



# Research-in-Brief

IWPR #L004

Updated June 2013

*Key Findings from 25 Years of IWPR Research*

## Quantifying Women's Labor Market Experiences: How A Gender Lens Changes the Conversation about the Economy

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From the outset, IWPR has highlighted the wage gap as a key indicator of women's economic security and gender (in) equality in the workplace. Fact sheets on the overall gender wage gap were published in IWPR's first years and document how much the earnings ratio between men and women changed over time, as well as how earnings for different groups of women varied over this period of time. From 1996 onwards, the Institute's research program on the Status of Women in the States has made these data available on a state-by-state basis, including in the report *Women's Economic Status in the States: Wide Disparities by Race, Ethnicity, and Region* (#1; 2004). IWPR also provides state-by-state wage data on Femstats, a section of its website, in spreadsheet form.

IWPR's research has also linked trends in the wage gap to policy developments, changes in the economy, and ongoing changes in women's lives. Such trends as later marriage, reduced fertility, gains in education, the growth of low-wage jobs and contingent work in the U.S. economy, and changes in the minimum wage, equal employment opportunity enforcement, and collective bargaining all affect women's opportunities in the labor market, including their labor force participation and the amount of sex segregation they face in employment. IWPR's studies have ranged from detailed examinations of specific industries to analyses of trends affecting the entire economy. Recently, IWPR has focused on the different experiences of women and men in job loss and recovery.

### The Great Recession and Recovery

The Great Recession, though devastating across the board for the U.S. economy, has affected women and men very differently both during the recession and since, during the long recovery. IWPR highlights these trends and differences in a variety of ways, producing both larger research studies of labor market experiences as well as quick digestible snapshots of employment trends that have garnered substantial public interest and informed policymakers and advocates. An IWPR briefing paper published in 2010, "Women and Men's Employment and Unemployment in the Great Recession" (#2), provided insight on changes in employment among women and men that expanded upon the

focus on men's job loss that was being so heavily discussed in the popular press. In a major study comparing the Great Recession to all recessions in the past several decades, the analysis revealed that the Great Recession was the first in the United States in many decades in which women workers lost a sizeable number of jobs. In fact, the increase in the number of unemployed women since the start of the Great Recession was larger than that experienced by men in any previous recession since the 1930s, and, after experiencing job loss, women and men were spending similar lengths of time unemployed and looking for work.

IWPR's work on employment and unemployment in the Great Recession and recovery also includes quick turnaround pieces that allow policymakers and advocates to

track monthly jobs trends with a gendered analysis. A widely-cited IWPR Quick Figures (#3) was designed by Study Director Jeffrey Hayes, Ph.D., to visually capture differences in the way the 2007-2009 recession was affecting women's and men's job loss and recovery. It shows that the timing of the recession was earlier for men, who experienced the vast majority of job loss early on, and later for women, who continued to lose jobs for several months after men had started to regain them. When the Bureau of Labor Statistics releases the national unemployment data on the first Friday of each month, the news media and Congressional offices look for IWPR's Quick Figures for a gendered analysis of these data.

In 2012, IWPR issued a briefing paper focused exclusively on the recovery years, comparing the recoveries of the Great Recession and prior recession in 2001 (#4). This analysis found that while both women and men were beginning to regain jobs lost during the recession, with women's employment finally speeding up after two years of the recovery, large cuts to public sector employment hit women particularly hard in contrast with the past 2001 experience.

In addition to tracking labor market trends since the Great Recession, IWPR has been contributing to policy discussions and informing policymakers on proposed ways to accelerate the country's economic recovery. IWPR's Heidi Hartmann collaborated with other members of the Womens Scholars Forum to put forth a series of specific "Recommendations for Improving Women's Employment in The Recovery" (#5) in 2011. These recommendations included a wide array of tools through which to boost women's employment, including federal transfers to state and local governments, providing increased funding for child care subsidies, expansion of unemployment insurance benefits for workers who have been forced to reduce their work hours for economic and noneconomic reasons, and expanding and supporting quality job creation in human infrastructure and care occupations, which are predominantly held by women. The recommendations formed the basis for a memo sent to the Director of the National Economic Council for consideration by the White House in developing the proposed American Jobs Act, and were cited by the Administration's materials and fact sheets surrounding President Barack Obama's speech on jobs and the economy on September 9, 2011.

