

wage-gap issue, cautions against jumping to that conclusion. "Before you label it as pure discrimination," she says, "remember there are a lot of things that we can't take into consideration." Statistics are blunt instruments that can't account for a woman's private choices, and figuring out how big a role those nuances play requires a close understanding of real people and situations.

LINDA GALESSIERE, A PARTNER AT the Toronto law firm McLean & Kerr LLP, knows that modern-day discrimination is much more subtle than Sunshine girls on office walls or men-only company golf tournaments. While working at another firm, Galessiere witnessed a disturbing pattern: When lawyers came up for partnership, male candidates would be invited to become equity partners, or full-owner participants in the firm, while the females were often slotted into income partnerships, a lesser designation.

Most of the time no explanation was offered, but Galessiere recalls that she often heard a woman lawyer wasn't enough of a "rainmaker," someone who brings in lucrative clients. That may have been true in some cases, she agrees, "but management never trained or expected women associates to *become* rainmakers. It was a self-fulfilling prophecy." Women lawyers were less likely to be introduced to clients, and if they were brought to client meetings, they'd often be the ones asked by senior lawyers to make photocopies.

In recent years, study after study has borne out the existence of stereotypes (held, interestingly, by both genders) about women's productivity and management potential. One 2006 survey of executives by Catalyst, an organization devoted to advancing women in business, found that women who >



Sex at work

In her new book, *The Sexual Paradox: Extreme Men, Gifted Women and the Real Gender Gap*, the Montreal psychologist Susan Pinker reveals how biological differences between men and women determine who comes out on top in the workforce. *Chatelaine* asks her why on earth sex still matters.
by Rachel Giese

You say that men and their skills and priorities are considered the standard model in the workplace. How has this affected women?

It's an outcropping of our expectation that, given the opportunity, women will behave exactly like men and choose what men choose. But that's a false, or flawed, comparison.

In fact, the variation among men is much more extreme than that among women. We have, at one end, the male achievers who will work 100 hours a week. Counterbalancing that, we have the bottom rung of performance, which is also more likely to be made up of men.

Women aren't as extreme, with most of them falling into average or high-average performance.

You interviewed several successful women who dropped out of well-paid careers in law, business, politics and science. Why is this happening?

A lot of these environments are

designed for the male life path: You get a job, work like hell for 40 years and then you retire. They're not set up for a woman's life path, where they have a modulated work schedule for a few years when their children are small. Because of the assumption that women are just like men, these work environments haven't made adjustments for women's priorities.

How do these priorities differ?

One example is the field of law. Most law students in the developing world are female; in Canada the rate is 60 percent. But most female lawyers in England, the U.S. and Canada work in the non-profit sector, teaching at universities, or practising law for the government or social-service agencies, whereas more men head to private practices where the financial rewards can be astronomical.

Now, in terms of ability, women might make better lawyers >

for maternity leave or scales back to a shorter week to accommodate family demands: She would still be lumped into this full-time group, pulling down the earnings of the representative working woman.

The 72 percent also doesn't account for experience levels. As a matter of course, women have more work interruptions, usually due to family and child-rearing obligations. As a result, a typical 40-year-old man working full time will have clocked nearly one-third more work hours than his female peer. Doesn't it stand to reason, then, that this man would earn higher wages?

Another statistical quirk is that the 72 percent figure throws executive assistants and chief executives into one pot. This is a problem because women tend to pool in the lower-paying occupations. In 2004, two-thirds of working women were in teaching, health, administrative or sales and service jobs: the so-called pink ghettos. As well, women are less likely to work in

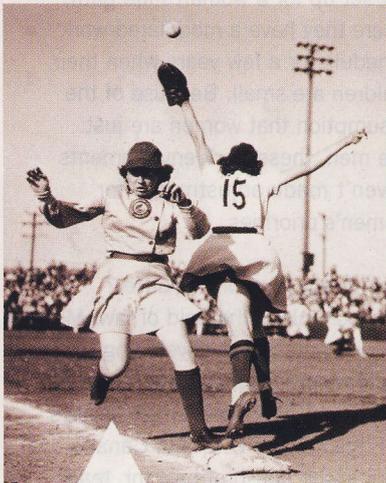
some of the best-paying and high-growth industries, such as computer science, where wages have recently been on the rise (in contrast to education and social work, where wages have dropped).

So, to fine-tune the wage-gap estimate, researchers try to compare the salaries of workers in the same jobs. Once occupation is accounted for, the gap narrows considerably, with women averaging 92 cents for every dollar men earn. Even better, as tracked by this measure, women's pay has slowly risen over the years, suggesting we're closing in on our male colleagues.

A difference of eight cents on the dollar is more of an earnings gully than a chasm, but it nevertheless begs explanation. After all, in many unionized industries, equity is a part of labour agreements. What's more, governments have put considerable effort into outlawing pay discrimination. Back in the 1960s, many provinces had lower minimum wages for women, on the assumption that we

worked for "pin money" to supplement the earnings of male breadwinners. In 1977, the Canadian Human Rights Act made gender discrimination illegal, and several provinces went further to specifically address hiring practices and salaries. The most progressive, such as Ontario and Quebec, now require that most public- and private-sector employers ensure equal pay for comparable jobs, while other jurisdictions, such as P.E.I. and Manitoba, mandate pay-equity legislation for employees of the province.

