

The University of Maine

DigitalCommons@UMaine

Social Justice: Diversity, Equity, & Inclusion

Special Collections

2-12-2001

UMaine Professor Studies Earnings Gap

Peter Cook

University of Maine

Follow this and additional works at: https://digitalcommons.library.umaine.edu/social_justice



Part of the [Educational Sociology Commons](#), [Inequality and Stratification Commons](#), and the [United States History Commons](#)

Repository Citation

Cook, Peter, "UMaine Professor Studies Earnings Gap" (2001). *Social Justice: Diversity, Equity, & Inclusion*. 295.

https://digitalcommons.library.umaine.edu/social_justice/295

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by DigitalCommons@UMaine. It has been accepted for inclusion in Social Justice: Diversity, Equity, & Inclusion by an authorized administrator of DigitalCommons@UMaine. For more information, please contact um.library.technical.services@maine.edu.



University of Maine News

UMaine Professor Studies Earnings Gap

February 12, 2001

Contact: Peter Cook at 581-3756

ORONO – The issue of pay equity between men and women in the United States is one that ignites emotions and inspires campaign promises. A University of Maine professor, working with a colleague at Rutgers University, has recently written a paper that examines the debate from a unique perspective.

In “The Tournament Careers of Top-Ranked Men and Women Tennis Professionals: Are the Gentlemen More Committed than the Ladies,” Donijo Robbins, assistant professor of public administration at UMaine and Douglas Coate, professor of economics at Rutgers University, study the careers of tennis players and their comparative earnings over time.

The paper was published in the Winter 2001 issue of the Journal of Labor Research.

“We needed to look at an individual sport, and tennis players are competitive on their own,” says Robbins. “We thought this might give us some idea now of how competitive men are versus women. Are the men more competitive? Since the literature suggests that they are, we wanted to look at a competitive sport and see if that explains the difference in their earnings.”

The careers of tennis players, says Robbins, are easier to track than careers of people in the business world. Information on pay and player rankings is readily available. The fact that tennis players have been used, she says, doesn't mean that the results are less credible.

“Sports and business both relate to human nature. Professor Coate and I are economists, so we tend to explain behavior in those terms,” she says. “You can relate competitiveness in tennis to competitiveness in the business world, because in both, if you're not committed to your job, you're not going to go anywhere and will stay at an entry level position.”

Robbins found no evidence to suggest that female tennis players were less committed to the sport than males.

“Both men and women are on the professional tour for about the same number of years,” she says. “We examined the commitment of top-ranked male and female players as measured by the number of tournaments per year they play and by the number of years they compete.”

Robbins says that if, because of physiological characteristics or other influences, men were more competitive or more committed to the game than women, such differences should show up in a study of the career profiles.

The study did find there was a gap between how much women tennis professionals earned and the earnings of their male counterparts.

“In tennis, there are only one or two tournaments that pay the same amount of money to both men and women,” says Robbins. “We believe this gap is justified because men play more sets than women. Why aren't the women playing as much?”

Robbins says that she doesn't know for sure, but thinks that the five sets men play as compared to women's three is related more to biology than to discrimination.

The fact that female tennis players receive lower pay does not negatively affect their competitiveness.

“Despite substantially lower earnings, the female professionals compete for as many years as do the males and just as intently in terms of annual number of tournaments played,” she says.

In the same way, Robbins says that some of the earnings gap in the business world may be justified at times. Much of the time, the gap is due more to a difference in jobs. For that reason, says Robbins, there will always be an earnings gap.

“You can make the generalization that men are in more physically demanding jobs. If you go to an auto manufacturing plant, most of the workers on the floor are men,” she says.

“However, if a woman is doing the exact same job for the same amount of time, there should be no difference in earnings. If there is an earnings gap under those circumstances, there's something wrong.”

Resources for: [Prospective Students](#), [Current Students](#),
[Researchers](#), [Visitors & Alumni](#), [Faculty & Staff](#), [Outreach](#),
[News & Events](#), [Athletic News](#)

The University of Maine, Orono, Maine 04469
207-581-1110

Privacy Policy -- Campus Security

A Member of the [University of Maine System](#)