

Gender Pay Inequality in Professional Sports: How Policy Shapes A Consistent Divide

Is it possible for male and female professional athletes to receive equal compensation? A look at how gender pay inequality persists in the policies that govern three professional sports and whether there is room for policy intervention.

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Introduction

Gender equality is important for allowing today's children to strive to be as successful as they can be regardless of their gender. The world's population is made up of 49.6% women and girls (Ritchie, 2019). Despite this statistic, gender inequality persists in workplaces, educational systems, and in cultures around the world. Gender equality matters because women continue to be underrepresented in political leadership which often decides the lives that women lead (United Nations, 2015). In the workplace, gender inequality affects a woman's ability to work high-paying jobs and gain a higher social status. Likewise, gender inequality in the education system limits opportunities for young students to learn essential skills that can help them be as successful as their male counterparts later in life (United Nations, 2015). Lastly, gender inequality in professional sports causes fewer women to pursue careers as professional athletes. Fewer spots for female professional athletes sponsorships and they are less lucrative compared to those of their male counterparts (Kosofsky, 1993). Evidently, gender equality affects everyone and matters for creating a world where everyone can achieve their greatest potential in any field they pursue.

In this paper, I will look more closely at the vast gender pay inequality that exists in professional American sports. In particular, I will focus on professional basketball, soccer, and tennis in the United States. The world of sports is constantly changing and in the last twenty years with the advancement of technology, sports viewership, and sponsorships in America, sports have become a large commodity. The men's teams over the years have become significantly more popular than the women's teams across various sports. In professional basketball, for example, viewership for the 2019 NBA Finals surpassed 15 million viewers, whereas the average viewership per game for the entire 2018-2019 season for the WNBA was

231,000 viewers (Jope, 2019). Statistics show that even over the last forty years, men's sports teams significantly outweigh women's teams in network airtime (Lee, 2017). Professional basketball is an example of a highly unequal professional sports league in terms of viewership, endorsement deals for athletes, and in athlete salaries. The highest paid male basketball player is Stephen Curry who earns \$40 million per year compared to the highest paid female basketball player, Brittney Griner, who earns \$113,500 per year (Jope, 2019). Ratings for the 2019 women's basketball season had a 200% increase in ratings, but this rating is still 0.6 (Jope, 2019). These ratings and viewership statistics directly impact how each of these organizations fares financially. The National Basketball Association (NBA) sells more tickets and has more viewers which allows it to support its athletes more (Jope, 2019). The market plays a large role in the salaries for athletes. The comparison between the statistics of the NBA and WNBA presents a stark gender inequality, but not all professional American sports are experiencing this drastic disparity.

In 1973, with the help of Grand Slam tennis champion and advocate for gender equality, Billie Jean King, equal pay was granted to men and women singles title winners in the U.S. Open (Popovich, 2015). This was the first professional tennis event to award equal prize money for male and female champions. In 2007, Wimbledon was the last Grand Slam tennis event to finally grant equal prize money to winners of both genders (Popovich, 2015). Professional tennis has made the greatest strides toward gender equality compared to the other two sports. Moreover, the U.S. Women's National Soccer Team (USWNT) is currently involved in a gender discrimination lawsuit against the U.S. Soccer Federation (Cash, 2020). The USWNT has won the last two FIFA World Cup Championships and four of the last eight. Per U.S. soccer's audited financial statements, from 2016-2018, the USWNT generated \$50.8 million in revenue versus the men's

\$49.9 million (U.S. Soccer Financial Information, 2018). In the 2014 FIFA World Cup, the winning men's team came home with over 17 times more prize money than the champion women's team (Morra, 2015). It should also be noted that the U.S. Men's National Soccer Team did not qualify to compete in the 2018 FIFA World Cup. While the USWNT generated greater revenue between 2016-2018, the team receives lower game earnings and poorer support from the U.S. Soccer Federation compared to the USMNT. The players are successful in their sport, yet they still are unable to achieve gender pay equality. In 1973 when women's professional tennis reached a landmark agreement to grant gender equal pay in major matches, more female tennis players who dreamed of pursuing a career in professional tennis saw this as a new opportunity. However, these needs have not been met for women competing in other sports. **Is there room for policy beyond college athletics to lessen or diminish the gender pay discrepancy between professional men's and women's sports?** In this paper, I will consider whether there is a role for policy beyond college athletics, that will ensure gender pay equality in professional sports.

To answer this question, I will do a comparative case study of three sports leagues to determine whether policy could positively influence greater gender pay equity in professional American sports. The sports programs that I will analyze are international professional tennis (a sport in which gender equality in terms of awarded prize money at major events has been equalized), the U.S. Men's and Women's National Soccer teams (an anomaly sport where the women's national team outperforms the men's team, yet receives a smaller paycheck), and professional American basketball (a sport where gender pay inequality is substantial). In the comparative policy analysis, I will examine the collective bargaining agreements for the NBA and WNBA as well as for the U.S Men's and Women's National Teams. Professional tennis

operates differently as it is an individual sport and the U.S. Tennis Association operates to schedule American athletes and support them in international competition. For professional tennis, I will assess the equal and unequal aspects of the sport. In addition to the comparative policy analysis, I will assess television coverage and network television contracts across the three sports. This section will focus on television broadcast equality of men's and women's major events. Policy to ensure gender equality took college athletics to a new level and brought more women into college sports. Ultimately, I plan to consider whether a similar policy can have a similar result in professional athletics. I will collect data by doing an in-depth content analysis of scholarly literature, news reports, and journals.

In Section II, I will discuss background information on Title IX and the significance of policy in athletics at the college level. In Section III, I will conduct a literature review that addresses what other authors have considered about the factors that created the gender pay disparity in professional sports. In Sections IV, I will complete the comparative policy analysis of the collective bargaining agreements and equal aspects of the three sports. I will present evidence-based findings about each of the three sports and what makes each of them unique in the pursuit of gender pay equality. In Section V, I will discuss television broadcast coverage of one major event for each of the three events. In Section VI, I will analyze the data I have gathered about the three sports and indicate where policy may fit in to encourage gender pay equality. Section VII will conclude the paper. I will conclude with limitations and potential future realities as they pertain to gender pay equality in professional athletics.

Background

In the past, we have seen how policy has improved gender equality in college sports. Prior to 1972, there was no federal requirement to ensure gender equality in schools or in the academic setting. In 1972, Title IX of the Education Amendments was passed. This law prohibits discrimination on the basis of sex in educational institutions that receive federal funds (“Title IX”, 2020). Notable results of this law include that women now have equal opportunity and funds to pursue a degree in any field they choose, and the law also grants rights to students who are victims of sexual violence. As it pertains to sports, Title IX grants an equal number of scholarships and athletic teams for women and men at every university. These gender equal opportunities would not have been possible without the efforts made by professional tennis player Billie Jean King during the 1970s. King was an advocate for gender equality throughout her tennis career and formed what is now the Women’s Tennis Association (WTA) in an effort to grant women equal monetary rewards for winning championships and equal opportunity to play. In 1972, King testified before Congress arguing for the passage of Title IX (Tory Burch Foundation, 2018). Her advocacy for this cause brought attention to gender equality in sports and her win in the 1973 game, “Battle of the Sexes,” allowed American society to see the power that athletic women have.

Title IX is the first federal statute that protects female students in educational institutions and this is the first statute that protects female athletes. Since its passage in 1972, female college athletes have achieved above and beyond what they were capable of in years past. Before Title IX, only 30,000 women were athletes on collegiate sports teams (Buchanan, 2012). By 2011, more than 200,000 young women participated in college athletics. When young girls have athletic women to look up to and a law that provides them the opportunity to participate in sports, more young girls join in.

Title IX of the Education Amendments was intended to create gender equality on school campuses that receive federal funds. What it is best known for is transforming the world of sports to allow more women to participate. Advocates for Title IX hoped that this would reduce the disparity between participation of men and women athletes, among other gender inequalities. It is fair to say that Title IX was successful in bringing more women into sports and significantly more women have joined college sports teams because they now have equal opportunity to earn scholarship money.

While the regulations pursuant to Title IX provide gender equality in college athletics, the publicity for and generation of funds for men's professional sports versus women's professional sports has not equalized. Therefore, while institutions comply with Title IX to the best of their ability, there are still ways in which Title IX is not perpetuating a shift toward gender equality in sports beyond the college level. It is unknown whether Title IX was intended to be a precursor to gender equality in professional sports. While women are joining professional teams more now than they were before the passage of Title IX, there remains a gender disparity between the salaries of most professional male and female athletes in their respective sports (Cooky, 2012). The market for professional sports, and basketball in particular, has created an enormous gender wage disparity between the salaries of NBA and WNBA athletes. Sponsorships for individual athletes can also contribute to an income disparity between male and female athletes. Therefore, it is important to consider what creates this gender pay disparity and what role policy could have to bring greater gender pay equality to professional athletics.

