

Gender Equity in the Accounting Profession: An Update

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Abstract

In this paper we contribute to the literature on gender equity in the public accounting profession in three ways. We provide an overview of the current status of gender issues in the public accounting industry, including: workforce demographics, compensation, discrimination lawsuits, impressions from female leaders, and the Accounting MOVE Project. We also present results of a survey of college students that show that, despite the industry's female retention efforts through multiple women's initiative programs, there are still significant differences in gender perceptions of the public accounting industry. Finally we summarize some key areas that we recommend the public accounting industry continue to focus on to improve female retention rates.

Introduction

In 1982, the United States Department of State (DOS) awarded a two-year \$25 million consulting contract to Price Waterhouse. At the time it was the largest consulting contract in the company's history. Price Waterhouse's senior partner, Joseph Connor, signed the contract at a DOS arranged ceremony attended by prominent civil service personnel. The contract was a career highlight for Anne Hopkins, then a senior manager at Price Waterhouse.

Three years earlier, senior management at Price Waterhouse had originally declined the DOS's Request for Proposal (RFP). According to Hopkins, the RFP was going to be "trashed" (Hopkins, 2005, p. 360). But Hopkins saw the RFP as an opportunity. Over the next two and a half years, she traveled to dozens of countries and completed a 26-volume analysis and design proposal. Many of the firm's partners praised Hopkins' accomplishments with the contract. Some stated it was "an outstanding performance" which was implemented "virtually at the partner level" (Legal Information Institute, 2012, para. 4).

As expected, Hopkins was nominated as a candidate for partner; she was the only female out of 88 candidates. However, to her surprise, she was not promoted. After the second nomination cycle, she was rejected again and she was told she would never be a partner (Hopkins, 2005, p. 361). Her ordeal resulted in the widely known sexual discrimination case, Hopkins v. Price Waterhouse, which reached the Supreme Court in 1988 (Hopkins, 2005).

Now, almost three decades later, workplace experts say, “Indeed, when it comes to respecting the work-life balance of employees, the accounting industry far outshines the rest of corporate America” (Greenhouse, 2011). Kathleen Christensen, director of workplace flexibility programs at Alfred P. Sloan Foundation, views the accounting industry with its flexible work arrangements (FWAs) as an exemplary model for corporate America. Christensen remarks that the Big-4 firms “have really thought through the way they do their work and how their people can control the hours they work” (Greenhouse, 2011, p. 1). The 2011 United States Census reports that within the past five years, 18% more women between the ages of 26 and 33 have entered the accounting field (Chartered Accountants, 2013).

In fact, the public accounting industry reached a historical milestone in February 2015 when Deloitte selected Cathy Engelbert to serve as its first female CEO. Engelbert, who joined Deloitte in 1986, was the first female CEO of one of the “Big Four” accounting firms in the U.S. Engelbert stated, “It is a proud moment and a milestone. To the extent that I can be a role model for diverse leaders at Deloitte, I love it. This is a tangible demonstration of our commitment at Deloitte to the advancement of women” (Fairchild, 2015, para. 3). Only two months later KPMG promoted Lynne Doughtie as their first female chairman and CEO (Rapoport, 2015), marking the second time that a Big-4 firm selected a woman to lead the firm. Clearly, this indicates a cultural shift in the advancement of women in accounting.

Yet at the same time, gender issues within the public accounting industry remain. For example, only nineteen percent of public accounting industry partners are female (American Institute of Certified Public Accountants [AICPA], 2013). In addition, a 2012 Institute of Management Accountants (IMA) survey shows that men earn 16% to 26% more than women across various age categories (Schiffel, et al. 2013).

In this paper we make three contributions to the literature on gender equity in the public accounting profession. First, we describe the current status of gender equity issues in the public accounting industry, including: workforce demographics, compensation, discrimination lawsuits, impressions from female leaders, and the Accounting MOVE Project. Next, in order to understand what tomorrow’s professionals are thinking today, we report the results of a survey we conducted of the perceptions of university accounting students about gender issues in public accounting. The majority of our survey results indicate that there are significant gender differences in perceptions of the public accounting industry. Finally, we provide a summary of key areas that we recommend the accounting industry continue to target in order to improve female retention rates.

