The past, present and future of pink collared jobs in U.S.

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ABSTRACT
Workers were referred by the color of their collar in the 1910s and 1920s; however it wasn’t used to discriminate people by social status and occupation until around the early 20th century. Jobs were classified into different collar jobs, like white-collar, blue-collar, pink-collar, etc. depending on the nature of work undertaken. The primary focus of the paper is on pink collared jobs. The paper offers an in-depth view of the concept, history, the current scenario, challenges faced by pink collared workers and the stigma associated with it. Recent years have seen men flocking towards pink collared jobs and the line between male dominated and female dominated jobs fading away. The paper studies the reasons behind the same and makes predictions for the future. The findings and predictions of the paper are based on a thorough review of the literature available.

Keywords: Pink collared jobs, men in pink collared jobs.

INTRODUCTION
Pink collared jobs are jobs traditionally held by women and are considered to be women’s work. Most of these are performed in a clean environment, without involving hard physical work and exposure to dangers. This term was used to differentiate female-oriented jobs from the others. It was implied that these jobs did not need as much professional training as white collar jobs. They hardly got equal pay and status. Some examples of pink collared jobs are waitress, babysitter, librarian, dressmaker, nurse, nutritionist, hotel housekeeper, etc.

History
There is no definitive moment which the historians point to the coining of the phrase pink collar. The term sees its origin in America during the First World War which marked the beginning of “pink collared jobs” as the U.S military needed personnel to do jobs like typing letters, answering phones and for performing similar tasks. Household jobs were typically the responsibility of females and they were financially dependent on their male counterparts. Widows and divorced women often found it difficult to support themselves and their children. Single women started travelling to cities like New York and engaging themselves in low paid factory jobs like sorting feathers, rolling tobacco, etc. However the factories were noisy, dark and dirty endangering their health and they also suffered minor accidents cutting their fingers and likewise while cleaning and adjusting machines while they were running in order to save money. Even after getting an opportunity to work in factories women suffered from poverty owing to the low pay.

Women like Emily Balch, Jane Addams, and Lillian Wald helped improve the condition of women in America around 20th century by setting up settlement houses, launching missions
in crowded and sanitary neighborhoods where the immigrants lived and offering social services by inviting them and children to their homes or classrooms.

The year 1920 marked a turning point in the lives of American women giving them the right to vote. Women started taking up leadership roles starting from the church and a few went on to becoming the presidents of these societies. Women also entered occupations like nursing, teaching etc. The Association for the Sociology of Religion was the first to elect a woman president in 1938. The term 'Pink Collar' widespread by 1977, with the publication of Louise Kapp Howe's watershed book, "Pink Collar Workers."

**Stigma associated with pink collared jobs**

The way females were treated at jobs was a result of the patriarchal social system prevalent then. Recent years have seen a considerable improvement in the status of women in the society; even then the attitude of people towards pink collared jobs has not seen significant positive changes. Behavioral economist, Teresa Ghilarducci, told the New York Times that stigma associated with women's jobs make it increasingly difficult for companies while hiring suitable matches.

1. **Lower pay**

While the wage gap has seemingly reduced as compared to the generation of women working in the past, it still has a long way to go. If the gap continues the current way, it would take about 45 years to eradicate this gap. It is observed that women earn less than men within all racial and ethnic groups. In 2010, white women earned 78.1 percent compared to white men, African American women earned 89.8 percent compared to black men, Hispanic women earned 91.3 percent compared to Hispanic men, and Asian women earned 79.7 percent compared to Asian men.

2. **Do not require special skill sets**

When women entered the U.S workforce during World War I, they were hired for jobs that did not require special skills or physical strength. Even the other jobs where females dominate, like nursing, babysitting, etc., seem to use the qualities that come naturally to a woman.

3. **Are not very important jobs**

Since women were not made a part of the core revenue generating departments, and have most of the times taken up jobs in the support areas primarily providing services, pink collared jobs are not looked at as jobs that are crucial for the success of the economy or to the benefit of the organization.

**Challenges faced by pink collar workers**

1. **Security issues**

While working for odd or stretched hours, while interacting with customers, harassment is common. Catcalls, groping, flashing and stalking go unreported most of the times.

2. **Stereotyping**

Women are stereotyped as non-performers, who complain or give excuses in order to hide their inability to handle normal work pressures.

3. **Workplace harassments**

More work, lack of appreciation, fewer avenues for promotion, derogatory comments add up to the woes of the pink collared workforce.