Theoretical Framework

The literature on the gender pay disparity of professional sports suggests that various factors are at play which create the gender pay disparity in professional sports. Basketball exemplifies one of the greatest gender pay inequalities in professional sports. As previously mentioned, a major imbalance exists between the wages of the highest paid male and female professional basketball players (Jope, 2019). Forbes indicates that one reason for this disparity is that the WNBA may be underpaying athletes based on its total revenue available (Berri, 2017). Estimates show that only 23% of revenue generated by the WNBA is used to pay athletes (“Examining,” 2019). This compares to the NBA where athletes receive about 50% of the NBA’s total revenue (“Examining,” 2019). There is also considerable difference between the total revenue dollars of the two leagues: 51.5 million in the WNBA to 5.9 billion in the NBA (Berri, 2017).

Furthermore, literature suggests that gender norms contribute to persistent gender pay inequality in professional sports (Ser, 2016). Historically, it has not been socially acceptable for women to participate in athletic competitions. Women were not permitted to compete in the 1896 Olympic Games because the founder did not believe that the female body would be strong enough to withstand certain athletic activities (Ser, 2016). The Olympic Games of 1900 permitted female athlete participation for the first time, but women were permitted to compete in only two events. These events were mixed with men, while the male Olympians had the opportunity to participate in 95 men-only events (Ser, 2016). Even in the 2016 Rio Olympic Games, there were 161 male-only events compared to 145 women and mixed events (Ser, 2016). It has taken 116 years for women’s sports to come close to reaching an equal level of *participation* in Olympic sports. Women continue to be set back by gender norms in sports that deemed female participation in athletic activity inappropriate. In addition, these gender norms

that were set hundreds of years ago have influenced our society's preferences for watching male versus female sports. It was socially unacceptable to allow women to compete at all in 1896, so all attention was directed on men's sports. The popularity garnered by men's sports over women's has translated into the media discrepancies we see today. Bandura suggests that media plays a role in "social learning," so these gender norms that play out on television will continue to impact people's experiences and preferences in the future (Bandura, 1986). The gender norms that favored male athletics have contributed to the heightened media coverage, endorsement deals, and multi-year contracts that perpetuate the gender pay divide.

The gap in the literature is that no one has compared these statistics with the policies that govern these organizations in order to determine whether additional legislation is necessary to make men's and women's professional sports equal. Other sources have asserted that gender inequality exists and there are reasons for this circumstance, but I aim to contribute to the literature by discussing whether policy intervention is necessary to counteract the gender pay inequality that exists in professional sports. Policy intervention made college athletics gender equal. I will be tasked with assessing whether a policy at the professional sports level would be feasible for narrowing the gender pay gap.

Hypothesis and Observable Implications

For this paper, I will be conducting inductive research, which means there is no clear hypothesis. I have made an observation that professional tennis is the only professional sport that has come close to achieving gender equality. Professional women's soccer has not accomplished this despite the fact that the USWNT generated more revenue in 2019 than the USMNT and it has won the last two consecutive FIFA World Cup Championships. Likewise, WNBA athletes

do not nearly receive the salaries that NBA athletes have achieved. The impact that Title IX had on gender equality in college athletics was substantial. Therefore, there is reason to believe that additional legislation could make a difference for athletes competing after college.

There are a few possible hypotheses that I have considered. One is that, no, there is not a role for policy to ensure pay equality at the professional level because the market drives salaries and sponsorships, and it would do harm to the flourishing market around sports to inject policy to solve equity concerns. Another potential hypothesis is, yes, there is a role for policy to ensure pay equality at the professional level because Americans care about gender equity and ensuring their daughters receive equal pay in any industry they pursue. I believe the most likely hypothesis is, yes, a policy could be drawn up, but it will be difficult to carry out. As income for professional athletes is not only determined by competition in games or matches, other factors will stand in the way of men and women ultimately receiving equal pay. A policy to equalize pay would likely need to include sections for the leagues about equalizing salaries, bonuses, media appearances, and sections for media outlets that mandate equal coverage. It is difficult to say whether these restrictions are feasible and whether members of Congress would agree to a policy with these lengths. Regardless, I hypothesize that a policy may be possible.

Methods

The goal of this paper is to determine whether there is a role for policy in an effort to achieve gender equality in the sports of tennis, soccer, and basketball. I have elected to do a comparative policy analysis across the three sports of basketball, soccer, and tennis to explore where gender inequality appears in the policies of men's versus women's league agreements. The collective bargaining agreements of professional soccer and basketball dictate the rules that the

athletes, coaches, and staff will follow year-round. These agreements are approved by the players' unions and the leagues themselves. I will look at each sport separately and compare policies across the men's and women's documents. The policies being assessed include player salary maximums and minimums, bonuses, and promotional appearances. Athletes additionally earn money and popularity from being broadcast on popular television stations. In the section following the policy analysis, I will look into the television schedules for one major event for each of the sports to assess how the television broadcasting of men's versus women's events has differed in recent years.

I have identified professional tennis, soccer, and basketball as the three case studies to focus on because tennis has seemed to be the closest to achieving gender pay equality, soccer is at the forefront of this issue, and basketball is a sport with largely unequal pay. I plan to look at the factors that enabled professional tennis to achieve gender equality from the passage of Title IX in 1972 with the help of Billie Jean King's activism to Wimbledon in 2007 being the final Grand Slam event to grant equal prize money to male and female players. The U.S. Women's National Team (USWNT) is the best national soccer team in the world, yet it cannot achieve gender equality from its governing body, the U.S. Soccer Federation. I plan to analyze the factors that are working to the USWNT's advantage and whether policy intervention may be necessary in order for these female athletes to achieve equal salary to the USMNT. Finally, I will look into the complex issue that is the large disparity between the compensation of NBA and WNBA players. I will consider whether policy implementation could be the most feasible way for female professional basketball players to achieve higher wages. The market for professional basketball in terms of sponsorships, ticket revenues, and the use of name/image/likeness of players to promote games accounts for the disparity between salaries of male and female professional

basketball players. I will question how the market for men's games impacts the narrative around gender pay equality in professional basketball.

These case studies will bring me to a question of, *what drives pay inequality in professional sports? Can this disparity be reduced or eliminated with policy intervention?* I will consider whether policy prescriptions can be implemented to address gender pay equality in professional basketball and soccer. After I explore each of the three sports, I believe my research will inform the answers to these questions. I also want to consider why it matters to focus on this issue. I will reflect on the implications if gender equality were to be achieved in professional basketball and soccer. Perhaps, the world of sports and sports media has progressed far beyond ensuring gender pay equality. The market may favor men's athletics disproportionately and policy implementation may create economic and societal disruption. If this is the case, I will consider the implications of this result.

Data Collection + Analysis

The data collection process for answering my research question will mainly include consulting secondary sources. I will do a comprehensive content analysis of the policies for the three sports included in my thesis. Each of these professional sports leagues are at different places in their pursuits of gender pay equality, so I plan to assess a range of quantitative and qualitative sources. I will gather my data by consulting reputable secondary sources through the Duke Libraries and Google Scholar. I will use the official collective bargaining agreements from the league websites. I will also gather data from reputable news sources to receive updates on these issues and quotes from professional athletes who weigh in on this issue. These news sources may be CNN, The New York Times, ESPN, and Bleacher Report, among others. News

reports will help bring together a story of how these sports leagues have arrived today at the level of gender pay inequality in which they find themselves. I will look into quantitative sources which will depict trends in athlete salaries over the years, and how player/team performance has influenced these salaries.

Data analysis will proceed by comparing the data that I have collected on each of the three sports. I will analyze what makes each of the three sports unique in the way that their games are structured (single player versus team), and how this may impact their ability to achieve gender equality. There will undoubtedly be unique facets that make professional tennis more successful in achieving gender equality than the other two professional sports leagues. I will identify and analyze the factors that indicate this success and whether these same factors can be attributed to the other two sports. I will look at where professional soccer and basketball are lacking in achieving gender equality. What barriers are holding these teams back? Do these barriers stem from league policies or media coverage or both? Assessing these factors will inform whether gender pay equality can be achieved without policy intervention. In the case that gender pay equality cannot be successfully achieved without policy intervention, I will consider whether it is necessary to intervene with policy to grant gender pay equality. I will assess possible policies and how they may look similar to Title IX. I will also determine the extent to which policy intervention may be *appropriate* and what implications policy may have on the world of sports economically and socially.