Part 1: Overview of Gender Equity Issues

Workforce Demographics

Researchers have studied gender parity issues in the accounting industry for over 20 years and have found that issues related to female retention and promotion to leadership positions persist. The results of the AICPA’s 2012 demographic study of women’s issues in accounting are strikingly similar to their 1993 study; findings from both studies indicate that a small percentage of women hired in public accounting firms progressed to partner (Almer and Single, 2012). According to the AICPA’s 2012 demographic study of professional staff, women comprised 21% of the workforce for firms with 10-49 employees, 40% of the workforce with 50-200 employees, and 44% of the workforce with over 200 employees. However, the study found that female percentages declined when analyzing partnership positions; 33% of partners are female in firms with 10-49 employees, 17% are female in firms with 50-200 employees, and 17% of the partners are female for companies with more than 200 employees (AICPA, 2013).

Women’s initiative programs are a concept that became popular in the early 1990s. Yet, the percentage of female partners in accounting has not increased significantly over the past two decades, although tremendous focus and numerous initiatives have been implemented to assist women’s progression into leadership positions. For example, in 2009, Deloitte offered “four hundred programs, events, and training sessions under the Women’s Initiative umbrella” (Adams, 2010, para. 6). Program types varied from two-hour business development seminars to five-year programs that provided career path customizations. Deloitte’s career building model, Mass Career Customization

(MCC) was implemented in 2005 and has served over 7,500 employees (Benko & Weisberg, 2008). The program, which extends beyond FWAs, provides multiple options in which employees customize career paths. Employees may choose career progression pace, work output level, work location and hours, and level of responsibility.

Cathy Benko, Deloitte LLP vice chairman, and Ann Weisberg, director of Deloitte's talent organization, surmise that focusing solely on FWAs does not address the core issue. They believe FWAs "focus almost exclusively on hours and work location" and are not effectively incorporated into the "ongoing talent management processes, nor do they address the larger question of career progression" (Benko & Weisberg, 2008, para. 18-19). Furthermore, they state (para. 19) the FWAs "result in reinforcing the workplace norm of continuous, full-time employment over the course of one's career." A study by Almer, et al. (2003) of 305 public accounting firm respondents indicated that there was a social stigma associated with "stepping off of the fast track" and that individuals, both male and female, were less likely to participate in FWAs with each promotion (Almer, et al., 2003).

Gender Pay Gap

According to numerous studies, gender pay gaps persist in accounting. Bloomberg Businessweek (Damast, 2013) reports that female MBA accounting graduates from top business schools earn 84.7 cents for every dollar paid to their male peers. In addition, in 2012 the Institute of Management Accountants (IMA) salary survey (1,134 survey respondents) categorized gender pay gaps not only by total compensation, but also by age, years in the field, and management level. Schiffel, et al. (2013) analyzed the IMA data and concluded that the overall compensation gender pay gap between men and women is 22% with men earning more.

When Schiffel, et al. (2013) analyzed the results by age, the salary gap for women in their thirties indicated that men earned more by a margin of 22%. For women in their fifties the gap was 23%, and for women in their sixties the gap was up to 26%. Only women in their forties had a narrower salary gap of 16%. Schiffel, et al. (2013) also analyzed the results by tenure and determined that salary gaps increased the longer women worked in the field of accounting. Women earned more than their male peers in their first five years of practice, with a salary gap of 5.7%. Women who worked in accounting for six to ten years earned 2.9% more compared to their male counterparts; however, once women worked in accounting for over ten years, the gap reversed to 22.3%. The authors postulated that this might be due to the significant pay gap from the prior decade. That is, the same "cohort" that had less than ten years of experience in the earlier surveys, and had a huge gender pay gap, now has more than 10 years of experience, but the gender pay gap has persisted. Meanwhile, the newer group (the current group with 0-10 years of experience) has a reversed gender pay gap; that is, the women are earning more than the men (Schiffel, et al., 2013).

