

Changing the Game

Thanks for that great introduction! You read it just the way I wrote it. <pause>

Madam Toastmaster, fellow Toastmasters and dear guests. We recently reached equal pay day. For those who haven't heard about the significance of this day, let me explain. Equal Pay Day is a symbolic day that illustrates how far into the next year a woman must work to earn the same amount made by a man in the previous year. In 2014, U.S. women earned only 79% of what men earn across industries. I will share with you thoughts, observations and statistics about women in technology and how to change the game.

Let's get started with a bit of background. Why do we dress baby girls in pink and baby boys in blue? <pause> Because they can't dress themselves.

In 1918, Ladies Home Journal published an article about pink is for boys and blue is for girls. Yes, just the opposite of what we perceive as "normal" today. The switch occurred sometime in the 40's, but no one seems to know why. Manufacturers were ecstatic because at the time, there was no way to know the gender of the baby for certain so parents often purchased two sets of supplies.

From birth, some well-meaning parents, grandparents, aunts and uncles give stereotypical gender specific gifts. How many times have we seen blue baby blankets and toy trucks intended for boys, while pink nursery walls and Barbie dolls await girls? I wonder what the balance of influence is in nature vs nurture. Just recently, my niece and her husband had a son and I sent some gifts. One item was a baby blanket my mother made for my daughter when she was a newborn. It was in a southwestern pattern of brown/blue/red and I was happy that it seemed to be to be more gender neutral. Even as adults, family and society have certain expectations of each gender. For example, when my mother and I visited her sister, my aunt, and I carried the luggage from the car to the door, my aunt remarked to my mother that I was "as helpful as a son", apparently the gold standard.

Next, let's move on to honorifics or titles - Mr/Ms/Mrs

Mr. is used for men, either single or married. A man might be addressed as Mr. John Smith, or Mr. Toastmaster. Ms. Beth Jones would be a woman, married or unmarried and appears to have replaced "Miss." While we say "Mr. President" referring to the president of the United States, it is "Madam Secretary" for a female Secretary of State, although we may finally have a "Madam President" in the U.S.

That brings us to "Mrs.". Mrs. John Doe would refer to the wife of John Doe. When my niece Adrienne married her longtime boyfriend Sam Smith, my father addressed a Christmas card to the couple as Mr. and Mrs. Adrienne Newell.

If Mrs. <name of male TM> is <name of male TM's> wife, then Mr. <name of female TM>, must be <name of female TM's> husband.

Lastly, let's explore for a moment how our upbringing may influence career choices.

"In the movies, they tell you that a girl is a *pretty princess*, not an *engineer* or a *rocket scientist*" – Mashhuda Glencross, SIGGRAPH 2016 General Submissions Chair

Hunger Games based on Suzanne Collins book series (Katniss Everdeen)

Harry Potter – J.K. Rowling (Hermione Granger)

Tangled – Disney – a twist on Rapunzel

But rather than Hollywood, let's look at the real world.

When I was in high school, there were 75% males and 25% females in my senior math class, similar ratios in college in the EECS department

Today, the statistics haven't changed much – women are 59% of U.S. labor force and 51% of population, but only 30% are in tech

Microsoft – 17% tech, 23% lead; Google 17% tech, 21% lead; Apple 20% tech, 28% lead

In STEM professions (science, technology, engineering and math), women fare somewhat better than the 79% national average, reaching 82% of men's earnings and in computing, achieving 87%. But 87% is not 100% - a gap still exists. Role models such as Sheryl Sandberg, Ann Wojcicki, and Meg Whitman may help inspire women to greater achievement.

While role models are crucial for steering girls towards the sciences in their formative years, once they enter the workforce, mentoring or advocacy play key roles for both men and women to reach their goals.

Studies have shown that companies with a more diverse workforce make more innovative products and do better in the marketplace. Apple came under fire for not including menstrual cycle tracking in its Health app, but corrected that oversight last Fall when it integrated with Clue, a fertility app. Tracking can help with natural birth control, such as the rhythm method to identify which days a woman is most, or least fertile in order to decrease or increase likelihood of conception. What do you call a Catholic woman who uses rhythm? <pause> Mommy.

Closing

Recent studies at U of Penn show only a .5% difference in men's and women's brains, which would suggest that nurture, our upbringing may be a stronger influence in behavior.

One day a group of husbands and wives went to a scientific program. The doctor there was showing them brains from real people and telling how expensive it would be to buy one. He said it was \$50,000 dollars for a female brain \$100,000 dollars for a male brain. The men snickered, thinking they knew why. One of the women asked, "Well, why would that be?" The doctor answered, "The men's brains cost more, because they have never been used."