Comparative Policy Analysis Across Sports

Data Sources

To investigate this research question, a comparative policy analysis of the collective bargaining agreements of the male and female professional soccer and basketball programs was completed. A collective bargaining agreement (CBA) for professional sports is a contract devised through collaborative negotiation between players and the league in which they are involved. The aspects that athletes and leagues agree on include player salaries, playoff bonuses, promotional appearances, and player eligibility, among many other criteria. Professional basketball and soccer leagues negotiate these agreements with their athletes. Professional tennis athletes do not agree on a collective bargaining agreement as tennis is an individual sport and individual athletes represent themselves. The Association of Tennis Professionals (ATP) and the Women's Tennis Association (WTA) are the organizing bodies of professional tennis. These institutions represent the players on tour and agree on tournament rules at the international level (Fisniku, 2013). The ATP and WTA may enforce rules and fine players if they act out. Given the structure of professional tennis leadership, an analysis of the current equal and unequal aspects of professional tennis will help demonstrate gender parity in tennis. A comparative policy analysis of the policies held by each of these organizations will demonstrate where gender inequality lies in the writing that governs team and athlete operations. The policies for basketball, soccer, and tennis respectively will be analyzed in the sections to follow. The policies analyzed for each of the three sports break down into categories of salary, or game earnings, bonuses, and promotional benefits. These are common criteria for inequalities across the three sports. Understanding where these inequalities lie can generate discussion on *why* the inequalities persist.

Policy Analysis of Professional Basketball

The first of the three policy analyses will focus on the collective bargaining agreements of the National Basketball Association (NBA) -- the men's professional basketball league -- and the Women's National Basketball Association (WNBA). The NBA was founded in 1946 and currently has 30 teams. The WNBA was founded in 1996 and currently has 12 teams. These two organizations are the governing bodies of professional basketball in the United States. The most recent NBA collective bargaining agreement (CBA) was established in 2017. This document is an agreement between the NBA and the National Basketball Players Association. The most recent WNBA CBA was established at the start of the 2020 season and it is signed by the WNBA and the Women's National Basketball Players Association. There are three sections of the CBAs that will be analyzed across the WNBA and NBA: salaries, bonuses, and promotional appearances.

Comparison of Salaries in the NBA versus the WNBA

The criteria that will be analyzed in this section are: minimum player salary, maximum player salary, minimum team salary, and the player salary caps for both organizations. To begin, a professional basketball player's minimum salary is determined based on the number of years he or she has played in their respective league. The minimum player salaries for players in the NBA is shown in Table 1 below.

Table 1: NBA Minimum Player Salary (NBA CBA, 2017, Exhibit C-1)

2017-18 MINIMUM ANNUAL SALARY SCALE

<u>Years of Service</u>	<u>Year 1</u>	<u>Year 2</u>	<u>Year 3</u>	<u>Year 4</u>	<u>Year 5</u>
0	815,615				
1	1,312,611	1,378,242			
2	1,471,382	1,544,951	1,618,520		
3	1,524,305	1,600,520	1,676,735	1,752,950	
4	1,577,230	1,656,092	1,734,954	1,813,816	1,892,678
5	1,709,538	1,795,015	1,880,492	1,965,969	2,051,446
6	1,841,849	1,933,941	2,026,033	2,118,125	2,210,217
7	1,974,159	2,072,867	2,171,575	2,270,283	2,368,991
8	2,106,470	2,211,794	2,317,118	2,422,442	2,527,766
9	2,116,955	2,222,803	2,328,651	2,434,499	2,540,347
10+	2,328,652	2,445,085	2,561,518	2,677,951	2,794,384

In contrast, the WNBA minimum player salary table can be seen in Table 2 below.

Table 2: WNBA Minimum Player Salary (WNBA CBA, 2020, p. 36)

<u>Years of Service</u>	<u>2020</u>	<u>2021</u>	<u>2022</u>	<u>2023</u>	<u>2024</u>	<u>2025</u>	<u>2026</u>	<u>2027</u>
0-2	\$57,000	\$58,710	\$60,471	\$62,285	\$64,154	\$66,079	\$68,061	\$70,103
3+	\$68,000	\$70,040	\$72,141	\$74,305	\$76,535	\$78,831	\$81,196	\$83,631

First, there is a great disparity between the initial minimum salaries, which is exacerbated further throughout the years. In comparing the minimum player salaries of athletes who have played three years in their respective leagues, NBA players make roughly 220% of the minimum salary

that WNBA players make. The increase in player salary in the NBA grows by over \$50,000 after year three, whereas the salary grows by just over \$2,000 in the WNBA after three years of service.

Moving on to maximum player salary based on the collective bargaining agreements for both organizations, these numbers are also based on the number of years of participation in the league. The formula for calculating the maximum salary of a player who has completed fewer than seven years, as specified in the NBA CBA results, is a salary of approximately \$27,285,000 and approximately \$32,742,000 for a player who has played between seven and nine years in the 2019-2020 season (Adams, 2019). That salary applies for athletes who are signing with a new team or re-signing at their own team. This maximum player salary increases by millions of dollars as the athlete reaches ten years in the league. The maximum player salary also increases for each of the 2020/21 and 2021/22 seasons. The WNBA maximum player salary can be seen in Table 3.

Table 3: WNBA Maximum Player Salary (WNBA CBA, 2020, p. 37)

(a) Maximum Player Salary for an athlete who has been a member in the league for at least six years:

<u>2020</u>	<u>2021</u>	<u>2022</u>	<u>2023</u>	<u>2024</u>	<u>2025</u>	<u>2026</u>	<u>2027</u>
\$215,000	\$221,450	\$228,094	\$234,936	\$241,984	\$249,244	\$256,721	\$264,423

(b) For all other Player Contracts, the Maximum Player Salary shall be:

<u>2020</u>	<u>2021</u>	<u>2022</u>	<u>2023</u>	<u>2024</u>	<u>2025</u>	<u>2026</u>	<u>2027</u>
\$185,000	\$190,550	\$196,267	\$202,154	\$208,219	\$214,466	\$220,900	\$227,527

As opposed to the men's salaries, the women's salaries start significantly lower and climb by only a few thousand dollars with each year in the league. The maximum salary for an NBA

player is more than 125 times greater than that of a WNBA player based on the same number of years played.

Continuing on to minimum team salary statistics, the wording for both professional basketball organizations is similar. Both the NBA and WNBA collective bargaining agreements say that the minimum team salary will be equal to 90% of the Salary Cap for the given Salary Cap Year. These statements can be found on page 160 of the NBA CBA and page 71 of the WNBA CBA. While the wording is similar, there are unequal implications for what these statements correlate to in terms of monetary payout. A professional male or female basketball player's annual compensation is a combination of salaries and benefits. In the NBA collective bargaining agreement, the athlete Salary Cap for the league for each year is described as 44.74% of the Projected Basketball Related Income (BRI) for a given Salary Cap Year and divided among the number of NBA teams that are scheduled to play in the year (NBA CBA, 2017, p. 159). The Salary Cap depends on Projected BRI and Projected Benefits for a given season. Each team can make exceptions which can allow a player to make more than the Salary Cap in a year. The NBA Salary Cap for the 2019-2020 season was set with a Projected Basketball Related Income of roughly \$8 billion (Hawksfanatic, 2020). For the 2019-2020 season, the league Salary Cap was roughly \$3.6 billion, resulting in a per team salary cap of \$109.14 million (Helin 2020).

For the WNBA, the team Salary Cap was laid out more directly in its collective bargaining agreement, which can be found in Table 4. This table indicates that the Salary Cap for WNBA athletes was set at \$1.3 million in 2020, with a gradual increase each year. Over \$100 million separates the Salary Caps for the NBA and the WNBA.

Table 4: WNBA Salary Cap (WNBA CBA, 2020, p. 70)

(a) **Salary Cap.** The Salary Cap for each Salary Cap Year during the term of this Agreement shall be as set forth below.

<u>2020</u>	<u>2021</u>	<u>2022</u>	<u>2023</u>
\$1,300,000	\$1,339,000	\$1,379,200	\$1,420,500
<u>2024</u>	<u>2025</u>	<u>2026</u>	<u>2027</u>
\$1,463,200	\$1,507,100	\$1,552,300	\$1,598,800

Comparison of Bonuses in the NBA versus the WNBA

In addition to receiving salaries which go into an athlete's total income for the year, NBA and WNBA athletes receive various bonuses throughout the season. Three bonuses that illuminate a major payout disparity between the NBA and WNBA. First, both leagues grant a Time Off Bonus to their athletes in the collective bargaining agreements. The Time Off Bonus is given to athletes participating in additional training or competition outside of the regular season, also known as the Off Season. For the NBA, this bonus may not exceed 20% of the player's Base Compensation for the given season (NBA CBA, 2017, p. 49). Given the base salary information in the collective bargaining agreement, an NBA athlete who has been in the league for three years would have the ability to earn a Time Off Bonus of roughly \$304,861 per season. In contrast, the WNBA Time Off Bonus policy may be applied toward athletes training in the Off Season with compensation of at most \$50,000 (WNBA CBA, 2020, p. 46-47). This is a discrepancy of over \$250,000 between leagues for equal opportunities of Off Season training.