Lastly, the researchers analyzed salaries by management level. The results showed that men consistently earn more than women, with a salary gap of: 7% for entry/lower level management positions, 18% for middle-management, 19% for senior level, and 17% for top level (Schiffel, et al., 2013). At the higher management levels these results are likely at least partially related to the results for tenure, since it typically takes a longer time to progress to higher levels of management compared to lower levels. At the lower management levels the contradiction between the survey results based on tenure and the results based on management level may be attributable to the fact that promotions between management levels may not necessarily occur linearly over time or equally between genders. For example, despite the fact that women with 5 or less years of experience are currently paid more than their male counterparts, if women are being promoted faster (e.g. with fewer years of experience) than men, there could be a greater proportion of men in the "entry-level" management level with more than 5 years of experience (thus when parsing the data by management level "entry level men" on average might earn more than "entry level women").

Gender Discrimination Lawsuits

Ann Hopkins filed her lawsuit against Price Waterhouse alleging discrimination and constructive discharge in 1984. Hopkins stated the company "in effect, forced me to leave" (Hopkins, 2005, p. 362). After her initial rejection to be admitted as a partner, she met with Joseph Connor who explained her situation. Hopkins was informed of the partners' negative comments associated with the vote which included: "universally disliked, overly aggressive, unduly harsh, needs a course in charm school, macho, and overcompensated for being a woman" (Hopkins, 2005, p.

361). After seven years of litigation through multiple courts, the Supreme Court ruled in her favor and awarded her back pay, attorney's fees, and a position as partner with Price Waterhouse. The case is popularly known for the Supreme Court's establishment of the standard of liability in Title VII (employment discrimination) cases. However, gender discrimination within the industry did not end with this case.

In 2011, Donna Kassman, a former Senior Manager with KPMG, filed a lawsuit against the company for gender discrimination. She brought the class-action lawsuit on behalf of thousands of current and former female KPMG managers (Baynes, 2011). The lawsuit seeks damages of \$350 million for lost salaries and benefits. According to the lawsuit, Kassman was not only denied promotions and pay increases, but also harassed by upper management. Kassman states that, while she was on maternity leave, she was "passed over for a promotion that was promised [and] her base salary was slashed by \$20,000... When Kassman complained about the salary cut, her male supervisor allegedly said that she did not need the money because she 'had a nice engagement ring'" (Newquist, 2011, para 5).

Kassman also claims that the salary cut was initiated without notification and her career came to an immediate halt. She recounts that the company praised her position as a role model for working mothers "even though one of the partners acknowledged that women on flexible schedules were not going to get anywhere" (Newquist, 2011, para. 7). Also, KPMG's human resources allegedly failed to adequately address Kassman's discrimination complaints. Kassman asserts that the harassment and gender discrimination she experienced resulted in her resignation from KPMG in 2010. KPMG requested that the plaintiff's claims be dismissed, but U.S. District Judge, Jesse Furman, denied the request in 2013 (Van Voris, 2013) and the case is moving forward. As of January 23, 2015 over 1,000 female KPMG employees have joined the lawsuit (Cohn, 2015) and the case is currently being litigated.

Perceptions of Female Leadership

Female leaders in the accounting profession are very interested in increasing gender diversity within the industry. For example, Moira Elms, Chair of Global Diversity and Inclusion Council at PricewaterhouseCoopers (PwC), says her interest in gender diversity has increased with each stage of her career. Elms recognized that she "got to a stage in [her] career where there were not many working women" and "that was when [she] became passionate about gender diversity" (Elms, 2013, para. 1). Elms believes that progress has slowly been made, but that firms continue focusing on developmental training during the early stages of a woman's career. She states, "If we don't plan well ahead, we cannot develop the talent"; additionally, junior talent should "undertake a number of different experiences to enable them to be credible in ten years" (Elms, 2013, para. 9).

