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## 2 Do Russian women want to work?

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From the very beginning of change in the Soviet Union it was predicted that economic and political reforms would have a significant impact on women.<sup>1</sup> In particular, there was an expectation that unemployment would be an inevitable consequence of restructuring, and that women would be the worst afflicted by this: 'that unemployment was primarily a female problem became practically a universally accepted point of view in Russian society from the moment when unemployment was legalised in July 1991'.<sup>2</sup> With the threat of mass unemployment, the negative aspects of women's work received more and more attention in the media and policy-making circles. This change in emphasis partly reflected a wish to protect men from unemployment and was also seen as socially desirable in itself. The Russian commentator Larissa Lissytukina, for example, has argued that 'emancipation for Soviet women is not based upon a demand to work. On the contrary, liberation is perceived by many as the right not to work'.<sup>3</sup> It also seemed that a reduction of women's employment would make economic sense, since the cost of social provision for women, such as maternity leave and child care, is said to make 'the female labour force an extremely unattractive proposition for employers'.<sup>4</sup> A logical answer to the great problem of economic reform – mass unemployment – therefore seemed to be that, instead of attempting to combine several roles, women should be allowed to fulfil their biological destiny as wives and mothers.

Early statistics did seem to show that women were indeed the majority of the unemployed. For example, Natal'ia Rimashevskaja states, without giving her source, that between 1989 and 1991, 60 per cent of those made redundant were women, rising to 80 per cent

amongst managerial workers.<sup>5</sup> Mezentseva also argued that, during the first stage of restructuring, 'as a result of a drop in production and the closure of a whole range of technically obsolete and uncompetitive sectors, the trend towards shifting women from paid to unpaid domestic labour is likely to intensify'.<sup>6</sup> Thus, women would 'have to content themselves with jobs offering few career prospects or chances for job promotion. As a result of these changes, women's part in decision making and management will be reduced to a minimum: women will work outside the home for economic reasons only'.<sup>7</sup>

Nor only was a reduction of female labour participation rates widely predicted, many commentators also felt that this was desirable: men should be given jobs first and women should return to what Mikhail Gorbachev called their 'purely womanly mission'.<sup>8</sup> The implication was that, while some women might choose to have a career, the majority of women would prefer to stay at home and look after their children and husbands. Nanette Funk contends, for example, that, while paid work 'provides some benefits and satisfactions, such as friendship, solidarity, relief from boredom at home, some economic goods, and a degree of respect and autonomy', it nevertheless involves 'gender alienation,' having to be "like a man" ... is all too often boring and absurd and provides only limited autonomy, given low salaries ... [I]n spite of the benefits, the harm it generates is above any acceptable threshold'.<sup>9</sup> Similarly, Hilary Pilkington assumes that their status as 'second class workers ... encourages women to see work as materially necessary but undesirable, and thus to favour options to "return to their womanly mission" in the home'.<sup>10</sup>

In the same vein, Lissytukina argues that in the past the only possible form of protest was an escape into private life; the house and, in particular, its kitchen was the only free sphere in society. 'The Russian kitchen was a front of massive resistance to the totalitarian regime and is perceived with sentimental nostalgia today'.

[Women] by no means perceive their kitchen ... as a narrow corridor cut off from the world ... in the kitchen one is surrounded by intimacy, publicity and intellectual creativity ... in the kitchen life gushes forth ... [and] quite a few more women wish to return to the kitchen in order to be relieved of doing road work, boring office jobs, construction jobs or factory work.<sup>11</sup>

For Lissytukina 'every experience of life during the Soviet regime made the idea of emancipation unacceptable to women'.<sup>12</sup> Furthermore, 'if Russian women had something to lose in their communist

past, they would undoubtedly have found a way to fight for it. The absence of any fight means no special values were left.'<sup>13</sup>

The images of 'happy housewives' conveyed in this account contrast markedly with economic realities, however. Overcrowding, poor facilities and the claustrophobia of most accommodation mean that workers often see their work as an escape. The kitchen may be an arena of creativity and discussion for the intelligentsia but workers gain more stimulation and companionship from their work collective. As Sergei Alashev, one of a new generation of sociologists, specialising in the ethnography of the post-Soviet enterprise, argues, 'workers get more satisfaction from carrying out their work responsibilities, and sometimes much more, than from the time they spend with their families'.<sup>14</sup> Finally, it is by no means clear that Russian women are as passive as is implied by these arguments, and they are in fact attempting to hold onto their jobs for a number of reasons, something which is reflected in the employment statistics.

#### Does unemployment have a 'female face'?

Despite the gloomy prognoses of the early 1990s, unemployment in Russia does not seem so far to have afflicted women disproportionately. According to the survey data produced by the state statistical service, Goskomstat, there are fewer women unemployed than men, and the percentage of women among the unemployed population is declining: in October 1992, men accounted for 50.5 per cent of the unemployed and women 49.5 per cent, while by March 1995 the figures were 55.3 per cent for men and 44.7 per cent for women. The survey figures do differ substantially from those for the registered unemployed, among whom women still constitute a majority, although even here the proportion of women is declining: in December 1992 they made up 72.2 per cent of the registered unemployed, but by March 1995 this figure had declined to 62.3 per cent.<sup>15</sup> Women accounted for just under half of the workers newly registered as unemployed in the first three quarters of 1995, while making up a substantial majority (71.7 per cent) of white-collar registrations.<sup>16</sup> The fact that women appear more inclined to register as unemployed may be connected with the fact that men generally receive higher wages than women and see themselves as the primary breadwinners: the paltry levels of benefit on offer are therefore less likely to tempt them into what is still seen as the humiliation of registration, although the figures would suggest that this is gradually changing. It seems that

employed men also earn significantly more than unemployed men from subsidiary economic activity,<sup>17</sup> and so are less eligible to register for benefit. In any case, of these two sets of statistics, it is the survey data which is considered to be internationally comparable: the employment rate found by the survey is five times higher than the rate of registered unemployment.<sup>18</sup>

Other evidence also supports the conclusion that unemployment in Russia is far from being predominantly a 'woman's problem'. According to Goskomstat figures for the first three quarters of 1995, for example, 50.5 per cent of those placed in jobs by the Federal Employment Service (hereafter FES) were women. Meanwhile, although women do tend to be unemployed slightly longer than men, the differences are quite marginal: according to the FES figures for 1994, 15 per cent of the men registered were unemployed for over a year, while the figure for women was 10 per cent. In that year the average duration of unemployment for women registered with the service was 5.5 months, while for men it was 5.28 months.<sup>19</sup> Unemployed men took an average of 7.2 months to find a job, women an average 8.2 months.<sup>20</sup> In addition to this, in the regions of Russia most severely affected by unemployment, such as Ivanovo, men tend to account for a greater proportion of the unemployed than women.<sup>21</sup> According to the FES figures for 1 July 1994, women accounted for only 40 per cent of the unemployed in the textile centre of Ivanovo, often known as the 'town of single women' because of its predominantly female workforce.<sup>22</sup> Although women workers in Ivanovo have been afflicted by the privations associated with working short time or being sent on administrative vacation, this cannot be equated with what Russians often refer to as 'being thrown out on the street'. In other regions, where the industries are more male dominated, women often make up a far greater proportion of the registered unemployed: in Kemerovo Oblast, where the Kuzbass coal basin is located and which has a low rate of unemployment, they account for 81 per cent of the total, for example. This underlines the fact that women cannot be assumed to be the primary victims of economic reform: in some regions this is the case, but not in others.

The fact that the much-predicted mass lay-offs of women have not materialised is partly explained by the fact that enterprises have to date generally avoided making large-scale compulsory redundancies. Instead, they have attempted to preserve the 'backbone' of their labour collectives, and have used strategies such as administrative leave, forced retirement of working pensioners and late payment of

wages to reduce labour costs.<sup>23</sup> This is reflected in the unemployment statistics: according to the Goskomstat survey for March 1995, 36 per cent of the unemployed left their jobs voluntarily, as compared with 33 per cent who left because of redundancy or the liquidation of their enterprise. What the same set of figures also highlights is that women are less likely than men to leave work voluntarily: only 31 per cent of unemployed women had done so as compared with 40 per cent of unemployed men, with 39 per cent of women as against 29 per cent of men having lost their jobs as a result of redundancy.<sup>24</sup> Amongst the registered unemployed only 12.8 per cent of those applying to the Employment Service in the first three quarters of 1995 had officially lost their jobs as a result of redundancy, but 73.1 per cent of these were women.<sup>25</sup> This suggests that, where they can, women are tenaciously hanging on to their jobs, being much more likely than men to hold on until forced to leave.<sup>26</sup>

This interpretation is also supported by statistics on employment. These show that men have been leaving industry in greater numbers than women: the percentages of women working in nearly all branches of industry, with the exception of engineering, have increased since 1991 and the trend is most marked in those industries, such as metallurgy and wood processing, where overall employment has been most sharply reduced. In metallurgy, the percentage of female employees has increased from 36.9 per cent in 1991 to 40.9 per cent in 1994, while in wood processing the percentage increased from 39.4 to 46.2 over the same period.<sup>27</sup> It may be that many men are leaving industry to find better-paid work in the private sector,<sup>28</sup> while women are too scared to leave their traditional employment because of their more insecure labour market prospects. But this in no way contradicts the other implication of these figures: that women are not succumbing to the call of the home in the face of late payment of wages, compulsory unpaid leave, deteriorating wages and working conditions, but are doing their best to remain in paid employment.

Survey data has long supported the conclusion that women are by no means eager to leave the labour market. Both Judith Shapiro<sup>29</sup> and Rimashevskaya<sup>30</sup> cite evidence from surveys which show that, even if men's wages were sufficient to support the family, the majority of women would want to keep on working. Mezentsseva<sup>31</sup> points to survey data which shows that while 81 per cent of those surveyed wanted to work a shorter day, only 4 per cent of engineers and technical staff, and 3 per cent of shop floor workers, said they would stop working altogether. Even given the often appalling conditions

Under which women work, there is enough evidence to show that women will not willingly give up the economic independence that work affords them. These attitudes have not changed as the economic climate has deteriorated. The July 1995 survey conducted by the Russian Centre for Public Opinion Research (VTsIOM) indicates that women show similar levels of commitment to work as men, and demonstrate no particular hankering for the comfort of home and family. Similar numbers of men and women opted for the statement 'Work is important and interesting to me irrespective of pay' (14.0 per cent for men and 14.7 per cent, respectively), as they did for its opposite, 'Work is an unpleasant occupation. If I could I wouldn't work at all' (3.9 per cent for men and 5.3 per cent, respectively). There was slightly more variation in the responses of men and women to the more moderate statements 'Work is important but there are other things more important to me' (15.8 per cent for men and 23.3 per cent for women) and 'Work is a means to earn a living; the better they pay the more I work' (62.4 per cent for men and 52 per cent for women), but, if anything, these figures suggest that women are less likely than men to have a purely instrumental attitude to their work.<sup>32</sup> It is true that, despite the high participation rate of women in the Russian labour market, twice as many women as men are economically inactive, but only 11.7 per cent of these women are 'people running a household': 65.4 per cent are married and 17.1 per cent are students. The main reason why there are many more inactive women than men is because Russian women are expected to live more than ten years longer than men – the inactive women are dead, so they do not figure in the statistics. Thus, the Russian women who are at home are predominantly not housewives, but grandmothers. The average age of economically inactive women is 66 years; that of economically inactive men is 44.8.<sup>33</sup>

#### Men and work

The survey and statistical data can only tell us so much, however. Unemployment levels, for example, are not necessarily an accurate indication of who is hardest hit economically by restructuring. Unemployment itself is not a particularly useful indicator of welfare in Russia, as is underlined by the fact that, according to an analysis of eight VTsIOM surveys carried out between January 1994 and March 1995, 30 per cent of those calling themselves 'unemployed' in the surveys were actually working more than twenty-eight hours a week, and many of the unemployed earned considerably more from

subsidiary activity alone than those in full-time work earned from all sources.<sup>34</sup> The survey data on women's desire or otherwise to stay in paid employment is, as argued above, quite consistent. But surveys which ask women to choose between a series of predetermined statements on their attitude to work can only provide a very limited idea of the meaning of work in women's lives. The following section aims to increase understanding of the significance of paid work for Russian women workers by presenting the results of qualitative research carried out in three contrasting regions and industries. In-depth interviews were conducted with twenty women working in engineering and manufacturing enterprises in Samara; thirty women from a coal mine in the Kuzbass coal basin of Western Siberia and forty women from a printing enterprise in Syktyvkar in the Komi Republic.<sup>35</sup> In all cases a number of interviews were also conducted with men. A great deal of information was also gathered through informal social contact and discussions. The women interviewed ranged from engineers and administrators to unskilled manual workers, although the section below mainly focuses on the experience of workers, both skilled and unskilled.

What is most striking about the data is the similarity between attitudes of women working in different industries and regions. There was a remarkable consistency in the terms in which the women talked about the place of work in their lives; all of them saw their status as workers and members of 'labour collectives' as crucial to their sense of identity. Work provided a release from the monotony of home life, was a source of companionship and support, and participation in social production was seen as inherently valuable.<sup>36</sup>

The idea of home as a refuge had very little resonance among the women workers that we interviewed. First of all, living conditions for many of the workers hardly corresponded to the cosy kitchen of the Lissytukina imagination. The case of the following print worker from Syktyvkar is by no means exceptional.

We live in a hostel obtained from my husband's work. We have twelve square metres for four people ... and there are no prospects to get a flat ... we've lived there for twelve years ... it's very difficult to live there; there is no place to rest after I've finished work for the day ... there are seventeen rooms sharing one kitchen with an average of four in each room ... there are only two cookers with four rings each.

Moreover, women workers often consider their domestic burden to be at least as onerous as their duties at work. However difficult work

could be, as one of the workers from the lamp room at a Kuzbass mine argued, the problem with housework was that it was never-ending and thankless: 'You cook a meal, it gets eaten, and then what have you got to show for it?' This view was widely held and not only by women. The following married couple, workers from an aviation enterprise in Samara, claimed:

VIKTOR: In some cases it's better for women to work than to stay at home because it's too difficult at home ... contacts are too restricted and it's boring. Everyday life is so complex that sometimes it's harder than work.

OLGA: Sometimes when women go to work they say they have come for a rest ... home is very tiring and it's difficult to be satisfied with the results of work at home ... there is no end to it and you can't see the results.

VIKTOR: We just exchange two types of tiring work ... at work we have a rest from a boring home life and at home we have a rest from badly organised work.

However, in addition to escaping from their home lives, many workers, contrary to what has often been argued,<sup>37</sup> actually enjoyed the content of their work. This was most marked in the printing works, where jobs, although they were dirty and heavy, required a certain level of skill and creativity. In contrast to the widely held idea that women are technologically illiterate, many of the women displayed as much attachment to 'their' machines as any of the men. This, for example, was a printer, talking about her relationship with her machine: 'As a printer I could repair my machine and I loved my machine. Everyday I stayed behind after work to clean it and do small repairs, and even when we had Subbotniks [unpaid extra work on Saturdays] I still tried to clean my machine even when I wasn't supposed to.' Even in industrial enterprises where the work was apparently less creative, women often displayed the same attachment to their machines and their work.<sup>38</sup> The work of recharging and checking the miners' lamps in the lamp room of the mine, for example, is quite routine, but it is taken very seriously by the women who do it, as is made clear by the following comments of a forewoman on the qualities required to be a labour brigadier in the collective:

There is someone who's been working in the collective for about four years and she knows everything, understands everything, is keen and asks questions and so on - well, I could appoint her. I tried to recently but the person concerned said, 'Oh no I couldn't, I don't know the work well enough yet.' She does, she's just nervous ... There are those ... who want to know everything - how this works, how that works, what to do in this situation,

that situation and so on. You have to choose people who are interested in the work because they have to set an example to the others.