Furthermore, the Playoff Bonus presents another payout difference between leagues. The NBA or WNBA Playoff at the end of a season is a series of games that determines the league winner for the year. Sixteen NBA teams make the NBA Playoff and eight teams in the WNBA make the WNBA Playoff. This number differs because the WNBA has fewer teams in its league. For the NBA Playoff, there is a Player Playoff Pool, which held \$20 million for the 2018 season.

Portions of the pool are awarded to teams for certain achievements. The team with the best season record, and the teams that land in the top six in the league will earn money from the Player Playoff Pool (Adams, 2018). The money is distributed evenly amongst players in the teams that win these awards. In addition, all teams that competed in the first round of the playoffs received \$298,485 (Adams, 2018). In 2018, the winning team in the NBA Finals (Golden State Warriors) received \$3,541,896 and the losing team (Cleveland Cavaliers) received \$2,346,947 (Adams, 2018). This comes out to roughly \$208,346 per winning player in the NBA Finals and roughly \$138,055 per losing player. The NBA does not provide monetary awards for the league Most Valuable Player. For the WNBA, the winning athletes in the WNBA Finals receive \$11,356 each (WNBA CBA, 2020, p. 87). The WNBA Finals runner-ups receive \$5,678 per player. The WNBA Most Valuable Player receives \$15,450 and the Rookie of the Year receives \$5,150 (WNBA CBA, 2020, p. 87).

A third category of bonuses awarded to NBA and WNBA players is distributed for participation in the league All-Star games. For the 2019 NBA All-Star game, the winners are awarded \$100,000 per player. The losers of the NBA All-Star game receive \$25,000 per player (Thompson, 2020). In contrast, all WNBA All-Star game participants receive \$2,575 and the All-Star Game Most Valuable Player receives \$5,150 (WNBA CBA, 2020, p. 87).

Comparison of Promotional Appearances in the NBA versus the WNBA

A final category of comparison across the NBA and WNBA collective bargaining agreements concerns athlete promotional appearances. As a part of the collective bargaining agreements, athletes may be asked to engage in promotional appearances on behalf of their team or the league. These appearances may include award shows, charitable events, autograph signing

sessions, or hospitality events, among others (WNBA CBA, 2020, p. 87). According to the NBA CBA, an NBA athlete will be paid \$3,500 for each promotional appearance he makes for a commercial sponsor of the league. For each subsequent appearance in the Salary Cap Year, the NBA athlete will receive \$4,500 from its team (NBA CBA, 2017, p. 44). In contrast, WNBA athletes are not compensated for their first ten promotional appearances for their team or the league. Beginning with the eleventh promotional appearance, a WNBA player is paid \$750.00 for every third appearance. This means that the athlete will be paid for their 11th, 14th, 17th appearances, and so on.

As evidenced by a comparison of the collective bargaining agreements of the men's and women's professional basketball organizations, pay discrepancies exist in the policies that direct these organizations. Salaries and bonuses differ drastically and compensation for promotional appearances is also unequal. A discussion of why these discrepancies persist will be detailed in the Results section.

Policy Analysis of Professional Soccer

This section will be focused on gender pay inequality across the U.S. Men's and Women's National Soccer Teams. These teams compete internationally in friendly competitions and in the FIFA World Cup. This section will not focus on Major League Soccer (MLS) or the National Women's Soccer League (NWSL), which represent the two professional soccer leagues sanctioned by the U.S. Soccer Federation. While many of the U.S. Men's and Women's National Team athletes also play in the MLS or NWSL and earn a separate salary for competing for these teams, these U.S. sanctioned leagues will not be the focus of this comparison. The first U.S.

Men's National Soccer Team (USMNT) was founded in 1885 and the USMNT competed in the first FIFA World Cup in 1930. After the passing of Title IX in 1972, the U.S. Women's National Soccer Team (USWNT) was founded and they competed in its first international competition in 1985.

For historical context, which prompted the delay in women's ability to play soccer at the international level, the story begins with Dick Kerr's Ladies F.C., which is one of the first professional women's soccer leagues in England (Freakonomics). These women began playing football, as they call soccer in the United Kingdom, in the 1920s to raise money for their men fighting in World War I. They initially played games against foreign national teams. At the time, men's football in the U.K. was already well-established with professional and amateur teams. In a game in 1920, the Dick Kerr Ladies attracted more than 50,000 fans in Everton, which prompted backlash from the men's leagues. The men's leagues filed a complaint with the Football Association (the governing body of English soccer) out of fear that the women's league would draw attention away from the men's league. This led to a ban on women's football in England in 1921. This is significant because the English Football Association at the time was the most powerful member of the International Football Association (FIFA). As a result of this ban, FIFA excluded women's soccer from the World Cup until 1971 (Freakonomics). Today, there are historians and economists that wonder what could have happened in the sport of women's soccer, if they had been allowed to play those fifty years. What would have happened for gender pay equality in professional soccer? There is no clear answer. This story provides context for the differences in athlete compensation across the two U.S. national team collective bargaining agreements (CBA). In the following sections, the policies that have been agreed upon by the USWNT and USMNT along with the U.S. Soccer Federation (USSF) will be evaluated. The

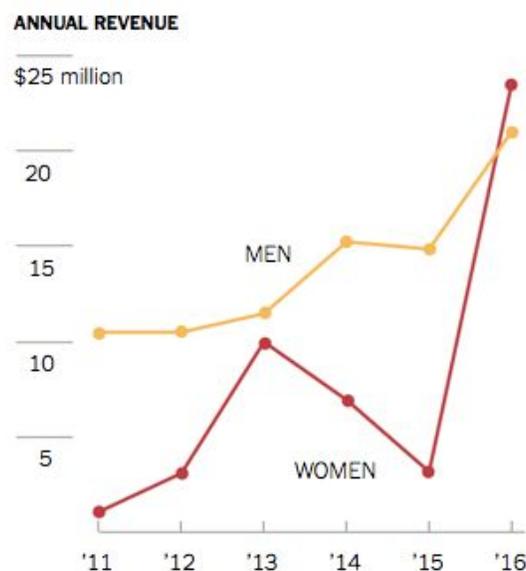
USMNT CBA used in this paper was in effect from 2011 to 2018. The USWNT CBA used in this paper was written in 2017 and is in effect until 2021. The USWNT is also currently involved in a lawsuit against the U.S. Soccer Federation that argues for gender pay discrimination against the USWNT. The lawsuit was filed by the USWNT in March, 2019 and created public attention during the 2019 World Cup. The lawsuit cites the collective bargaining agreements for both programs in its arguments. The gender pay gap between the men's and women's teams occurs across various criteria including game earnings, performance bonuses, and game promotion, among other forms of inequity. Why these inequalities persist will be discussed following the evaluation of the organization policies.

Comparison of Policies in USMNT CBA versus USWNT CBA

Five policies that will be discussed in this section that arose in both the USMNT CBA and the USWNT CBA that present inequalities between programs. These policies discuss regular season game earnings (player salary), performance bonuses, World Cup bonuses, game promotion, and physical playing field surfaces. To begin with player salaries, if the USWNT and USMNT each played and won 20 friendly competitions in a year, players on the USWNT would earn a maximum of \$99,000, or \$4,950 per game (Central District, 2019, p. 11). In contrast, players on the USMNT would earn roughly \$263,320, or \$13,166 per game. If both teams won all 20 of the friendly competitions, the USWNT would earn 38% of the payout that the men's team would earn. These policies on compensation for these matches are agreed upon by the U.S. Soccer Federation and the respective men's and women's teams when they devise their collective bargaining agreements. Revenue generation, performance, television ratings by the men's and women's national teams are cited as reasons for the chosen degree of compensation,

according to former U.S. Soccer president, Sunil Gulati (Das, 2016). These three criteria are usually led by the men in most years -- they play in larger arenas and sell more tickets. However, the women overtook the men in annual revenue raised for the U.S. Soccer Federation in 2016. This is largely due to the fact that the USWNT won the FIFA World Cup in 2015. In the wake of this win, the women were able to generate greater revenue than the men in 2016. Table 5 indicates how revenue generation by the men's and women's teams has differed in recent years.

Table 5: Revenue Generation by U.S. Men's and Women's National Soccer Teams In Recent Years (Das, 2016).