4. **Fewer growth opportunities**

Men end up earning more than women even in female-dominated jobs and men in particular who enter those fields easily move up to supervisory positions, a phenomenon known as the glass escalator - as opposed to the glass ceiling that women encounter in male-dominated professions.
5. Lack of family support
Women most of the time witness low self confidence due to the fear of falling short at the workplace due to family responsibilities. Also reluctance on the part of family members to encourage females for better jobs keeps them trapped in the same vicious circle of low pay, less status and more work.

The Present Scenario
The graph below depicts the representation of women in certain jobs:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>JOB</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Registered Nurses</td>
<td>37.19%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elementary and Middle School Teachers</td>
<td>31.34%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Workers</td>
<td>28.18%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meeting and Convention Planners</td>
<td>72.80%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medical and Health Services Managers</td>
<td>72.50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Counselors</td>
<td>72.50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tax Preparers</td>
<td>72.50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social and Community Service Managers</td>
<td>72.50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Human Resources Managers</td>
<td>72.50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Psychologists</td>
<td>72.50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tax Examiners, Collectors, and Revenue Agents</td>
<td>64.99%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Financial Specialists, All Other</td>
<td>84.26%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education Administrators</td>
<td>84.26%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Business Operations Specialists</td>
<td>84.26%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advertising and Promotions Managers</td>
<td>61.32%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accountants and Auditors</td>
<td>61.32%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public Relations Managers</td>
<td>61.32%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Insurance Underwriters</td>
<td>61.32%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Claims Adjusters, Appraisers, Examiners, and Investigators</td>
<td>12.32%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Veterinarians</td>
<td>61.32%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


The graph shows that one of the female dominated occupations is nursing. Nine out of 10 registered nurses in the U.S are females. Some of the occupations where women are highly concentrated include human resources, social workers, and counselors.
Economists believe that integrated occupations would make the economy more efficient than staggering proportions.

Men opting for pink collared jobs
More men are entering fields that have been traditionally dominated by women. According to The New York Times, from 2000 to 2010, fields with a vast majority of women accounted for nearly a third of job growth for men. Some of the reasons for men opting for such jobs are:

1. Job stability:
The labor market is so hard that if you do not have a job, you land up either not having a job or in some temporary job. Traditionally pink collared jobs were supposed to be permanent stable jobs preferred by single mothers with low education and the jobs were really not affected by the dynamic business environment.
2. Growing job opportunities.
It is not that men are taking up women's jobs but the market for such jobs is increasing creating a lot of opportunities in service sector like banking, hospitality and healthcare as compared to manufacturing or construction thereby causing men to take up these opportunities. Also technological advancements are making jobs more and more attractive for men.

3. Recession in male dominated industries
It was seen during the recession that male dominated jobs saw a hard hit especially to do with manufacturing and many of the laid off workers are still finding it difficult to find jobs. Women comparatively were spared of the recession after effects attracting men towards pink collar jobs.

4. Better work life balance
Pink collared jobs are viewed as “family jobs,” perfect for workers who have priorities outside of their career as they offer less demanding tasks, flexible schedules and less physical work as compared to jobs traditionally meant for men.

THE FUTURE
The term 'pink collar jobs' has already started becoming obsolete with the number of men entering these jobs. Also enforcement of various legislations like Equal Pay Act, The Federal Civil Rights Act, Title IX of the Education Amendments Act, Family and Medical Leave Act, Fair Labor Standards Act, Comprehensive Omnibus Budget Reconciliation Act will empower women to chose and excel in male dominated jobs equally helping erase the line between male and female dominated jobs. If technology is to be believed as the future, then we might have men working at home and females doing their jobs outside. Increased literacy, liberal social cultures would lead to a gradual erosion of gender stereotyping.

CONCLUSION
 Females entering the workforce were need based both for the U.S army as well as widowed or divorced females, Females have over a time period dominated certain professions and they form a considerable chunk of the U.S workforce in spite of the social stigmas and challenges associated with their jobs. While women progress to make inroads into prestigious, high-wage professions dominated by men, more men are reaching for their dreams in female-dominated occupations that their fathers might have never opted for. One would pursue his or her dream with abandon, regardless of the expectations of others. After all, there would not be male nurses or female engineers, but rather nurses and engineers. There would not be men’s jobs or women’s jobs. Work would be for any individual who finds purpose and meaning through.

REFERENCES