IWPR also took a closer look at the impact of the Great

Recession in three specific areas of the country: Southwestern Pennsylvania (#6; 2010), Milwaukee, Wisconsin (#7; 2011), and the state of Pennsylvania (#8; 2012). The Milwaukee briefing paper found that single mothers head over two-thirds of the households in poverty. The overall number of people in poverty in Milwaukee alone increased by 16,500 due to the recession, "yet while rates of unemployment for men have fallen in both Milwaukee MSA and Wisconsin during the last year, there has been no reduction in the rates of unemployment for women" (#7, p. 2) which remained in the double-digit percentages.

Pennsylvania faces a similar situation. In the state of Pennsylvania, women have proportionally gained back fewer jobs than women nationally: "by the end of 2011 women had only regained 12 percent of their total job losses compared with men who had regained 62 percent of their recession job losses" (#8, p. 3). In addition, Pennsylvania mirrors Milwaukee in the prevalence of poverty among households headed by single mothers; in both areas, just over 40 percent of single woman-headed households are in poverty. These studies are intended to explicate the situation in each area in order to provide a reliable, quantitative platform for state policy. They suggest a need for state-funded work training programs, subsidized employment, and affordable childcare to aid in improving economic outcomes in these areas.

## **Closing the Wage Gap**

IWPR's 1995 briefing paper (#9) (updated in 1997, #10), "The Wage Gap: Women's and Men's Earnings," provides a comprehensive look at the wage gap as it varies by race and ethnicity, education, occupation, and age, as well as across time. It shows that the wage gap between women and men, which had remained virtually constant from 1955 through the 1970s at about 40 percent, began to decline in the 1980s, as the ratio of women's annual earnings to men's for full-time year-round workers increased gradually over the 1980s and 1990s (reaching 72 percent in 1994 for a wage gap of 28 percent). The study also reveals that nearly three-quarters of the reduction in the gender wage gap was due to the decline in the real earnings of men, and only one-quarter to rising real wages for women. To put it another way, the study shows that if men's annual earnings had remained at their 1979 levels in real terms, the female-male earnings

ratio would have risen to only 63 percent rather than 72 percent from the 60-percent baseline. Subsequent fact sheets show that the annual earnings ratio reached a peak of 77 percent in 2001, 2009, and again in 2011, reflecting a general slowdown in the rate of progress in closing the wage gap.

An analysis released by IWPR in 2011 to honor the 100th Anniversary of International Women’s Day projected that it would take until 2056 for women and men’s earnings to reach pay parity if the wage gap continues to close at the same pace it has for the last fifty years (#11). IWPR’s most recent update of this projection, based on earnings trends between 1960 and 2011, finds that pay equity has become one year more remote, pushed to 2057 (#12).

The wage gap, of course, is not due to only one factor. IWPR’s research has highlighted a number of factors that contribute to the narrowing of the wage gap and women’s economic advancement, including occupational integration, proactive workforce development, increased unionization, higher minimum wages, and more effective enforcement of anti-discrimination laws. IWPR research also recommends tackling the elimination of the undervaluation of work traditionally done by women.

## **The Undervaluation of Women’s Work**

Just months after its founding, IWPR teamed up with the National Committee on Pay Equity (NCPE) to produce “OPM Comparable Worth/Pay Equity Study Overstates Women’s Progress in Federal Workforce” (#13). The briefing paper highlights the flawed analysis and assessment of earnings data on comparable worth/pay equity in the federal workforce presented in a report produced by the Office of Personnel Management (OPM). OPM’s report, *Comparable Worth for Federal Jobs: A Wrong Turn off the Road Toward Pay Equity and Women’s Career Advancement* (OPM Doc. 149-40-3, September 1987), argues that comparable worth is not necessary in the federal sector because of women’s already-strong employment status. The OPM report also argues that comparable worth, if implemented, would harm some women, slow women’s progress overall, and prove so unwieldy that it could reduce efficiency and productivity. IWPR researchers showed that the OPM analysis was flawed in several ways. Despite some gains in non-traditional occupations, the vast majority of women in the federal workforce were concentrated in the lowest-paying salary grades, GS 1-8. Researchers

also found that women’s individual characteristics (education, experience, and labor force commitment) explained no more than half the wage gap—suggesting that the other half was due to undervaluation of jobs predominantly held by women, that is, women with those same characteristics would have earned more in the federal civil service had they not been concentrated in female-dominated jobs and pay grades—they would have earned similarly to men.

