

## **Why Social Workers Earn Less than Accountants: Pay Equity**

“So, if you have your way and we have comparable worth, you’ll be destroying our society and killing our children. . . . Our society needs cheap labor to survive.”—Brigadier general speaking to me over lunch at a federal employees Secretary’s Day celebration.

On a fall evening twenty some years ago, I kissed my husband and young sons and drove across town to see the movie *Nine to Five* (1980)—inspired by the organization I would later join. Although I went by myself, I soon felt as if I knew everyone at the theater. We roared and cheered as Violet, Dora, and Judy tied up Mr. Hart, their lecherous boss,<sup>1</sup> and proceeded to run the office, humanize the culture, launch a childcare center, institute flexible schedules, and raise pay—all the while improving productivity and profits. At the end of the film, the goateed CEO, Mr. Tinsworthy, arrives for a personal tour. At each stop he heaps praise on a clueless Mr. Hart, marveling at how the changes have boosted the bottom line. Then Tinsworthy leans over and whispers in Mr. Hart’s ear: “That equal pay thing, though—that has to go.”

And that’s how we knew the movie was a comedy, not a fantasy. On most issues discussed in this book, the Big Boys will allow some wiggle room. But as a group, they reserve their fiercest opposition to the idea that women are underpaid. Indeed, the undervaluation of women’s work remains the key to women’s subordinate role in the workplace and in society.

### **How Bad Is It?**

When I speak to students about women’s pay in relation to men’s, I remind them that there are two categories of jobs—those where women and men do the same work, and those performed primarily by one gender or the other. Most people look for examples of equity in the first category, especially professional jobs, so that’s where I start. I ask volunteers to come up and represent the field they hope to join. A long line forms. One at a time, I hold my hand over the heads of a future manager, lawyer, doctor, reporter, financial specialist, and others, while the audience weighs in on which occupations have equal pay for women and men. If they think the pay’s the same, they raise their left hand—“L” for likely. If they disagree, they raise their right hand—“R” for “Are you out of your mind?” Often they shout the words at the same time. Opinions vary; we cluster those with the highest likely votes over to one side. Then I reveal the answers—and have volunteers sit in the portion of a chair that represents women’s share of men’s pay in that job.

I won’t keep you guessing. In none of the fields does a volunteer get to sit comfortably on the whole seat. Most have to contort their bodies to squeeze into three-quarters of a chair or less.

Because the truth is that women make less than men at every level, from corporate manager (68 percent) and professional positions such as doctor (77 percent) and financial

manager (69 percent) to low-wage jobs like retail sales (64 percent) and poultry workers (71 percent). Even in new industries, like the Internet, female professionals with the same job and equal seniority pull in only 88 percent of men's earnings.<sup>2</sup>

That's not all. Women earn less than men even in female-dominated jobs like secretary (90 percent).

### **Explaining the Wage Gap**

Some of women's lower pay is due to blatant discrimination of the old-fashioned kind—like the woman who was told her male colleague got a bigger raise because “he had a family to support.” (So does she.) The fact that such behavior is illegal doesn't mean it's disappeared. Still, it accounts for only a small part of the pay gap between men and women.

### **Myth: Women Make Less Because They Work Less**

If you think women's lower wages are related to the fact that they work fewer hours and fewer years than men, you're right. Women do work less overall and this does affect the gap—but not the one you read about in the media. That figure—how many cents women earn for every dollar paid to men (most recently 77 cents for women overall, 72 cents for African American women, 58 cents for Latinas, 87 cents for women of Asian descent)<sup>3</sup>—is based on men and women who work full time, year round. When we look at women in general, including those who work part-time and have taken time off, the gap between their pay and men's stretches to a chasm, with women bringing home only 38 percent of men's earnings.<sup>4</sup> Researchers conclude that no more than half this differential can be attributed to actual number of hours worked.

The reality is that those who work part time or who take some time off to care for family members experience a penalty for their choice. No law says part-timers have to be paid the same hourly rate as those who do the identical job full time—and they aren't; part-timers on average earn much less per hour and receive few if any benefits (see Chapter 7). And that's only part of the story. Women do take more time off than men to care for family members.

We expect them to experience some loss of earnings as a result. But how big a hit should they take and how long should the penalty last? Consider these statistics: Over a period of fifteen years, taking one year off amounts to a penalty of 32 percent in earning power. Two years chops your pay by 46 percent, and three by more than half—56 percent.<sup>5</sup> “I knew there'd be some cost,” wrote Laura, a Wisconsin engineer who left the workforce for three years when her children were babies.<sup>6</sup> “But I had no idea that I'd still be paying the price fifteen years later.” Few could argue that staying home with a newborn or a dying parent should flatten pay by such a staggering amount.

And what about women who do spend long hours on the job? You'd expect the wage gap to narrow as the number of hours increases, right? In fact, it widens. Women working 41 to 44 hours per week earn 84.6 percent of men's pay for the same hours; when they put in

60 hours a week or more, the proportion goes down to 78.3 percent. Adding insult to injury, many women have to work longer than men do to receive the promotions that lead to higher pay. For example, according to the National Center for Education Statistics, women school principals spend an average of three additional years as teachers before moving to administration. It takes more than work hours to explain away the wage gap.

### **Myth: Women Make Less Because They Don't Ask for More**

Recent studies show that women are much less likely than men to initiate salary negotiations and much more likely to accept whatever an employer offers.<sup>7</sup> For a group of graduates with master's degrees, the difference in starting pay between women and men was \$4,000—almost exactly the amount gained as a result of negotiations. This gap keeps growing as the years go by, since raises are usually based on percentages of salary and new employers often start by asking how much you made on your last job. But women don't earn less in the same jobs simply because they're less assertive. You have to factor in other realities of life for women in Corporate America—fewer raises, smaller bonuses, less frequent promotions (see Chapter 4). I remember talking with a television personality, a woman over fifty who knew she was paid considerably less than her male counterparts despite having more experience. “You can argue ratings, talent, objective criteria 'til you're blue in the face,” she said. “The bottom line is, [management is] more committed to the men and they're going to pay whatever they have to in order to keep them.”

The issue of negotiations, of course, applies only in the higher level or union jobs where you engage in some discussion about pay. In most of the jobs women fill, you're simply told, “This is the pay rate. Take it or leave it.” And in many jobs, asking how much others are making can cost you your job.

In fact, the way women are treated when they do the same jobs as men is still only a small part of the story of the wage gap.

### **Myth: Women Make Less Because They're Less Educated**

Some people think men have more education than women and that's why they earn more. But the numbers don't bear this out. Women's educational achievements are almost equivalent to men's. What's more, women at every level of schooling earn less than their male counterparts.

Level of Education Women's Pay as Percentage of Men's<sup>8</sup>

Less than 9th grade 80 percent  
High school 74 percent  
Some college 73 percent  
Associate's degree 75 percent  
Bachelor's 73 percent  
Master's 71 percent

Doctorate 77 percent  
Professional degrees 66 percent

The Big Boys like to point out that the gap has decreased over the years, and so it has. What they fail to mention are three key facts: The gap is biggest at the highest level of education. Half or more of the narrowing of the overall pay difference comes from loss of pay for men, particularly men of color. Gains for women were mostly among nonmothers—the “mommy wage gap” actually increased. This isn’t the kind of “progress” we had in mind.<sup>9</sup>

### **Reality: Why Women Earn So Little Money**

Women don’t just earn less than men—they often earn very little. Consider, for instance, that 17 percent of women but only 1 percent of men working full time average less than \$15,000 per year.<sup>10</sup> More than 90 percent of long-term low earners among prime-age adults are women. They’re childcare workers who can’t afford childcare, health-care workers with no health insurance, college clericals who can’t pay for higher education for their kids. What accounts for this? The best researchers in the country got together to figure it out. They talked, they examined all the research, they ran multiple regression analyses, and here’s what they came up with: The reason women earn so little money is—their employers pay them so little money. Why do their employers pay them so little? Because they can, and because they think they have to in order to compete.<sup>11</sup>

The heart of the pay gap lies in how society values what women do.