Where work was not inherently rewarding, workers valued the fact that they felt needed within their labour collectives. As the following printer argued, 'I'd go mad staring at four walls all day ... we work at home as well but without any thanks ... not that we're thanked here either but at least here we feel needed, unlike at home.' Feeling needed was intrinsically linked to the feeling of companionship that most women gained within their collectives. This print worker's enthusiasm for the social life of her enterprise was typical:

If you love your job you can't stay at home and two days on the weekend is enough for a rest ... I probably wouldn't give up work even if I could ... it's my character ... I can't live without people ... I was home for eighteen months with both the children ... eighteen months is not so long ... it just flew by and I was soon back at work ... Most women want to work ... although the conditions are not so good ... you need something else ... and if all women stayed at home who would work? ... I can't even take a holiday.

Indeed, the women mine-workers had re-appropriated the Soviet era expression 'Off to work, like to a holiday' (*na rabotu kak na prazdnik*), which made joking reference to the supposedly endemic slacking among Soviet workers. This expression cropped up several times in interviews with women workers from a variety of collectives, but it was not employed ironically. Instead, it was both posited as an ideal and used descriptively. One worker from the lamp room, for example, talking about what she felt was the wonderful atmosphere that had prevailed in her collective before the forewoman had decided to break up established shift teams, claimed,

I used to look forward to going to work - I went to work *kak na prazdnik*. If I had any problems I used to get to work and tell the girls about it and they'd say, 'Don't worry Liuda, it'll all work out' and I already used to feel better. We all used to help each other. For example, we used to fight over the floor cloth: I'd say, 'look you have a rest; I'll do the floor today' and they'd say, 'No Liuda, you're always doing it, let us do it.'

Not only did women value the companionship offered by their collectives, they also felt that membership of the labour collective was something valuable in itself. Workers did not experience the Communist Party's emphasis on collectivism as an inauthentic imposition. They have, however, adapted such ideas in the light of their own experience. This woman mine-worker treated the idea of the collective with a reverence that the communist authorities would have found

very pleasing, although for her the collective was not a cell in the construction of the communist future but a vital support network: 'We all know each others' problems here. The collective is your second family. You come to work and you can express (*vyskazat'*) your feelings, talk about your problems and then you'll feel better. That is how it should be.'

The idea of the collective as a family constantly recurred in interviews, which contradicts Lissytukina's assertion that women feel that there are no values from the past worth preserving. Where workers felt that collectivism had waned during the transition period, as a significant proportion of them claimed it had, they were disturbed and saddened by this. As one forewoman from the print works commented, 'We had a very good collective and it was as a family; it was very good and small and we were all together ... now people are more separated and there are not such good relations, not such a close collective ... maybe it's because of the situation in the country as a whole ... because of the changes.' Given this attachment to the collective, it seems that women workers will, as the statistics suggest they are doing, retain their work within enterprises for as long as it is possible for them to do so. Seventy years of propaganda telling women that work was a path to freedom and the most worthy of endeavours has certainly left its mark: women will not withdraw from the labour market in the near future unless they are forced to do so.

Will women be forced out of work in the future?

As has already been discussed, policy makers tend to be ideologically sympathetic to the idea that the reduction in the labour force necessitated by restructuring could be achieved through a reduction in male labour participation rates. And this view is by no means confined to politicians: it is also common among male managers and workers. Within an ideological climate in which essentialist conceptions of sexual difference prevail, there will be strong moral pressure on women to leave the jobs for the boys. It is quite clear from interviews with male workers and managers that, while they accept the necessity for women to work when there are no men available, the view would not be true in a situation of high male unemployment. The first discussion of female employment has assumed that economic imperatives also dictate that women will be excluded from work because they are more expensive to employ. Women are, however, notoriously ready to accept lower wages and to work in worse

conditions than men – in fact, bad working conditions are often actively sought by women since 'danger money' is a welcome supplement to low wages. The following section explores whether economic imperatives and ideology do in fact tend in the same direction.

Despite the fact that, according to communist ideology, women belonged in the workplace, the traditional gender division of labour was rarely challenged, either at home or at work. For this reason, the majority of men have an ambiguous attitude to women's work: they accept women's presence within the workplace on a daily basis, but retain the idea that, in a 'civilised' world, women would either stay at home or do clean, light work.<sup>39</sup> This, for example, was the view of a young male printer:

Men and women should do different work, and heavy work is men's work ... and work which has long hours and night shifts and harmful conditions because women must be beautiful and weak and must not look like horses ... for example, bus drivers. Bus no. 4 has a woman driver, but imagine her in dirty overalls under the bus, covered in oil and then preparing to go to the theatre. She would smell. On the other hand, a man must be proud of his position and profession and that he earns the money for them to go to the theatre.

His view was echoed by the following miner (who is married to the enthusiastic worker referred to by the forewoman of the lamp room, quoted above):

My wife gets very tired, she only goes to work for the money. All women only work at the mine for the money. [For] very, very low wages. At other enterprises the pay is even lower. What else is there to say? Here all women work, regardless of whether it's clean or dirty work. They only work for the money. They can work up to their waists in dirt, as long as they get paid.

Given such views, it is quite clear how most male workers would react if there was a choice between the loss of male or female jobs at a given enterprise. Certainly there is little ambiguity in the position of this fitter at the printing enterprise in Syktyvkar: 'Printing is men's work and I don't understand why there are women here. Women must be women and they cannot feel themselves to be women working here.'

As argued above, some commentators have assumed that as well as facing discrimination in the labour market of the future, women will also be disadvantaged by the fact that they are 'expensive'. This is a view which is shared by many enterprise managers. As one Samara personnel manager put it, 'work in an engineering enterprise is not for women; they're either on maternity leave, or on sick leave, or on some other type of leave'.<sup>40</sup> The following lament of a director of a small

wood-processing and paper-producing enterprise about the cost of employing women is also characteristic:

Discrimination against women is not allowed. But women have a right to a shorter working day and that means that it's better to employ men than women because women disrupt production. You can't interrupt production or allow women to stop work earlier than men ... there is an All-Russian Law for women in the north ... if you have men and women working on one operation ... it means you are paying women more because they work fewer hours ... and enterprises need workers who will work longer and are cheaper ... I don't have this problem in my enterprise because women and men have equal pay and no one disagrees ... if the state wants to support women they should pay this money from the budget and not force entrepreneurs to pay it ... we pay high taxes ... and this all leads to an increase in the cost of production ... the state made this provision but we are paying for it.

In spite of these considerable disadvantages, however, 50 per cent of the workforce of this director's enterprise were women. Furthermore, he also conceded in the interview that 'There are several types of work where women work better than men ... and the quality of their work is higher'. The fact that the same manager can argue that women are expensive, while also employing a large number of them and respecting the quality of their work, highlights the existence of counter-ailing tendencies amid the widespread hostility to women's employment.

For although many managers would concur with these comments about the expense of employing women, women continued to be employed by the very same managers and for good reason. They do observe that men would refuse to do for the pay on offer, and they are also seen as well disciplined and easy to control. The gendering of jobs in Russia is a complex issue,<sup>41</sup> but there is one iron law: almost regardless of the physical strength required for a job, if it is low paid and low status it will become a 'woman's job'. This is understood and accepted by both men and women in industry. This shop chief certainly knew why the workers in her shop were women: 'It's heavy work and I don't like to see women working here, especially the inotype which is very harmful ... the printers should be men as well ... really it just turned out long ago that it was low paid and not very important, perhaps. They pay us, but only enough not to let us die.' The forewoman from the central boiler house (*kotel'naia*) at the mine was similarly clear about the reason why women were doing the heavy work in her collective: 'Yes, it's hard work for women but men would not do it for the pay that we get.' The fact that women are prepared to

accept lower pay than men is reflected in the fact that men are leaving industrial employment in greater numbers than women.<sup>42</sup>

While women are often characterised as unreliable because of pregnancy, child care and other 'women's problems', they are also paradoxically regarded as more reliable than men. As Alasheev argues, 'women are the most categorical exponents of the norms of a conscientious attitude to work'.<sup>43</sup> This comes across strongly in the following quote from the director of the printing enterprise: 'We have no problems with women ... they work like bees, and with men every day there are problems. They deviate from the timetable, there are problems with labour discipline and we have wonderful women. We have problems with the kindergarten, but very rarely with the women themselves.' Similarly, the forewoman of the lamp room at the mine was categorical in her assessment of the qualities of her all-female collective. Asked if there was any absenteeism in her collective, she replied, 'Of course not. Why "of course"? Because women are serious. Once they've got work they try very hard to keep it ... this work is hard and dirty but we are still very scared to lose it.' While we would argue that women are by no means as passive as these quotations would imply,<sup>44</sup> the perception of them as quiescent and responsible workers increases their chances of employment in a period in which managers are supposed to be breaking away from the old discredited Soviet industrial culture.

### Conclusion

The discussion above makes it clear that, while there are strong ideological and some economic reasons why women may be gradually pushed out of the labour market, there are also reasons why they may be able to remain within the industrial workforce. The question, however, is what sort of work they will be doing? What is likely to happen is that the majority of women will become even more ghettoised than they were in the past, in low-paid undesirable employment, while a small minority might be able to take advantage of the changes. As Monousova argues, currently there is 'a marked tendency for men to take over the better paid occupations and to move into the more prosperous enterprises, while women have been left behind, or have moved in the opposite direction'.<sup>45</sup> (Precisely this process could be observed in the printing enterprise in Syktyvkar where, as soon as new technology was introduced which involved more complex but physically lighter and cleaner work, men were brought in to 'man' the

new machines at much higher pay rates than the women were receiving on the old machines.) While this is nothing new in the present period of economic restructuring such 'downgrading' of women is likely to be both more general and more rapid.

What is clear is that the vast majority of women want to remain in work, and at present will put up with terrible working conditions and extremely low wages rather than give up their jobs. So the real question is not whether they are going to work or not, but whether they will be able to organise in defence of their rights and to improve their wages and working conditions. This raises the important question of the relationship between women's consciousness of themselves as women and as workers: at present, women have shown their readiness to defend their rights as workers, often playing a significant role in the workers' movement,<sup>46</sup> but until they do so specifically as women they will remain in a subordinate position at work.

## Notes

- 1 We would like to thank all our Russian colleagues, and particularly Galina Monousova, for providing us with the most recent statistical data on women's employment.
- 2 Centre for Labour Market Research, *Polozhenie zhenshchin v reformiruemoi ekonomike: opyt Rossii* (Moscow, 1995), p. 26.
- 3 Larissa Lissyutkina, 'Soviet women at the crossroads of perestroika' in Nanette Funk and Magda Mueller (eds.), *Gender politics and post-communism: reflections from Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union* (New York and London: Routledge, 1993), p. 276.
- 4 Yelena Mezentseva, 'What does the future hold? (Some thoughts on the prospects for women's employment)' in Anastasia Posadskaya (ed.), *Women in Russia: a new era in Russian feminism* (London: Verso, 1994), p. 77.
- 5 Natal'ia Rimashevskaya, 'Perestroika and the status of women in the Soviet Union' in Shirin Rai, Hilary Pilkington and Annie Phizacklea (eds.), *Women in the face of change: the Soviet Union, Eastern Europe and China* (London: Routledge, 1992), p. 16.
- 6 Mezentseva, 'What does the future hold?' p. 77.
- 7 *Ibid.*, p. 83.
- 8 Mikhail Gorbachev, *Perestroika* (London: Collins, 1987), p. 177.
- 9 Nanette Funk, 'Feminism East and West' in Funk and Mueller (eds.), *Gender politics and post-communism*, p. 322.
- 10 Hilary Pilkington, 'Russia and the former Soviet Republics. Behind the mask of Soviet unity: realities of women's lives' in Chris Corrin (ed.), *Superwomen and the double burden* (London: Scarlet Press, 1992), p. 200.

- 11 Lissyutkina, 'Soviet women', p. 276. Anastasia Posadskaya warned at the time that 'the programme of women's removal from hazardous working conditions ... might turn into the programme of the removal of women from production' (Anastasia Posadskaya, 'Changes in gender discourses and policies in the former Soviet Union' in Valentine Moghadam (ed.), *Democratic reform and the position of women in transition economies* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993), p. 168).
- 12 Lissyutkina, 'Soviet women', p. 277.
- 13 *Ibid.*, p. 285.
- 14 Sergei Alesheev, 'On a particular kind of love and the specificity of Soviet production' in Simon Clarke (ed.), *Management and industry in Russia: formal and informal relations in the period of transition* (Aldershot: Edward Elgar, 1995), p. 70.
- 15 Goskomstat, *Information statistical bulletin no. 9 August 1995* (Moscow, 1995).
- 16 Goskomstat, *Survey of those applying to the employment service (form 1-T.)*, Moscow, 17 November 1995. Nevertheless, the view that unemployment is a female problem persists. Sue Bridger and her colleagues assert, without giving any reference, that 'At least 70 per cent of Russia's unemployed are women and this was already very much the case as early as 1992' (Sue Bridger, Rebecca Kay and Kathryn Pinnick, *No more heroines? Russia, Women and the market* (London: Routledge, 1996), p. 51). In July 1994, women still amounted to 77 per cent of the 12,245 registered unemployed in Moscow city and 68 per cent in Moscow region (Federal Employment Service, *Rynok truda v Rossii (January-June 1994)*, vol. 3 (Moscow, 1994)). This is where Bridger and her colleagues did their research and where unemployment is particularly a female white-collar problem (46 per cent of Moscow's unemployed women had higher education, against the national average of 12 per cent), but Moscow is hardly Russia.
- 17 VTsIOM, *Ekonomicheskie i sotsialnye peremeny: monitoring obshchestvennogo mneniia* 4, July-August 1995, p. 38.
- 18 Centre for Labour Market Research, *Polozhenie zhenshchin*, p. 26. These figures do not take into account women who are working on short time or are on administrative leave. But the point about such workers is that they are not yet unemployed. It is not possible in a volatile economic situation to make predictions about whom among those on administrative vacation or short time will eventually become unemployed. This is confirmed by longitudinal research on industrial enterprises which shows that enterprises apparently on the verge of collapse are often able to crawl back from the brink. For examples, see Simon Clarke (ed.), *The Russian industrial enterprise in transition* (Aldershot: Edward Elgar, 1996). The fact that women are prepared to hold on to their jobs even when faced with problems such as short time is discussed below.