In 1989, with 20 states having implemented programs to raise the wages of workers in female-dominated job classes in their state civil services, IWPR saw an opportunity to expand its work on pay equity. In collaboration with the Urban Institute, and with funding from the Ford Foundation, IWPR embarked on a project to examine how much difference these pay equity programs made for women. The study, “Pay Equity and Women’s Wage Increases: Success in the States, A Model for the Nation” (#14; 1994), finds that all 20 states were successful in narrowing the female/male wage gap without substantial negative effects, such as decreased employment. Further, the extent to which the states succeeded depended on many factors, including how much money was spent, the proportion of women affected, and the standard to which female wages were raised. Programs that focused on funding wage increases for employees in female-dominated job classes and that spread the reform over a longer period of time were more likely to raise women’s wages with significantly smaller disruptions to employment. Overall, progress was made by most of the 20 states toward raising women’s wages to levels that are freer from discrimination or cultural devaluation.

In 1989, IWPR published *High Skill and Low Pay: The Economics of Childcare Work* (#15), which brought to light the disparities between skill level and pay that child care workers face. This report finds that while child care workers have above average education levels, their wages were about 55 percent of what an average worker earned and are even paid poorly compared to women with similar education levels in other female-dominated occupations. This low pay has led to high turnover rates and an overall negative effect on the quality of childcare. The report finds that certain settings, such as schools, government, or unionized workplaces, are associated with higher wages and longer job tenure and, therefore, recommends the organization or unionization of child care professionals as one way to increase pay and decrease turnover. Public

subsidies are also mentioned as a way to increase wages without increasing the cost of child care for parents. IWPR next addressed this issue in its 2002 report, *Building a Stronger Child Care Workforce: A Review of Studies of the Effectiveness of Public Compensation Initiatives* (#16), which reviews the preliminary findings on the implementation and early effects of publicly supported compensation initiatives on the child care workforce. While programs varied in their approach to compensation, the report finds that not only were income and education increased, there were greater feelings of professionalism and higher staff morale as well as an increase in the quality of the applicant pool, all of which lead to decreased turnover.

## **Low Pay as a Gender Issue**

Also in its early years, IWPR released *Low-Wage Jobs and Workers: Trends and Options for Change* (#17; 1989), a report funded by the U. S. Department of Labor that focuses on the prevalence of low-wage employment among women and minorities, as well as the factors that decrease the risks of low-wage work and increase the opportunity for higher-wage employment. The report finds that low-wage employment increased from 1975 through 1984 as a share of all jobs, and that the increase in low-wage work occurred disproportionately among women (especially mothers) and people of color. The researchers argue that race and gender discrimination must be included in explaining disparities in the distribution of low-wage work, especially because women of color are four times more likely, white women three times more likely, and men of color 1.6 times more likely than white men to be low-wage workers, when controlling for factors such as the workers' human capital (i.e. education and work experience) and structural differences in jobs and industries (i.e. firm size and occupation).

Several times over the years, IWPR has returned to the issue of low-wage work, focusing on increasing the legislated minimum wage, strengthening equal employment opportunity policy enforcement and collective bargaining, and implementing pay equity/comparable worth approaches. For a chapter titled "Defining and Characterizing the Low-Wage Labor Market," which was included in a volume published by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services in 2000 (#18), IWPR researchers collaborated with a peer research organization, the Eco-

nomics Policy Institute (EPI), to provide information on the composition and experiences of the low-wage workforce. Researchers found that women and people of color were disproportionately represented within this group; the report also concluded that other societal and economic trends, such as the long-term decline in real wages and educational upgrading of the workforce, were contributing to the persistence of economic instability for low-wage workers even though workers are more educated than ever overall.

IWPR's work on the minimum wage and other labor market interventions provided insight on the potential impacts and benefits of certain policies on the vulnerable low-wage segment of the workforce. An IWPR Research-in-Brief (RIB) published in 1997, "How Women Can Earn a Living Wage: The Effects of Pay Equity Remedies and a Higher Minimum Wage" (#19), examines the potential impacts of two labor market reforms, a proposed federal comparable worth policy and a recently-legislated increase in the federal minimum wage to \$5.15 per hour, and found significant benefits for women and their families. The implementation of a federal pay equity/comparable worth policy was projected to increase the hourly wages of women, as well as men, in women's jobs and narrow the gender wage ratio by nearly 14 percent, effectively achieving the same narrowing of the gender wage gap that took a decade to occur in the years prior to the publication of the research. Both policies were projected to decrease women's poverty substantially. Two years later, as the U.S. Congress considered the next increase of the federal minimum wage to \$6.15 per hour, IWPR again partnered with EPI to examine the impact of minimum wage increases on employment and found that following the 1997 increase, employment rates of low-wage workers, especially among single mothers, increased, challenging the common wisdom that raising the minimum wage causes job loss (#20).