I once heard Robert Reich tell the story of becoming secretary of labor under President Bill Clinton. His very first act, said Reich, was to abolish the executive dining room. All the hot shots would eat in the employee cafeteria along with everyone else. So there he was, standing in line, and he struck up a conversation with the woman in front of him. After telling him all about her job, the woman asked, “And what do you do?” “I’m the Secretary,” Reich replied. “Oh,” she said, “whose secretary are you?”

Reich always gets a laugh with that story. But for me the message was why the most trusted advisors of the president are called secretaries. That’s exactly what secretaries were—the most trusted advisor to the person in charge. The jobs were high status, high paid—and virtually all held by men. Then came the Civil War and a shortage of males for many jobs previously closed to women. Along with necessity, what convinced employers to give women a shot was the cost savings involved. Since the government has to pass a statute in order to create a new job category, we have a legislative record of the arguments in favor of creating these positions. Here’s what the Librarian of Congress argued, for example: “I know many industrious, practically educated women who would be glad to do for \$1,200 a year the job that male librarians do for \$1,800.”<sup>12</sup> None of the congressmen (that’s all there were at the time) disputed the amounts. They presumed that women needed less money because they had parents and then a husband to pay the way—never mind that this was never true for large groups of workers, especially African

Americans and immigrants. Congress created the job slots and established the wage rates at one-half to two-thirds that of men doing the same work.

Not surprisingly, the women who filled these jobs in both the public and private sector proved to be quite capable, and the savings were substantial. More and more were hired until certain jobs became female-dominated. And guess what happened—the discriminatory rate became the prevailing wage or “market rate.” When the Equal Pay Act was passed in 1963, which required that men and women doing the same job for the same company be paid the same wage, most women and men no longer performed the same jobs—and the ones done by women paid less simply because women did them. That’s true of jobs that had typically been women’s work—taking care of children, the elderly, the sick—as well as jobs that were once performed mainly by men. In fact, the National Academy of Sciences concluded that “the more an occupation is dominated by women, the less it pays.”<sup>13</sup> You could actually plot it out on a graph—for every 1 percent increase in the percentage of women in an occupation, the pay would fall \$42 a year (in 1971 dollars).<sup>14</sup>

Today almost every job category, from doctor to drill sergeant, carpenter to CEO, has some women in it. But most women are doing the same jobs women have always done. Nearly three-fifths of women workers are employed in service, sales, and clerical jobs. Fewer than one in seven work in jobs typically held by men. Even within certain occupations, women are clustered in the lower-paying jobs. Walk into a gift or novelty shop and chances are four out of five that the person helping you will be a female. Then stop by a higher-paying car dealership—the probability of a woman handling your purchase drops to one in five. Ask who’s cleaning houses, changing bedpans, caring for toddlers, and you’re most likely to find not just a woman, but a woman of color.

Sex segregation isn’t only about what women do. Fewer than 8 percent of men hold female-dominated positions. Yes, we want more women designing and building houses, fixing cars, and putting out fires—but we also want more men tending to young kids and frail elders. And that won’t happen until those jobs pay a decent wage. Whether at the top or bottom of the job ladder, jobs done predominantly by women pay less than jobs performed mainly by men.<sup>15</sup>

### **The Consequences of that Reality**

The issue of the undervaluation of women’s work hit home for me in the mid-1970s. My first husband Kosti and I had moved to Baltimore so he could be closer to a Greek community. Although I’d been teaching women’s studies for three years, the field was still new and far from accepted in most institutions. So I joined a women’s group and looked for ways to get to know women in my neighborhood, many of whom were on welfare or in low-wage jobs. When Kosti and I separated, I had to find a paying job. I decided to look for a position where I could use my clerical skills; that’s how I’d supplemented my financial aid during college. I also wanted more insight on issues facing women in “regular”—not university or professional—jobs. My thinking was I’d sock away some money and return to community organizing. Many male activists I knew

would pick up jobs painting houses or something similar, then go back to doing movement work full time. But once hired in the electrocardiogram (EKG) department of a local hospital, I was locked in. This wasn't because of health insurance—like many young people, I didn't worry about falling ill. The problem was pay. Here I was, single, no children, and I earned so little money, I couldn't afford to take time off. Looking at my male movement buddies, I appreciated that the jobs they did involved hard work, but so did mine—administering EKGs (this was before the job required special certification) and deciphering and typing the doctor's taped reports. Patients' lives depended on my accuracy. For hours each day my coworkers and I ran our carts up and down the hospital halls, carefully administering the tests, often to patients who were old or frightened and needed to be reassured that the strange-looking circles I was pasting on their chest wouldn't shock them or cause other harm. Then I had to hurry back and begin typing piles of tapes (the cardiologist happened to be Greek and I was the only one who really understood his accent). We were always told how important our work was—but our wages sent a very different message.

A close look at other typically female jobs shows a similar pattern. We pay the people who care for our children less than those who tend to our cars, our pets, our lawns. Consider prekindergarten teachers in state-funded programs—seven out of ten earn salaries in the low-income category and one in six works a second job to make ends meet.<sup>16</sup> I applaud the goal of encouraging more females to move into math and science. But we also have to ask why mathematicians are paid so much more than social workers or prekindergarten teachers.

Women aren't the only ones who suffer from these disparities. When I met Larry in Baltimore he worked in a steel mill, where women were scarce and pay was high. We moved to Chicago to be closer to his family in Wisconsin and he got a job building hot water heaters. The plant had more women, not a lot, and the pay was still good, though not as much as steel. Then we came to Milwaukee and Larry got hired at General Electric manufacturing cables for magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) machines. He earned less but still a decent wage; his department had a pretty good representation of women. After he got laid off, Larry realized he wasn't going to find these factory jobs anymore and decided to go to college to become a teacher. Four years later he had a bachelor's degree and began work in a female-dominated field—where he earned less than he had in any of those other jobs.

Families, not just women, benefit when pay inequities are removed. The American Federation of Labor and Congress of Industrial Organizations (AFL-CIO) determined that if female workers received the same pay as males of the same age who work the same number of hours, have the same education and union status, and live in the same region of the country, these women's annual family income would rise by \$4,000. Poverty rates would be cut in half. The gain to working families? A staggering \$200 billion in family income every year.<sup>17</sup>

In order to get to that point, we have to ask not just who performs which job, but who decides how much those jobs are worth.

### **Myth: The Market Decides**

The Big Boys like to tell us that the market decides how much each job should pay. I got a helpful lesson in how the market functions when we first started the 9to5 chapter in Milwaukee. A woman who identified herself as an executive secretary at a major corporation called to ask if she could take me to lunch. We met the next day. She looked quite conventional, an older woman with large glasses and permed hair, but her message was subversive. “I want to explain something about how things work around here,” she told me over Caesar salad. Her boss, who we’ll call George, would go out to lunch with let’s call him Sam, a buddy who ran another major company. They’d chat about this and that. At one point, Sam would say, “So, what are you giving your girl this year?” “Fifty cents,” George might respond. “Oh, really? I was going to give a quarter.” “Okay,” George would reply. “That sounds good to me.” George and Sam didn’t have lunch in order to conspire. They weren’t engaging in deliberate price fixing. It was just a chat between two buddies, one conversation among many. My confidante, who had finally gotten her boss to reveal this process, looked me in the eye: “Your group has to change that,” she said.