Source: U.S. Soccer

By The New York Times

The salary for friendly competitions makes up one part of an individual player's overall income as a national soccer team member. Athletes may also receive various bonuses for competing in certain events or representing the team in promotional appearances. There is a

significant gender disparity when it comes to compensation for competing in the FIFA World Cup. Using the USWNT and USMNT collective bargaining agreements, The Guardian broke down the gender pay gap between the USWNT and USMNT when it comes to World Cup compensation. First, members of the USWNT earned \$37,500 each for qualifying for the World Cup in 2019. If the men's team had qualified, the U.S. Soccer Federation offered a player pool of \$2.5 million, which would come out to an award of \$108,695 maximum per player for qualifying (Murray, 2019). Next, for winning individual World Cup qualification games, USWNT players earn \$3,000 compared to the USMNT's \$12,500 per player. The men's teams play eleven more World Cup qualification games than the women's teams. In this case the men will receive more money for playing more games in addition to receiving more per game played. Players will also receive additional bonuses for being announced as one of the 23 members of the World Cup roster. This bonus is \$37,500 for the women and \$68,750 for the men. Once the teams enter the knockout stage of the World Cup, USMNT players will receive \$6,875 per game in which they compete. The women do not receive bonuses for competing in games in the subsequent knockout round. If the USWNT wins the World Cup, as they did in 2015 and 2019, they receive \$110,000 per player. The USMNT, in contrast, would have received \$407,608 per player if they had won the 2018 championships. Finally, the women earned a World Cup victory tour, which provided \$60,869 to each player (Murray, 2019). The discrepancies in World Cup bonuses are due to the fact that FIFA chooses to award more money to participants in the men's World Cup. FIFA claims this is due to higher viewership and ratings for the men's events.

Furthermore, discrepancies lie between the U.S. Soccer Federation's treatment of the men's and women's national teams when it comes to game promotion and equitable playing surfaces. According to the lawsuit, the USSF has allocated fewer resources in promoting

USWNT games compared to USMNT games. The USSF has also not gone to the same lengths to support and promote women's games compared to men's games. This has left fans without sufficient time to buy tickets, which has affected the USWNT's ability to sell out games (Central District, 2019, p. 14). In addition, "in December 2017, the former President of Soccer United Marketing – the for-profit marketing company the USSF has used for many years to market the national teams and other soccer entities – acknowledged that the [women's national team (WNT)] has been under-marketed. She further acknowledged that the USSF has 'taken the WNT for granted' and agreed that there was a need for the USSF to invest equally in the WNT and MNT," (Central District, 2019, p. 14). The disparity created in the promotion of the USWNT compared to the USMNT has likely resulted in loss of revenue and a lack of support for the USWNT.

Finally, playing surfaces have not been equitable for all USWNT and USMNT games. The plaintiffs in the 2019 lawsuit between the USWNT and USSF provided examples of competitions where the playing surfaces were not provided at the same standard for the women's national team as for the men's competitions. The USWNT argued that 13 of their 62 domestic games between January 1, 2014 and December 31, 2017 were played on artificial surfaces. The USMNT, experienced artificial surfaces for only one out of their 49 domestic games in the same period (Central District, 2019, p. 13). The playing surfaces that soccer players use during games can have various effects on the players and the game. According to Storelli, a company that creates soccer gear for all surfaces, indicates that the terrain of a grass field can impact the speed of a soccer game because there are often bumps in the grass (Storelli, 2020). Playing on a grass field can also provide more cushion to athletes as soccer cleats can pierce grass surfaces more easily compared to a type of plastic turf. Regardless of the surface on which the USWNT players

prefer to play, these conditions were not provided equally to both programs during four years of domestic play. Evidently, despite the women's national program outplaying their male counterparts, discrepancies in their compensation and playing conditions persist.

Policy Analysis of Professional Tennis

The final section of the comparative policy analysis will focus on professional tennis. Tennis differs from the other two sports presented in this paper because it is an individual sport. Tennis players may represent their country or themselves, but in a competition they compete as individuals or in pairs. In addition, tennis players are not unionized; therefore, they do not have collective bargaining agreements with a governing body. Professional tennis is largely governed outside of the U.S. because most events happen in other countries around the world. The United States Tennis Association (USTA) is the national governing body for American professional tennis and takes control over the calendar for events held in America. The USTA was founded in 1881, originally as the U.S. National Lawn Tennis Association. Only men were represented by this league to begin. Under the USTA, there is the American Tennis Professionals (ATP) organization for the men and the Women's Tennis Association (WTA). The WTA was founded in 1973 by Billie Jean King as professional female tennis players worked to establish gender pay equality. These are the only organizations through which American players can compete in international competition. Both of these organizations act to protect and advocate for American tennis players (Fisniku, 2013). Given that rules are not agreed upon between the athletes and the organizations, the ATP and WTA have the ability to penalize players who act out of the organization's requirements (Fisniku, 2013). In the ATP, there are three current tennis athletes that serve on the Board of Representatives; however, over half of the full council is made up of

ownership representation. There is a conflict of interest at times between the athletes and the ATP because policies that this organization decides on may not be agreed upon by the athletes. The organization may make decisions that support the organization financially, but ones in which the athletes do not agree.

Despite a lack of unionization or collective bargaining agreements, professional tennis remains one of the most gender equal professional sports in the world. In this section, the equal and unequal aspects of professional tennis will be compared to assess how far professional tennis has come in achieving gender pay equity. The majority of the discussion about equal pay in professional tennis will focus on tournament prize money payout. Since tennis is an individual sport, comparing competition earnings for the women versus the men is the most prominent way to assess gender parity. Promotional appearances will not be a topic of comparison because these opportunities are made possible by the athletes themselves. The USTA may feature athletes in their promotional content; however, the organization has not disclosed the monetary compensation for athletes in these instances. The USTA's primary function is to schedule events for athletes and serve as a leader and coordinator for American tennis players. Athletes who participate in promotional appearances with sponsors will likely receive compensation for those appearances, but those are agreed upon between the athlete and the sponsor.

Equal Aspects of Professional Tennis

In 2007, all Grand Slam events committed to the distribution of equal prize money to male and female players marking one of the most prominent achievements for gender pay equality in professional sports. The four Grand Slam tournaments are the U.S. Open, the Australian Open, the French Open, and Wimbledon. These four events did not grant

gender-equal pay all at the same time. The U.S. Open was the first event to institute equal prize money in 1973. As mentioned earlier, Billie Jean King, a dominant female professional tennis player in the 1960-70s, sparked a movement for gender pay equality in tennis. In 1973, she threatened to boycott the U.S. Open which prompted the USTA to grant equal prize money (Bodo, 2018). The winners in this event in 1973 earned \$25,000. Today, the male and female winners of the U.S. Open receive \$3.8 million.

The Australian Open was the second Grand Slam event to commit to gender-equal prize money. The Australian Open remained unequal for nearly thirty years after the U.S. Open transitioned to equal prize money. In 1978, in particular, the male champion of the Australian Open earned 583.3% of what the women earned for winning the event (Bodo, 2018). In 2001, the WTA argued for gender pay equality and the officials in Australia finally agreed. A third Grand Slam tournament, the French Open began distributing equal prize money in 2006 after female French tennis player, Amelie Mauresmo, earned equal prize money for winning the Australian Open, but received less than her male counterpart in Wimbledon later that year. Lastly, Wimbledon committed to equal prize money in 2007 after a steady decline in the gender pay discrepancy in the years prior.

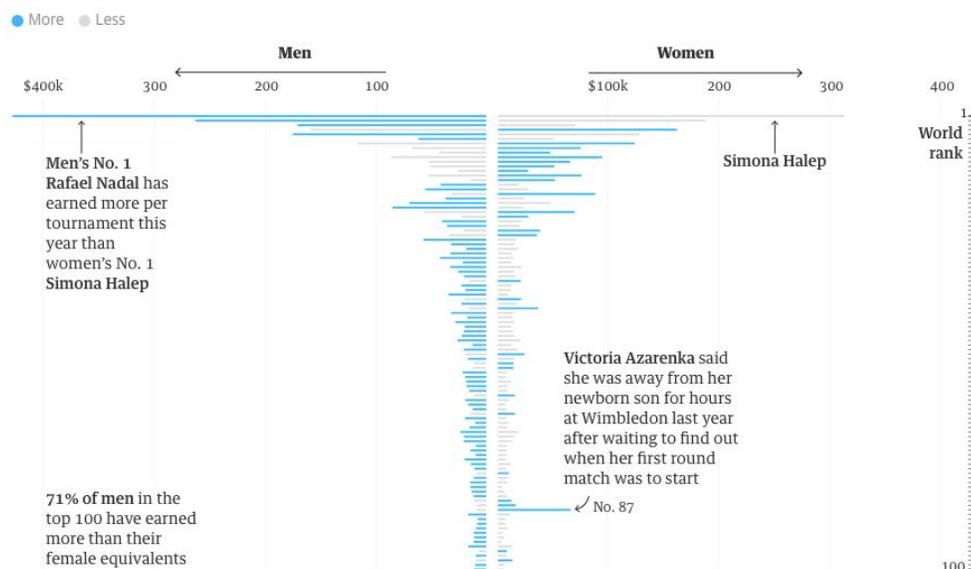
While the Grand Slam events are often the most popular events for tennis spectators, various other tennis tournaments offer equal prize money throughout the year. Masters 1000 events which occur frequently throughout the year distribute equal prize money to male and female winners. These events include: BNP Paribas Open, Indian Wells, Miami Open, Rolex Monte-Carlo Masters, Mutua Madrid Open, Internazionali BNL d'Italia, Rome Masters, Rogers Cup, Western & Southern Open, Cincinnati Open, Rolex Shanghai Masters, Rolex Paris Masters (Jonathan, 2020). The BNP Paribas Open, one of the Masters 1000 events that is regarded highly