IWPR also studied temporary work for the Department of Labor's Commission on Workforce Quality and Labor Market Efficiency, collaborating with June Lapidus (now at Roosevelt University). This report was included in a volume published by the Department of Labor in 1989, *Investing in People: A Strategy to Address America's Workforce Crisis* (#21), and examined the demographics and other characteristics of the contingent workforce and the firms that employ them, finding that women are disproportionately hired as

temporary employees. These positions, which tend to pay less and tend not to offer important fringe benefits, such as access to group health insurance and retirement plans, leave these workers vulnerable and economically insecure.

Partnering with EPI again, IWPR examined the broader phenomenon of contingent work and identified some alarming trends about changes in the workforce, that the contingent or temporary workforce was growing more rapidly than overall employment and that most of the growth in contingent employment occurred among workers who would have chosen full-time employment instead, if it had been available to them. This report, *Contingent Work: A Chart Book on Part-Time and Temporary Employment* (#22; 1991) provides an overview of these trends and the nature of temporary employment and also makes policy recommendations for improving job and income security for contingent workers through regulation of temporary work and the firms that employ these workers as well as the expansion and strengthening of the safety net for contingent workers.

## **The Gender Wage Gap as a Family Issue**

In 1999, IWPR worked on a joint research project with the AFL-CIO to combine three strands of investigation: low pay, the gender wage gap, and the undervaluation of typical female work. The study, *Equal Pay for Working Families* (#23), reveals that both men and women face serious inequity when they work in female-dominated jobs, defined in the study as jobs in which women are 70 percent or more of the workers. It shows that the 25.6 million women who work in these jobs lose an average of \$3,446 per year, and the 4.0 million men who work in the predominately female occupations lose an average of \$6,259 each year for a whopping \$114 billion loss (in 1999 dollars) for women and men in predominately-female jobs. The project also finds that paying working women the wages of comparably-educated men would increase family incomes substantially and cut poverty rates by at least half for families with a working woman. This report has been widely cited; the estimates were updated in 2008 and made available to the presidential campaigns. Leaders from the U.S. DOL frequently cite IWPR's findings to show how powerful a poverty reduction tool eliminating discrimina-

tion against women would be, and, therefore, how important it is to eradicate wage discrimination against women.

## **The Lifetime Wage Gap**

In one of its most widely quoted and cited studies, *Still a Man's Labor Market: The Long-Term Earnings Gap* (#24), authors Stephen J. Rose (now at the Georgetown University Center on Education and the Workforce) and IWPR's Heidi Hartmann, used 15 years of data from a longitudinal study, the Panel Study of Income Dynamics, to examine gender differences in earnings and present the gender wage gap in a new way. The study, released in 2004, shows that women earned 38 percent of what men earned across the 15 years, or only 38 cents for every dollar men earned, leaving a gap of 62 cents per male dollar earned. This figure is less than half of the more conventional measure of the pay gap based on year-round earnings of full-time workers for a single year, which stood at 23 percent, or 77 cents for every male dollar earned. The new measure includes not only the fact that women earn less per hour worked than men but also work fewer hours than men (on average). The conventional measure compares only those women and men who work full-time year-round, which leaves about half of women workers out of the comparison. The study finds that only 26 percent of women worked full-time all 15 years, and that women's reduced work hours are related to marriage and childbearing. Showing that the gender wage gap cumulates across the lifetime illustrates the importance of the continued unequal division of family labor, with women reducing their time in the labor market to perform family work. This common domestic division of labor means that women are less likely than men to have retirement pensions, have smaller benefits when they do have them, have smaller Social Security benefits than men, and are decidedly disadvantaged in the labor market should they become divorced, since their reduced work experience will lower their wages. In absolute terms, these researchers found that the average woman earned only \$273,592 across a 15-year period, while the average man earned \$722,693, representing a career earnings gap for women of \$449,101.