Alison Dunnebecke was the first woman in the firm Hein and Associates to be offered an alternative, part-time work schedule due to pregnancy complications. She remembers, "It was actually the male partners... who suggested an alternative part-time work arrangement. The biggest thing for me was the fact that I had a choice. It relieved the stress big time" (Callen, 2009, para. 11-12). Dunnebecke, who currently serves as a tax partner, was prepared to quit because she was unaware of available work schedule options. She recalls that at the beginning of her career women would "downplay their gender in the male-dominated workplace... dressing like men and sporting bow ties with collared shirts" (Callen, 2009, para. 9).

Anton Collins Mitchell's first female partner, Melissa Hooley, started her career at Arthur Andersen in 1988. Hooley had "fond memories of the firm's family atmosphere, where success was measured by job performance, not how many hours were clocked in" (Callen, 2009, para. 18). After the company closed its doors due to the Enron scandal, she was hired by a smaller firm which provided the same family type atmosphere. Hooley encourages women to pace themselves throughout their career for it is "a marathon, not a sprint" (Callen, 2009, para. 25). She currently serves as a mentor for young women in the industry and encourages them to have candid discussions with management about career needs and company expectations.

Deirdre Mahlan, formerly a senior manager at Price Waterhouse but now the CFO at Diageo PLC, notes that during the earlier stages of her career she was not concerned about her job title and did not clearly communicate her future

career objectives with company leadership. When the financial director asked about Mahlan's vague responses regarding career goals, she expressed her desire to not be presumptuous. She claims "the difference between men and women... [is that] men will say, well, 'I think I'm the best person for the job,' [while] women tend to point out possible gaps." Mahlan is troubled that something within the "corporate culture is getting in the way of women's career advancement" and wants to define the component within the culture that is causing women to leave corporate roles (Rowan, 2014, para. 10-11).

Mahlan's instincts appear to be correct. According to the 2004 AICPA Work/Life and Women's initiatives study, females have lower career aspirations for partnership than their male counterparts and women do not view partnership as appealing as men do. Twenty-five percent of female staff members aspire to the partnership level compared to 62% of their male peers. Furthermore, 41% of female senior managers want to become partner compared to 65% of their male counterparts (AICPA, 2004, p. 16).

In 1992, Deloitte contracted with Catalyst, a women's advocacy and research firm, to investigate why women leave the company. The Catalyst study found that women believed their career advancement was limited because "they were excluded from informal networks, mentoring, and plum assignments due to assumptions made for them. And, the long hours and heavy travel schedules for some made juggling work and home life next to impossible" (Molina, 2005, para. 3).

Anna Marie Valerio, author of *Developing Women Leaders*, reports, "many executives will admit confidentially that they are especially reluctant to provide women with candid performance feedback" due to their "lack of prior experience in providing feedback to women and fear of de-motivating a strong performer, as well as concerns about triggering an emotional response" (Valerio, 2011, p. 7). She notes that men may fear that disclosing the truth to female talent will elicit emotional reactions, and thus they may restrict forthright communications to women, which contributes to women not having full knowledge of their skill and experience gaps for career succession. This struggle to clearly articulate advancement criteria may limit female leadership development.

Women face a double-edged sword; gender bias regarding personality characteristics may create a difficult path for women striving for leadership positions. Labels such as "aggressive" and "abrasive" are as undesirable as "overly feminine" and "too soft"; thus, the range of acceptable female behavior is narrow, creating a greater challenge to be perceived as a credible and likable leader. Valerio believes leadership skills are viewed as "more characteristic of men" and that "people are more resistant to managers' exerting influence when managers are female than when they are male" (Valerio, 2011, p. 8).