So much for the market.

And what is the market anyway? To a large extent, it’s a reflection of the prevailing culture. Social mores, not God, determined that women needed and deserved less than men—or that ex-slaves deserved less than whites. For a long time society viewed women as less able to do what men do (provide, protect, govern), and viewed the caretaking work performed by women (both paid and unpaid) as less valuable than tasks typically performed by men. Those in charge also assumed a woman would—or should—have a man to take care of her. Even as the rationale for these views fell away and society accepted the principle of equality, the legacy of discrimination had been built into the pay scale and the way jobs were evaluated.

### **Myth: “Objective” Job Evaluation Determines Wages**

Employers have been relying on various job evaluation surveys for nearly a century. Evaluators use some group of criteria to determine what skill, effort, responsibility, and working conditions characterize every job category and then assign a certain number of points to each; the greater the points, the higher the pay. This sounds objective—but subjectivity can play a big role in determining what questions to ask and how many points to assign to each factor. Those who designed job evaluation systems often based them on an industry model; they either overlooked or underrated skills associated with women. Here are two of my favorite examples. A job evaluator once gave female bindery workers zero points for knowing how to sew the binderies because, he said, that’s the kind of sewing all women know how to do. Another evaluation used the following question to ascertain the unpleasantness of a nurse’s job: “Do you work with grease?” Nurses had to answer “no,” although they obviously do work with unpleasant substances and odors.

Many skills women utilize, including language skills, office machine skills, people skills, don't show up on the evaluation forms. "Planning, scheduling, and coordinating," for example, are all considered important competencies in managerial positions and count toward compensation, but these are seldom recognized in support staff jobs. You might not rate the skills and responsibilities of a dogcatcher higher than those of nursery school teachers, but a job evaluation system did.<sup>18</sup>

Some people will argue that risk does and should play a big factor in determining pay. I agree. Yet the Washington Post found that one of the poorest paid occupations, nurses' aides, faces a risk of serious injury higher than that of a coal miner or steel worker.<sup>19</sup> Lifting and moving patients can and often does lead to back injuries. Assaults by patients are not uncommon. In 1997, nurses' aides suffered 27 percent of all serious workplace assaults in private industry, compared with 7 percent for security guards. (As for dirt and danger, which certainly should play a role in determining pay, some of the lowest-wage jobs—often performed by nonwhite immigrant workers of both genders—are those with grueling physical labor, nonexistent rest breaks, and the highest exposure to dangerous substances.)

In each of the examples above, the skill, effort, and risk involved with these female-dominated jobs were simply invisible to those evaluating the jobs and setting pay. The "market rate" usually plays a big role in deciding how to compensate various skills. If the market rates reflect sex, race, or ethnic bias, as we've seen, well, that just gets folded into the "objective" outcome.

What's needed is a form of job evaluation that removes gender and race bias from the compensation system.

### **Moving Toward Solutions: A New Approach to Job Evaluation**

Maybe you can't compare a nurse with a plumber. But you can compare what skills, effort, responsibility, and working conditions each job requires as well as other factors, such as the consequence of errors. Given the degree of sex segregation in the workforce, groups of women workers began to search for a remedy that would consider these job components, so that pay for female-dominated jobs could be brought in line with pay for male-dominated positions that were comparable. This idea of "comparable worth" is not a new one; the War Labor Board introduced it during the two world wars. In the mid 1970s, city nurses in Denver who worked in intensive care filed a sex discrimination lawsuit when they found they were paid less than sign painters, tire repairmen, meter servicemen, and tree trimmers. School secretaries in Iowa sued because the custodians received a dollar an hour raise and secretaries didn't—the secretaries thought both groups deserved the extra pay. In Madison, Wisconsin, public health nurses (mostly women) sued because they were paid less than health sanitarians (mostly men). In each case, the court ruled against the women, saying more or less that yes, there was a disparity but the market permitted it and that the courts couldn't correct social inequity.

A more promising ruling came in 1981 in an Oregon case.<sup>20</sup> Here prison matrons filed suit because they were paid less than prison guards whose duties were not exactly the same but were comparable in terms of skills, effort, and so forth. The state's attorneys argued that the women had no grounds to sue because the jobs weren't equal. They insisted that a provision in Title VII of the Civil Rights Act<sup>21</sup> restricted pay discrimination suits to cases of equal pay for equal work. The Supreme Court ruled that Title VII could be used to argue for comparable worth, although that wasn't the basis on which they decided the case and they didn't indicate how they would rule if such an argument were presented. Instead, they based their decision in favor of the prison matrons on a narrow sex discrimination issue: The state had done a study showing the women should be paid 95 percent of what the male guards earned, yet continued to pay the prison matrons only 75 percent of the higher rate.

Sex discrimination was also the basis of a decision in a Washington state case in September 1983, when Federal Judge Jack Tanner ruled that the state had engaged in "direct, overt and institutionalized discrimination." As in Oregon, the state had commissioned a study in 1974 that showed pay disparities of about 20 percent for female-dominated jobs, but had taken no action to correct the problem.

Title VII might provide a remedy when women and men do different jobs, but pursuing that route can be long and complicated. Feminists supporting the concept of comparable worth or pay equity have come up with other solutions.

## **FEMINIST SOLUTIONS**

Raising women's pay will take a multipronged approach, including redesigning the way companies recruit and reward (see Chapter 4), ending the caregiver penalty (see Chapters 3 and 7), and expanding women's bargaining power (see Chapter 6). It also means raising the wage floor, the bottom amount anyone can be paid (see Chapter 8). Here I want to address jobs where women and men do either substantially similar work, or different but comparable work, for the same employer.

### **Same Employer, Same Jobs: Enforce the Laws and Give Them Teeth**

Since 1963 the law's been clear that businesses must pay the same wages to women and men in their employ who perform the same jobs. Laws themselves, of course, don't solve all the problems. I remember taking a call in the 1980s from a woman who had known for years that male coworkers earned considerably more than she did and that this was illegal. Still, she'd never done anything about it. Why not? "I was afraid I'd get fired," she told me. When I asked why she was calling us now, the woman laughed bitterly. She'd just been fired. Her situation was not unique. A 1999 study crossing all industries and areas of the country found that one-quarter to one-half of the pay gap is due solely to differences in pay between men and women working in the same establishments and in similar jobs.<sup>22</sup>

If laws aren't the whole answer, they are a start. But they need to be enforced and to impose consequences on wrongdoers. A measure to beef up enforcement of the Equal Pay Act has been pending in Congress since 1999. Known as the Paycheck Fairness Act, it would increase resources available to the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC), the agency that oversees antidiscrimination laws. The bill would also provide for better training of EEOC staff on wage discrimination and compliance, and clarify that the law applies to all of an employer's "establishments," regardless of location. It would give the law more heft by protecting complainants from retaliation, making it easier to file class-action lawsuits, and allowing people to seek not just back pay, but compensatory and punitive damages. Right now many employers can fire you for talking about salary with coworkers, even though that information could shine a light on disparities in pay. The Paycheck Fairness Act would prohibit such salary secrecy requirements. And it would require greater proof from employers who claim they have some reason other than gender for the pay differential.

