

WOMEN'S VU

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Comparable worth: hot issue of the 80's

Charlotte Frankel

Comparable worth is the hot issue of the 80's. To throw an analog on the fire (pun intended), pay equity is about apples and apples whereas comparable worth deals with apples and oranges.

Equal pay for equal work is covered by the Equal Pay Act of 1963 and Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, which defines discrimination. The Equal Pay Act forbids employers from differential payment of men and women if their jobs require equal skill, effort, and responsibility. Comparable worth refers to the principle of paying persons the same salary for *different* jobs which are evaluated as being *equally valuable* to the employer.

Comparable worth has arisen as a result of sex segregation in employment. Women are socialized into traditional female occupations such as teaching, clerical work, nursing, social work, among others, which are less well paid than occupations dominated by men. In spite of the great increase in women's labor force participation, there is greater sex segregation than twenty years ago, when fewer women were gainfully employed.

There are conflicting predictions on whether the entry of men into pink collar fields will raise the wage scale. Some experts forecast that wages will rise because men will demand higher pay; others conclude that men and women will have lower wages in women-dominated fields.

In his book, *A Dialogue on Comparable Worth*, Michael Evan Gold quotes Leviticus on the comparable worth of men and women: "And the Lord spoke unto Moses, saying, Speak unto the children of Israel and say unto them: When a man shall utter a vow of persons unto the Lord, according to thy valuation, then thy valuation for the male from 20 years old even unto 60 years old, even thy valuation shall be 50 shekels of silver, after the shekel of the sanctuary. And if it be a female, then thy valuation shall be 30 shekels." Little has changed over the millennia, Gold adds.

It would seem so. Women working full time in 1987 had earnings that were seventy percent of men's, an increase of one percent over the previous year. This increase is attributed to younger women going into non-traditional jobs.

A recent study, *The American Woman, 1987-88, A Report in Depth*, revealed that women college graduates who work full time earn little more than male high school dropouts: \$20,257 versus \$19,120. The average salary for male college graduates is \$31,487.

Some courts have held that Title VII can be interpreted to prohibit sex discrimination in compensation for jobs which are comparable, but unequal, in terms of skill, effort and responsibility. Other courts have ruled that the exceptions for sex-based wage differentials contained in the Equal Pay Act bar Title VII sex bias claims of unequal pay for unequal, but comparable, work.

The U.S. Supreme Court, while not ruling on the comparable work theory, has made it clear that individuals may bring sex discrimination in compensation claims under Title VII even though no member of the opposite sex performs "equal work" as interpreted under the Equal Pay Act.

The 1979 ruling in the case of *Gunther v. the County of Washington* established a legal precedent which future comparable worth cases may follow. A group of Washington jail matrons filed suit charging sex discrimination because they were paid less than male prison guards. The duties each performed were different but comparable in nature. The matrons lost their case and their jobs, but Judge Thomas Tang's ruling set a legal precedent which future comparable worth cases may follow. The judge ruled: "If we were to limit Title VII protection against sexual discrimination compensation practices to those covered by the Equal Pay Act, we would, in effect, insulate other equally harmful discriminatory practices from review." The case went to the Supreme Court, which in 1981 handed down the ruling that the provisions of Title VII and of the Equal Pay Act had to be read together to look at more than just equal jobs to include substantially similar jobs.

A notable case in terms of setting the tone of legal interpretation was *AFSCME v. State of Washington* heard in the District Court of Washington in 1983. It stated that because the state had done a comparable worth study but had not properly implemented it, it was discriminating against women. However, the ruling was overturned by the appellate court.

The federal Economic Equity Act of 1987 is pending before Congress. The legislation con-

Women who
work a 40-hour
week...



tains seventeen separate provisions designed to improve women's economic status.

According to *Women's Times*, legislation to study pay equity in the United States government continues to move with "glacial speed" and is still in committee.

The mechanisms for implementing comparable worth begins with the commission of a study conducted by a consultant who analyzes job descriptions and weighs them numerically.

Comparable worth has its critics. One of these is Vanderbilt Professor Kathryn Anderson, department of Economics, who says, "I don't see how the appropriate value of the job can be objectively calculated outside of using market mechanism.... In the studies I've seen, I have a lot of questions about the way the rates were estimated and placed onto the factors in the job. I think there are a lot of unmeasurable factors about jobs that we would never be able to control in determining the appropriate valuation."