Political skills within the workplace are a necessary factor for career advancement. A Chartered Institute of Management Accountants (CIMA) report claims that "one of the keys to success is the ability to promote oneself and be assertive about one's performance and ambition" (2010, p. 12). Yet, standing up and broadcasting one's strengths may not be a natural characteristic for some women. A senior leader from the United Kingdom (UK) realized that she was a "naturally quiet person and unassuming" and needed to "shout a bit louder about [her] skills" (CIMA, 2010, p. 13). Women's networking styles are, at times, different than their male peers. Women tend to develop personal bonds while networking, whereas men, utilize a straightforward approach. The male networking strategy is to do "a straight shot", thinking to themselves, "Who do I know who has what I need right now?" (Casserly, 2010, para. 3).

Accounting MOVE Project

The Accounting MOVE Project is one of the most updated and comprehensive assessments of the accounting gender issue to date. MOVE, which stands for Money, Opportunity, Vital Supports for Work-Life, and Entrepreneurship, measures both demographic data and workplace culture to understand gender issues facing an industry. In 2012, sponsors of the Accounting MOVE Project (including various accounting firms and non-profit professional accounting associations) retained Wilson-Taylor Associates (WTA) for the MOVE Project to research a gender

issue facing the accounting industry; why do more women, who work at public accounting firms, leave mid-career compared to their male peers? Over 400 women within 37 public accounting firms participated in the survey. WTA conducted 40 extensive interviews with women whose career stages varied from new accounting graduates to partners. Over 30% of those surveyed were employed at either the senior staff or manager level. The purpose of the research was to understand the dynamics between public accounting firms and female employees who have the potential to reach partner. According to the report, “culture trumps programs, which explains why so many employers repeatedly re-launch women’s initiatives. Programs and ‘commitment from the top’ are announced with the best of intentions...then fizzle out because the efforts to advance women are rarely translated to an everyday business advantage for specific client engagements, teams, and growth” (Lindy, 2013, p. 2).

For example, numerous initiatives provide flexible work schedules for women who must balance work and family. But, other offered initiatives oftentimes fail to provide early career training of networking and business development, essential skill-sets that are highly valued for individuals being considered for partnership. The MOVE team suggests “networking and business development skills are most successful when they are deployed early and often, and are integrated with the firm’s actual growth goals” (Lindy, 2013, p. 7).

Lindy (2013, p. 4) also explains that another barrier to women becoming partners is that communications with upper management about career paths are vague and a “lack of clarity on expectations or potential career paths is a major reason why women leave.” In fact, the Accounting MOVE project found that “44% of women – most of them senior staff – have been strongly tempted to leave at least once, and more than half of them are still considering defecting” (Lindy, 2013, p. 3). In addition, prior to conversations with management, women are already talking themselves into leaving the firm; this phase frequently transpires at the senior staff level.

According to the report, straightforward communications about flexible work arrangements is also imperative; women are oftentimes fearful that participation in the programs may negatively impact compensation and/or career aspirations. Female partner role models who have participated in part-time flex initiatives could ease concerns of their junior female colleagues. Additionally, Lindy notes, “peer [female] relationships are the most important and underrated dynamic in retaining women” (Lindy, 2013, p. 1). Positive female relationships with co-workers and partner role models increase loyalty and job satisfaction. Likewise, if women see their female peers and role models leaving the firm, they are likely to follow them (Lindy, 2013).

Based on our above overview of the current status of gender issues, including the lower proportion of female partners (compared to the proportion of overall female professional staff), the statistics on compensation gaps, the pending gender discrimination lawsuit against a Big-4 accounting firm, the current impressions of female leaders, and the results of the many other surveys we described above, it seems clear that gender equity issues are far from resolved. In the following section we describe the results of a survey we distributed to undergraduate and graduate students attending a major public university in the southwest United States to explore whether current perceptions of gender equity in the public accounting profession differ between male and female students.