- 19 Federal Employment Service, *Rabochaia sila na rynke truda v 1994g.* (Moscow, 1995).
- 20 Goskomstat, *Information statistical bulletin no. 9 August 1995* (Moscow, 1995).
- 21 Centre for Labour Market Research, *Polozhenie zhenshchin*, p. 28.
- 22 Federal Employment Service, *Rynok truda v Rossii (January-June 1994)*, vol. 3 (Moscow, 1994).
- 23 For a detailed example of the type of strategies employed by enterprises, see Tanya Metalina, 'Employment policy in an industrial enterprise' in Simon Clarke (ed.), *Labour relations in transition* (Aldershot: Edward Elgar, 1996), pp. 119-45.
- 24 Employers have many ways of persuading people to leave voluntarily, so a significant proportion of those made redundant are officially recorded as voluntary severances. Women are also much less likely than men to lose their jobs for disciplinary reasons.
- 25 Goskomstat, *Survey of those applying to the employment service (form I-T)*.
- 26 Research on unemployed women has indicated that they generally feel that working fewer hours for less money is preferable to being made unemployed. Elena B. Gruzdeva, *Zhenskaia bezrabotitsa v Rossii (1991-1994gg.)* (Moscow: IMEMO RAN, 1995), pp. 63-4.
- 27 Centre for Labour Market Research, *Polozhenie zhenshchin*, p. 8.
- 28 There has been no systematic research on the destinations of men leaving industrial employment.
- 29 Judith Shapiro, 'The industrial labour force' in Mary Buckley (ed.), *Perestroika and Soviet women* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), pp. 21-2.
- 30 Rimashevskaya, 'Perestroika and the status of women in the Soviet Union', p. 15.
- 31 Yelena Mezentseva, 'Equal opportunities or protectionist measures? The choice facing women', in Posadskaya (ed.), *Women in Russia*, pp. 119-21.
- 32 VTsIOM, 1995, *Ekonomicheskie i sotsialnye peremeny: monitoring obshchestvennogo mneniia* no. 5, September-October 1995, p. 85.
- 33 Goskomstat, *Information Statistical Bulletin no. 9 August 1995*.
- 34 VTsIOM, 1995, *Ekonomicheskie i sotsialnye peremeny: monitoring obshchestvennogo mneniia* no. 4, July-August 1995, p. 38.
- 35 Women make up 15-20 per cent of those employed in the average mine. They are employed in the mine administration, mainly in low-grade clerical work; in auxiliary collectives such as the *lampovaya* (lamp room), *kotel'naya* (boiler house), the coal improvement facilities, building brigades, the ventilation and lift-operating workshops; in mine services such as the canteens, laundries, hairdressers, kindergartens and prophylactic health centres. Although printing is considered to be men's work in Russia, the majority of the workers in the enterprise studied were women.
- 36 This is reflected in the qualitative material presented by Elena Gruzdeva who interviewed a total of thirty-one unemployed women, from a variety of backgrounds, registered with the employment service. Work had clearly been very important to the respondents, as is starkly illustrated by their comments on the experience of unemployment: 'It's so hard to be at home without work that I went out and wandered the streets'; '[It's] a horrendous state. I had the feeling that I'd flown away from life (*vyletela iz zhizni*)' (Gruzdeva, *Zhenskaia bezrabotitsa*, p. 61).
- 37 Donald Filtzer, for example, argues that women workers 'gain little intrinsic fulfilment from the content of ... work itself' (Donald Filtzer, *Soviet workers and the collapse of perestroika: the Soviet labour process and Gorbachev's reforms 1985-1991* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), pp. 171-2).
- 38 For further examples of this from enterprises in Samara, see Alashev, 'On a particular kind of love', pp. 72-3.
- 39 Notwithstanding their positive assessments of work, many women also hold contradictory views about the suitability of different types of work for women in general (as opposed to themselves). Statements such as 'women should not really do this work but I'm used to it' are very common. For more details, see Elain Bowers, 'Gender stereotyping and the gender division of labour in Russia' in Simon Clarke (ed.), *Conflict and change in the Russian industrial enterprise* (Aldershot: Edward Elgar, 1996), pp. 191-209.
- 40 Quoted in Irina Kozina and Vadim Borisov, 'The changing status of workers in the enterprise' in Clarke (ed.) *Conflict and change in the Russian industrial enterprise*, p. 157.
- 41 See Bowers, 'Gender stereotyping'.
- 42 Centre for Labour Market Research, *Polozhenie zhenshchin*, p. 8.
- 43 Alashev 'On a particular kind of love', p. 78.
- 44 For examples of women's activism, see Galina Monousova, 'Gender differentiation and industrial relations' in Clarke (ed.) *Conflict and change in the Russian industrial enterprise*, pp. 162-90.
- 45 *Ibid.*, p. 157.
- 46 Although the most dramatic examples of independent workers' mobilisation have been in traditional 'male' professions such as mining and the aviation industry, women are often involved in small-scale struggles in defence of their rights as workers. For examples, see Monousova, 'Gender differentiation'. Moreover, although women's role in the miners' strike activity has not received much attention in the literature, women workers are often active in pushing the men to strike. Meanwhile, at the mine under discussion in this paper, the women had been involved in a struggle to change the shift system at the mine and female workers at one of the mine's kindergarten have resisted being transferred to the under-funded local authority.

# COMPARABLE WORTH

## Theories and Evidence

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## Segregation and the Pay Gap

### I. Introduction

The terms *comparable worth* and *pay equity* refer to a form of sex discrimination that went virtually unrecognized until about 15 years ago. The issue is still little understood. Indeed, its status as a type of discrimination is controversial. Yet evidence abounds that jobs filled mostly by women have pay levels that are lower than they would be if the jobs were filled mostly by men. This is seen as sex discrimination by advocates of the principle of comparable worth.

At first glance, the issue sounds very much like the more familiar issue of "equal pay for equal work," which refers to men and women in the *same* job, with the same seniority, performing the same work equally well, but being paid differently. Comparable worth is a different issue. It is distinct because it refers to comparisons between the pay in *different* jobs, jobs that differ in that they entail at least some distinct tasks. The comparisons are between one job that is largely male and one that is largely female. (Throughout this book, for brevity, I will use the terms *male job* and *female job* to describe jobs that are *disproportionately* or *predominantly*, but generally not entirely, performed by persons of one sex.) The allegation of discrimination is the claim that the difference between the pay of the two jobs results from gender bias in wage setting rather than from other job characteristics. Needless to say, a thorny issue is how one decides when two distinct jobs are nonetheless comparable in the sense that we would expect them to pay the same in the absence of sex discrimination.

The wage discrimination at issue in comparable worth is also distinct from discrimination in hiring, initial job placement, and promotion (all of which, for brevity, I will refer to as *hiring discrimination*). Hiring discrimination against women seeking to enter traditionally male jobs is one (although not the only) reason for occupational sex segregation. Without segregation of jobs, female jobs could not be given a discrimi-

natory pay level. This is obvious, since, without segregation, there would be no predominantly male and predominantly female jobs! Yet, in my view, engaging in discrimination on the basis of sex in setting the pay levels assigned to male and female jobs is analytically distinct from engaging in hiring discrimination on the basis of sex.

Some examples may help the reader to visualize the sorts of comparisons at issue in comparable worth. In the state of Washington, where female state employees sued over pay equity, the job of legal secretary, a female job, was found by an evaluation study to be comparable in worth to the job of heavy equipment operator, a job filled mostly by men. However, in 1972, heavy equipment operators made about \$400 more per month. Stockroom attendants, mostly men, made much more than dental hygienists, who were mostly women. (The above examples are from Remick 1980, pp. 416–417, as cited in Steinberg 1990.) In 1975, nurses in Denver sued the city claiming that their jobs paid less than male jobs such as tree trimmer and sign painter (Blum 1991, p. 49). It would be hard to argue that the latter two jobs require as much skill or are as demanding as nursing. Women workers for the city of San Jose discovered in the mid-1970s that secretaries were generally earning less than workers in male jobs that required no more than an eighth grade education, including, for example, men who washed cars for the city (Blum 1991, p. 60). Eventually, women in San Jose succeeded in getting the city to do a job evaluation study. It showed, to choose some examples, that nurses earned \$9120 per year less than fire truck mechanics and that legal secretaries made \$7288 less than equipment mechanics (Blum 1991, pp. 82–83). In 1985, the California School Employees Association complained that school librarians and teaching assistants (female jobs) were paid less than custodians and groundskeepers (male jobs) (Steinberg 1990). To take yet another example, in recent years the city of Philadelphia was paying practical nurses (mostly women) less than gardeners (mostly men) (Steinberg 1990). These are not atypical examples. In addition, one is hard-pressed to come up with a single example of a male job paying less than a female job that reasonable people would find comparable in skill, effort, or difficult working conditions. Nor are these differences in pay a result of men averaging more years of experience than women, since in the above comparisons of employers' policies regarding pay levels in the various jobs, a constant level of experience was assumed. (For example, this can be done by comparing starting salaries.)

Recently, the concept of comparable worth or pay equity has been applied to issues of discrimination on the basis of race or ethnicity as well as gender. If a job in a particular organization is filled largely with African Americans or Hispanics, does the pay level tend to be lower

than is commensurate with the job's skill level and other demands? We can examine whether the racial or ethnic composition of a job has an effect on its pay level just as we can examine whether its sex composition has this effect. In academic theorizing, as well as in legislation and litigation about hiring discrimination, issues of racial discrimination were raised first. They were later extended to sex discrimination. Where comparable worth is concerned, things have happened in the reverse order. The issue was first raised with respect to sex discrimination and has more recently been examined with respect to racial discrimination. In this book, I focus exclusively on comparable worth as an issue of gender discrimination. However, the reader should bear in mind that analogous questions can be raised with respect to race and ethnicity. (See Jacob and Steinberg 1990a, note 12, on studies that have assessed effects of minority composition on wages. See also National Committee on Pay Equity 1987.)

This book is an interdisciplinary examination of the issue of comparable worth. This chapter sets the stage for the discussion by providing a sketch of the situation of men and women in paid employment in the United States. Twentieth-century trends and contemporary patterns in women's and men's employment, occupations, and pay are described, drawing from research by sociologists, economists, and psychologists. Chapter 2 compares various theories of labor markets from economic and sociology, with attention to how each view explains gender inequality in jobs and earnings, and how it treats the issue of comparable worth. Chapter 3 presents an empirical analysis of aggregate occupational data from the 1980 census that demonstrates the tendency of predominantly female occupations to pay less than predominantly male occupations, even after numerous measures of skill demands, working conditions, and market conditions are statistically controlled. It also demonstrates the penalty for doing nurturant work, a finding I interpret as evidence of indirect gender bias in wage setting. Chapter 4 examines methods of and findings from job evaluation, a technique used to evaluate jobs and assess comparable worth within a single organization. Chapter 5 explains the current legal status of comparable worth in the federal courts. Chapter 6 examines normative debates about gender in equality and comparable worth, drawing on social, political, and economic philosophies, including feminist theories. Finally, Chapter 7 takes the reader through the policy debates surrounding comparable worth and presents my own view on these controversial issues.

Views of comparable worth hinge, in part, on empirical evidence. Yet such evidence is interpreted differently through the "lenses" of different theoretical models. Views of comparable worth are also affected by normative positions, by values. Although I am a sociologist by training, in

this book I also draw upon the disciplines of economics, psychology, law, and philosophy, as well as on interdisciplinary feminist perspectives. Thus, I hope to present a view of the complex and controversial issue of comparable worth that is informed by debates over evidence, theories, and values.

The remainder of this chapter sets the stage for examining comparable worth by summarizing research findings on the situation of women and men in paid employment. For the most part, I will draw upon research from the United States. The situation is similar in other industrial countries, albeit with some variations (Rosenfeld and Kalleberg 1990; Brinton 1988; Blau and Ferber 1986; Roos 1985). This chapter discusses the increases in women's employment in recent decades, the tendency of women to be clustered into a limited number of occupations, changes in the degree of occupational sex segregation, and changes in the sex gap in pay.

## II. Increasing Employment Among Women

Some women have always worked outside the home for pay in addition to working within the home. One often sees the term *working women* used to differentiate women who work for pay from full-time homemakers. This is misleading, of course, since homemakers work as well. To avoid this misleading juxtaposition, I will use the term *employment* or *labor force participation* to refer to paid work typically done outside the home.

### A. Which Women Are Employed?

Women are more likely to be employed if they are single, have fewer children, are black, have considerable education and other job skills, have high potential earnings, or have a husband with low earnings (Killingsworth and Heckman 1986; Desai and Waite 1991; O'Neill 1981). These are each "net" effects, that is, differences that are observed when other things are "held constant" via statistical controls. Yet, since some of these factors are negatively correlated with each other, real women often experience conflicting pulls. For example, consider a woman with a college education, three children, and a husband who is a well-paid manager. The fact that she is married, has children, and has a husband with relatively high earnings all mitigate against her employment. However, her college education increases the earnings she could make in a job, as well as her nondomestic interests, and thus makes it more likely

that she will be employed. Marital homogamy, the tendency to marry persons from a similar class and educational background, means that women whose high education and potential earnings mitigate in favor of employment typically have husbands with relatively high earnings, a factor mitigating against employment.

Today, many women remain employed during pregnancy and return to their jobs immediately or within a few weeks or months of birth. Relatively continuous employment around a birth is more common among women who are well educated, are in more skilled jobs, and have higher wages, perhaps because the financial loss from leaving their jobs would be greater for such women (Desai and Waite 1991). However, continuous participation around a birth is also more common among women with more economic need—single mothers or women whose husbands have low earnings (Desai and Waite 1991). Continuous participation is also aided by the availability of a more flexible work schedule or by working in an occupation containing more women with young children (Desai and Waite 1991).

### B. Trends in Women's Employment

It was traditionally believed that many women entered and left the labor force numerous times during their lives. Recent research that traces the employment histories of birth cohorts has challenged this view. (A birth cohort is a group of people born in the same year.) This research shows that, while many women left employment at the time of marriage or a first birth, after marriage, every birth cohort in this century has had continuous increases across time in the proportion of women employed (Goldin 1990, p. 22). This implies that while many women spent some years out of the labor force, if they stayed employed or reentered employment after marriage, they generally stayed employed fairly continuously. The reentries were typically after a period of child-rearing. What has been changing most is how many women enter the labor force at all and how early those who leave for childrearing reenter to stay (Goldin 1990).

The proportion of U.S. women who are employed has increased steadily since the early 1800s (Goldin 1990). More and more women have moved from working exclusively in the home to working both in their homes and for pay. As Table 1.1 shows, 19% of women were in the labor force (i.e., either employed or looking for a job) in 1890. By 1950 this figure was up to 30%. It was 35% in 1960, 42% in 1970, 51% by 1980, and 56% by 1987. The only time in this century that a decline in the proportion of women employed has ever occurred was right after World War II.

Table 1.1. shows increases in the proportion employed for both white and black women since 1950. However, the black and white trends differ in that black women did not increase their employment rate between 1890 and 1950; it was already very high (40%) in 1890. As Table 1.1 shows, black women have had higher employment rates than white women during every period, although white women had nearly caught up by 1987.

Married women with small children are still the group with the lowest employment rates. Yet this group has shown the fastest rate of increase, and now has participation rates only slightly lower than women's overall average. Consider, for example, married women who have at least one child under the age of 3. Table 1.1 shows that in 1960, only 15% of such women were in the labor force, compared to 35% of women overall. In 1975, 33% of such women were in the labor force, compared to

Table 1.1. Labor Force Participation<sup>1</sup> of Women by Marital Status, Presence of Youngest Child, and Race, 1890-1987

	All Women							
	Married <sup>4</sup>			White		Black <sup>2</sup>		Hispanic <sup>3</sup> Total
	Total	Total	With child under 3	Total	Married <sup>4</sup>	Total	Married <sup>4</sup>	
1890	18.9	4.6	NA	16.3	2.5	39.7	22.5	NA
1950	29.5	23.8	NA	28.5	20.7	37.8	31.8	NA
1960	35.1	30.5	15.3	34.2	29.8	42.7	40.5	NA
1970	41.6	40.8	25.8	40.9	38.5	47.3	50.0	NA
1975	46.3	44.4	32.7	45.9	43.5	48.8	54.0	43.0
1980	51.1	50.2	41.1	50.9	49.3	53.1	59.3	47.4
1985	54.5	54.2	50.5	54.1	53.0	56.5	62.4	49.3
1987	56.0	55.8	54.2	55.7	55.1	58.0	65.1	52.0

Sources: Goldin 1990 (Table 2.1); U.S. Department of Labor 1987b (Tables 1 and 3), 1988, 1989 (Table 6); Lueck, Orr, and O'Connell 1982 (Table A-2); Taeuber 1991 (Table B1-5).  
Notes:

<sup>1</sup> Numbers given are percentage of women in the labor force. The labor force consists of those who are employed and those looking for a job. Those out of the labor force include homemakers, students, the retired, and discouraged workers (those who want a job but have given up looking). NA, data not available.

<sup>2</sup> Data for 1890 through 1970 are for all nonwhites rather than for blacks.

<sup>3</sup> Includes all Hispanics, regardless of race. "Hispanic" is a diverse category, including persons whose ancestry is Mexican, Central American, Cuban, and Puerto Rican, and including citizens and noncitizens. Hispanics are also included in "white" and "black" categories according to their race. Figures for Hispanics by marital status not available in government documents.

<sup>4</sup> "Married" includes only married women with husband present.