like a Grand Slam event, was set to present a total prize money pool of \$17,085,360 at the 2020 event (Jonathan, 2020). The event was postponed due to the COVID-19 outbreak; however, men and women singles and doubles players would have received the same prize money. Many of the Masters 1000 and WTA Premier Mandatory tournaments have additionally increased prize money payout in recent years. The Indian Wells event saw a prize money increase of 81.95% since 2012 (Jonathan, 2020). A prize pool increase is significant because tennis tournaments like the ones that have been mentioned are major sources of income for professional tennis players.

Unequal Aspects of Professional Tennis

Various lower tier events distribute unequal prize money to male and female winners. At some WTA events with higher-tier female athletes and lower-tier male athletes, the women will be awarded higher prize money than the men. However, the disparity is greater to the advantage of the men in events when the skill level of men and women is equal or the women are lower-tier. In addition, a 2018 report by The Guardian highlighted the disparity between earnings of players in the top 100. Table 6 indicates the discrepancy between the top earning female player and the top earning male player, along with the rest of the top 100 players in the world side-by-side. The table shows a significant difference in the earnings of the top ranked male and female players, Rafael Nadal and Simona Halep. In addition, the blue lines in the table indicate whether the male player or the female player of the same rank receive more money. 71% of men in the top 100 players earn more than women of the same rank (Levitt, 2018).

Table 6: Earnings Per Tournament for Top 100 Players in the World (Levitt, 2018).



Discrepancies in earnings for professional tennis players occur because other competitive events like the WTA Premier 5 do not provide equal payout to athletes. The China Open, typically held in Beijing in October pays the male winner 67% more than the female winner (Rothenberg, 2016). Likewise, in an event in Rio de Janeiro in February, 2016, the male champion was awarded \$303,300 compared to the female winner's \$43,000 (Rothenberg, 2020). The Abierto Mexicano Telcel event of the ATP World Tour 500 series is another unequal event. The total prize money for the ATP in the 2020 tournament was \$1,845,265. For the women's event, the total prize pool came out to \$251,750 (Jonathan, 2020). In fact, in some of these events where ATP and WTA events are sold under the same ticket, the payout disparity for athletes may be stark (Connley, 2019).

While professional tennis in the United States operates differently compared to professional soccer and basketball, there remain aspects that do not compensate male and female athletes equally. In major events, men and women have the opportunity to achieve equal prize money; however, throughout the year, various other opportunities for earning pay for play

continue to distribute unequal payout. In the next section, which discusses television broadcasting across the three sports, professional tennis will prove to be the most equitable of the three in television coverage of major events.

Comparison of Domestic Television Broadcast Equity Across Sports

With the surge of media coverage of sports in recent years, television and broadcast coverage has played a major role in how teams and athletes gain exposure. Media coverage of sports includes not only television broadcasting, but social media content, news articles, podcasts, and streaming services. People can now hold live sports in their hands. Media coverage allows the public to watch their favorite athletes or experience sports like they have never seen before. Professional teams can now make deals with television broadcasting stations and athletes can profit from commercial appearances. The media plays a major role in the payout divide for professional athletes because it can influence which athletes are talked about the most and exposure leads to contracts. With the evolution of mass media it would be impossible to discuss the extent to which all forms of media influence each athlete's salary. Therefore, this section will focus only on television coverage of five major events across the three sports of basketball, soccer and tennis. This section will, first, consider the league contracts with network stations to determine the amount of revenue that is generated for different leagues based on broadcast deals and revenue generated as a result of viewership. Then, the domestic television coverage of the 2019 NBA and WNBA Finals will be the first two major events that this section will cover. Separate events occur during late Spring for the men and mid-Fall for the women. The second section will look at the domestic television schedules for the 2014 Men's FIFA World Cup, in which the U.S. Men's National Team advanced to the Round of 16, and the 2019 Women's FIFA

World Cup, in which the U.S. Women's National Team won. The final major event of focus in this section is the 2019 Tennis U.S. Open, which is a combined event for men and women. The analysis of these events will cover when and what time the men's versus the women's games were played and on what network station. Ratings and viewership of these events will also be accounted for.

To provide context for how television broadcasting becomes monetized, television coverage of professional sports today is determined by television ratings and primetime broadcasts. TV ratings are associated with Nielsen Media Research. Data is collected on national television viewership and this information is distributed to television networks, media and advertisers (Nielsen, 2021). Through statistical sampling, Nielsen is able to provide results that come in the measurements of rating points and shares. To gather data, a random sample of thousands of households across America is used to measure how many people are watching certain programs. Nielsen collects data on the demographics of viewers, including their age, gender, race, geographic location, and socioeconomic status. A single national rating point represents 1% of the number of television sets used given the number of television-equipped households (Nielsen, 2021). These ratings are important because advertising rates are based on Nielsen's data and these ratings can determine whether a television show is renewed for another season. Sporting events receive ratings as well.

Furthermore, the time at which a program is broadcast can impact its viewership and ratings, which then impacts revenue generated for the broadcasting network. Primetime television is a section of peak television watching time in the middle of the evening. This is usually between 7:00-11:00PM across the United States. This is a part of the day when statistically the most people are watching television; therefore, this is when advertising agencies

earn the greatest revenues. In addition, advertising expenditures are often the highest during these times. New shows or episodes, or the most popular sporting events often play during primetime. Nielsen ratings indicate these statistics.

Beginning with a look at television broadcasting for professional basketball, both the men's and women's leagues hold deals with network broadcasting stations. The NBA currently holds a nine-year television deal with ABC/ESPN and TNT that generates annual league television revenues of roughly \$2.66 billion beginning with the 2016-2017 season (ESPN, 2014). The NBA Finals are shown exclusively on ABC. The networks of ESPN and ABC cover all 44 postseason games, in addition to various regular season games. In contrast, the WNBA signed a six-year broadcast deal with ESPN over the 2017-2022 seasons. ESPN broadcasts 30 WNBA games each season. The deal brings in roughly \$12 million for the WNBA, equating to about \$1 million in earnings for each team per year (Lefton, 2013). In addition, beginning with the 2019 season, CBS Sports Network agreed to a deal to broadcast 40 regular-season WNBA games. CBS Sports Network and the NBA agreed that all 40 of these games would be on weekends during primetime (WNBA, 2019). Therefore, beginning with the payout of network deals with each of these leagues, the NBA receives significantly more money per year for a television contract alone. The network plans on a major viewership of these games, but the NBA will bring in these earnings regardless of how many viewers tune into their games across the season. The WNBA is making 0.45% of the earnings of the NBA based on broadcasting contracts alone.

The 2019 NBA Finals took place over two weeks from May 30th to June 13th. The NBA plays a best of seven games series. The first game between the Golden State Warriors and the Toronto Raptors in 2019 began at 9PM EST on May 30th. All six NBA Finals games played during primetime. Game 6 had the most viewers with an average of 18.34 million (Pucci, 2019).

Ratings were down in 2019 from previous years. Despite this, ratings were between 7.6 and 10.7 across the six games (Pucci, 2019). It should also be mentioned that ESPN televised every playoff game from April 13 to April 28. These were shown every week night during primetime and began at 2:30pm on the weekends through the late night (Rill, 2019). The NBA Conference semifinals and finals were also shown on ESPN.

The 2019 WNBA Finals took place between September 29th and October 10th in a best of five games series. These games were all broadcast at primetime on ESPN, ESPN2 or ABC (WNBA, 2019). All of the first round and semifinal playoff games were also broadcast on ESPN2 during primetime television. There are fewer of these games than there are NBA playoff games because there are fewer teams in the WNBA compared to the NBA. Ratings for the 2019 WNBA Finals and playoffs were down from previous years. There was an average of 381,000 viewers across the five games with 440,000 watching Game 5 (Paulsen, 2019). The rating for Game 5 was 0.27.