# Workforce Development and Occupational Segregation

## Attacking Gender-Based Segregation

Several IWPR studies demonstrate the link between women's lower wages and the lack of proactive career counseling. Welfare reform in the late 1990s prioritized work and reduced women's access to vocational training. IWPR's 2002 report, *Working First but Working Poor: The Need for Education and Training Following Welfare Reform* (#25), a joint project with the NOW Legal Defense Fund (now Legal Momentum) summarizes results from interviews with welfare case workers, vocational counselors, women welfare recipients, and low-income women and men in seven cities. The report finds that the large majority of women coming for counseling were channeled into traditional (and lower-paying) female jobs; yet when shown a list of traditional male jobs (with higher median earnings) almost two-thirds of women said they would have considered these. A decade later, IWPR's briefing paper, "The Workforce Investment Act and Women's Progress: Does WIA-Funded Training Reinforce Sex Segregation in the Labor Market and the Gender Wage Gap?" (#26) quantifies the impact of such traditional job-channeling on the gender wage gap. The briefing paper finds average women's earnings, following services funded by WIA (Workforce Investment Act), the federal program that provides job training resources to the states, were close to \$1,500 less per quarter than those of their male counterparts. The gender wage gap between women and men who had received WIA services was no less than the gender wage gap among all women and men, arguably pointing to a failure of the WIA system to meet its mandate of helping women reach economic self-sufficiency. As a result of the study, IWPR's study director Ariane Hegewisch was invited to speak on a panel for the New York State Legislature Commission on Skills Development and Career Education's roundtable on "Improving Employment Training Opportunities for Women in New York State" on October 11, 2011. This proceeding subsequently led to the enactment of S6429A-2011, a law requiring the New York State Department of Labor to provide guidance and assistance to state and local workforce training boards and other eligible participants to improve services and training for

women to qualify them for higher paying jobs and careers.

A 2010 Briefing Paper, "Separate and Not Equal? Gender Segregation in the Labor Market and the Gender Wage Gap" (#27), examines the overall gender segregation trends in the U.S. labor market between 1973 and 2009, revealing that, after a considerable move towards more gender-integrated occupations in the 1970s and 1980s, progress stalled from the mid 1990s onwards for all age groups, including younger women. The analysis shows that, at each of three levels of skill and education (low, medium, and high), female-dominated occupations pay less than male-dominated ones, most strongly so at college-level occupations. State-by-state analysis of the correlation between occupational segregation and the gender wage gap, submitted in testimony (#28) for a hearing of the New York State Assembly on "Pay Equity in the State of New York" in 2011, shows that the gender wage gap is widest in the state with the highest level of occupational segregation (Wyoming) and lowest in Washington, DC, where occupational segregation is also the lowest. The testimony argues that this pattern should be of concern to policymakers because occupational segregation is not only a major cause of the wage gap, it is also inefficient economically, preventing able people from moving into occupations where they could perform well and that would satisfy them more than the ones open to them. An updated version of the briefing paper will appear in the *Handbook of Research on Gender and Economic Life* in 2013 (#29).

IWPR's report, *Quality Employment for Women in the Green Economy* (#30), challenges the lack of proactive workforce development from another direction. The report shows that green jobs are better jobs for women, with higher earnings and a lower gender wage gap than in the overall economy in almost all states. Yet it also highlights that women are less likely than men to have access to such good green jobs, particularly to the middle skill technical occupations that are most likely to grow as a result of investments responsive to increased awareness of environmental concerns. IWPR's review of more than 40 state-level workforce reports on the potential of green jobs finds the great majority of states fail to note, let alone address as a policy concern, the stark underrepresentation of women in high-paying and growing green job fields.

## The Role of Unions in Increasing Women's Employment Opportunities

In one of IWPR's earliest studies on the wages of child care workers, IWPR researchers noted how instrumental unions are in raising wages of women workers (#15). Thereafter, IWPR looked for union effects in most of its studies. A 1994 report, *What do Unions do for Women* (#31), shows that unions not only increase wages more than they do for men (once other factors thought to affect wages are taken into account), but that they also lengthen job tenure, increase the likelihood of receiving fringe benefits, and generally improve families' living standards. Additional studies for AFSCME (#32; 1990), the Communication Workers of America (#33 and #34, 1989; #35, 1992; #36, 1995; #37, 2006; and #38, 2011), and the United Food and Commercial Workers International Union (#39; 2001) explore the growth of women's employment in unionized jobs and the increased opportunity for earning family sustaining wages that unions provide to women workers in public sector clerical work, telecommunications, and the retail food service industry. Unionized jobs support many single mothers and their children well above the poverty level.