The administration of George W. Bush decided equal pay isn't worth bothering about—the Department of Labor simply stopped publishing information about the pay gap. The Paycheck Fairness Act would reverse that by requiring the secretary of labor to conduct studies and promote research on the elimination of sex-based wage disparities.

### **Same Employers, Different Jobs: Equal Pay for Jobs of Equivalent Value**

A second piece of legislation, the Fair Pay Act, addresses jobs at a given employer that are comparable but not the same. It would amend the Equal Pay Act to require equal pay for jobs of equivalent value. In addition to gender, the Fair Pay Act prohibits wage discrimination based on race or national origin. Each business would evaluate its own jobs but would have to use a legitimate and nondiscriminatory job evaluation system like the ones described above. Adjustments in pay would have to raise the lower pay rates—no cutting men's pay in the name of pay equity. Some states have already applied such a remedy to jobs of public employees, and taxes didn't rise, businesses didn't flee, the sky didn't fall. Costs were modest and certain job categories saw significant improvements. In Minnesota, for example, where the legislature passed the State Government Pay Equity Act in 1982, the cost of pay equity adjustments was less than 1 percent of the budget each year for a four-year period. Thousands of Minnesota women in state jobs saw their earnings rise significantly above the poverty level.<sup>23</sup>

The Canadian province of Ontario was the first to institute a pay equity policy that applies to private as well as public sector jobs. Experts have created several models of job evaluation systems that are gender neutral, valuing job content in the range of female work as well as male and removing bias embedded in typical market-driven systems. Five additional provinces followed with some version of a pay equity law, with one other, Quebec, extending to the private sector.

Any pay equity system has to build in continual monitoring and enforcement. Wisconsin provides a useful lesson of what happens when pay adjustments are a one-shot deal. Under sixteen years of an administration opposed to pay equity, support staff saw gains

steadily erode as “market adjustments” were made for certain jobs. According to Michael Lowery, a member of the bargaining team at the University of Wisconsin–Milwaukee, “the market only recognizes guys—prison guards, police, custodians, etc.”<sup>24</sup> There were never adjustments for female-dominated positions. “We’re back where we started,” Lowery said.

In Canada, a national task force recommended establishing a separate commission to ensure monitoring and compliance with pay equity laws. This body would also carry out public education on the issue, provide technical assistance, and investigate and attempt to resolve disputes. We should do the same.

### **Different Jobs, Different Employers: Revalue Women’s Work**

Even if statutes providing for pay equity were enacted and administered properly, they wouldn’t solve the entire problem of women’s low pay. Not all jobs have positions to compare. Childcare centers, for example, don’t offer a lot of job categories besides caring for kids. Many women work for employers who hire virtually all women, or who pay males and females equally bad wages—think of them as equal opportunity oppressors.

The principles in this chapter, however, are relevant wherever the undervaluation of work associated with women or with men of color has helped suppress the pay for an occupation or job category. When groups like homecare workers, childcare providers, domestics, or others organize for better pay, demands for new wage rates should highlight the social history of the current pay scale and the lessons learned from employers where jobs can be compared. Similarly, employers can conduct their own payroll audits and make adjustments, even if all or most of the jobs are held by women.

### **Moving into Better Jobs: Increase Educational Opportunities**

Many women would benefit from educational and training opportunities to sharpen their skills. Welfare-to-work and other job training efforts should focus on training for jobs that pay a living wage (see Chapter 8). Schools at every level need to do a better job in steering women into higher paying fields like math and science (see Chapter 4). But we also have to challenge a system under which social workers earn so much less than accountants. The main problem isn’t that women are unskilled—rather, their skills are undervalued. Which takes us right back to Mr. Tinsworthy.

### **TAKING ON THE BIG BOYS**

Like the CEO in the movie *Nine to Five*, the Big Boys have been resolute in opposing pay equity. One even called it “the looniest idea since Loony Tunes”<sup>25</sup>—a lovely example of trivializing the issue. They patronized women, claiming they cheerfully choose to trade income for flexibility and other perks. When advocates organized to win pay equity in the public sector, opponents jumped to demonize “fat cat” state workers, compartmentalize them from private sector workers (and women from men, union from non-union, white from people of color), and catastrophize about the harm to the business climate. Newly

appointed Chief Justice John Roberts dismissed the concept as a “pernicious” redistribution of wealth: “Their slogan may as well be, ‘From each according to his ability, to each according to her gender.’”<sup>26</sup>

The pay equity fight is where I earned my debating spurs and my favorite newspaper write-up.

### **Winning Friends and Influencing People**

My involvement in fighting for pay equity began in earnest in 1984, when then-governor of Wisconsin Tony Earl appointed me as an “official observer” to the state’s Task Force on Comparable Worth.<sup>27</sup> The fancy designation was meant to compensate for not being named as an actual commissioner. The meetings were public; anyone could observe, but observers didn’t have the right to speak. We didn’t let that get in our way. Right away we petitioned and won a thirty-minute slot for public comment at each Task Force meeting—and grew to be good friends and allies with the Task Force leaders. It didn’t take long to see how much we needed each other.

Wisconsin wasn’t the first state to put pay equity on the public agenda, but it was the first where the opposition mobilized on a grand scale and with the support of national forces. Led by the Wisconsin Manufacturers and Commerce, opponents bombarded legislators with weekly bulletins. They set out to prove that pay equity would be deadly to the state’s business climate. Only a large, well-organized, and unified movement of supporters could win over public opinion and effectively counter this opposition. The activists began by framing pay equity as a justice issue—our slogan was “Justice Is Worth It”—and appealing to the largest grouping possible. Our alliance totaled fifty-six women’s groups, and religious, civil rights, labor, professional, and community organizations, each of whom mobilized their own constituency. A coordinating group in Madison known as the “Lunch Bunch” sent out bimonthly fact sheets to all the organizations, as well as to legislators and the media. Each sheet had a different focus—explanations of the pay equity concept, a roundup of activity in other states, an overview of litigation on the issue, a summary of the Task Force’s methodology, and so on. I became part of a core of debaters who shared our combat experience and helped prepare materials and alerts. Activists were able to compare notes on legislators’ responses and quickly concentrate attention on those who needed it.

In the end, pay equity passed in the Wisconsin budget because of hardball politicking around what had deteriorated into a highly partisan issue.<sup>28</sup> But the grassroots work was the backdrop without which victory would have been impossible.

### **Losing Innocence**

I was already forty years old when we began this campaign. I’d certainly been around the block. But dealing with politicians in the state capitol in the winter of 1985 made me feel like a high school kid who just learned about Watergate. First I went to see my own senator. “Tell the governor to call me if he wants my vote,” he said. Just like that! To my

face! Then I went off to find my assembly representative, a man by the name of Tom Crawford. He tried to shoo me away as he prepared to leave his office. “I already know what you think,” he said. “How can you?” I asked. “We’ve never met.” Crawford hurried down the hall with me at his heels eagerly sharing my views—until he walked into the men’s room, leaving me wide-jawed and stranded outside the door.

I didn’t follow him into the men’s room, but I did make a vow: We would make ourselves heard.

## **Getting Heard**

9to5 worked hard to put faces to the statistics. But our goal was also to counter the efforts to marginalize this fight and to use divide-and-conquer tactics. Meet some of our most effective speakers.