#### Increasing Employment Among Women

46% of women overall. However, by 1987, the figure for women with children under 3 was up to 54%, only slightly less than the 56% of all women who were in the labor force.

One might wonder whether the dramatic increase in employment among mothers of young children is mainly an influx into part-time jobs. For the most part, this is not the case. To be sure, mothers are more likely than other women to be employed part-time. For example, in 1988 about one third of women with children had part-time jobs, while only about one fifth of all employed women worked part-time (Barrett 1991). Yet much of the increase in the employment of mothers has been in full-time jobs. This can be inferred from the fact that the proportion of employed women whose jobs are part-time has been relatively constant at around 20% since the early 1960s (Barrett 1991), even while the proportion of employed women who have small children has gone up dramatically.

Perhaps it is surprising, but very few women use part-time employment as a transition between full-time homemaking and full-time employment. It is much more common to move from homemaking to a full-time job (Blank 1989). For some, part-time work is an occasional alternative to full-time employment; for a few it occasionally punctuates nonemployment (Blank 1989). Few women use part-time employment as a transition because part-time jobs are largely dead-end; employers seldom structure jobs to facilitate smooth transitions from part-time jobs to attractive full-time jobs.

#### C. Explanations of Increases in Women's Employment

What explains the dramatic increase in women's employment since World War II? To examine this, let us separate various specific explanations into two broad claims: (1) those asserting women's increased economic need to be employed, and (2) those asserting their increased opportunities for jobs and higher wages.

**Increased Economic Need.** Do more women than ever have an economic need to be employed? Yes. This is true in that a growing proportion of women are single or divorced, and more of these women than ever have children. Especially since 1970, the divorce rate has increased, the average age at marriage has gone up, and the proportion of out-of-wedlock births has increased for both white women and women of color (England and Farkas 1986). If we look at families that include children, the proportion of families with no adult male stayed fairly near 10% from 1940 through 1970, but thereafter it began to increase, reaching 16% by 1982 (Norwood 1982). These facts explain some of the increase in

women's employment in terms of economic need. However, they cannot explain the increase among married women with husbands present, except to the extent that more married women than previously are aware of the risk of divorce and invest in job experience as a form of insurance (Burkhauser and Duncan 1989).

Can the increase in employment among married women be explained by increased economic need for two incomes? The answer depends, in part, upon what we mean by "need." The question of what income a family needs is, at least in part, subjective. However, assuming any constant definition of need, only if the real (i.e., inflation-adjusted) incomes of men have gone down over time can the economic need for a second paycheck be said to have gone up. Table 1.2 presents data on men's income. "Income" includes interest, dividends, and government transfer payments, rather than just earnings from employment. The figures also include all men, not only those employed full-time year-round. Since these figures include men who had spells of unemployment, they will show men's incomes going down if annual earnings go down because more men are unemployed part of the year or because the average duration of unemployment goes up, as well as if wage rates go down. Table 1.2 shows that, on average, men's incomes were going up throughout the 1950s, 1960s, and early 1970s. Since 1973, however, men's incomes have gone down. They have rebounded since the early 1980s, but by 1988 had only returned to their late 1960s levels. These trends apply to both white and black men, though in any given year black men's earnings have been lower than those of white men. (For discussion of trends in men's earnings, see Levy 1987, 1988; Burtless 1990.) If decreasing male income causes increasing need for wives' employment, one cannot argue that such need was increasing in the 1950s, 1960s, early 1970s, or since 1983, but only between 1973 and 1983.

The reader might question whether increases in the percentage of earnings paid in taxes would alter this conclusion. Based on data presented elsewhere (Steurlé and Wilson 1987; Steurlé forthcoming) regarding families at the median income, I have calculated that the percentage of income paid in federal income tax plus Social Security tax (excluding the portion paid by the employer) was 7.6% in 1955, 10.8% in 1960, 14.2% in 1970, 17.5% in 1980, and 17.1% in 1990. The increases in federal taxes in the 1950s and 1960s were not more than increases in male earnings, and federal taxes have not increased in the 1980s. Thus, the conclusion that men's incomes have been going up continuously except between about 1973 and 1983 holds even when federal taxes are considered.

Since 1950, women's employment has gone up continuously, while men's income went down only between about 1973 to 1983. In sum,

Table 1.2. Median Income of Men by Race: 1950–1988<sup>1</sup>

Year	Total	White	Black <sup>2</sup>	Hispanic <sup>3</sup>
1950	12,615	13,298	7,221	NA
1955	14,823	15,644	8,232	NA
1960	16,306	17,169	9,032	NA
1964	17,734	18,836	10,678	NA
1965	18,864	19,867	10,692	NA
1970	20,337	21,376	12,675	NA
1971	20,164	21,139	12,607	NA
1972	21,085	22,115	13,395	NA
1973	21,465	22,522	13,623	NA
1974	20,281	21,246	13,164	15,461
1975	19,467	20,450	12,226	14,902
1976	19,597	20,660	12,439	14,658
1977	19,762	20,699	12,283	15,221
1978	19,841	20,781	12,449	15,205
1979	19,194	20,051	12,412	14,455
1980	17,989	19,135	11,498	13,867
1981	17,534	18,605	11,063	13,278
1982	17,101	18,080	10,835	12,836
1983	17,414	18,320	10,714	12,893
1984	17,762	18,749	10,757	12,640
1985	18,473	19,494	11,681	12,571
1986	18,473	19,494	11,681	12,447
1987	18,522	19,687	11,679	12,736
1988	18,908	19,959	12,044	13,030

Source: Hensen 1990.

Notes:

<sup>1</sup> All income is in constant 1988 dollars. Thus, these figures are adjusted for changes in the cost of living (as measured by the Consumer Price Index) such that they reflect real trends in pretax purchasing power. NA, data not available.

<sup>2</sup> This category includes black males for 1970–1988. Before 1970, the category includes all nonwhite males.

<sup>3</sup> Includes all Hispanics, regardless of race. Hispanics are also included in "white" and "black" categories according to their race.

while the decade after 1973 saw increases in economic need for a second paycheck, such increases in need have *not* been a *consistent* trend for married women. Thus they cannot be the main explanation of the *consistent* increases in women's employment.

Yet most people I talk to have a clear perception that, in some meaningful way that is missed in the above figures, since the mid-1970s couples have needed two paychecks more than they did in times past.

There is a way to reconcile the kernel of truth in this perception with the figures presented above. My reconciliation hinges on an assumption about how people perceive well-being that comes from research in behavioral economics and social psychology to be discussed in Chapter 2. There is an asymmetry between how gains and losses are perceived. As a result, a decrease in one's income of \$5000 reduces one's sense of well-being more than an increase in income over the same income range increases the sense of well-being.

To illustrate, consider the situation of a couple with a nonemployed wife whose husband earns \$30,000 a year, but suffers a loss in income of \$10,000 due to conditions in the economy at large. Perhaps he worked in an auto plant that closed and the best job he can now find is a non-unionized job paying \$20,000. In response to this loss, the wife finds a job that pays exactly the \$10,000 that was lost, after expenses such as day care. Later, suppose that the man gets an offer of a better job that will restore him to his original earnings of \$30,000 (in inflation-adjusted dollars). The couple had previously felt that this was an adequate income—perhaps not as much as they would like, but high enough to make them decide the wife would stay home and care for their young children. Based on this we would predict that the wife will quit her job when the husband begins his new job. But the data in Tables 1.1 and 1.2 have shown us that when men's incomes rebound after a loss, women's employment does not decrease as the "economic need" thesis would predict. So our task is to understand why our hypothetical wife does not quit even when her husband's earnings had returned to their former level. This could be because she has grown to like her job, but that is not the point I want to emphasize here. If she quits the job, their family income will be exactly where it was before she joined the labor force. However, the asymmetry in how losses and gains affect perceived well-being implies that the original loss of \$10,000 lowered well-being more than the rebound of \$10,000 increased well-being. Thus, the sense of well-being still dictates the wife's employment. If losses are perceived as larger than gains of the same amount, then permanent increases in women's employment will be spawned in periods when men have even temporary decreases in earnings.

Similarly, the asymmetry in the perception of losses and gains suggests that permanent increases in women's employment will result when earnings inequality among men goes up, even in the absence of declines in men's average earnings. Increased inequality in men's earnings can result from earnings of men in the lower portion of the distribution going down while the earnings of men toward the top of the distribution go up. The asymmetry principle above predicts increased employment among women from this trend. That is, the *losses* in male

#### *Increasing Employment Among Women*

earnings in the families at the lower end of the distribution will do more to increase their wives' employment than the *gains* in male earnings in the families at the higher end of the distribution will do to lower the wives' employment. Since men's earnings have become substantially more unequal in the last two decades (Levy 1987; Burtless 1990), this may explain some of the increase in women's employment.

Finally, this principle regarding an asymmetry in how gains and losses are perceived helps explain how in recent decades the increases in wives' employment before childbearing make it likely that more wives will continue employment after childbearing than would have been the case in the absence of the prechild employment. Today, unlike in the 1950s and 1960s, most women are employed for several years, if not more, between marriage and the birth of the couple's first child. Consider the example of a woman whose potential wage is \$20,000 per year. If she has been employed before having children, she experiences non-employment after childbirth as a loss of \$20,000 per year. Had she not been employed before the birth, employment after the birth would be perceived as a gain of \$20,000 per year. Since the loss is felt more saliently than the gain of the same amount, women who are employed before childbearing are more likely to be employed afterward than are women who were not employed before the birth, even when the two groups have the same potential postbirth earnings and the same husbands' earnings. Thus, the trend to later childbearing creates an increase in women's employment after childbearing over and above its effect via the higher potential wage of women with more experience.

*Increased Opportunities.* What about the second explanation of increases in women's employment? Is there evidence that women's employment has increased because of increased opportunities for jobs and higher wages? Since World War II, jobs that had long been sex-typed as "women's work" showed greater increases in labor demand than did jobs overall (Oppenheimer 1970). This growth resulted from a restructuring of the economy that produced declining employment shares in agriculture and manufacturing and increases in service industries (such as retail sales, health, banking, and restaurants) and in service occupations (such as secretary) (Glass, Tienda, and Smith 1988). This has provided women with increased opportunities for employment.

At the same time, real (i.e., inflation-adjusted) wage increases have made the rewards of employment greater. To put it another way, using economist's terminology, the opportunity cost of (i.e., what is forgone by) being a homemaker has increased. Table 1.3 shows that among full-time workers, women's real (i.e., inflation-adjusted) earnings were increasing in the 1950s, 1960s, and early 1970s. This was true for both white and black women, although in any given year black women



**Table 1.3. Median Annual Earnings of Women and Men Employed Full-Time, Year-Round, by Race and Hispanic Origin, 1955–1987<sup>1</sup>**

	White			Black			Hispanic <sup>2</sup>		
	Women	Men	Ratio <sup>3</sup>	Women	Men	Ratio	Women	Men	Ratio
1955	12,110	21,431	0.565	6,220	11,292	0.551	NA <sup>4</sup>	NA	NA
1960	12,988	21,431	0.606	8,804	14,165	0.622	NA	NA	NA
1965	14,155	24,468	0.579	9,612	15,367	0.625	NA	NA	NA
1970	16,187	27,623	0.586	13,637	19,409	0.703	NA	NA	NA
1975	16,323	27,918	0.585	16,030	21,416	0.748	NA	NA	NA
1976	16,719	28,487	0.587	15,737	20,914	0.752	NA	NA	NA
1977	16,642	28,852	0.577	15,848	20,707	0.765	NA	NA	NA
1978	16,955	28,502	0.595	15,855	22,549	0.703	NA	NA	NA
1979	16,624	28,144	0.591	15,454	21,218	0.728	NA	NA	NA
1980	16,142	27,200	0.593	15,055	19,138	0.787	13,637	19,021	0.717
1981	15,381	26,473	0.581	14,298	18,730	0.763	13,646	18,726	0.729
1982	16,310	26,186	0.623	14,577	18,598	0.784	13,384	18,362	0.729
1983	16,741	26,348	0.635	14,860	18,786	0.791	13,578	18,246	0.744
1984	17,040	27,162	0.627	15,357	18,537	0.828	14,253	18,790	0.759
1985	17,404	27,131	0.641	15,407	18,977	0.812	14,279	18,315	0.780
1986	17,721	27,582	0.642	15,507	19,447	0.797	14,706	17,625	0.834
1987	17,775	27,468	0.647	16,211	19,385	0.836	14,893	17,872	0.833

Source: Figart, Hartmann, Hoytt, and Outtz 1989 (Tables 3 and 4).

Notes:

<sup>1</sup> Earnings are in constant 1987 dollars. Thus, these figures are adjusted for changes in the cost of living (as measured by the Consumer Price Index) such that they reflect real trends in before-tax purchasing power. NA, data not available.

<sup>2</sup> Includes all Hispanics, regardless of race. Hispanics are also included in "white" or "black" categories according to their race.

<sup>3</sup> Ratio of women's annual earnings to men's annual earnings.

earned less than white women. These wage increases for women were fueled by general growth in the economy that provided increases to men as well. During these periods, the rewards of employment went up for women, and this brought into or kept in the labor force an increasing proportion of white and black women (Butz and Ward 1979).

### III. The Sex Segregation of Jobs

In the United States, as in most societies, men and women generally hold different jobs. If we use the approximately 500 detailed occupational categories used by the U.S. Census Bureau as a benchmark, approximately 60% of men or women would have to change occupations in

order to achieve integration (Blau 1988). "Integration" here refers to a situation in which each occupation has the same sex mix as the labor force as a whole. If we were to use a more detailed classification of job titles and look within firms, we would see segregation to be even more pervasive than these figures indicate (Bielby and Baron 1984). This is partly because some occupations are filled exclusively by men in some firms but exclusively by women in others. For example, many restaurants have either all males or all females waiting tables. Thus, for this occupation, the level of integration implied by national data is misleading as an indicator of how often men and women really work together in the same job within a restaurant. More segregation is seen within firms than in national occupational data for a second reason as well. Organizations often employ more detailed categories than the census categories. Take, for example, a census occupation like physician. The 1980 census shows this to be 14% female. But if we were to use most any clinic's or hospital's more detailed classification by department, we would see that certain specialties, such as pediatrics and psychiatry, contain more than 14% females, while others, such as surgeons, contain fewer (American Medical Association 1986).

Another type of segregation is by industry or firm. The industry one works in is defined by the good or service sold by the firm one works for. For example, one can work in the auto industry or the restaurant industry. Workers in all occupations are included within the industry. Thus, managers, secretaries, production workers, and janitors who work for General Motors are all classified as in the auto industry. Women are more likely than men to work in small firms and in industries with labor-intensive production and relatively low levels of unionization and profit. Yet sex segregation by firms and industries is nowhere near as pervasive as segregation by occupation. After all, most firms and certainly most industries have both male and female workers. In contrast, some occupations (e.g., nursing, secretarial work, plumbing) are filled almost exclusively by one sex or the other.

Segregation means that few jobs are substantially integrated by sex. If sex had no relation to the job one were in, we would expect the sex ratio of each job to approximate the sex ratio of the labor force as a whole, which was slightly over 40% female in 1980. Thus, one way to look at integrated jobs would be to look at what occupations are between, say, 30 and 50% female. According to the 1980 census, out of 503 occupations, this included only 87 occupations. Examples of these integrated occupations are personnel managers, accountants, buyers, physicians' assistants, authors, artists, shoe salespersons, door-to-door salespersons, bartenders, book binders, short-order cooks, ushers, and tailors.

