

## Exploiting the Gender Gap

By WARREN FARRELL

From The New York Times on September 5, 2005

Carlsbad, Calif. — Nothing disturbs working women more than the statistics often mentioned on Labor Day showing that they are paid only 76 cents to men's dollar for the same work. If that were the whole story, it should disturb all of us; like many men, I have two daughters and a wife in the work force.

When I was on the board of the National Organization for Women in New York City, I blamed discrimination for that gap. Then I asked myself, "If an employer has to pay a man one dollar for the same work a woman would do for 76 cents, why would anyone hire a man?"

Perhaps, I thought, male bosses undervalue women. But I discovered that in 2000, women without bosses - who own their own businesses - earned only 49 percent of male business owners. Why? When the Rochester Institute of Technology surveyed business owners with M.B.A.'s from one top business school, they found that money was the primary motivator for only 29 percent of the women, versus 76 percent of the men. Women put a premium on autonomy, flexibility (25- to 35-hour weeks and proximity to home), fulfillment and safety.

After years of research, I discovered 25 differences in the work-life choices of men and women. All 25 lead to men earning more money, but to women having better lives.

High pay, as it turns out, is about tradeoffs. Men's tradeoffs include working more hours (women work more around the home); taking more dangerous, dirtier and outdoor jobs (garbage collecting, construction, trucking); relocating and traveling; and training for technical jobs with less people contact (like engineering).

Is the pay gap, then, about the different choices of men and women? Not quite. It's about parents' choices. Women who have never been married and are childless earn 117 percent of their childless male counterparts. (This comparison controls for education, hours worked and age.) Their decisions are more like married men's, and never-married men's decisions are more like women's in general (careers in arts, no weekend work, etc.)

Does this imply that mothers sacrifice careers? Not really. Surveys of men and women in their 20's find that both sexes (70 percent of men, and 63 percent of women) would sacrifice pay for more family time. The next generation's discussion will be about who gets to be the primary parent.

Don't women, though, earn less than men in the same job? Yes and no. For example, the Bureau of Labor Statistics lumps together all medical doctors. Men are more likely to be surgeons (versus general practitioners) and work in private practice for hours that are longer and less predictable, and for more years. In brief, the same job is not the same. Are these women's choices? When I taught at a medical school, I saw that even my first-year female students eyed specialties with fewer and more predictable hours.

But don't female executives also make less than male executives? Yes. Discrimination? Let's look. The men are more frequently executives of national and international firms with more personnel and revenues, and responsible for bottom-line sales, marketing and finances, not human resources or public relations. They have more experience, relocate and travel overseas more, and so on.

Comparing men and women with the "same jobs," then, is to compare apples and oranges. However, when all 25 choices are the same, the great news for women is that then the women make more than the men. Is there discrimination against women? Yes, like the old boys' network. And sometimes discrimination against women becomes discrimination against men: in hazardous fields, women suffer fewer hazards. For example, more than 500 marines have died in the war in Iraq. All but two were men. In other fields, men are virtually excluded - try getting hired as a male dental hygienist, nursery school teacher, cocktail waiter.

There are 80 jobs in which women earn more than men - positions like financial analyst, speech-language pathologist, radiation therapist, library worker, biological technician, motion picture projectionist. Female sales engineers make 143 percent of their male counterparts; female statisticians earn 135 percent.

I want my daughters to know that people who work 44 hours a week make, on average, more than twice the pay of someone working 34 hours a week. And that pharmacists now earn almost as much as doctors. But **only by abandoning our focus on discrimination against women can we discover these opportunities for women.**

Warren Farrell is the author of "Why Men Earn More: The Startling Truth Behind the Pay Gap - and What Women Can Do About It."