Carlene Carr ran the office in a warehouse. A single mother with two kids, she’d originally called us in 1983 for information because she was working side-by-side with the boss’s son, who had the title “management trainee” and considerably higher pay but the same job assignment she did, except that he refused to do things like filing “because Daddy told me I didn’t have to.” In the testimony she developed for a public hearing,<sup>29</sup> Carlene described her job responsibilities as including “invoicing, inventory, cost analysis, pricing for more than 1,000 products and 500 customers in various sell categories, accounts receivable, inventory control, in-house programming, direct sales for a cash-and-carry program, typing a weekly sales newsletter, other typing as necessary, and handling customer service calls.” Her official title was computer operator. Her wage: \$4.75 an hour (at the time, only \$1.04 over the minimum wage).

Everyone else in the plant made more than Carlene, including those in the warehouse and dock and in maintenance. “Their jobs required hard work and skill,” she noted; “surely mine did, too. If my job were done improperly, not only would millions of dollars of accounts be jeopardized, but none of the other workers could complete their jobs.” She went on to list the raft of public assistance programs she was eligible for as a result of her low wage, including food stamps, government-subsidized housing, childcare assistance, the free-milk program at school. Unfortunately, she earned “too much to qualify for the program I needed the most, Title XIX health care.”

The pay equity campaign applied only to state workers. But Carlene desperately wanted the state to be a model for her employer and others. “I am not the exception,” she told legislators, “I am closer to the norm. There are many thousands of us—working women in poverty—and it hurts. It hurts to work full time and not be able to pay your own way. It hurts to be angry when your child needs shoes. It hurts to do your job and be undervalued.”

We got to know Deborah after she was featured in an article in the Milwaukee Journal about the black family being in a state of crisis. Here was another woman living in poverty even though she worked full time as the secretary in a social-service agency.

“My family would not be in crisis if I were paid commensurate with my skills and responsibilities,” she said at one of our press events. When opponents demonized women by arguing that pay equity was an excuse for women not to work hard, I pointed to Deborah, who somehow managed a second, minimum-wage job and studied real estate on the side, while caring for her two sons.

In my talks, I also referred to a group of parish secretaries I met with one summer evening in a suburban Milwaukee church. These were women who had raised a family and then taken clerical jobs, skilled women in their forties or fifties earning less than \$10,000 a year. They were not suffering financially because they were married to men with decent paying jobs, but along with tea and cookies, they shared how much they resented the fact that their work was unappreciated. That night they were upset for another reason. One of their group was absent because her husband had recently died. Suddenly her less-than-\$10,000 wage was her family’s only income. Medical insurance had come through her husband’s job, not hers. Although he had life insurance, she’d put that away for retirement because she had no pension, and now she was afraid she’d lose her home. Each woman in the group knew this could be her story.

## **The Debates**

Throughout the campaign we organized as many debates as possible, in order to win public opinion and increase pressure on the legislators. I took on a series of business lobbyists—some of whom, I’m proud to say, ended their debating career (at least on this subject) after our encounter.

My first opponent, Wayne Correy from the Allen-Bradley manufacturing corporation, belongs in that category. I’d never met him before the debate, but we got a glimpse of each other a couple hours earlier when a local TV station interviewed us for the five-o’clock news and paired us on the screen. He wasn’t a particularly imposing figure and apparently felt he needed an advantage. As soon as I arrived at the debate site, he rushed over to greet me. “You were much better looking on TV,” he told me. “Really, and you were much taller,” I said. (Okay, I just wish I had said that.) But instead of intimidating me, he brought out my competitive urges.

Before our encounter, a group of us made a list of all the arguments we thought Correy would use and ideas for how to answer them. Happily, he stuck to the playbook, and I blocked every play he made. He began with patronizing—women make less as a result of their own choices, trading income for flexibility, preferring jobs with easy access and easy exit. I pointed out that the lowest-paying jobs are in fact the least flexible. “You want to see an easy exit from a job,” I said. “Meet a woman with no maternity leave.” Easy access implies that women’s jobs don’t change at all over the years—a myth easily dispelled by talking to any nurse, secretary, or social worker who’s struggled with technological change.

My opponent plodded through various explanations for women’s lower pay: Wages reflect supply and demand. Higher paid jobs are more productive. “Oh!” I replied, “there

must be a shortage of liquor-store clerks in Maryland and that's why they earn more than teachers in that state." I referred to a study in Minnesota to determine the relationship between availability of labor, on the one hand, and wages on the other. Guess what they found? Virtually no relationship except in a few cases of highly technical labor in short supply. Under pay equity, such a legitimate market factor would still be taken into account; the jobs would be overcompensated accordingly. As for productivity, clerical workers' productivity shot up with the computer, yet in some cases their pay declined. Unlike the manual lifting job now performed by the forklift, which was considered more skilled and therefore more valuable with automation, technology was thought to make office work "easier." I quoted a conservative Republican, Robert Isaacs, who instituted pay equity as mayor of Colorado Springs, Colorado. "We did something that was fair and just," he said, "and in return we got higher productivity, lower absenteeism, improved morale. Isn't that what the private sector always wants?"

Unable to prove his economic theories, Mr. Correy turned to demonizing, blaming male-dominated unions for "negotiating" lower wages. I reminded him that this is like saying parents share the blame for child labor because they "allowed" their children to work. Unions operate within a certain environment and can't easily bargain outside of that. Certainly male chauvinism exists within organized labor as everywhere else in society, but unions have also led the way in fighting for pay equity. Besides, the overwhelming majority of women are not represented by unions.

Correy also denounced bureaucrats comparing janitors with clericals and equated that to comparing apples and oranges. (I have never understood why people use this phrase. After all, apples and oranges have a lot in common—they're both fruits, both round, both good sources of vitamin C. Why not say, compare apples and antipasto? I feel the same about the expression "You want to have your cake and eat it, too." Who'd bother making the cake if no one was going to eat it? The real problem is that women have to do most of the baking and often are left with only crumbs.) From my experience on the Task Force, I was able to detail how the job evaluations were actually being done—three job evaluation committees made up of equal numbers of managers and employees utilized a survey instrument to compare not job titles but job components and assign points to those. In order to test the reliability of the process, each group was given about 1,000 of the same survey questions to review. More than nine times out of ten, they came up with the same answers—an extremely high reliability rating.

Anyone who thinks she's underpaid can always quit, Correy muttered. Talk about minimizing. "Quitting—the ultimate American freedom," I replied. "But like moving, it requires a security deposit—you have to know you'll have another job, and that the next position won't be just as bad. That's why America has another tradition: organizing to improve your lot."

The catastrophizing came last—pay equity will be a boondoggle we just can't afford, Correy tried to persuade the audience. I reminded them (to great cheers, I might add) that as a nation, we had long ago decided that discrimination is wrong, period, not just when remedying it could be cheap or easy. But I also delivered the good news: The price tag

for this advance had not been great in Washington and Minnesota, and would not prove to be elsewhere. Factoring in the huge gains for working families and for everyone in reducing poverty, how could we afford not to take this step?

Correy kindly (but unwittingly) gave 9to5 the material for our guide for activists, called “Twenty-Five Arguments Against Pay Equity and How to Answer Them.”

### **When the Big Boys Tell It Like It Is**

Some of the Big Boys, like the brigadier general I quoted at the beginning of this chapter, were refreshingly candid about their reasons for hanging on to the status quo. I once debated a lawyer on a radio show who summarized his opposition to pay equity with this statement: “Capitalism is about paying people as little as possible in order to make as much profit as possible.”<sup>30</sup> Indeed. But most Big Boys were more suave. Several lobbyists acknowledged past discrimination and argued for “alternatives” to pay equity such as childcare and affirmative action. We need those, we pointed out, but since they don’t address the undervaluation of women’s work, they wouldn’t substitute for reform that revalued women’s work.