IWPR's 2006 study, *Solving the Nursing Shortage Through Higher Wages* (#40), is the most comprehensive occupational study IWPR has done of the effect of unions on women's employment opportunities. IWPR's analysis points to collusion between hospitals as a likely cause of depressed nurse wages in spite of a "nursing shortage." The study, supported by the SEIU, examines how nurses' pay and working conditions affect hospitals' ability to meet their staffing needs, arguing that most analyses of the nurse workforce overlook the critical link between pay and nurse supply. While most economists view the link between wages and the number of workers seeking jobs as the key driver in labor markets, of the 49 studies of the nursing shortage examined for the research, only 11 propose increasing wages in order to attract more nurses. The study findings helped make the case for thousands of nurses in Albany when Northeast Health agreed to a \$1.25 million settlement to raise the wages of nurses after SEIU filed a law suit alleging collusion. The IWPR study also successfully demonstrates that unions raise nurses' pay and improve staffing ratios, thereby improving their working conditions and reducing turnover. In exact figures, nurses who are union members enjoy a

13-percent wage boost and nurse/patient ratios are 18 percent higher in the most unionized cities as compared to cities with the lowest levels of nurse unionization.

IWPR's 2006 analysis of employment and earnings for women and minorities in the media and communications industry, with support from BellSouth, likewise finds a clear earnings advantage for women and minorities in unionized communications jobs. The study, *Making the Right Call: Jobs and Diversity in the Communications and Media Sector* (#37), also notes the decline of higher quality jobs as a result of deregulation of the industry and a concomitant loss of well-paid jobs for women in some nontraditional occupations for women, such as line installer. The wired telecommunications sector has traditionally provided excellent opportunities for African Americans, Hispanics, and women nonsupervisory workers. The jobs within this industry tend to provide higher earnings, more full-time work, and greater union representation. IWPR explored the role of unions in this sector in a 2011 fact sheet, "The Union Advantage in Wireline Telecommunications for African Americans, Hispanics, and Women" (#38). The study found that unions are integral to ensuring that job opportunities in this sector are good-quality jobs. In the telecommunications sector, employees covered by union contracts earn substantially more than those not covered.

While women are a growing share of union members, they tend to lag behind in leadership positions. With support from the Berger Marks Foundation, IWPR has published two guides to help encourage women's engagement and advancement in their unions: *I Knew I Could Do This Work: Seven Strategies That Promote Women's Activism and Leadership in Unions* (#41; 2007) and *The Next Generation: A Handbook for Mentoring Future Union Leaders* (#42; 2012). The United Food and Commercial Workers International Union (UFCW) distributed *I Knew I Could Do This Work* to more than 150 international advisory board and executive council members to educate union organizers and to advocate women's leadership within the union. The study also inspired UFCW, in August 2008, to formally recognize and honor IWPR for "its dedicated services and commitment to working families and their communities." The *Next Generation* handbook has generated substantial interest in mentoring among union leaders and members; it has been distributed and discussed at numerous conferences and meetings, including those organized by the

American Federation of Teachers (AFT), the AFL-CIO, the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers (IBEW), the Labor Council for Latin American Advancement, and the United Association for Labor Education (UALE).

## Highlighting the Role of Enforcement of Anti-Discrimination Laws

In 1991, IWPR staff presented the lead testimony documenting continued discrimination against women in the labor market before the House of Representatives Committee on Education and Labor regarding the proposed Civil Rights Act of 1991, later signed into law (#43). The Act improves remedies for federal race, sex, and national origin discrimination. In her testimony, Dr. Heidi Hartmann, with Dr. Roberta Spalter-Roth, cited social science research to describe the importance of women's earnings for family survival, the continued existence of wage and job discrimination, and the effectiveness of civil rights and anti-discrimination policies. Preliminary calculations by IWPR suggest that if women, as well as blacks, are included in the calculation, the Gross National Product (GNP) would be about 15 percent higher. The researchers illustrated that labor market barriers that prevent the full and productive employment of women and minorities are therefore damaging to U.S. economic growth. They also noted that legal remedies, when implemented and enforced, are successful methods for overcoming these barriers and have positive effects on decreasing job segregation and increasing women's employment, job tenure, and wages.