### A. What Kinds of Jobs Do Men and Women Hold?

Occupations filled mainly with women include maids, assembly line workers in the electronics industry, clerks in retail stores, secretaries and other clerical workers, teachers (at the grade school through high school level), nurses, real estate agents, social workers, and librarians. Men predominate in the highest status professions (such as doctor and lawyer), in higher levels of management, in blue-collar crafts (such as plumber, carpenter, and electrician), in assembly line jobs in durable manufacturing (such as autos, steel, and tires), and in jobs involving outdoor labor. One can see from these lists that women's jobs are not usually *less* skilled than men's, but women's and men's jobs generally require *different kinds* of skills. There are both male and female jobs at both low and high levels of education. For example, hairdressers (mostly women) and bus drivers (mostly men) each average 13 years of schooling. Examples of male and female jobs at higher levels of education include electrical engineers and librarians, each averaging 17 years of education. (These examples are taken from the 1980 census data used in Chapter 3.)

Although women's and men's jobs require approximately equal average amounts of formal education received prior to entering the job, women's jobs typically provide less on-the-job training (Corcoran and Duncan 1979; Barron, Black, and Loewenstein 1990). Thus, as the seniority of workers increases, women's jobs may *become* less skilled relative to men's.

Female jobs are also attached to shorter mobility ladders than male jobs, thus reducing women's possibilities for promotion (C. Smith 1979; Rosenbaum 1980; Bielby and Baron 1984; DiPrete and Soule 1988). Related to this is the fact that very few female jobs involve supervision of other workers (Jaffee 1989; Wolf and Fligstein 1979; Hill 1980; Ward and Mueller 1985), especially male workers (Bergmann 1986).

How compatible are women's jobs with family responsibilities? One might think that women would choose jobs most compatible with such responsibilities. To a limited extent this is true. For example, more men than women are concentrated in jobs requiring out-of-town travel, working evenings, or unusually long hours. However, even here there are exceptions. For example, nurses are often required to work evenings, nights, and weekends. Overall, on other dimensions, it does not appear that women's jobs are any more compatible with family responsibilities than men's. Indeed, one national survey (Glass 1990) found more men than women reporting flexibility of schedules, more unsupervised break time, and more paid sick leave and vacation, all of which would be helpful for a parent.

Black women, like white women, generally work in predominantly female occupations. Race discrimination and poverty have limited black women's options even more than those of white women. Thus, more black than white women fill jobs such as maid and nurse's aide. However, much of the convergence between black and white women's earnings during the 1960s and 1970s (seen in Table 1.3) came from black women moving into secretarial work as well as the professions of teaching, nursing, and social work. These jobs had previously been dominated by white women. However, black women in these jobs are more likely than white women to work for the government (local, state, or federal), making their jobs particularly vulnerable to budgetary cuts in this era of fiscal austerity (Higginbotham 1987).

### B. Trends in Segregation

If we use the census detailed occupational categories for calculation, the extent of occupational sex segregation among nonfarm occupations declined very slowly and unevenly throughout the century until about 1970 (England 1981; Jacobs 1989a). Starting about 1970, a much faster decline has occurred (Beller 1984; Jacobs 1989a; Blau 1988). Most of the decline since 1970 came from women entering male jobs, rather than men entering female jobs.

The 1970s saw an increasing number of women becoming accountants, bank officers, financial managers, and janitors. These changes contributed heavily to the decline in segregation. Other male occupations that increased their representation of women by at least 10 percentage points during the 1970s include computer programmers, personnel and labor relations professionals, pharmacists, draftspersons, radio operators, public relations professionals, office managers, buyers and purchasing agents, insurance agents, real estate agents, postal clerks, stock clerks, ticket agents, typesetters, bus drivers, animal caretakers, and bartenders (Beller 1984). The decline in segregation was much greater among younger than among older cohorts. The decline was greater in professional occupations than in blue-collar occupations. The overall decline in occupational sex segregation in the 1970s was as great for African Americans as for whites (Beller 1984).

The decline in occupational segregation by sex continued in the 1980s, though at a pace somewhat slower than in the 1970s (Blau 1988). In general, the same jobs that saw large influxes of women in the 1970s did so in the 1980s as well. Examples are computer operators, insurance adjusters, animal caretakers, typesetters, personnel workers, vocational counselors, and public relations workers. There was little integration of

women into the skilled blue-collar crafts such as plumbing or carpentry, or into durable goods manufacturing jobs (e.g., auto or steel workers), just as there had been little entry of women into these fields in the 1970s. These facts provide a hint about the reasons for the slowing of desegregation. First, occupations that, for whatever reasons, were the easiest targets for women's entry desegregated first, leaving the "hard cases" to move more slowly later. Second, since the influx of women continues to be largest in those occupations where it began, some initially male jobs have now "tipped" and become disproportionately female. Thus, further increases in the proportion of women in these jobs increase rather than decrease segregation. Examples of such occupations are public relations professionals, personnel and labor relations professionals, and real estate agents.

Thus far the discussion of trends in segregation has been based on research using the detailed occupational categories employed by the Census Bureau. We can think of jobs as specific occupations within a specific establishment (and hence, a specific industry). Such jobs would be the most meaningful categories across which to compute a measure of occupational sex segregation. Unfortunately, such data are not available for the economy as a whole for even one year, much less a number of years. However, as discussed above, we know that national occupational data understate the full extent of job segregation, since men and women in mixed-sex occupations often work in different industries and firms or in different subspecialties within the occupation. But what about *trends* in the sex segregation of these more detailed categories of jobs? Unfortunately, we have little information on this.

One cautionary note to the conclusion that *job* segregation declined in the 1970s comes from case studies of formerly male occupations into which there has been a large influx of women since 1970. In some cases there has been occupational desegregation but not job desegregation. That is, women and men in a newly integrated occupation may often work for different establishments, sometimes in different industries (Reskin and Roos 1990). For example, bus driving has also become integrated, but most of the women work for school districts while men still retain most of the better-paid jobs as city bus drivers. To take another example, the occupation bakers has become integrated as grocery stores have started hiring women for newly created in-store jobs using automated processes to make cakes and cookies. Yet men still dominate the less automated and more highly paid tasks of making bread in nonstore settings. Women are also becoming systems analysts. Yet in this occupation women often work in hospitals, banking, and insurance, while men are more likely to work in manufacturing industries. In each of these cases, women have gone into a formerly male occupation, but into a less

desirable subpart of it, at least in terms of pay. Thus, even though an occupation has been integrated, when we use more detailed and industry-specific categories, we see that a new female "ghetto" has been created.

In summary, what can we conclude regarding trends in segregation? Occupational classifications measure the function or task people perform. Occupational segregation increased and decreased sporadically throughout the century, with a very modest net decline between 1900 and 1970. There was a faster pace of decline during the 1970s, and there has been a continued though slowed decline in segregation since 1980. We do not have data on whether segregation in jobs (defined by cross-classifying more detailed job titles and firms) has also decreased since 1970. Doubts about this are fueled by evidence that some of the occupational integration has led to new patterns of segregation within occupations. My conjecture is that some desegregation in jobs is occurring, particularly at the managerial and professional level, and will continue, but that the pace of desegregation of jobs is slower than that of occupations.

### C. Explanations of Levels and Trends in Segregation

Why are some jobs filled by women, some by men, and few integrated by sex? What explains why levels of segregation change over time? As a way to organize research on these questions, I will divide the factors affecting segregation into those involving *choices* on the part of those entering jobs, and those involving *constraints* faced by job entrants. In making this distinction, we must remember that today's choices may be affected by past constraints, and vice versa. For example, parents or teachers may encourage different job choices for young women and men. This sex-differentiated reinforcement is a constraint that may lead to different job *choices* at the point one declares a college major or applies for a job. The emphasis in this chapter is not on which theory each factor is compatible with. Often a single factor plays a part in several theories, and theories are not my concern in this chapter. (For discussion of how this research forms evidence for particular theories, see Chapter 2.)

*Choices.* Segregation results, in part, because men and women choose different jobs. But why are these choices different? Some researchers argue that the choices are rational responses to the division of labor by sex in the family. In this view, women choose jobs compatible with their family responsibilities. I see this as playing a relatively minor role in job choices, since, as discussed above, the jobs women hold are generally not more accommodating to parenting than are men's jobs.

A variant of this argument sees the division of labor by sex in the family to cause women's employment to be intermittent, which leads women to choose jobs that maximize lifetime earnings, conditional on this intermittent employment. If jobs that provide much on-the-job training have steeper wage trajectories (i.e., higher rates of return to seniority) but lower starting wages, women may avoid such jobs because the gains from steeper wage gains do not outweigh the losses from the lower starting wages. Research on this question is discussed in Chapter 2 as it bears on the ability of human capital theory to explain segregation. In my view, this view is largely incorrect. Consistent with the view, women are concentrated in jobs that provide relatively low amounts of on-the-job training (Corcoran and Duncan 1979; Barron et al. 1990), and female jobs do have lower returns to seniority than male jobs (Rosenbaum 1980; Filer 1983). However, no research has ever demonstrated the higher starting wages that are the purported advantage of jobs offering less training. Given this, it is hard to see how women's efforts to maximize lifetime earnings would lead them to choose female jobs.<sup>1</sup>

Thus, if the job choices of men and women differ, I believe these differences are sustained by lifelong socialization that leads men and women to find different jobs interesting, respectable, of value, or consistent with their gendered identities. This is consistent with the view I develop in this book—that it is much more accurate to see men and women in jobs with different skills, than with different amounts of skill. Preferences for certain kinds of work entail preferences for exercising certain kinds of skills. The socialization that forms these proclivities begins in childhood and continues throughout adulthood. It operates through reinforcement patterns, role models, cognitive learning, sex-segregated networks of peers, and other processes.

These differences in interests can be seen early in life. Even preschool and elementary school children express sex-typed occupational goals (Marini and Brinton 1984). However, the occupational aspirations of boys are more highly sex typed than those of girls (Marini and Greenberger 1978).

Are these differences in job interests a reflection of broader differences in values? Some evidence supports this. Studies decades ago found that males claimed to place more value on money in choosing a job. Studies attempting to assess changes in the job dimensions valued by young adults have found surprisingly little convergence between the sexes (Lueptow 1980; Herzog 1982; Peng et al. 1981; Tittle 1981). Lueptow (1980) compared the occupational values of graduating seniors in 1961 and 1975 and found that in both years men claimed to place more value than did women on status, money, freedom from supervision, and po-

tential for leadership. In both years, the study found that women placed more value on working with people, helping others, using their abilities, and being creative. Other surveys have shown that men place a greater value on autonomy, authority, and promotion possibilities than do women (Brenner and Tomkiewicz 1979; Murray and Atkinson 1981; Peng, Feters, and Kolstad 1981; Herzog 1982), and these job dimensions have been found to affect men's job satisfactions to a greater extent than women's (Glenn and Weaver 1982; Crane and Hodson 1984; Murray and Atkinson 1981). There is also some evidence that men value taking risks more than women (Walker, Tausky, and Oliver 1982; Subich, Barrett, Donerspike, and Alexander 1989).

Yet we must be cautious in inferring from these studies that sex differences in occupational values explain segregation. Some of the studies surveyed adults already holding jobs. Thus, it is possible that jobs affected values as much as values affected the job chosen. The studies also show some conflicting findings. For example, while a number of surveys find that men claim to value pay more than women, one study found no such difference (Walker et al. 1982), and some studies have found pay to have a greater influence on women's job satisfaction than on men's (Crane and Hodson 1984).

It is also important not to assume that these sex differences show men to be more career or achievement oriented than women. Women may be equally career oriented but focused on different skills or values. One example of such bias in interpretation appears in an article by Brenner and Tomkiewicz (1979), who asked college students to rate job characteristics in terms of their importance to them. Men were found to place more value on income, opportunity to take risks, and supervisory authority. Women placed more value on good relations with coworkers, opportunity to develop knowledge and skills on the job, and intellectual stimulation. The authors conclude from these findings that women give less importance to careers than men. This is certainly not an obvious conclusion from the findings; one might regard an orientation toward continued learning of knowledge and skills, on which women placed more emphasis, as the best indicator in the survey of the sort of careerism we would expect employers to care about.

A preference for a sex-typical job does not always reflect values, tastes, or dispositions toward the kind of work in these jobs. It may rather reflect a preference for working with members of one's own sex or for doing work labeled male or female regardless of the content of the work. There is evidence of this sort of preference, especially among males. One experiment (Heilman 1979) divided high school students into two groups that received different information on the projected sex composition of the occupations of lawyer and architect. Students ran-

domly assigned to the first group were told that these jobs were projected to have a high percentage of males in them in coming years, while those randomly assigned to the second group were told the jobs were projected to contain a much higher percentage of females. The boys told that the jobs were projected to have more women in them reported less interest in going into those jobs. The opposite effect occurred for girls, although the effect was stronger for the boys.

In my view, gender role socialization and sex-typed choices of jobs clearly have some role in segregation. But what is their role in the desegregation observed since about 1970? There is evidence that occupational preferences have shifted substantially among high school students (Marini and Brinton 1984). A decline in sex differences in college majors occurred during this period as well (Beller 1984; Jacobs 1985, 1989b). Of course, some of these shifts could be *responses* to changed constraints. This is suggested by the evidence reviewed above that specific occupational choices shifted more than underlying occupational values. Yet preferences were undoubtedly shifting for other reasons as well. However, these changes in preferences are probably *not* explained by changing patterns of childhood socialization, since the women who started these changes in the 1970s were young children in the very traditional 1950s. Thus, to say that socialization is a factor in segregation does *not* imply that changing patterns of childhood socialization is the only way for desegregation to occur.

*Constraints Posed by Employers, Male Workers, and Institutional Practices.* One sort of constraint faced by those seeking jobs is discrimination by employers. Our concern here is not with theories of discrimination, which are reviewed in Chapter 2, but with evidence about whether hiring discrimination exists. Discrimination in hiring, placement, and promotion is suggested by experimental studies that present randomly assigned groups of managers or prospective managers with resumes that differ only in the male or female names on them. Such studies often find that men are preferred in typically male jobs (Rosen and Jerdee 1974, 1978; Levinson 1975; Rosen 1982). Sociologists Bielby and Baron (1986) also found substantial evidence of discrimination in the statements of California manufacturers about their hiring practices. Milkman's (1987) historical study showed that although many women went into previously male jobs during World War II, this shifted rather than eradicated boundaries between men and women's work; employers redivided jobs such that each job was done only by women or only by men. Women were laid off after the war. As new hires were made, employers refused to rehire women in the traditionally male jobs they had held during the war, even when this violated union seniority

rules, and even when the women had more training in the job than the men newly returned from the war.

Employers may discriminate because of beliefs about sex differences in skills, because of values about the roles men and women should play, to create antagonisms that minimize workers' solidarity, or to avoid the disruption that occurs when male workers are faced with a woman entering "their" jobs.

Some women anticipate discrimination and alter their "choices" accordingly. Discrepancies between young women's aspirations and their expectations about future jobs are evidence that women anticipate a constraint. Marini and Greenberger (1978) found that girls expected to end up in occupations that averaged 75% female, but aspired to occupations that averaged 66% female. In contrast they found no difference between the average percentage female of the occupations high school boys said they expected to work in and those to which they aspired. Another survey of high school students showed that 34% of girls but only 22% of boys believed that their sex would prevent them from getting the kind of work they would like to have (Bachman, Johnston, and O'Malley 1980). This is evidence that young women anticipate constraints and this affects their plans.

One constraint women face is the way they are treated by male workers if they enter a male job. In one survey of female blue-collar workers, almost one third of the women reported that male coworkers gave them a hard time and that male coworkers disapproved of women doing craft work (O'Farrell and Harlan 1982). Schroedel's (1985) in-depth interviews with women who entered male-dominated blue-collar craft jobs revealed that many women felt unwelcome as a result of men's derogatory comments, men's attempts to sexualize the relationships (such as touching women while working next to them), and men's unwillingness to teach women the skills they would ordinarily teach a new male coworker. Case studies of occupations that many women entered in the 1970s show that men often tried to keep women out, either for fear that it would lower their wages or because they saw it as a threat to their sense of masculinity (Reskin and Roos 1990). Unionized men have been more successful than others at keeping women out (Reskin and Roos 1990; Hartmann 1976). There are several ways that unions have helped men to keep women out of "their" jobs. Some unionized jobs can only be entered through apprenticeships and one has to be selected by a union member to be an apprentice. Also, prior to the passage of the 1964 Civil Rights Act, which rendered such laws illegal, unions lobbied for laws that prohibited hiring women in particular jobs or for particular shifts. Institutional inertia plays a role in perpetuating discriminatory constraints. Milkman (1987) examined historical data on a number of man-

ufacturing firms across the century and found that if an industry hires one sex in a certain job at its origin, the sex label generally "sticks" for decades because it gains the weight of tradition.