According to these statistics, the opportunity for viewership of each of the men's and women's events was mostly equal. All Playoff and Finals games were broadcast during primetime on cable networks. However, the 2019 WNBA Finals had a viewership that was roughly 2% of the NBA Finals in the same year. This could be due to advertising of each of the events. The lack of viewership could also be due to the fact that many of the WNBA regular season games are not shown on cable networks during primetime. Most of the WNBA games played between May and August of 2019 were shown on NBA TV, Twitter, and CBS Sports Network. These are all networks that require an additional subscription or membership. There are evidently various factors at play, which determine the rating differential, which influence the league payout for network broadcasting deals.

Next, I will compare the 2014 Men's FIFA World Cup and 2019 Women's FIFA World Cup television broadcast schedules. The U.S. Men's National Soccer Team advanced to the Round of 16 in 2014 and did not qualify for the World Cup in 2018. The U.S. Women's National Soccer Team won the 2019 World Cup. In 2014, ABC, ESPN, and Univision broadcast World Cup matches. After 2014, Men's FIFA World Cup coverage switched from ESPN networks to Fox Sports. A significant number of the group play games were broadcast on ESPN and networks in Spanish between June 12-26 (Paulsen, 2014). Only three of these matches featured the American team, but between one and four group play games were shown on these channels each day. ESPN or ABC and Univision broadcast every game after group play including after the U.S. team was eliminated in the Round of 16 (Paulsen, 2014). Ratings and viewership for the 2014 World Cup were far more successful than in years past. Viewership for these events averaged 8.1 million combined across ESPN and Univision (Paulsen, 2014). The group stage match between the USMNT and Portugal captured 18.2 million viewers, which ranked as the most-watched World Cup event on ESPN (Paulsen, 2014).

In looking at the 2019 Women's FIFA World Cup domestic coverage, Fox Sports and various Spanish stations, including Universo and Telemundo, covered 52 games, (Barbaro, 2019). These included all of the matches featuring the women's American team and many match-ups featuring other countries. Aside from the channels on which they were broadcast, the coverage of the 2019 Women's World Cup games was similar to the 2014 Men's World Cup coverage. All games after group play were broadcast. The semifinals and finals for both the 2014 Men's and 2019 Women's World Cups were aired at 3 or 3:30PM EST (Sports Media Watch, 2019). According to Fox Sports' Nielsen ratings report, 14.3 million Americans watched the FIFA World Cup Finals on July 7, 2019 (Hess, 2019). This was a greater turnout than viewership

for the 2018 Men's World Cup Finals by 22% (Hess, 2019). The USMNT did not compete in that event, so that may have a bearing on viewership. Furthermore, the viewership since the last Women's World Cup Finals in 2015 increased by 402%. The USWNT played in both of the 2015 and 2019 events (Hess, 2019).

In this case as well, there was equal opportunity for Americans to view both the Men's and Women's World Cup events in 2014 and 2019. Nearly the same number of games were broadcast and Americans had the chance to watch all of the matches featuring the USMNT and USWNT. There was greater viewership for the group play match featuring the USMNT in 2014 than the 2019 World Cup Final featuring the USWNT. There is speculation, as a part of the USWNT lawsuit against the U.S. Soccer Federation, that FIFA and the U.S. Soccer Federation have not equitably promoted the men's and women's World Cup competitions. This could be due to various factors, one being that the ratio of men to women on the FIFA Executive Committee is stark. The first woman was elected to this committee in 2013 and there remains only one woman out of the 25 members of the committee (McGregor, 2015). Whether it is due to a lack of female representation at the top of FIFA leadership or another reason, it is important to note that a lesser game featuring the USMNT garnered roughly 4 million more views than the World Cup Final in which the USWNT won. Discrepancies in viewership impact how much network stations are willing to pay the respective Men's and Women's National Teams to broadcast these events, and this ultimately contributes to athlete treatment and compensation.

Finally, looking at the 2019 U.S. Open, which took place in New York City. The USTA and ESPN signed an 11-year contract in 2015 to broadcast the U.S. Open (Ourand, 2013). This meant that the U.S. Open was broadcast exclusively on cable. U.S. Tennis Association (USTA) signed this deal for \$770 million. All events were shown on ESPN, ESPN2 or on the ESPN app.

Looking at the U.S. Open television guide, ESPN aired the first round for both the men and women on ESPN from 11AM to 11PM on the first day of the tournament, Monday, August 31st (US Open, 2019). All the first round matches were shown over the course of the first few days including some events with popular players being shown during "Primetime at the U.S. Open" in the evenings. At the end of the week on Thursday and Friday, the Men's Doubles Final played on the first day just before the Women's Singles Semifinals. On Friday, the Women's Doubles Final played just before the Men's Singles Semifinals. Therefore, the singles semifinals for both genders were played during primetime on opposite days of the doubles finals. The Women's Singles Final was aired at primetime on Saturday and the Men's Singles Final aired at primetime on Sunday. Based on the television guide, viewers had an equal opportunity to view both men's and women's competitions. The most popular events were aired during primetime television hours and the men's and women's events did not conflict. Furthermore, according to Sports Media Watch, the Women's Singles Final had the highest viewership of an U.S. Open competition since USTA switched from CBS to an ESPN deal in 2015 (Paulsen, 2019). The Final between Serena Williams and Bianca Andreescu tabbed 3.72 million viewers, which increased ratings and viewership from previous years. In addition, this event captured more viewers than the Men's Singles Final which tabbed between 1.6 and 2.75 million viewers (Paulsen, 2019).

Television broadcasting represents another area in which professional tennis appears to be the strongest for maintaining gender equity. The women's and men's events are presented with equal timing to allow for optimal public exposure. In addition, Americans appear to watch the men's and women's events nearly equally compared to the other two sports. The U.S. Open

distributes equal prize money to the winners; therefore, the broadcasting data does not directly influence player payout in this particular event.

Reflections and Potential for Policy

Evidence from the professional sports collective bargaining agreements and data on television broadcasting indicate that male and female athletes are compensated and treated differently. These disparities exist for various reasons including long-standing societal norms, league revenue generation, and opportunities for greater bargaining power by some parties.

Reflection on Discrepancies in Professional Basketball

Within the realm of professional basketball, there are various instances across the two collective bargaining agreements where the policies prevent the women from receiving the same compensation as the men. One reason for these disparities is historical societal norms that disallowed female participation in the early 1900s. The men's National Basketball League was created 50 years before the Women's National Basketball League, which allowed the men's organization to gain popularity. They established a foundation ahead of the women and that allowed them to create more than double the number of women's teams that exist today. The men's professional league has profited off the name, image, and likeness of its players and teams through various media outlets. With public opinion favoring the men, the men's national league was also able to begin raising revenue 50 years before the women. This leads to the second reason for the wide disparity between male and female athlete payout in these leagues: league revenue. In the 2018-2019 season, the NBA raised \$8.76 billion in revenue (Gough, 2020). In the same season, the WNBA raised \$60 million in revenue (Jope, 2019). Evidently, the women's

organization does not have the same profits with which it can give back to its athletes. However, the proportion of league revenue that the respective leagues *choose* to give back to its athletes is also different. In the 2017-2018 season, the NBA distributed 50 percent of the league's revenue to its players. In the same season, the WNBA distributed less than 25 percent of its revenue to its players (Gough, 2020). The men's professional league has more money to pay its players and chooses to give it back to their players. The women have less money and do not give a large share of that revenue to their athletes. Furthermore, given that the WNBA brings in a smaller annual revenue, a larger percentage of it must go toward overhead and other league costs. The NBA has over \$4 billion left over after paying 50% to its players. The WNBA is left with \$45 million after paying its players.

One final reason for the great discrepancy between the compensation of male and female basketball players in America is due to the fact that the men have greater bargaining power. American male basketball players have the opportunity to play in competitive professional leagues abroad. The "EuroLeague," which comprises 18 teams located in 18 European and Asian countries, is an alternative for various American male players ("Euroleague," 2021). Many of the American players that travel to play in Europe or Asia were unable to secure a spot in the American league. With competitive leagues overseas, the U.S. must continue to provide the best support for its athletes. At the same time, the U.S. has the most dominant professional men's basketball league in the world having won gold at 15 of the last 19 Summer Olympic Games. With this, the league may also feel pressure to continue to provide the best environment for its athletes to thrive and continue to attract attention. America wants to breed and keep the best players stateside because it can attract greater viewership which leads to greater revenue.