Part 2: Survey of Current Student Perceptions

Perceptions are an individual’s personal reality and what he/she sees, hears, and feels influence those impressions. Viewpoints of gender equity in accounting are derived early and are influenced by the input from university faculty and accounting professionals (author, 2000). The students of today are the professionals of tomorrow, and it is reasonable to assume that accounting student perceptions are likely to carry over into their professional careers. Unless experiences that influence male and female perceptions differ in the accounting profession compared to their university experiences, student and professional perceptions of gender equity should be similar. Understanding differences in student gender equity perceptions is one step towards identifying the problems associated with gender equity in the accounting profession.

To address the question of whether or not there are differences in perception of students regarding gender equity within the public accounting profession we conducted a survey of undergraduate and graduate students attending a major public university in the southwest United States. We conducted the surveys over multiple semesters in both 2013 and 2014. One hundred forty students responded, of which 83 were female and 57 were male. Their ages ranged from 19 to 50 years with a mean of 26. Although students were given an option to turn in a blank survey rather than participating, all students filled out the survey so our response rate was 100%.

We asked the students to rank six closed-ended statements about gender-related issues on a scale of zero to six, with zero representing respondents who strongly disagree and six representing respondents who strongly agree. Also, we gave students an option to specify uncertainty of an answer. We included the statements as part of a larger survey, in which we asked six demographic questions and 25 opinion questions (see Appendix A for a copy of the full survey instrument). We used a t-test to determine the statistical significance of the results. Below are the six statements we analyzed in the study:

1. Accounting is a male dominated profession.
2. In the field of accounting, women are likely to be judged less competent than their male counterpart.
3. Having a family or family commitments will not affect my career success.
4. Women in accounting can expect to have similar opportunities for promotions and raises as their male counterparts.
5. Women in accounting can expect to have similar quality job assignments as their male peers.
6. Women in accounting can expect to have similar salaries as their male peers throughout their careers.

The results shown on Table 1 indicate that for four out of the six statements gender equity perceptions differ between male and female respondents. The strongest result (statistically significant at the 98% level) was for statement #2 which measured differences between male and female perceptions of whether women are likely to be judged less competent than their male counterparts. Women felt more strongly than men (mean of 2.86 compared to 2.21) that they were likely to be judged less competent. The results of three additional statements (#4, #5, and #6) also indicated statistically significant differences between gender perceptions at the 95% level. These statements relate to perceptions of women having similar opportunities for promotion and raises, similar job assignments, and similar salaries as their male peers. Although both genders agreed with the statements, in all three cases, the men indicated a statistically higher level of agreement than the women.

However, the results also show that more than half of both the male and female respondents agree or strongly agree that women in accounting can expect to have similar opportunities for promotions and raises as their male peers, while only 12% of men and 18% of women disagree or strongly disagree. Similarly, two thirds of the male and female respondents agree or strongly agree that women in accounting can expect to have similar quality job assignments as their male peers. Also, 49% of female and 60% of male respondents agree or strongly agree that women in accounting can expect to have similar salaries as their male peers throughout their career. So, despite the fact that there are significant gender differences in the perceptions, the majority of students do believe that women are likely to have equal opportunities for promotions or raises, similar quality job assignments, and similar salaries to men.

Since the survey was only done at one institution, researchers need to collect more data to determine the robustness of these results. Researchers also still need to confirm the correlation between student perceptions and the perceptions of professionals at various stages of their careers.

Part 3: Areas to Target for Improvement

It is clear that gender equity issues remain in accounting. According to the research cited in this paper, women have been promoted less frequently than men to top-level positions, paid less than their male peers, and, on occasion, discriminated against because of their gender. It is not surprising that female professionals believe there is a lack of gender equity.

Student perceptions are likely to evolve into professional perceptions. But, these perceptions will shift if personal experiences and what he/she sees or hears as a professional differ from impressions formed during college. According to our survey results, female student perceptions of gender equity regarding competence, opportunities, quality of job assignments, and salaries are significantly different than male perceptions. However, the majority of both genders currently perceive that women will be treated equitably. If accounting firms are unable to make adjustments to improve the gender issues facing the industry, there is a good chance that the perceptions of these male and female students will be altered negatively when they become professionals.