Institutional inertia perpetuates segregation in yet another way. Many firms have structured mobility ladders, sometimes called internal labor markets. While some jobs are a "dead end" from which one cannot be promoted, others lead to a sequence of jobs through which promotions are common. The jobs at the bottom of these mobility ladders are filled from outside the firm; they may be thought of as ports of entry. Once segregation has occurred in jobs that are ports of entry—for any of the reasons discussed above—the existence of structured mobility ladders will perpetuate segregation up the ladders and through the life cycle of each cohort of workers without a need for further overt discrimination.

Another set of institutional practices that create constraints falls into a category similar to the legal notion of "disparate impact," discussed in more detail in Chapter 5. Job requirements that have a disparate and adverse impact on women are those that, given prior sex differences in experiences, make it more difficult for women to qualify for or remain in the job. These constraints are distinct from direct sex discrimination in hiring. That is, sex is not explicitly being used as a criterion for letting people into the job. Yet other criteria are being used that tend to screen out women. Examples of such criteria that have an adverse impact on women include upper age limits for entering apprenticeships (which disadvantage homemakers returning to the labor force), veterans' preferences (since more men than women have been veterans), limited public advertising of jobs (since more men than women are likely to talk to men who work in the jobs and thus have access to the information), the use of machinery designed for typical male height and strength, and departmental rather than plantwide seniority being credited toward promotions (Roos and Reskin 1984).

It is hard to know how much discriminatory barriers of either an overt or disparate impact variety have changed. My rough sense is that there has been a substantial decline in hiring discrimination, but that a substantial amount remains. Antidiscrimination legislation has had some effects on employers' hiring practices (Beller 1979, 1982a, 1982b; Leonard 1984; U.S. Department of Labor 1984; Burstein 1985; Gunderson 1989). In this sense, the lessening of constraints has been an important factor in desegregation. After legal requirements, Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) was institutionalized as part of personnel departments in most large firms, thus giving it some inertial force even in the absence of governmental enforcement. The Republican administrations in office since 1980 have been much less aggressive than prior Republican or Democratic administrations about using the Equal Employment Oppor-

tunity Commission (EEOC) or the Office of Federal Contract Compliance Program (OFCCP) to sue or fine employers who discriminate against women or people of color.

Women have been helped by changes in some job requirements whether these changes occurred because of successful lawsuits involving disparate impact (Burstein and Pitchford 1990) or for other reasons. To take an example of the latter, the development of real estate courses at community colleges around 1970 provided a way for women to circumvent apprenticeship systems that had required current brokers (mostly men) to sponsor new real estate agents (Reskin and Roos 1990).

The fact that resistance by male workers to women's entrance into jobs is a factor in discrimination suggests some conditions under which desegregation might proceed. Reskin and Roos (1990) show that women are more likely to enter male-dominated occupations when they are undergoing deskilling, losing autonomy, or their earnings relative to all jobs is going down. Women are more able to enter jobs at such times because men are less concerned with keeping women out when their jobs are losing desirability; in such times men themselves want to leave the jobs. Unfortunately for women, this means it will be easiest to enter those male jobs with declining advantages in terms of earnings, mobility prospects, or autonomy.

Desegregation has also been more likely to occur when there is an expansion in demand in a male occupation and women are found to be cheaper than men (Oppenheimer 1970; Richardson and Hatcher 1983; Cohn 1985).

#### IV. The Sex Gap in Pay

##### A. Trends in the Sex Gap in Pay

In the United States, as in most nations, women earn substantially less than men. For manufacturing workers, the female/male earnings ratio moved from 0.35 in 1820, to 0.50 in 1850, to 0.58 in 1930 (Goldin 1990). For all workers, the ratio rose from 0.45 to 0.60 between 1890 and 1930 (Goldin 1990). Table 1.3 shows little change between 1955 and 1980 for whites. During most of this period the ratio was about 0.59. Among blacks, Table 1.3 shows that the sex gap in pay narrowed considerably between 1955 and 1980, with women's relative earnings moving from 0.55 to 0.79. Thus, when it comes to women's pay relative to that of men, there have been eras of progress and eras of stagnation, and the timing of such change has differed by race.

Since 1980, white, black, and Hispanic women have made progress relative to men of their own racial or ethnic group, and relative to white men. As Table 1.3 shows, the sex ratio for whites moved from 0.59 to 0.65 between 1980 and 1987. For blacks the sex ratio moved from 0.79 to 0.84, and for Hispanics from 0.72 to 0.83. For the most part, women made these relative gains because their earnings showed slight (inflation-adjusted) absolute gains during the 1980s, while white and black men's wages were relatively stagnant and Hispanic men's wages declined.

The figures referred to so far (in Table 1.3) are based on annual earnings of full-time workers. Another way to look at trends in the pay gap is

Table 1.4. Female-Male Ratios of Median Usual Weekly Earnings among Full-Time Wage and Salary Workers, by Race, 1967-1989

Year <sup>3</sup>	Unadjusted for Hours Worked <sup>1</sup>		Adjusted for Hours Worked <sup>2</sup>	
	White	Black	White	Black
1967	0.608	0.700	0.676	0.732
1971	0.607	0.707	0.669	0.747
1973	0.606	0.718	0.669	0.756
1974	0.598	0.731	0.659	0.768
1975	0.613	0.751	0.672	0.789
1976	0.615	0.738	0.676	0.781
1977	0.606	0.731	0.669	0.775
1978	0.599	0.732	0.660	0.773
1979	0.611	0.747	0.673	0.790
1981	0.635	0.775	0.694	0.817
1982	0.639	0.794	0.698	0.838
1983	0.646	0.790	0.703	0.832
1984	0.670	0.798	0.731	0.842
1985	0.674	0.829	0.736	0.874
1986	0.679	0.827	0.742	0.866
1987	0.682	0.844	0.745	0.890
1988	0.684	0.830	0.746	0.877
1989	0.693	0.865	0.758	0.914

Source: U.S. Department of Labor 1967-1989.

Notes:

<sup>1</sup> Includes only full-time workers, i.e., those working at least 35 hours per week.

<sup>2</sup> Includes only full-time workers, i.e., those working at least 35 hours per week, and adjusts for sex differences in average hours worked among these workers.

<sup>3</sup> Data for 1967-1978 are for the month of May only.

to examine usual weekly earnings of full-time, year-round workers. Figures in the left two columns of Table 1.4 show these trends for black and white men and women. For some reason the female/male ratios are slightly higher in such data, but they show the same basic trends in the sex gap in pay—steady decreases among blacks and decreases among whites since 1980.

One limitation of the statistics in Table 1.3 and in the left two columns of Table 1.4 is that all workers who work at least 35 hours a week are considered full-time. Yet among these full-time workers, men average slightly more hours per week than women. Thus, when figures on the sex gap in pay are adjusted for differences in hours worked within full-time workers, the ratios are several percentage points higher, although the trends in sex gaps are similar, as the right two columns of Table 1.4 show.

One set of statistics that can mislead as an indicator of women's progress is comparisons between the sex gap in pay for different age groups. Table 1.5 gives female/male earnings ratios separately by age group, for

Table 1.5. Adjusted<sup>1</sup> Female-Male Ratios of Median Usual Weekly Earnings among Full-Time Wage and Salary Workers, by Age, 1973-1988

Age	1973	1978	1983	1988
Total, 16 years and older	0.68	0.67	0.72	0.77
16-19	0.86	0.91	0.96	0.93
20-24	0.83	0.80	0.89	0.96
25-34	0.72	0.73	0.80	0.85
35-44	0.61	0.59	0.66	0.75
45-54	0.62	0.59	0.63	0.67

Sources: Figures for 1973 to 1983 from Table 3, O'Neill, June. "The Trends in the Male-Female Wage Gap in the United States." *Journal of Labor Economics* Vol. 3, No. 1, pp. S91-S116. Copyright © 1985. Reprinted with permission. Figures for 1988 from U.S. Department of Labor 1989a (Table 33) and 1989b (Table 41).

Notes:

<sup>1</sup> Adjusted for sex differences in hours worked among workers classified as full-time (i.e., 35 hours/week or more). For 1988 figures only, data on hours used for the adjustments come from a slightly different age group than was used for the figures on earnings because of unavailability of data on narrow age groups in published sources. For 1988, hours for those 25-44 were used to adjust earnings ratios of those 25-34 and 35-44, and hours of those 45-64 were used to adjust earnings ratios of those 45-54.

1973, 1978, 1983, and 1988. The table shows that, in each year, the gap is much smaller among younger workers. For example, in 1988, the female/male earnings ratio among those 20–24 was 0.96, whereas it was 0.85 among those 25–34, and 0.75 among those 35–44. Some interpret this to mean that the sex gap in pay is disappearing. This optimistic interpretation hinges on assuming that the differences in a given year across age groups result entirely from a cohort effect and not at all from a life cycle effect. Another way to put this assumption is to say that each cohort (i.e. people born in a given year) will retain the same sex ratio of pay it currently has as it ages. If this is true, as the older cohorts with the larger sex gap retire, the overall sex gap in pay will decrease. If, on the other hand, we interpret the age differences as entirely a life cycle effect, experienced by every cohort, the figures have no implications as to the future of the sex gap in pay. They simply reveal that the sex gap in pay increases with age. This results in part because the sex gap in experience increases as women go through the childbearing years, and in part because even those women who are employed continuously usually work in jobs low on prospects for mobility and raises. For both these reasons, women's earnings fall further and further behind men's across the life cycle. Further complicating matters is the possibility of period effects. Period effects refer to changes over time, for example, decreases in discrimination, that affect all employed cohorts and age groups approximately equally.

In reality, all three effects (cohort, life cycle, and period) are probably operative, as suggested by Table 1.5 (and by Bianchi and Spain 1986). In each of the years shown, younger workers have a higher female/male ratio of earnings. We can also follow one cohort across the years. To take one example, consider those who were aged 25–34 in 1973, with women earning 0.72 of men's earnings. Ten years later, in 1983, when this same cohort was aged 35–44, the women were earning only 0.66 what men earned. For this cohort, women's relative losses across the life cycle were great enough to override any period gains between 1973 and 1983. But, if we look at the cohort 25–34 in 1978, women earned 0.73 of men's earnings in 1978, but had decreased the sex gap slightly to a ratio of 0.75 by 1988 when the cohort was 35–44. Here the period progress accruing to the cohort appears to have been large enough to override any relative losses of women across the life cycle. This suggests that favorable change in women's relative pay is occurring via both period and cohort effects. However, net of these changes, women's relative position deteriorates across the life cycle. Thus, the progress is not as fast as would be indicated by interpreting all of the age differences in sex ratio for any given year as cohort effects.

### B. Explanations of the Sex Gap in Pay

What factors explain the sex gap in pay? Here I will consider evidence for the role of a number of factors, leaving questions of what theories this evidence supports for Chapter 2. Some of these factors have their effects on the sex gap in pay via their effects on segregation.

*Sex Differences in Productivity or Effort?* Are women less productive than men? We seldom have measures of productivity, so there is little direct evidence on this. Yet there is much speculation and some indirect evidence. Becker (1985) speculates that, because of their domestic responsibilities, women exert less intense effort on the job, saving energy for domestic pursuits. The fact that women who are employed do more household work than their husbands is well documented (Berk and Berk 1979; Ross 1987; Hochschild 1989). But despite this, tests of differences in effort have, if anything, suggested that women expend *more* effort than men in their paid jobs. Bielby and Bielby (1988) analyzed data from a national survey that asked respondents how "hard" their jobs require them to work, how much "effort, either physical or mental" their jobs require, and how much "effort" they put into their jobs "beyond what is required." Women reported slightly *more* effort than men. One might wonder whether this finding simply results from women "bragging" more than men about their effort level. This is doubtful, since social psychologists' experiments show that men generally overestimate and women underestimate their own performance (Colwill 1982). Evidence on time allocation also suggests that women's effort is higher than men's; national survey data show that women report less time than men in coffee breaks, lunch breaks, and other regularly scheduled work breaks (Stafford and Duncan 1980; Quinn and Staines 1979). Thus, research indicates that sex differences in effort explain none of the sex gap in pay.

*Industries and Firms.* While the most obvious form of segregation is at the occupational level, there is some segregation by industry and firm as well, and this contributes to the sex gap in pay. Unlike occupations, many of which are nearly all male or female, almost all firms (and thus industries, since they are a collection of firms all selling the same product) employ both men and women. Yet, although sex segregation by firm and industry is not nearly as extreme as by occupation, there are, nonetheless, systematic tendencies for women to be employed in those firms and industries with low average wages (Blau 1977; Beck, Horan, and Tolbert 1980; Hodson and England 1986; Aldrich and Buchele 1989; Coverdill 1988; Ferber and Spaeth 1984). For example, Blau (1977) exam-



ined cases where men and women in the same very detailed occupation (like accounting clerk, payroll clerk, or computer programmer) had different wages, and found that this was usually a matter of women working in a lower-wage firm. Often the entire industry the lower-paying firms were in had lower average wage scales.

However, even when women move to higher-wage firms and industries, their wages do not go up as much as men's do. The wage premium associated with being in a high-wage firm or industry goes disproportionately to male jobs (Aldrich and Buchele 1989).

*Amount of Human Capital Investment and Expected Human Capital Investment.* Are women in jobs requiring less skill, and, if so, does this affect the sex gap in pay? Here, let us confine our attention to *amount* of skills or training rather than *types* of skill. Amount of schooling, one type of human capital, explains virtually none of the sex gap in pay, since men and women in the labor force have virtually the same median years of formal education, as Table 1.6 shows. Among whites, women had 1.3 years more education than men in the labor force in 1952, and men did not close this gap until 1969. By 1979, white men's median was a trivial 0.1 year more education than white women's. For blacks the trends are somewhat different, but black women have had slightly more education than black men in all years since 1952, as Table 1.6 shows, although by 1983 this female advantage in median education had declined to a relatively trivial 0.2 year.

There is a sex difference in another sort of human capital: years of job experience. Because many women spend some years rearing children and keeping house full-time, the average woman in the labor force has fewer years of experience than the average man. Early studies had

Table 1.6. Median Years of School Completed by Men and Women in the Labor Force, by Race, 1952-1983

	White			Black		
	Men	Women	Difference	Men	Women	Difference
1952	10.8	12.1	-1.3	7.2	8.1	-0.9
1959	11.8	12.2	-0.4	8.1	9.4	-1.3
1969	12.4	12.4	0.0	10.8	11.9	-1.1
1979	12.7	12.6	0.1	12.2	12.4	-0.2
1983	12.8	12.7	0.1	12.4	12.6	-0.2

Source: From: O'Neill, J. "The Trends in The Male-Female Wage Gap in the United States." *Journal of Labor Economics* Vol. 3, No. 1, pp. S91-S116. Copyright © 1985. Reprinted with permission.

shown that this difference explains between one quarter and one half of the sex gap in pay (Polachek 1975; Mincer and Polachek 1974, 1978; Sandell and Shapiro 1978).