### **“I Pulled Myself Up by My High Heels”**

The pay equity fight in Wisconsin was my first, but certainly not my last, experience going up against a so-called feminist. Attorney Ann Shindell never claimed that women should stay home or leave the larger salaries to their husbands. To the contrary, her argument—an indirect form of demonizing—went something like this: “I pulled myself up by my high heels and so can you. Asking the government to intervene makes women look like weak creatures that can’t work hard and earn their own advancement. This is all a matter of power and negotiation.”

It wasn’t hard to show how few jobs populated by women allow for negotiation of any sort. Calling someone weak puts the blame on them. We call women exploited—placing the blame squarely where it belongs, on their employers and on the legacy of discrimination embedded in wage evaluation systems.

The opposition also ran ads featuring women saying, “I’m a plumber [or some other job] and I’m against comparable worth.” These lost their effectiveness when we revealed the fact that the women were actresses.

The so-called feminists who argued against pay equity generally worked for law firms, consultants, or public-relations outfits that represented management. When they spoke to business audiences, their emphasis was not only on why to avoid pay equity but how—with their firms ready to pick up the new clients. If labor organizers could hand out union cards the way these folks hand out business cards, the AFL-CIO would be bursting at the seams. Fortunately, many business and professional women don’t see their own careers tied to defeat of pay equity; the Wisconsin chapter of Business and Professional Women/USA was an active member of our coalition.

## **Tripping Through the Technicalities**

All our debate opponents also tried to discredit the pay equity study by taking points out of context and making hay out of seemingly ridiculous examples. One of their favorites was that a “simple clerical” got more points for “effect of action” than a pilot—never mind that “effect of action” refers to how many people the job impacts; the pilot received many more points than the clerical on “consequence of error.” The sheer weight of numbers of examples can hurt here, giving a veneer of credibility to the view that the study was subjective. Our side compared notes after each debate so we were well aware of the examples the other side would use and were able to counter with specifics. You don’t always have the opportunity to get back to each point the opponent makes. I would be sure to answer two or three examples of such criticism in my remarks, but above all I lambasted the opposition for continuing to raise these distortions when every one of the examples had already been refuted by Task Force leaders.

Another favorite tactic of the opponents was to argue that if women’s jobs were underpaid, some men’s jobs must be overpaid. The way to avoid a pay-adjustment scheme that would cost money and thereby raise taxes, create skyrocketing inflation, business flight, you name it, was to adjust both ends of the scales. Obviously this was part of a compartmentalizing effort to turn men against us, along with women who didn’t want their men to get less pay. It conveniently ignored the essence of the problem: The discriminatory wage originally set for women when it was legally and morally acceptable to pay women less than men, even for doing exactly the same job for the same employer, determined the prevailing wage for female-dominated jobs a century later. It’s illegal to remedy discrimination against one group by lowering the pay of others. Doing so, we pointed out, wouldn’t end discrimination but perpetuate it by incorporating it into paychecks of people who had previously been better off.

## **Sometimes Bawdy**

After we’d won the pay equity item in the state budget in July of 1985, a mainline Milwaukee law firm held a seminar on the subject for corporate leaders and invited me to be one of the speakers. At first this puzzled me. Why would a firm that had opposed the bill give 9to5 a platform? It didn’t take long to figure it out—they wanted to know what we were up to and especially whether we would try to impose pay equity on private sector employers.

The seminar was held at a fancy hotel, attended by hundreds of well-dressed, well-connected people. I wore my best (and only) summer suit. “I know you asked me here to find out our plans,” I told them, “and I’m happy to share them. But first I have to give you some background, so you’ll understand where we came up with the idea for the next stage of our campaign.” I explained how I’d been influenced by a state legislator from Eau Claire named Joe Looby, a union activist with an easygoing manner, an imposing set of eyebrows, and a booming voice. One day in the spring of 1985 while I was in Madison fighting for pay equity, I sat in on a caucus meeting of Democrats in the assembly. Looby

rose to explain why he'd switched from opposing the bill to supporting it after a recent medical experience. "When you have surgery," I remember Looby telling his colleagues, "first the area has to get 'prepped.' You know how they're always comparing nurses and electricians, nurses and plumbers? Well, there I was waiting to get prepped, and in walks the electrician with his giant tool belt, and the nurse with a nice, neat little kit. 'Please, God,' I said, 'please let the nurse be the one that does the prep and the electrician be here to fix something in the wall, and if this guy is making fifteen dollars an hour, please let her be making that much, too.'" The nurse efficiently completed the prep and Looby moved along to surgery. Later a doctor came in to see how he was doing. "Is everything working?" the doctor asked. "Not exactly," Looby replied. "Well," the doctor informed him, "you can't go home until everything is working." In walked a plumber with his roto-roto, followed by the nurse with a nice, neat little kit. Again Looby prayed that the nurse would be the one to do the procedure, and that she'd be earning the same salary as the plumber. He got the nurse—and Looby's vote was sealed. He took his seat amid howls of laughter.

Immediately another state representative, Marlin Schneider, bounced up. "Let me tell you what really happened," he said. "Looby's lying on the bed waiting to be prepped and in walks the nurse with a straight-edge razor. She holds the razor over the affected area. 'Hey, Looby,' she shouts, 'are you for comparable worth?'" I could see the corporate audience wondering where I was going. "Here's our plan," I told them. "We're finding out the surgery schedule for top executives. Our organizing will focus on operating-room nurses. We'll be handing out straight-edge razors and conducting training sessions. The name of our campaign? 'Use it or lose it.'"

The next day a business editor for the Milwaukee Journal published a long article on the seminar. He described my remarks as "moving, witty and sometimes bawdy."<sup>31</sup>

### **Continuing the Fight**

Unfortunately, Carlene Carr's dream of the state being a model for private sector employees hasn't materialized. 9to5 and other groups work with the National Committee on Pay Equity (NCPE) to spread awareness of the problem and policy solutions. Every year the NCPE selects a Tuesday in April as Equal Pay Day; Tuesday was chosen because that's the day when women's wages catch up to men's wages from the previous week. Supporters of equal pay wear red to symbolize how women are "in the red" because of pay inequity. 9to5 also created an array of workshops with titles like "What Could You Do with an Extra Quarter, Thirty-Five, or Forty-Five Cents?" referring to the shortfall in earnings for white, black, and Latina women compared to every dollar earned by men. These trainings helped women learn specific tips for evaluating their own job skills and asking for higher pay, and also prepared them for broader policy campaigns.

9to5 chapters and others have been delightfully creative in designing activities for Equal Pay Day. Colorado 9to5, for example, presented legislators with candy bars with a chunk missing, representing women's lower pay. A group of early childhood teachers associated with the American Federation of Teachers (AFT) delivered a petition and bag of peanuts

to all 535 members of Congress on behalf of thousands of activists across the nation, protesting that those doing such vital work for our children earn only peanuts.

## **RAISING THE PAY OF FAMILY CHILDCARE PROVIDERS**

Childcare is a prime example of the undervaluation of jobs that are seen as “women’s work.” A group of family childcare providers in Rhode Island set out to change that reality by making visible the cost and the value of the care they administer every day.

The Home Daycare Justice Campaign began in Providence, Rhode Island in 1990 as part of an organization known as DARE—Direct Action for Rights and Equality. Pearlie Mae Thomas, a DARE member, was one of many women hired by the state’s Department of Human Services (DHS) to provide care in their homes for children of women eligible for assistance. The pay wasn’t only low, often it arrived as much as three months late. Pearlie Mae Thomas decided to do something about that. She and DARE staff began to survey providers in the community and soon found fifteen others who joined the campaign to demand timely payment from DHS. After getting the brush-off, a group that had grown to twenty-five providers brought the press with them to the associate director’s office. The next daycare payroll came on time.