We believe that companies should continue to focus on several factors to improve gender equity in the accounting profession. First, accounting firms should continue to implement FWAs because they assist dual income families that must juggle work and personal commitments. Additionally, firms should address the negative perceptions of FWA participation. Second, researchers should continue investigating current male and female career aspirations. If research findings are similar to the AICPA Work/Life and Women's Initiatives 2004 study survey mentioned earlier, accounting firms should follow up with programs that address those findings.

Third, organizations should incorporate programs that enhance candid communications with female talent about the requirements for partnership positions (Valerio, 2011). For example, business development skills should be nurtured early in the profession; the ability to bring in business is essential for companies to remain competitive and for all individuals being considered for partner. This leads to the fourth factor, networking. According to the research, women network differently than men, and some women are timid about the process. Like business development, women need training early in their careers on the nuances of networking. This process has the potential to develop a substantial return on investment considering the anticipated growth of female business decision makers globally. The profession should do a better job informing accounting students of the necessary people skills for top leadership positions as some students might have the perception that the accounting profession involves minimal human interaction. Perhaps if accounting educators placed more emphasis on the importance of networking, female students might seek out opportunities earlier in their careers to improve their networking skills.

The fifth factor to address is female mentorship. According to the Accounting MOVE Project, women are more inclined to achieve their career goals if they have female role models. Firms should assign females that have reached the level of partner as advocates to qualified women who express a desire to be admitted as partner. The relationship has the potential to boost women's self-confidence and to alleviate fears.

Finally, both accounting firms and women must work collaboratively to develop a cultural change. Accounting firms should, through their actions, prove their support of women's initiative strategies. Simultaneously, women must recognize, acquire, and demonstrate the critical skills required for partner level.

Conclusion

Accounting firms have expressed concern with regards to gender parity for over two decades. Yet the number of female partners remains low compared to their male peers, a gender pay gap persists across all levels of employment, and an employment discrimination lawsuit is still in progress at one of the Big-4 accounting firms. But there are small signs of improvement. Two of the Big-4 accounting firms are now being led by female CEOs. Furthermore, according to our survey results, although female and male student perceptions of gender equity differ,

the majority of students (both male and female) believe that accounting career opportunities are similar between men and women. These findings are encouraging and reflect progress in perception of the public accounting industry by future public accounting professionals. Public accounting firms should continue to work towards improving the perceptions of gender equity in the profession by addressing female career aspirations, focusing on early development of female business and networking skills, and improving female leader mentorship programs.

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Table 1**Results of 2014 Gender Perception Survey**

	AGREE		DISAGREE		NEUTRAL		NO RESPONSE		MEAN		ST. DEV.		p-value
	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	
1	30%	21%	40%	33%	23%	30%	7%	16%	2.56	2.69	1.69	1.53	0.3348
2	31%	16%	40%	44%	21%	23%	8%	18%	2.86	2.21	1.64	1.43	0.0148 **
3	47%	39%	33%	37%	18%	23%	2%	2%	3.33	3.18	1.90	1.65	0.3121
4	53%	65%	18%	12%	23%	12%	6%	11%	3.81	4.25	1.55	1.33	0.0478 *
5	66%	77%	11%	9%	17%	7%	6%	7%	4.10	4.55	1.41	1.27	0.0348 *
6	49%	60%	26%	18%	17%	14%	7%	9%	3.60	4.13	1.58	1.56	0.0305 *

n = 83 n = 57

Statement:

- 1 Accounting is a male dominated profession.
- 2 In the field of accounting, women are likely to be judged less competent than their male counterpart.
- 3 Having a family or family commitments will not affect my career success.
- 4 Women in accounting can expect to have similar opportunities for promotions and raises as their male counterparts.
- 5 Women in accounting can expect to have similar quality job assignments as their male peers.
- 6 Women in accounting can expect to have similar salaries as their male peers throughout their careers.