In addition to shedding light on the potential impacts of proposed anti-discrimination laws and policies, IWPR has also provided information on the impacts of affirmative action policies and the enforcement of Title VII of the Civil Rights Act and proposed new interventions for consideration by policymakers. In 1993, IWPR produced a report, *The Impact of the Glass Ceiling and Structural Change on Minorities and Women* (#44), to provide a comprehensive review of existing literature, expert opinion, and published and unpublished data on women and people of color in management occupations and the professions. Some of the policy recommendations that emerged from this work include improving access to higher education, introducing and expanding new "family-friendly" policies

for the workplace, and monitoring the use of independent contractors and temporary workers. This report, requested by the U.S. Department of Labor's Glass Ceiling Commission was widely disseminated. A 1996 briefing paper (#45) provided an overview of research on the impacts of affirmative action and Title VII through a review of empirical studies and found that while the passage of these policies is important and had the desired effects of increasing opportunities for women and minorities, continued emphasis on enforcement and compliance, as well as strong ongoing government action, is critical to speed up the slow progress of women and people of color in the labor force.

Beginning in 2006, IWPR and the WAGE Project undertook a research project on the impact of sex discrimination litigation on organizational policies in private firms and public agencies that were subject to charges of sex and/or race discrimination and which had ended in a consent decree (defined as a negotiated and court-supervised pre-trial settlement). In employment discrimination cases, these consent decrees typically include 'injunctive relief' in the form of changes to human resource management policies and practices. The IWPR report, *Ending Sex and Race Discrimination at Work: Legal Interventions that Push the Envelope* (#46; 2011), is based on the analysis of more than 500 consent decrees that were negotiated by the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC), the U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ), or private law firms; and four case studies of the negotiation and implementation of sex discrimination consent decrees, including two concerned with pay discrimination and two with sexual harassment. The study finds that injunctive relief is a critical but underutilized feature of Title VII, and that, while private class action consent decrees typically are informed by the latest research on organizational science, consent decrees negotiated by the EEOC and the DOJ typically adopted a much more limited approach. Following the release of the report, the Workplace Class Action blog stated, "the IWPR report should be required reading for any corporate counsel facing workplace class action litigation...employers should expect plaintiff's lawyers to view this report as a play book on the specific injunctive relief which they should request in any settlement of an employment discrimination class action." Furthermore, the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) General Counsel, the Chair of the EEOC, and the



Director of the Office for Federal Contract Compliance Programs requested meetings with IWPR staff to discuss the report. Moreover, the report formed the basis for an amicus brief filed by IWPR in January 2011 in the *Walmart Stores, Inc. vs. Dukes et al.* Supreme Court case (#47).

The research on legal cases claiming pay discrimination shows the type of employment practices that perpetuate the gender wage gap. IWPR's 2011 fact sheet, "Pay Secrecy and Wage Discrimination" (#48), based on an original survey of 2,700 Americans, highlights why pay discrimination cases are relatively rare: although the Equal Pay Act of 1963 and Title VII of the Civil Rights Act prohibit discrimination in all aspects of compensation, in practice, employer policies regarding pay secrecy, including threat of retaliation, make it difficult for women to discover pay discrimination and effectively use these rights.

## Conclusion

IWPR's research has not only highlighted gender disparities in compensation, employment, and work experi-

ences, but continues to inform the national debate on these issues and explore ways to eradicate them. On the issue of the gender wage gap, for instance, in 2012, following a disagreement between political commentators Alex Castellanos and Rachel Maddow on NBC's Meet the Press, during which Mr. Castellanos denied that a gender wage gap existed, The Rachel Maddow Show invited IWPR President Dr. Heidi Hartmann to be interviewed by Dr. Maddow to provide the public with data and facts on the gender wage gap. Dr. Maddow recognized on the show that IWPR has "done some of the most important and most highly publicized work on this issue."

With the increase in women's participation in the labor force over the last decades and the revitalized discourse on women's economic advancement and changing roles in society, IWPR's work on issues such as sex segregation in the workforce, minimum wage and anti-discrimination policy, unionization, and industry-specific trends in employment and advancement of women is sure to expand in coming years.

**This Research-in-Brief is one in a series of publications highlighting IWPR's most significant research contributions to policy issues affecting women across IWPR's twenty-five year history.**

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