After this victory, the women turned their attention to compensation and eventually spun off into a co-op of providers. Judy Victor became one of the co-op leaders during the nine years she spent as a family childcare provider. “I sort of fell into this,” Victor told me, describing the long hours and constantly changing shifts she worked earlier at a nursing home. “I was a single mom who hardly saw my kids—sometimes I had to leave them alone. I wanted to be there.”<sup>32</sup>

Victor calls the co-op not just a good idea but a “necessity to make sure providers weren’t exploited and were treated as a valuable asset not only to the state agency, but to the families they served.” The group launched a campaign they called the Cost of Care. With the help of a professor from nearby Wheelock College, they designed a survey and interviewed a random sample of providers to find out exactly what providers were spending on food, equipment, space, and other expenses; how many children they watched; and how much money they received in compensation. Even Judy Victor was startled by the results, which the co-op published in a booklet in 2002. Many providers were making as little as \$2.76 an hour (the highest pay was \$11 an hour) for fifty to sixty hours of work every week.

“The way providers are valued basically reflects what society thinks about women,” Victor said. “That’s women’s work. They’re supposed to be home watching children anyway.” The providers worked to expose this problem and to show that, like Head Start teachers, they educate children. “They may not have degrees, but they do the work,” says Victor. “They’re expected to teach the children things, take them on field trips, have activities and curriculum. If I give you nine hours of this kind of service, I should be entitled to some kind of decent pay and benefits.”

The parents of kids Victor cared for were often immigrants who “looked to me for things beyond what they’d look to a teacher in a center or Head Start. They wanted social support. Family childcare goes beyond caring for kids—in many cases, it means caring for the whole family.”

The co-op presented lawmakers with the Cost of Care and other research. They utilized a 2003 study done by the Rhode Island Institute for Labor Studies that showed every dollar the state spends on childcare brings \$1.72 in return from sources such as payroll taxes and people spending more money. The women also looked at what other occupations earned—janitors, sanitation workers, and others, were all paid more than they were. They knew those jobs were important, “but so were ours,” Victor said. “They look at us as babysitters. Family childcare providers are so much more than that—we’re teachers, we’re counselors, we give the kids guidance. We’re a valuable workforce.”

### **Winning Respect**

Because of the work of the co-op, that value is beginning to be recognized. Rates of payment from the Rhode Island DSS have gone up by 40 percent. Providers taking care of at least two children, earning at least \$1,800 every six months, became entitled to participate in the state’s Medicaid program, known as Right Care. Much more money is now available for training, and partnerships have sprung up with colleges offering two- or four-year degrees in early childhood education. United Way of America and the Rhode Island Childcare Facilities Fund awarded mini grants to providers who want to beautify their property, buy equipment, and do professional development. For two years the co-op ran a successful pilot project to provide substitutes when a provider was ill or wanted a vacation. Unfortunately, the state refused to provide funds to continue that initiative.

The Service Employees International Union is now working with providers to win recognition as a union, so that they can negotiate not only wages and benefits, but funds for training, substitutes, and professional days for continuing education. “The State expects providers to care for each kid at least nine hours a day,” Victor explained. “They regulate the money we get, the things we could do. If you have a workforce you have that much control over, they’re basically your employees. Providers don’t really want to be employees of the state, but they want to be recognized as a valuable asset, as a profession that needs to be rewarded as such.”

Victor, who’s no longer with the co-op, is proud “that I had even a little bit to do with it. Even though we didn’t get all the things we wanted to—and I think they eventually will, the governor is trying to put off the inevitable, they will become a union and bargain for what they need—after all the work in the last nine or ten years, family childcare providers as women have gotten a lot of respect in this state and nationally. People at the capitol realize this is not something women are doing to make some pocket money. This is a career for the majority of us. It’s being recognized as a profession.”

### **FINAL THOUGHTS: DOING THE RIGHT THING**

One year on Valentine's day, the Milwaukee 9to5 chapter gave a "Full-of-Heart" award to Ralph Sherman, who was then director of Jewish Family Services. The support staff at the agency, led by a 9to5 board member, had barraged Sherman with materials about how their jobs were undervalued and the consequences for them and their families. "You'll have to convince me," Sherman told the women. They did. He went on to persuade the agency's board of directors to revalue those jobs and significantly raise the pay. At the 9to5 ceremony, Sherman was reluctant to accept his award. "Why honor me for doing what we should have done all along?" he said. (When I attended his funeral a couple years ago, I learned that this recognition meant more to him than all the accolades he'd accumulated during his lengthy career.)

Ralph Sherman was right. Valuing women's work is what we should have been doing all along. Thanks to women like the clericals on his staff and the Rhode Island childcare providers—ordinary women taking on the Big Boys from the bottom up—someday all workers will experience fair pay as a matter of course.

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<sup>1</sup> Jane Fonda knew Karen Nussbaum, one of the founders of 9to5, and wanted to create a movie that highlighted the group's issues. Karen told me the original plot involved murdering the boss. "That's not really our agenda," she told Fonda. Hence the kidnapping (also not part of the agenda). The fantasies about how to off the boss did flow from conversations Fonda had with forty 9to5 members in Cleveland.

<sup>2</sup> A survey done by the Industry Standard among its 2,600 subscribers found a 27 percent compensation gap among women and men in the Internet economy when bonuses were considered along with pay. "Still a Man's World," *The Industry Standard* (January 1–8, 2001): 80–81.

<sup>3</sup> National Committee on Pay Equity (NCPE). That group attributes the slight rise in these 2005 figures from the numbers in 2004 (76 cents overall, 66 cents for African American women, 56 cents for Latinas, and 80 cents for women of Asian descent) to the fact that men's earnings fell more than women's. Women's earnings were \$31,858, a drop of 1.3 percent, while men's earnings were \$41,386, a drop of 1.8 percent from the previous year.

<sup>4</sup> See the study done by Steven J. Rose and Heidi Hartmann, "Still a Man's Labor Market: The Long Term Earnings Gap" (Washington, DC: Institute for Women's Policy Research, 2004), which looked at a random sample of women and men over a 15-year period.

<sup>5</sup> See the study done by Steven J. Rose and Heidi Hartmann, "Still a Man's Labor Market: The Long Term Earnings Gap" (Washington, DC: Institute for Women's Policy Research, 2004). Another study by Sylvia Hewlitt of 2,443 highly qualified women (graduate degrees and high honors undergraduate) found more than a third stopped working for some period of time, usually to care for children, 24 percent for elders. The average time of this "off-ramping," as Hewlitt calls it, was 2.2 years. The leave cost women 18 percent of their earning power—37 percent if they took three or more years off. See Hewlitt, "The New Have-It-All Myth," *More* magazine (June 2005).

<sup>6</sup> "Laura," *Electronic testimony to the Economic Sufficiency Task Force of Wisconsin Women Equal Prosperity*, a statewide project to raise the status of women in Wisconsin (May 2004): <http://wiwep.org/EconomicSufficiency/homepage>.

<sup>7</sup> Abby Ellin, "When It Comes to Salary, Many Women Don't Push," *New York Times*, February 29, 2004.

<sup>8</sup> U.S. Census Bureau, median earnings of women 25 years or older working full time, year round as a percentage of men's annual earnings in 2003. See <http://www.census.gov/hhes/income/histinc/p24/html>.