AGREE = 4, 5, or 6

DISAGREE = 0, 1, or 2

NEUTRAL = 3

*significant at the 95% level for one tailed test

**significant at the 98% level for one tailed test

Appendix A
Survey Instrument

1. Degree Program

- Bachelor's (Major in accounting)
- Bachelor's (Business Major, not accounting)
- Masters in Accounting/Tax
- MBA
- Other (please Identify _____)

2. Year In school

- Freshman
- Sophomore
- Junior
- Senior
- Graduate Student

3. Gender

- Male
- Female

4. Age _____

5. Organization Membership(s) (Check all that apply)

- Beta Alpha Psi
- Student Accounting Association
- Institute of Management Accountants
- Institute of Internal Auditors
- Association of Certified Fraud Examiners

6. Career Plans (Select the ONE area that most closely represents your future plans immediately after graduation)

- Public accounting (Auditing/Tax/Consulting)
- Internal auditing
- Corporate/Private Accounting
- Government
- Fraud examination/Forensic accounting

Other _____

7. Which of the following programs have you heard of (check all that apply)

- _____ CPA (Certified Public Accountant)
- _____ CIA (Certified Internal Auditor)
- _____ CMA (Certified Management Accountant)
- _____ CFE (Certified Fraud Examiner)

8. Rank the programs below in order of their overall usefulness (i.e. career advancement, salary level, and reputation). One, indicating the most useful, 2 being second, 3 being third and 4 being the least useful.

- _____ CPA (Certified Public Accountant)
- _____ CIA (Certified Internal Auditor)
- _____ CMA (Certified Management Accountant)
- _____ CFE (Certified Fraud Examiner)

9. For each of the following statements circle the number that corresponds with the level to which you agree or disagree. If you don't know or are uncertain, circle the X;

Strongly Disagree				Strongly Agree				Don't Know	
0	1	2	3	4	5	6	x		
0	1	2	3	4	5	6	x	The CPA is very important in public accounting.	
0	1	2	3	4	5	6	x	The CMA is very important for individuals in corporate /private accounting.	
0	1	2	3	4	5	6	x	The CIA is very important for individuals in internal auditing.	
0	1	2	3	4	5	6	x	The CFE is very important for individuals in fraud examination/forensic accounting.	
0	1	2	3	4	5	6	x	The probability of promotion is greater with professional certification (i.e.CPA/CMA/CIA/CFE).	
0	1	2	3	4	5	6	x	Accounting is a male-dominated profession.	

0	1	2	3	4	5	6	x	In the field of accounting, women are likely to be judged less competent than their male counterpart.
0	1	2	3	4	5	6	x	Having a family or family commitments will not affect my career success.
0	1	2	3	4	5	6	x	Women in accounting can expect to have similar opportunities for promotions and raises as their male peers.
0	1	2	3	4	5	6	x	Women in accounting can expect to have similar quality job assignments their male peers.
0	1	2	3	4	5	6	x	Women in accounting can expect to have similar salaries as their male peers throughout their career.
0	1	2	3	4	5	6	x	Having a CPA will enhance advancement opportunities.
0	1	2	3	4	5	6	x	Having a CPA will enhance salaries.
0	1	2	3	4	5	6	x	Having a CPA will enhance professional reputation.
0	1	2	3	4	5	6	x	Having a CMA will enhance advancement opportunities.
0	1	2	3	4	5	6	x	Having a CMA will enhance salaries.
0	1	2	3	4	5	6	x	Having a CMA will enhance professional reputation.
0	1	2	3	4	5	6	x	Having a CIA will enhance advancement opportunities.
0	1	2	3	4	5	6	x	Having a CIA will enhance salaries.

0	1	2	3	4	5	6	x	Having a CIA will enhance professional reputation.
0	1	2	3	4	5	6	x	Having a CFE will enhance advancement opportunities.
0	1	2	3	4	5	6	x	Having a CFE will enhance salaries.
0	1	2	3	4	5	6	x	Having a CFE will enhance professional reputation.