Why, then, are we still lagging? Wendy Cukier, head of the Diversity Institute in Management and Technology at Toronto's Ryerson University, sees those eight percentage points as a measure of systemic barriers. "I think it's a big mistake to pretend that just because we've made progress, there are no problems," she says. However, Marie Drolet, a senior researcher at StatsCan who's the agency's go-to specialist on the >



1943: Canadians are recruited to play in the All-American Girls Professional Baseball League, while male players are serving overseas.

1951: Women make up 22.3% of the workforce. It's six years after the end of World War II; men are home again but more women opt to continue working.

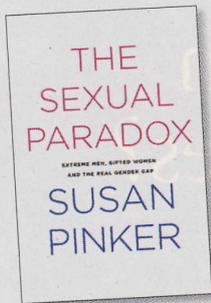
1977: The new Canadian Human Rights Act prohibits sexual discrimination in the workplace and assures women pay equity.

1993: Kim Campbell becomes Canada's first female prime minister when Brian Mulroney announces his retirement from politics.

2002: The Women's Executive Network launches the Top 100 Awards recognizing Canada's most powerful women across the spectrum of professional life.

2007: Rebecca MacDonald, chair of the Energy Savings Income Fund, tops the Profit W100 list of Canada's women entrepreneurs.

(LEFT) TIME & LIFE PICTURES/GETTY IMAGES. (CENTRE) TOM HANSON/CP IMAGES. (RIGHT) CLAY STANG



because they tend to have better social skills, yet their choices lead them away from the most lucrative jobs. It's not so much intentional discrimination, but it's the [culture of the workplace].

Working 80 hours a week isn't compatible with family life, so women tend to opt for something more moderate.

You say that women shouldn't be steered away from traditionally female professions such as nursing and teaching, but those jobs don't pay as well as traditionally male ones in technology, finance or skilled labour. Is that discrimination?

It's true that we don't put a lot of value on the human careers: the caring professions and non-profit work. In a capitalist society, a trader on Wall Street is always going to earn more than a grade-one teacher.

But as a society, if we are seriously committed to wage parity, then we have to look at paying more for the jobs that women choose.

Historically, gender differences have been used to hold women back, by suggesting that we aren't as smart or as tough as men. But you argue that to move forward, we must acknowledge our differences.

I'm not saying all women are from Venus and all men are from Mars. Not only are women not like men, but they're not like each other.

About 30 percent of women are just as career-oriented as men. But unless we address the fact that 60 to 75 percent want to take time off to care for their children, women will always be behind the eight-ball. And so will policy-makers and employers.

Unless the way we think about work changes, we won't have these talented women in the workforce. •

fit the gender stereotype of being empathetic or good collaborators were deemed "too soft" for leadership roles, while those who defied those expectations by showing assertiveness and ambition were labelled excessively tough. What's more, the soft characteristics made women likeable but not respected, while the tough traits produced reverse reactions. The study's subtitle summed up the findings: "Damned if You Do, Doomed if You Don't."

Doubts about a woman's commitment to work, especially if she's a mother, are common. "A manager who hires a woman in her twenties or thirties has to assume she may have kids, and that will lower her productivity," says Linda Duxbury, a professor at Carleton University's Spratt School of Business. The resulting discrimination is often one of omission: The employee isn't praised or given complex, rewarding assignments. "It's all unstated, which makes it so much more difficult to address," she says.

WHEN SALINA CROSS CONFRONTED

her (male) boss about the pay gap with her male colleague, her boss replied with a variety of explanations – none of them entirely satisfactory. She was told he'd been with the company longer, but surely that couldn't justify such a large difference, she thought. She also found out that her commissions had been capped, while her male counterpart had no ceiling on how much he could earn. Then something her boss said led her to believe he made an all too-common gender-based assumption: that her male colleague was his family's main breadwinner and she wasn't. (In fact, she was a single mother who had separated from her husband and needed every dollar.)

Beth Tyndall, vice president of human resources at the Toronto

technology consulting company Navantis Inc., has seen this type of covert sexism play out again and again. At a previous job, she heard a male HR colleague dismiss a potential internal job candidate with the words, "She wouldn't want that job now because she's a mother."

"There is a myth that when women leave to have kids, they don't return to the work force," says Tyndall, "yet 90 percent do actually return." And this assumption that women will grow less motivated affects how their experience is valued.

Those losses add up over time; for instance, a woman may get a more modest year-end bonus than her male peer because the bonuses are awarded as a percentage of salary, and his salary is often larger. Or she may have to wait longer for a promotion because she has to prove herself, while he gets a raise based on his perceived potential. Evelyn Murphy, president of The WAGE Project Inc., a U.S. advocate against wage discrimination, has estimated that a young woman graduating from high school today will make \$700,000 less than a male graduate over a 35-year career, and a female university grad will earn \$1.2 million less than her male peer.

Such penalties hit working-class women especially hard. Barbara Annis, a Canadian based in New York who advises companies on gender issues, says that even managers who support promoting women often feel no compunction about underpaying female staff on the front lines. She recalls one senior manager saying, "I love the women. They work so much harder, they're so much more loyal and I get twice the work for half the money."

Pay-equity legislation was supposed to eliminate such practices. However, Michael Baker, a University of Toronto economics >