Reflection on Discrepancies in Professional Soccer

Structural inequalities in the treatment and compensation of male versus female professional soccer players in the U.S. stems from historical gender norms. Misogyny against competitive women's soccer in the early 1900s set the women back in various ways. Since the U.S. Men's National Team (USMNT) had years to progress and gain popularity, it can play in larger arenas, which allows it to sell more tickets and gain higher revenue for the U.S. Soccer Federation (USSF). Viewership and television ratings are a major source of income for the USSF. As higher earners than the women, the men are able to negotiate for higher game bonuses and achieve additional benefits out of their collective bargaining agreements (Das, 2016). Since the women's national team historically has not been the majority earner for the USSF, it is expected to perform at a world-class level in order to keep up financially. Now, the women are negotiating with the USSF for higher salaries because they are now performing better and raising more money than the men's national team. The reason that inequality persists, similar to professional basketball, is that the men have more bargaining power. The men's national soccer team negotiates its collective bargaining agreement with the USSF separate from the women and that is why the pay structure differs. According to Andrew Das of the New York Times, in the payment structure that the men have negotiated, "the security net is that every male player in the pool, unlike the women, has the advantage of falling back on a lucrative salary from his professional club." As mentioned in the policy comparison section, professional soccer players earn an additional salary from their professional club teams in the United States. If the men underperform for the U.S. National Team, they have a fallback for financial compensation. The women do not have the same ability to negotiate because they cannot fall back on the professional women's soccer teams for financial compensation. This occurs for the same reasons

that the USWNT finds itself not bringing in greater revenue -- competitions in smaller arenas and fewer ticket sales. Ultimately, historical gender norms have led to popularity discrepancies, which have led to revenue generating inequalities, which contribute to the difference of treatment between male and female professional soccer players.

Reflection on Discrepancies in Professional Tennis

Professional tennis athletes have nearly achieved gender equality in award compensation in recent years. Equal broadcasting and popularity of major men's versus women's professional tennis events is one of the factors that has allowed the sport to provide equal compensation for men and women. Since tickets for men's and women's tennis tournaments are often sold on the same ticket and these events are broadcast with equal timing, the male and female tennis matches often receive similar viewership and ratings. While the Women's Tennis Association (WTA) was founded significantly after the USTA, which initially only sponsored men, Americans have been following the success of female tennis players for decades. Before Billie Jean King created the WTA, she was a dominant athlete with an active following. The delayed timing of bringing female tennis players to primetime broadcasting has not been as large of a factor for professional tennis compared to the other two sports. The women evidently faced gender pay setbacks in major events; however, they were able to overcome these discrepancies with more ease since they had a following earlier on and broadcasting companies feature them equally with the men in major events. There is still room for progress, but as more major events commit to gender equal pay distribution, more events may follow suit.

Comparison Across Sports in Policy Equity

While the three sports differ in various ways between how they are governed, whether they are individual or team sports, and where their compensation comes from, there are trends across the three sports. The female athletes' salaries or game earnings are in most cases less than their male counterparts. The WNBA is at a stark contrast from the NBA earnings season to season, while the top 100 female tennis players also cannot match the prize money that their male counterparts receive. Ultimately, the policies for these organizations allow for unequal compensation for male and female athletes. In every case, historical gender norms have contributed to a setback in progress for women's sports. The mentality in the 1800s and early 1900s that female athleticism was inappropriate and dangerous set back female advancement in sports. Without public support, and worse, with disapproval, women have been held back from receiving equal compensation for equal play. In these three sports, the governing organizations for female athletes each formed at least 50 years after the men's organizations. Gender norms pressed pause on women and start for men, which allowed male athletes and teams to gain popularity and sponsorships. In athletics, time is money -- advancing in the tournament brings higher bonuses, ratings for television viewership earn revenue, and more years in front of the public eye grant higher salaries.

Potential for Policy Opportunities to Reduce Gender Equality Gaps

In 1972, Title IX was introduced in order to provide equal opportunities for athletic participation to men and women at the collegiate level. This policy had the ability to bring more women into college sports and diminish gender inequality in college athletics. The question is whether a policy to reduce gender equality at the level of professional athletics is possible to narrow the gap between salaries, bonuses, and treatment for male versus female professional

athletes. As evidenced by the way that NBA players and U.S. Men's National Team members are able to negotiate for higher salaries and bonuses, the market influences their bargaining power. They know that higher viewership influences higher league revenue and they are able to use these to their advantage compared to women. The U.S. Women's National Team is currently trying to argue for better treatment given that it raised more revenue compared to the men for the U.S. Soccer Federation (USSF) after its back-to-back World Cup wins. However, they have found this more difficult due to gender norms that transcend the history of their sport. Given how large the role popularity plays in athlete salaries and benefits, it is difficult to see how policy intervention may bring female athletes up to speed with the men. A policy could require that prominent cable networks broadcast more WNBA regular season games. However, if they do not receive the viewership that they must meet to break even for a given broadcast time slot, their system for supporting themselves financially as a business could be disrupted. At the same time, the government could require the USSF to maintain that the national men's and women's soccer teams play on surfaces of equal merit throughout the season. This may be an equalizing policy for this element of their sport. I hypothesized that a sweeping policy to diminish gender inequality in professional sports may be possible, though not easy to carry out. **Ultimately, given the evidence of how these organizations support their athletes or how the athletes support themselves, an overarching policy to grant equal broadcasting schedules and equal salaries would be too disruptive to the market of professional sports.** The discrepancy between what network stations can offer the NBA for a broadcasting deal and what these stations can offer WNBA broadcasts is sizable. The money is not there to support the women's league at the same level as the men because they are not generating that money. Requiring that television stations offer the same contract is not financially sound. At the same time, a policy cannot mandate the

press to write about women's athletics at the same rate they write about the men. Social media networks and news outlets have a goal to publish articles that will attract an audience. They may choose to write more about changes in the NBA instead of the WNBA because it will attract more readers. The market for professional sports revolves around the media in many ways. As a result, a policy that interferes with the free press would be impractical.

There are a few implications given that policy intervention to diminish gender inequality is not appropriate at this time. First, women will have to continue to vouch for themselves and advance their professional sports on their own. Female professional athletes will continue to seek out lucrative sponsorships as they do today. Professional men's basketball players like LeBron James and the late Kobe Bryant have been advocates for women's basketball including encouraging their daughters to be involved in the sport (Honi, 2020). Perhaps as the big names in men's sports continue to shine light on the women, the women's professional leagues will catch up to the men financially in a number of years. Secondly, without a policy to support professional athletes equally, the more unequal professional sports will continue to receive unequal coverage in the media. For basketball more specifically, sports media sources will likely continue to write more stories on the popular male players because it will draw more clicks on social media or readers of the newspaper. The advancement of social media and profitability of stories currently benefit the male athletes more, as can be seen by the billion-dollar contracts that television sources are willing to offer the NBA. This has implications on the progress of women's sports reaching the spotlight.

While policy initiatives that support gender equality may not be feasible for the current market, that does not mean that professional male and female athletes will forever be compensated unequally. Female leaders across these three sports have paved the way for women

athletes to make it as far as they have come. The passage of Title IX opened the door for countless women. Additionally, it is likely that advocates for gender equality like Billie Jean King, Serena Williams, Megan Rapinoe, Sue Bird, and many others will continue to be vocal in support of pushing women forward in professional athletics. One way in which the women's organizations could continue to push for advancement would be to institute mentorship opportunities between professional athletes and young athletes. The chance for developing female athletes to connect with leaders in their sport will help them improve their skills in communication and goal setting (Bowling 2018). A federal policy to improve gender equality may not be the appropriate next step; however, there are opportunities for the individual organizations to promote advancement of women in sports in order to level the playing field.

Conclusion

While gender inequality persists in professional basketball, soccer, and tennis in the United States, this research has brought me to the conclusion that there is not room for policy to correct this issue at this time. The policies that govern these professional athletic organizations permit unequal compensation of men and women who play the same sport. These inequalities stretch across player salaries, bonuses, promotional compensation, and network television contracts. While the major events for both the men's and women's leagues across these three sports receive nearly equal opportunities for viewership on television, the men's basketball and soccer championship events receive significantly higher ratings than the women's events. With the men's and women's tennis championships on the same ticket, these organizations are able to see more equal viewership. This research has demonstrated that gender inequality does persist in professional sports and there are various factors that contribute to this circumstance. Historical

social norms that held that athletics were unsafe for women set back the development of women's professional sports. Stemming from this issue, the men's organizations had the opportunity to gain popularity and bargaining power while the women were held back. With the market for athletes and sports in the United States being a major financial industry, a federal policy mandating equal pay for women may be disruptive at this point. Next steps toward gender equality in professional sports may include greater advocacy on the part of key leaders in the world of sports. Raising awareness of the value of female athletes and their professional leagues will motivate better viewership and revenue generation.

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