A 1979 study by Corcoran and Duncan will be discussed in some detail since it is the best available for assessing the effects of various types of human capital on the sex gap in pay. They used a standard method of regression decomposition in which the amount that any variable contributes to the sex gap in pay is a function of (1) the rate of return of the variable (how much an additional increment contributes to earnings for both men and women) and (2) the size of the difference between men and women's average on this variable. They found that the regression coefficients or slopes—the rates of return—to different types of human capital were not terribly different for men and women. Their results do show that the *overall* rate of return to experience is higher for white males than other groups. (Hoffman 1981 also found this.) But when experience is divided into subcomponents according to whether the experience was with one's current employer (called "tenure") and whether it involved on-the-job training, rates of return for the subcomponents did not differ much by race or sex. This implies that the overall group differences in rates of return to experience came from groups spending different proportions of their employed years in different types of experience, which in turn offer varying rates of return. For example, white men are likely to have a higher portion of their experience in a job that provides on-the-job training, and years of tenure during which training was provided have a higher rate of return than other years of tenure in one's current firm or than years of experience in prior firms.

Since coefficients did not vary significantly between groups for most variables, Corcoran and Duncan used white male slopes for the decomposition, and my discussion that follows uses these results. Calculations from Corcoran and Duncan's study (1979) are presented in Tables 1.7 and 1.8. (They include decompositions using other groups' slopes.)

A striking implication of Table 1.7 is the amount of the sex gap in pay among whites that comes from men having more tenure (seniority with one's firm), including periods during which the employer was providing training. The training portion of tenure explains 11% of the gap between white men and white women. Although Table 1.7 shows that this same factor explains 8% of the gap between white men and black women, and 15% of the gap between black men and white men, Table 1.8 shows that on-the-job training is a relatively minor factor in the sex gap in pay between black men and women, explaining only 2%. It is also a trivial part of the pay gap between black women and white women (1%). Whether or not differences between groups in time spent in jobs with

Table 1.7. Percentage of 1975 Wage Gap between White Men and Other Groups Accounted for by Indicators of Human Capital

	Black Men	White Women	Black Women
Years out of labor force since completing school	0 (0)	6 (5)	3 (-3)
Years of work experience before present employer	2 (6)	3 (1)	1 (-1)
Years with current employer prior to current position	5 (4)	12 (11)	7 (5)
Years of training completed on current job	15 (22)	11 (17)	8 (14)
Years of posttraining tenure on current job	-4 (-5)	-1 (-1)	-1 (1)
Proportion of total working years that were full-time	0 (-1)	8 (7)	4 (2)
Hours of work missed due to illness of others in 1975	-1 (1)	-1 (0)	-2 (-1)
Hours of work missed due to own illness in 1975	-1 (-1)	0 (0)	-1 (0)
Placed limits on job hours or location	0 (1)	2 (1)	1 (-1)
Plans to stop work for nontraining reasons	-1 (-1)	2 (1)	1 (2)
Formal education (in years)	38 (43)	2 (2)	11 (15)
Percentage of total gap explained by human capital	53 (71)	44 (45)	32 (32)
Percentage of total gap unexplained by human capital	47 (29)	56 (55)	68 (68)

Note: The decomposition calculates what percentage of the total gap in the natural log of hourly earnings between white men and each other group arises because of group differences in means on the independent variables, assuming the white male slopes. The calculation is the difference between the two groups' means times the slope. This is then divided by the total log-dollar gap and the quotient multiplied by 100 to convert to a percentage. (The percentages in parentheses are alternative estimates arrived at by using the lower-earning group's slopes.) The total gap is adjusted for whether individuals live in the South and the size of the largest city they live near. Adapted and computed from Corcoran and Duncan (1979, Table 1).

training are themselves explained by discrimination in job assignments or by job choices is a separate question that Corcoran and Duncan's analysis cannot answer.

White women also earn less if they have been out of the labor force. (See also Mincer and Ofek 1982.) This is shown by the net effects on wages of (1) years of work experience before present employer and (2) years with current employer prior to current position. The first of

Table 1.8. Percentage of 1975 Wage Gap between Black Men and Women and between Black and White Women Explained by Indicators of Human Capital

	Black Women and Black Men	Black Women and White Women
Years out of labor force since completing school	10 (-7)	-8 (14)
Years of work experience before present employer	0 (-3)	-3 (3)
Years with current employer prior to current position	7 (6)	-12 (-12)
Years of training completed on current job	2 (2)	1 (2)
Years of posttraining tenure on current job	2 (-2)	-4 (3)
Proportion of total working years that were full-time	16 (4)	-10 (-6)
Hours of work missed due to illness of others in 1975	2 (-1)	3 (-5)
Hours of work missed due to own illness in 1975	0 (0)	3 (-2)
Placed limits on job hours or location	-3 (1)	-3 (-6)
Plans to stop work for nontraining reasons	3 (5)	-1 (7)
Formal education (in years)	-16 (-20)	76 (97)
Percentage of total gap explained by human capital	25 (-15)	43 (95)
Percentage of total gap unexplained by human capital	75 (115)	57 (5)

Note: The decomposition calculates what percentage of the total gap in the natural log of hourly earnings between the two groups arises because of group differences in means on the independent variables, assuming the slopes of the higher-earning groups, black men in column 1 and white women in column 2. (The percentages in parentheses are alternative estimates arrived at by using the lower-earning group's slopes.) The total gap is adjusted for whether individuals live in the South and the size of the largest city they live near. Computed from Corcoran and Duncan (1979, Table 1).

these two factors explains 3% of the gap between white men and white women (Table 1.7) but has no effect on the sex gap among blacks (Table 1.8). The second factor explains 12% of the sex gap among whites (Table 1.7), and 7% (Table 1.8) of the sex gap among blacks. The proximate cause of these portions of the sex gap in pay is women's lesser employment experience. However, discriminatory job and wage differentials may be behind some proportion of these sex differences in years of employment experience, since women have less motivation to stay employed if they are paid less. It is interesting that none of the measures of experience contribute to the pay gap between white and black women; black women have more experience but lower earnings.

Overall, Table 1.7 shows that Corcoran and Duncan (1979) found human capital (broadly construed to include all measures of education, employment continuity, and labor force attachment) to explain 44% of the pay gap between white men and women and 32% of the gap between white men and black women.

Tables 1.7 and 1.8, taken together, also reveal some facts about the interaction of race and gender. Overall, a much smaller proportion of the sex gap in pay between black women and black men is explained by human capital than is explained for either the gap between black and white women or between black women and white men. In particular, black women's higher average education than black men's makes a large *negative* contribution to the sex gap for blacks. That is, black women have higher education than black men, but lower earnings. In contrast, education makes significant contributions to the pay gap between black and white women (76%), between black women and white men (11%), and between black and white men (38%).

Let us now turn our attention to the question of whether women's *intentions* or *expectations* for less employment continuity at the time they first enter employment might explain some of the subsequent sex gap in pay. To the extent that job experience provides skill accumulation, this can be seen as relevant to the amount of human capital one accumulates. There are two versions of how expectations about continuity of experience might affect earnings. One posits that, if there is a trade-off between starting wages and steep wage trajectories (i.e., high returns to experience and/or tenure), women who plan intermittent employment will be more apt to choose jobs with relatively high starting wages than will either men or women planning continuous employment. This could possibly create an average sex gap in pay, despite the fact that it would produce higher lifetime earnings for women than if they chose jobs similar to men. However, as mentioned above, no study to date has found higher average starting wages for women or in women's jobs, even when other factors are controlled (England 1984; England, Farkas, Kilbourne, and Dou 1988). A milder version of this thesis might say that women will be more motivated to choose jobs with steep upward wage trajectories the longer they plan to be employed. I find this a more plausible claim, although we lack research on how much this has affected women's choices.

A second way that women's plans for intermittent employment may affect the sex gap in pay is via employers' statistical discrimination. (Definitions and theoretical discussion of statistical discrimination appear in Chapter 2.) If women have higher turnover rates, and employers know this, then based on this sex difference in turnover they may engage in what economists call statistical discrimination. That is, em-

ployers will be reluctant to hire women in jobs where turnover is especially expensive, particularly jobs that provide much on-the-job training. What evidence is there for this as a factor in the sex gap in pay? First, let us look at the evidence about sex differences in turnover. It is equivocal (Price 1977, p. 40). Several studies based on recent national probability samples of young workers (mostly in their twenties) found no sex differences in turnover, even when wage was not controlled (Waite and Berryman 1985; Donohue 1987; Lynch 1991). At first glance this seems extremely counterintuitive since we know that women leave the labor force for childrearing more often than men. The seeming anomaly is explained by the fact that men change firms more often than women (Barnes and Jones 1974). Other studies find gross differences, with women having higher turnover rates, but after statistically adjusting for wages or wage-related job characteristics, these differences disappear or reverse (Viscusi 1980; Blau and Kahn 1981; Haber, Lamas, and Green 1983; Shorey 1983). In general, workers of any sex or race are more likely to quit a job when it is low paying or has low opportunity for advancement (C. Smith 1979; Osterman 1982; Haber et al. 1983; Shorey 1983; Grounau 1988; Kahn and Griesinger 1989; Light and Ureta 1989). Thus, if women are placed in less desirable jobs through discrimination, this could explain part of their higher turnover in studies that do find gross sex differences in turnover. If this is true, then women's disadvantageous job placements may explain their higher turnover rather than vice versa. However, if the job placements result from statistical discrimination based on real exogenous turnover differences, then statistical controls for job characteristics are inappropriate in studies designed to assess exogenous sex differences in turnover propensity. Thus, the "chicken and egg" question of which is exogenous, the higher turnover or the discrimination, is virtually impossible to assess statistically. My best guess is that, except in the most recent cohorts (to which Waite and Berryman's 1985, Donohue's 1987, and Lynch's 1991 analyses were confined), exogenous sex differences in turnover existed but were very small and not present in all workplaces or occupations. However, it is important to note that among young cohorts in the recent period, turnover differences disappeared. Thus, if employers continue favoring men for jobs providing much training, it cannot be explained rationally via statistical discrimination but must reflect erroneous perceptions or other discriminatory motivations.

Thus far I have discussed how much of the sex gap in pay can be explained by human capital or anticipated human capital at any one point in time. But what of the trends in the sex gap in pay? Can these be explained by trends in human capital? Let us look at this question first in terms of the post-World War II period up until about 1980, a period

during which the sex gap in pay was relatively unchanging. Were there trends in human capital that we would expect to have reduced the sex gap in pay? Several studies suggest not. For example, women's education relative to men's has not increased in the last 50 years (Goldin 1990; Smith and Ward 1984). Thus, based on education trends, we would not expect the sex gap in pay to change. Of course, during all this time, both men's and women's levels of education were increasing, and women had as much or more education than men (Jacobs 1989b). Thus, the point is not that at any one time education can explain the sex gap in pay, but rather that trends in the sex gap in education were not changing favorably to women, so we would not expect a change in the sex gap in pay on the basis of trends in education alone.

Similarly, prior to 1980, women's experience did not increase relative to men's (Smith and Ward 1984; Goldin 1990). At first this seems counterintuitive. One might think that as the percentage of women who are employed increases, this would lessen the sex gap in experience. But, in fact, the upward surge in women's employment affects the average experience of employed women in two conflicting ways: (1) On the one hand, the fact that fewer currently employed women have left the labor force (at all or for as long a time) increases the average experience of employed women. (2) On the other hand, the entrance of new female workers with little experience depresses the average years of experience of employed women. Thus, whether the average experience of employed women goes up, down, or stays the same as women's employment increases depends upon the relative strength of these two conflicting forces. Recent research (Smith and Ward 1984; Goldin 1990) suggests that they canceled each other out, so that women's average experience did not rise, and the sex gap in experience did not begin to close, until about 1980. Since 1980, however, women's relative experience has increased, and this is one factor in the declining sex gap in pay (Smith and Ward 1984; Goldin 1990; O'Neill 1985). However, this does not mean that experience completely "explains" the sex gap in pay. As we have seen, experience explains less than one half the sex gap in pay at any particular point in time.

*Values and Preferences.* Do women's values and preferences help explain the sex gap in pay? In one sense, I have already considered this question above. I argued that gender-specific socialization orients both men and women toward kinds of jobs and skills typical for their gender. Insofar as women's jobs then pay less, values have played a part in the sex gap in pay. In a formal analysis of this type, Filer (1983) uses a large number of measures of tastes and personality characteristics to predict earnings and finds that they explain some of the sex difference in pay.

Much of this, I would argue, is an indirect effect. Values affect occupational choice and occupations are affecting earnings, but Filer (1983) study does not make clear the mechanism through which occupational characteristics affect earnings. One such mechanism is the sort of wage discrimination against female jobs at issue in comparable worth, to be discussed below.

A thesis claiming a more direct causal line from values to earnings posits that men simply place a higher value on earnings when they decide which occupation to select, while women trade these off for other job characteristics. A number of studies have asked people what they value in jobs, and find that men rank earnings more highly than women (Brenner and Tomkiewicz 1979; Lueptow 1980; Peng et al. 1981; Herlihy 1982; Major and Konar 1984). However, one study by Walker et al. (1981) found no such difference. Moreover, research on job satisfaction has found that women's satisfaction is *more* affected than is men's by the pay in their job (Glenn and Weaver 1982; Crane and Hodson 1984). In addition, studies of turnover find that the extent to which wage increases affect whether women will quit a job is as large or larger for women than for men (Shorey 1983; Kahn and Griesinger 1989; Light and Ureta 1989). Thus, if we look at responses to job characteristics, it appears that women may place more importance than men on earnings. In short, existing evidence provides no clear answer to the question of whether or not there is a sex difference in the value placed on money contributing to the sex gap in pay.

*Sex Composition Effects.* The call for comparable worth is based on the finding that a job's sex composition affects its wage level. This is a very consistent finding coming from a wide range of studies. Here I review this research, dividing studies into three types: those taking occupations as units of analysis and using national data, those taking individuals as units of analysis and (generally) using national data, and those taking jobs as units of analysis using data from a single organization or employer.

One type of study has taken U.S. Census detailed occupational categories as units of analysis and used national data. Such studies have controlled for occupational characteristics such as average requirements for education, and an array of occupational demands, with measures typically taken from the Dictionary of Occupational Titles (DOT). In general, such studies have found that, net of these measures, both men and women earn less if they work in a predominantly female occupation. This has been found for 1940, 1950, and 1960 with controls for education (Freiman and Terrell 1975b), for 1970 with controls for education, DOT skill measures, and other variables (England and McLaughlin

Is Examining the Effect of Occupational Sex Composition on Earnings and the Sex Gap in Pay

Measure of Earnings	Pay Ratio (Female/Male)	Estimated Coefficients of Sex Composition <sup>2</sup>		Percentage of Sex Gap Explained by Sex Composition <sup>3</sup> : Coefficients			Unit of Analysis <sup>4</sup>	Control Variables <sup>5</sup> Included in Regressions
		Female Equation	Male Equation	Female	Male	Average		
Median annual		-1438	-5008				Weighted occupation. (n = 260)	1, 2
Median annual		-2070	-3900				Unweighted occupation. (n = 212)	1, 2, 7, 11, 27
Median annual, standardized <sup>6</sup>		-1630	-2960				Unweighted occupation. (n = 499)	1
Median annual, full-time year-round	0.54	-1682	-3005	21	38	30	Weighted occupation. (n = 387)	1, 26, 27, 29, 30, 31, 32
Hourly	0.64	-0.586	-0.686	9	11	10	Weighted occupation. (n = 192)	1, 2, 4, 5, 6, 7, 12, 13, 14, 26, 27, 33
Hourly	0.68	-0.158 (0.049)	-0.148 (0.049)	12	11	11	Weighted occupation. (n = 306)	1, 2, 6, 7, 11, 18, 27, 28, 36, 37, 38, 39
Hourly	0.66	-0.090 (0.014)	-0.168 (0.015)	11	21	16	Individual n <sub>f</sub> = 19,412 n <sub>m</sub> = 24,056	1, 2, 3, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 12, 13, 15, 26, 27, 28, 36
Hourly for full-time workers	0.70 nhs <sup>7</sup> hs	-0.340 (0.067) -0.211 (0.033)	-0.241 (0.060) -0.225 (0.026)	43 28	30 30	37 29	Individual n <sub>f</sub> = 5,555 n <sub>m</sub> = 8,167	1, 4, 5, 7, 8, 9, 10, 12, 13, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24,

1979; England, Chassie, and McCormick 1982), and for 1980 with similar controls (Parcel 1989). The one study that does not find this net negative effect of occupational percentage female (Filer 1989) used a very extensive list of controls. I will argue in Chapter 3, in conjunction with my analysis of this genre using 1980 census data, that Filer may have included inappropriate variables and "overpartialed" the effect. To foreshadow, my analysis in Chapter 3 finds a negative effect on wages of the percentage female in an occupation, under more rigorous controls than most previous studies have used for skill demands as well as characteristics of the firms and industry people in given occupations typically work in.

