

Female managers do not reduce the gender wage gap, study finds

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Working women are "leaning in" and supporting more females in leadership roles, but a new study finds that having a female manager doesn't necessarily equate to higher salaries for female employees. In fact, women can sometimes take an earnings hit relative to their male colleagues when they go to work for a female manager.

"Agents of Change or Cogs in the Machine? Re-examining the Influence of Female Managers on the Gender Wage Gap" (*American Journal of Sociology*, forthcoming) is co-authored by Sameer B. Srivastava, assistant professor, and Eliot L. Sherman, doctoral student—both at UC Berkeley's Haas School of Business. The study examined how the salaries of both male and female employees changed when they switched from reporting to a male manager to reporting to a female manager (and vice versa).

Whereas most previous research has suggested that [female managers](#) are "agents of change" who act in ways that reduce the [gender wage gap](#), this study found no support for this assertion. In fact, a subset of switchers—low-performing [women](#) who switched to working for a high-performing female supervisor—fared worse financially, not better, than their male colleagues making a comparable switch.

According to Srivastava, this effect can occur when people see themselves as part of a valuable group but worry that others won't see them that way. "A high-performing woman might, for example, worry about being devalued because of her association with a low-performing

female subordinate," he explains. "This might lead her to undervalue the subordinate's contributions."

Srivastava and Sherman analyzed 1,701 full-time employees in the U.S. who worked for a leading firm in the information services industry between 2005 and 2009. The researchers had access to complete employment data: salary, reporting structure, annual performance evaluations, and demographic information. For example, the average age of employees was 43; average length of employment was 8.85 years; and merit increases ranged from 3% to 5%.

The authors conclude that it may be wishful thinking to assume that the gender [wage gap](#) will automatically close as more and more women take management positions. Instead, they argue that, for fundamental change to occur, the increasing number of women managers must be matched by an organizational culture that is keen on gender equality, fostering initiatives to reduce tokenism, and encouraging women to positively identify with their gender in the workplace.

More information: Agents of Change or Cogs in the Machine? Re-examining the Influence of Female Managers on the Gender Wage Gap, faculty.haas.berkeley.edu/srivastava/papers/Agents%20or%20Cogs%20-%20Abstract%20to%20be%20posted.pdf

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