- rewards, incentives, and character
- Paying “fair share” of taxes: upper, middle, and low-income households
- “confidence in the American Dream changes over time in response to the relative attainability of the promise of the dream”

## Conclusion

The American dream is not as viable as it once was due to the circumstances of the growing wealth gap. These outdated american values provide justification for politicians, the wealthy, and the working class to continue to function under a system that disenfranchises the working class.

## Thesis

While it has been widely observed around the world that capitalism facilitates class divisions, it would be a vast oversimplification to assert that the system is inherently racist only based off of discriminatory patterns noted in the U.S.. Such patterns would have to be seen consistently in other nations who follow the system for it to be considered fundamentally racist. It is true that the system encourages greed and that the long history of racism in the United States makes it easier for minorities to be exploited; however, this only means that capitalism is a vehicle through which racism can be expressed and facilitated, not one that is naturally embedded with racism.

# Is the economic system of capitalism inherently racist? An Analysis of Theoretical Frameworks Within Racial Capitalism

## What is Racial Capitalism?

“The process of deriving social and economic value from the racial identity of another person.”

*Cedric J. Robinson (paraphrased by Nancy Leong)*

## "Assessing Racial Privilege..."

*Jennifer Fluri et al.*

The U.S.'s Eurocentric housing practices transcend borders in the ways they marginalize minorities; in particular, America's fueling of gentrification prioritizes the economic mobility of White individuals globally.

## "Racial Capitalism"

*Nancy Leong*

In the U.S., Whiteness is of significant socioeconomic value while non-Whiteness is not. The systematic devaluing of non-White people has created a situation in which their commodification is rampant.

## "Racial Capitalism"

*Jodi Melamed*

Capitalism functions through the continuous exploitation of one group by another (i.e.: proletariat/bourgeoisie); therefore, the system—inherently fostering the prime conditions under which racism thrives—is racist.

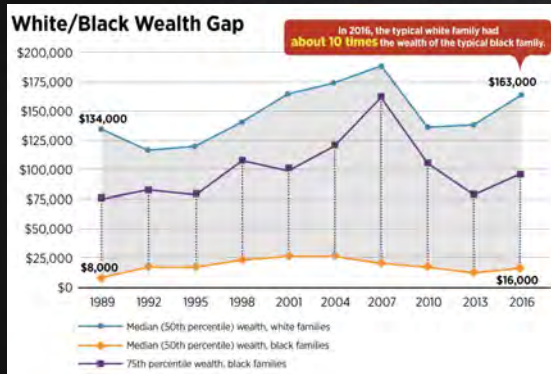
# THE RACIAL WEALTH GAP AS A CONTRIBUTION TO INEQUALITY IN THE U.S.

Chapter Five  
Kashani

POLSC29204

Sara

- Disparities in wealth between Black and White families has been an issue for generations
- Continues today with underfunded school districts and unequal career opportunities
- Racial wealth gap is caused by systemic issues unrelated to personal choices



How did the wealth gap occur and continue to be an issue?

- Post civil war: newly freed Black families not given promised land from U.S. government, Jim Crow laws, discrimination, and redlining
- Post WWII: exclusion from policies that benefited the working class
- Today: police brutality, underfunded schools, income inequality

How can these systemic issues be remedied long term?

- Federally mandated integration of schools for socioeconomic diversity
- Police and criminal justice reform, abolition of private prisons
- Allocation of resources towards infrastructure and quality of life in poorer rural areas
- Policies aimed towards closing the labor gap and reducing income differences