A second type of study takes individuals as units of analysis, and examines the effects of occupational sex composition by mapping this contextual variable onto each individual's record according to the occupation s/he holds. Controls for various other occupational characteristics are mapped on in the same way as contextual variables. Such studies find a net negative effect on both men's and women's wages of being in an occupation that is predominantly female (Johnson and Solon 1986). One advantage of such studies is that they employ controls for individuals' human capital. One study (England et al. 1988) found this negative effect of occupational percentage female using longitudinal data and a "fixed-effects" model to control for any unmeasured differences between unchanging pay-relevant attributes of those individuals in predominantly female and male occupations.

Sorensen (1989b) has assembled most of the published studies investigating the net effect of occupations' percentage female. (She includes studies using either census occupations or individuals as units of analysis.) These findings are summarized in Table 1.9. In general, these studies find that moving from an all-male to a comparable all-female occupation is associated with a wage penalty equivalent to between 10 and 30% of the sex gap in pay.

A third type of study employs data from one organization or employer. These studies show similar findings. One advantage of these studies is that they often employ more detailed job categories than do national studies. A second advantage is that they allow us to see the potential effects of comparable worth at the level at which they would occur in the version of the reform generally advocated—within a single employer or organization. A disadvantage of such studies is that they are limited to the public sector, where data on pay are more readily available. A number of states have done job evaluation studies for comparable worth purposes in the last ten years. Invariably, these studies have found that, net of measures of job skill or worth, female jobs pay less (Remick 1984; Rothchild 1984; Steinberg, Haignere, Possin, Chertos,

and Treiman 1986; Acker 1989; Orazem and Matilla 1989). The job evaluation techniques used in such studies are discussed in more detail in Chapter 4.

Another study of public sector employment examined pay in the California state civil service. Baron and Newman (1989; forthcoming) found "smoking gun" evidence of discrimination in pay setting. A 1934 memo (Becker 1934) said that pay in jobs is set, among other things, according to the "age, sex, and standard of living of employees normally recruited for the given job." Baron and Newman's (1989; forthcoming) analysis of the California civil service data found higher pay levels in predominantly male jobs, even when controlling for the broader occupational category into which each more detailed job falls, and for the education and experience required of persons entering the job. Their study did not have the sort of measures of skill demands common to job evaluations. However, the validity of their conclusions is further buttressed by the fact that changes in the sex composition of jobs between 1979 and 1985 were associated with changes in a job's pay level such that a job's becoming more female depressed wages and becoming more male increased wages (Baron and Newman 1989). If we assume that any changes in jobs' skill demands were uncorrelated with changes in sex composition, then their findings about change effectively "hold constant" any unmeasured skill demands of the jobs.

Other studies that have also analyzed how change over time in jobs' sex composition affects change in their pay find that when a job changes its sex composition, the wage for both men and women goes up if more males come into the job, and the wage for both men and women goes down if more women come into the job (Ferber and Lowry 1976, p. 384; Pfeffer and Davis-Blake 1987). We cannot be sure if the changing sex composition affected the wages, as these authors suggest, if the change in wage affects sex composition (as suggested by Reskin and Roos 1990), or if both effects are operative.

*Types of Skills and Working Conditions in Jobs: Indirect Gender Bias.* Another factor affecting the sex gap in pay is the kind, rather than amount, of skills and working conditions jobs require. Some view this as a part of the comparable worth issue. The studies above implicitly do not. That is, they take as given the returns to different job characteristics, and, controlling for these factors, estimate the adverse effect on wages of being in a predominantly female occupation.

However, the types of skills common in women's jobs may have lower returns than the types of skills common in men's jobs because of gender discrimination. That is, if a type of skill or working condition has traditionally been associated with women's work in either the household or

paid employment, it may come to be devalued via stigma that gets institutionalized into wage systems, so that this skill or working condition comes eventually to carry a low rate of reward, or a penalty, whether it appears in a male or female occupation. However, since such skills and working conditions are more common to female occupations, this devaluation has a disparate and adverse impact on women's wages. Many view this as a part of the discrimination at issue in comparable worth, as will be discussed in Chapter 4 as an issue in job evaluation studies, in Chapter 5 as an issue in legal proofs of discrimination, and in Chapter 6 as an issue of feminist theory. There is substantial evidence that women's concentration in jobs with different kinds of skills affects the sex gap in pay. Daymont and Andrisani (1984) show that one's college major has an important effect on pay, and women are in the majors associated with lower pay. Women are more often than men in jobs involving nurturant social skills, and these not only have lower returns than other skills, but actually have net negative returns (Kilbourne, England, Farkas, and Beron 1990; Steinberg et al. 1986; Jacobs and Steinberg 1990a; Steinberg 1990). The fixed-effects model used by Kilbourne et al. (1990) allows an assessment of the effect of doing nurturant work on earnings while controlling for all unchanging, unmeasured differences between individuals in nurturant and other jobs. Even under these stringent individual controls, as well as controls for factors computed from DOT measures and occupational sex composition, the penalty for nurturance is found. My analysis in Chapter 3 will show this penalty for doing nurturant work as well. The adverse working conditions typical in some women's jobs (such as interpersonal stress, exposure to death and suffering, or exposure to blood, urine, and feces) are often given fewer points in job evaluations used to set pay than are the kinds of adverse working conditions (such as exposure to dirt and the out-of-doors) more typical in men's jobs (Steinberg 1990). Even those adverse working conditions typical to male jobs seldom have a large effect on earnings, however.

Overall, I conclude that the *kinds* of skills traditionally exercised by women are valued less in wage determination than are traditionally male skills. This more indirect form of gender bias is seen by many advocates as part of the discrimination to be redressed by comparable worth.

### C. Consequences of the Sex Gap in Pay

What are the consequences of the sex gap in pay? A person doubting the importance of the issue might argue that if marriage is nearly universal and husbands and wives pool their income, the sex gap in pay has

little consequence for the economic well-being of either women or children. This would be a mistaken conclusion, however. The sex gap in pay has important consequences within marriage as well as for those women who are not married.

Not all women marry, and some women divorce. Many never-married and divorced women have children. Indeed, rates of both divorce and out-of-wedlock births have increased dramatically. About half of the cohort born in the early 1950s (Cherlin 1981; Preston and McDonald 1979), and two thirds of those marrying today (Martin and Bumpass 1989) are projected to experience divorce. Many divorced women have children. Out-of-wedlock births rose from 5% of all births in 1960 to 18% in 1980 (Preston 1984). Unmarried women with children—whether divorced or never married—typically have custody of their children and must support them on some combination of their own earnings, any child support they receive from the children's fathers, and government subsidies. Child support awards are typically small. For example, awards to divorced women averaged \$2500 per year per family in 1981, and less than half the mothers received the full amount awarded (U.S. Bureau of Census 1983b). While it is true that many divorced women remarry, both age and the presence of children inhibit women's remarriage probabilities (Mott and Moore 1983), so a significant minority of women with children do not remarry (Preston 1984). Thus, the sex gap in pay, in combination with the fact that divorced and never-married women generally have financial responsibility for their children after divorce, is a crucial part of why such a high proportion of female-headed families is in poverty (McLanahan, Sorensen, and Watson 1989, p. 120).

There is a paradox here. To some extent the increase in divorce is probably itself a result of women's increased economic independence (England and Farkas 1986, pp. 64–65). The fact that more women than previously have jobs means that more can afford to leave marriages they consider unhappy and at least minimally support themselves and their children. Yet, because of the continued sex gap in pay and men's failure to support their children after divorce, the economic consequences of divorce for women and children are still grave (Preston 1984).

But what of marriages that remain intact? For married women, does the sex gap in pay have adverse consequences? Yes. A long line of research on marital power (reviewed in England and Kilbourne 1990c) has shown that women's employment and the relative earnings of husbands and wives affect the balance of power in marriages. When women's earnings are lower, even when they are making valuable contributions in the form of home management and child rearing, their bargaining power vis-à-vis their husbands is substantially lower than that of women with higher earnings. The fact that women's economic fate is more adversely affected by divorce than men's is part of why men

can retain disproportionate bargaining power within marriages. The ability to leave a relationship with relatively few losses implies the power to hold out for a better bargain without risk of a big loss. Thus, the sex gap in pay has profound consequences for the degree of informal democracy in marriages. It adversely affects women's ability to negotiate for what they want in marriage on a wide range of issues, including intimacy, purchasing decisions, the sharing of household work, and geographical moves. The sex gap in pay is a part of what prevents equality in husbands' and wives' bargaining power over all these issues.

## V. Conclusion

This chapter has presented an overview of women's and men's positions in paid employment. The chapter began by exploring explanations for the unabated increase in women's employment. One factor is the increasing proportion of women who are single, many with children. These women need jobs because, whether they are divorced or never married, they usually have the major responsibility for the support of themselves and any children they have. Among married women, increased potential wages have drawn more women into employment, as has a restructuring of the economy that brought disproportionate increases in labor demands in fields already labeled "female." I argued that couples today may perceive a greater need for two earners than previously despite the fact that, on average, male earnings have greater buying power today than in the 1950s or early 1960s. I speculated that this increase in perceived need can be reconciled with trends in men's earnings if a decrease in income is perceived as larger than a gain of the same amount over the same income range. The last 20 years have seen fluctuations in men's earnings because of recessions and recoveries, and increasing wage inequality among men. The asymmetry in the perceptions of losses and gains of the same size may explain why women who enter paid labor to buffer reductions in men's earnings often stay even after their husband's earnings have rebounded. Also, as the norm becomes for women to be employed before childbearing, couples get used to two incomes and want to avoid the loss that would occur if women did not return to their jobs shortly after childbearing.

The unabated increase in women's employment makes the issue of comparable worth more important: As employment becomes the norm for most women most of the time, the consequences of facing discriminatory wage penalties increase. The importance of comparable worth also results from occupational sex segregation. If there were no disproportionately female or male jobs, there would be no problem of com-

parable worth, at least as an issue of gender inequality. There might still be concerns about whether the pay levels of jobs were set in a consistent manner, or about whether the racial or ethnic composition of jobs had discriminatory effects. But without the sex segregation of jobs, comparable worth would not be the important women's issue it is today.

Occupational sex segregation has declined since about 1970, although it is still substantial. Yet even as national data show a decline in segregation, we also see sex segregation of subfields within occupations women have recently entered, and some occupations show desegregation and then resegregation, as they move from being mostly male to integrated, and then "tip" and become segregated female enclaves.

Occupational sex segregation is partly explained by social forces operating upon women's and men's choice of jobs. These social forces include influences of parents, educational institutions, peer groups, and other social networks. Discrimination by employers in hiring is also a factor, as is the resistance of male workers to women's entrance into their occupations. Finally, historical and institutional factors also contribute to segregation; if a job starts out as female or male, considerable inertia develops around that initial label. Also, if entry level jobs are of one sex or the other, this segregation will be perpetuated over time and up the mobility ladders that comprise internal labor markets.

Segregation more often takes the form of women and men exercising different kinds of skills than of women's concentration into less skilled jobs. This is precisely why the issue of comparable worth is so poignant; women are often being paid less for equally demanding, though different jobs. This fact also makes it more comprehensible that women's own choices could be one factor in job choices. When we focus upon the low wages and low mobility prospects of typically women's jobs, it appears that no rational woman would choose such jobs. But when we see that often equally high levels but different kinds of skills are exercised in female jobs, it is more plausible that reasonable people would find such work interesting and meaningful. This, however, does not imply that women want or agree with the low pay accorded their jobs.

This chapter also examined research on the sex gap in pay. Education and effort, the two "all-American" routes to economic success, do have payoffs for both men and women. Yet neither is particularly relevant to the sex gap in pay since women have as many years of education as men, and studies show women expend as much or more effort as men on their jobs. Women's fewer years of seniority and overall employment experience, and the intermittency of such experience, explains some proportion (between one quarter and one half) of the sex gap in pay.

Much of the sex gap in pay results from segregation itself. Some of this segregation is interfirm, with women concentrated in lower-paying firms and industries. This aspect of the sex gap in pay would not be



touched by comparable worth reforms unless we envisioned a national wage setting board whose authority spanned the entire economy, something no American advocates of comparable worth have suggested.

A large component of the sex gap in pay comes about because women are segregated into lower-paying occupations within every firm. Proponents of pay equity reforms allege that at least some portion of the pay differences between male and female jobs arise *because* the jobs are filled by women or entail skills that are traditionally female. Evidence abounds that, controlling for a number of measures of skill and other occupational requirements, jobs with more women in them offer lower wages to both men and women than do jobs containing more men. I refer to this as direct gender bias in wage setting. There is also evidence that, net of this direct effect of jobs' sex composition, kinds of skills traditionally done by women, such as nurturant social skills, have lower (sometimes even negative) returns than other kinds of skills (such as cognitive skills). I refer to this as indirect gender bias in wage setting. Comparable worth is about both of these types of gender bias in wage setting: direct gender bias based on the sex composition of the job, and indirect gender bias in which the returns to jobs' requirements for various types of skill and working conditions differ according to whether the job characteristic is traditionally associated with women's or men's spheres.

This chapter has focused on empirical regularities rather than how these are interpreted by theories or help us to evaluate theories. The next chapter will focus on scientific theorizing, examining how a number of bodies of theory view labor markets, gender inequality, and, most specifically, comparable worth.

#### Note

1. The evidence is mixed on whether women with more traditional family plans are more likely to choose female occupations. Waite and Berryman (1985) find that young women who aspire to have more children and less continuous employment are more apt to choose female occupations. In contrast, Lehrer and Stokes (1985) find that young women's plans to be employed at age 35 and expected family size affected the skill level of the occupation aspired to, but *not* its sex composition. Even if Waite and Berryman's finding is correct, this does not demonstrate that female occupations lead to higher lifetime earnings than male occupations for those who have intermittent employment. It may simply mean that the wage disadvantages of female occupations are taken into account more in occupational choices of women who plan more continuous employment.

## Theories of Labor Markets

### I. Introduction

This chapter considers competing theories of how labor markets work, and their implications for gender inequality and comparable worth. The theories to be discussed include orthodox neoclassical economics, a new neoclassical institutionalism, and framing models from behavioral economics that blend well with findings from experimental social psychology. I also consider Marxist views in sociology and economics, as well as other sociological and institutionalist perspectives. Finally, I propose an interdisciplinary view that draws selectively upon the theories reviewed.

I give a disproportionate amount of space to the neoclassical view for two reasons: First, the internal coherence of the neoclassical view makes it possible to spell out its implications clearly. Second, the neoclassical "market wage" argument has come to dominate arguments against comparable worth policies. I find some merit in neoclassical theories. Yet, in contrast to the view of most neoclassical economists, I believe that comparable worth policies could have salutary effects on women and address a very real form of discrimination. It is important to my argument to explain why I hold this view despite its tension with neoclassical thinking.

This chapter focuses on theories about how labor markets operate to produce wage differences between women and men, and between female and male jobs. In contrast, Chapter 6 focuses on *normative* theoretical questions about how rewards, including wages, *should* be allocated to men and women and across jobs. Of course, these positive and normative questions are never entirely separate, though some bodies of theory emphasize one aspect over the other. Both positive and normative issues underlie policy debates over comparable worth, to be discussed in the concluding Chapter 7.