<sup>9</sup> Hilary M. Lips, "The Gender Wage Gap: Debunking the Rationalizations," *WomensMedia.com*: <http://www.womensmedia.com/new/Lips-Hilary-gender-wage-gap.shtml>. In 2001, women's pay compared to men's overall was 76 percent. The figures were 72 percent for those with masters degrees, 75 percent for those with doctorates, and 60 percent for those with professional degrees. Jane Waldfogel found that the "mommy wage gap"—the gap between earnings of mothers and nonmothers—grew from 10 percent in 1980, when nonmothers earned 66 percent and mothers 56 percent of the pay of their male counterparts, to 17.5 percent in 1991, when nonmothers earned 90.1 percent but mothers only 72.6 percent of men's pay.

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“Understanding the ‘Family Gap’ in Pay for Women with Children,” *Journal of Economic Perspectives* 12, no. 1 (1998): 137–56.

<sup>10</sup> Steven J. Rose and Heidi Hartmann, “Still a Man’s Labor Market: The Long Term Earnings Gap” (Washington, DC: Institute for Women’s Policy Research, 2004). See also Hilary M. Lips, “The Gender Wage Gap: Debunking the Rationalizations,” *WomensMedia.com*, <http://www.womensmedia.com/new/Lips-Hilary-gender-wage-gap.shtml>.

<sup>11</sup> Adapted from remarks by Steve Lerner, then head of the AFL-CIO Organizing Institute, at a conference in Washington, DC, entitled “Low-Wage Workers in the New Economy: Strategies for Opportunity and Advancement,” May 24, 2000.

<sup>12</sup> As the first major purchaser of typewriters, the government created the category “Female Clerk” (later called “Typist”) and set the annual pay at \$600; “Male Clerks” (whose job involved filing, rewriting certain documents, and reception) earned \$1,200 per year (Paul Van Riper, *History of the United States Civil Service* [Evanston, IL: Row, Peterson, 1958], 479).

<sup>13</sup> Donald J. Treiman and Heidi I. Hartmann, *Women, Work and Wages: Equal Pay for Jobs of Equal Value* (Washington, DC: National Academy Press, 1981): 62-71.

<sup>14</sup> Social psychologists have demonstrated repeatedly that occupations associated with women or requiring stereotypically feminine skills are rated as less prestigious and deserving of less pay than occupations associated with men and masculine skills. As more and more women enter an occupation, there may be a tendency to value (and reward) that occupation less and less. See Donald Tomaskovic-Devey, *Gender and Racial Inequality at Work: The Sources and Consequences of Job Segregation* (Ithaca, NY: ILR Press, 1993).

<sup>15</sup> Daniel H. Weinberg’s “Evidence from Census 2000 about Earnings by Detailed Occupation for Men and Women,” shows men earning more than women in all 20 of the highest-paid occupations for both sexes as well as in all 20 of the lowest-paid (Census Bureau Report [June 2004]:

<http://purl.access.apo.gov/gpo/lps64752>). Steven Rose and Heidi Hartmann (“Still a Man’s Labor Market: The Long Term Earnings Gap” [Washington, DC: Institute for Women’s Policy Research, 2004]) divided jobs into three categories—elite, good, and less skilled. In each tier, male-dominated categories pay more than those held primarily by women, even though the educational requirements are similar. The Center for Gender Studies found only four occupational categories for which comparison data were available in which women earned even a little more than men: special education teachers, order clerks, electrical and electronic engineers, and miscellaneous food preparation occupations.

<sup>16</sup> National Institute for Early Education Research, “Massive National Study Finds Many Prekindergarten Teachers Underpaid; Others Lacking Required Credentials,” press release (May 3, 2005): <http://nieer.org/mediacenter/index.php?PressID=44>.

<sup>17</sup> Heidi Hartmann et al., “Equal Pay for Working Families: National and State Data on Pay Gap and Its Costs” (Washington, DC: Institute for Women’s Policy Research, June 1999).

<sup>18</sup> Ronnie Steinberg, speech at Emory University, “Ronnie Steinberg discusses future efforts in pay equity reform” (April 29, 1996).

<sup>19</sup> Lorraine Adams, “The Hazards of Elder Care,” *The Washington Post* (October 31, 1999): <http://pqasb.pqarchiver.com/washingtonpost/access>.

<sup>20</sup> *County of Washington v. Gunther*, 452 U.S. 161 (1981).

<sup>21</sup> This provision is known as the Bennett Amendment.

<sup>22</sup> Kimberly Bayard et al., “New Evidence on Sex Segregation and Sex Differences in Wages from Matched Employer-Employee Data,” Working Paper No. 7003 (Cambridge, MA: National Bureau of Economic Research, 1999).

<sup>23</sup> According to Sara Evans and Barbara Nelson, the base salary for a Clerk I working for the state of Minnesota in 1983 was \$11,922, only 17 percent above the poverty line of \$10,178 (*Wage Justice* [Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989], 99–100). Over the next four years, without the state’s pay equity initiative, the base salary would have risen to \$13,675, 22 percent above the then-current poverty line. However, as a result of pay equity, that Clerk I took home \$15,931, 42 percent above the poverty line. Contrary to critics who said the state would have to cut jobs and that women’s share of state jobs would decline, the total number of state employees increased from 32,383 in January 1982 to 35,643 in January of 1986. Women’s representation in state employment increased from 42 percent of employees in 1982 to 44 percent in 1986.

<sup>24</sup> Michael Lowery, in-person testimony at an open forum of the Wisconsin Women Equal Prosperity project in Milwaukee, February 25, 2004.

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<sup>25</sup> Clarence M. Pendleton Jr., appointed by President Reagan to chair the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, made this statement in 1984 (see “On Comparable Pay for Comparable Work,” *New York Times*, November 17, 1984.)

<sup>26</sup> Memo to White House Counsel Fred F. Fielding on February 20, 1984. Roberts, then-associate White House counsel, also wrote, “It is difficult to exaggerate the perniciousness of the ‘comparable worth’ theory. It mandates nothing less than the central planning of the economy by judges” (“Memorandum re Nancy Risque Request for Guidance on Letter from Congresswoman Snowe et al.” [see <http://www.savethecourt.org>]).

<sup>27</sup> Governor Earl created the Task Force as a compromise with the union, Council 24 of the American Federation of State, County, and Municipal Workers. AFSCME had lodged a complaint with the EEOC and State Personnel Commission after state administrators balked at implementing a provision of the Omnibus Civil Service Reform Act of November 1977 to end the practice of paying traditionally female jobs less than similar jobs held by men. That provision was grounded in a comprehensive review of the civil service system under Governor Patrick J. Lucey earlier that year. Examples cited included barbers and cosmetologists, bakers and cooks, and stock clerks and typists. For a more detailed background, see Dennis Dresang, “Gender and Pay: The Politics of Pay Equity in Wisconsin,” in *The Politics and Practice of Pay Equity*, ed. Ronnie Steinberg (Nashville: Vanderbilt Press, forthcoming).

<sup>28</sup> Dennis Dresang, *ibid.* See also my article, “From the Grassroots: Developing an Effective Political Strategy” in the same volume.

<sup>29</sup> The hearing was held in Milwaukee December 10, 1984.

<sup>30</sup> Attorney Barry Chaet. The debate took place in 1985 on WISN radio in Milwaukee on “Nighttalk” with Dave Begel.

<sup>31</sup> See Ray Kenny, “Keen Wit Serves Bravo Well in Fight Over Women’s Pay,” July 16, 1985.

<sup>32</sup> Phone interview, June 28, 2005.