At Vanderbilt, the Opportunity Development Center (ODC) is responsible for keeping University personnel informed of the institution's obligations under federal law, which includes fair employment practices and programs. Pat Pierce, Director of that office says, "ODC is very sensitive to issues of pay equity. In cooperation with Personnel Services periodic reviews of University job descriptions and salary surveys are conducted."

The last word comes from Eleanor Holmes Norton, former chair of the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission: "Comparable worth is the most difficult issue that has arisen under Title VII and ultimately it could have the same effect on the nation as school desegregation did in the 1950s."

An alumna of Vanderbilt, Charlotte Frankel is a freelance writer. ■

Spring Break Trip

Julia Schultz, Eng. 1

The Spring Break advertisement might have read:

"Going fast. All expense-paid trip to the grey beaches of the Rio Grande. Open air, aluminum and cement condos in one of the most popular parts of Mexico. Have to see to believe."

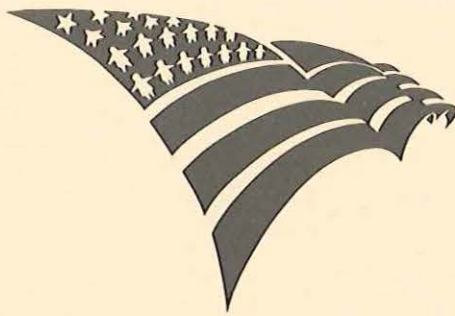
Although many college students might pass up this opportunity for the sunny beaches of Miami, fifteen other Vanderbilt students and I saw it as an experience which we could not afford to miss. The Alternative Spring Break Program offered us the chance not to lounge in the golden Mexican sun but to work in an impoverished colonia of Juarez.

We repaired the exterior of a service-church (in Spanish, "serviglesia") in the colonia, a neighborhood of shanties built on government plots. The service-church is part of a compound consisting of a church, a free clinic, and a one-room kindergarten, all sponsored by a nonprofit Presbyterian Organization, Project Verdad (the Spanish word for "truth"). It was our goal to work with Project Verdad at this site, repainting and finishing the church and encouraging the families in the community to come to the compound by interacting with their children.

The project aims to educate the community in basic health care, provide rudimentary medical treatment, and teach kindergarten to those who want to learn. Our physical work during the vacation helped to bridge the gap between the compound and neighborhood.

Ironically, during this week the compound became a vacation spot of sorts to those in the neighborhood. Adults and wide-eyed children watched attentively as we students created a playground, built the ceiling for the sanctuary, and danced to American music. They watched as we cleaned after a strenuous day, tasted the delicious food prepared by Mexican women, and struggled to complete Spanish sentences. We also exchanged tidbits of information about our cultures.

We were an oasis of hope and curiosity in the midst of a dry, dusty future. But, likewise, that impoverished, crumbling community was a true vacation for us. It was a retreat from an oftentimes materialistic world to one sustained not with superfluous possessions but with sweet sincerity and raw perseverance. It offered us a chance to delve into the core of human nature, to put aside money and ethnocentrism in order to arrive at—just as the name of Project Verdad implies—truth.



Women and the Constitution: A Bicentennial Perspective

Claudia Deane, A&S 4

The swarm of delegates made up of women from across the nation moved into the Grand Ballroom of the Atlanta Hilton for the opening session. Girl Scouts marched, choirmasters gestured, television cameras zoomed in, and behind the main platform a huge American flag slowly rose as two former First Ladies and one former President watched. Dramatic? Definitely. But perhaps also appropriate for a convention centered on "Women and the Constitution: A Bicentennial Perspective" held in Atlanta in February. After all, considering their original place in the Constitution (may I say nowhere?), women have a lot to be dramatic about.

There was a feeling of unity in that room, camaraderie. A feeling of stopping to take a breath and pat oneself on the back during a climb. I can't say that as a college student of the eighties (and one of the relatively few students in attendance), I could completely identify with that feeling. While growing up, I was never told I couldn't be whatever I wanted. I see a certain



Christina Cain

Alternative Spring Break Juarez

Constitution, continued

admired aunt telling me I should be a lawyer, or if not, a doctor, since approximately age eight. I have never yet experienced blatant discrimination, but I know it exists. During this weekend, however, I was surprised at how recent many of the actions that have made this state of being possible for me were taken, and how many more issues still need to be dealt with.

One high point was when Sandra Day O'Connor lucidly traced the path of women's issues through the Supreme Court in the past two decades.

On the more political end of the spectrum, Geraldine Ferraro lamented the fact that women are "shockingly underrepresented" in Congress and other high government positions. She offered this key piece of advice: "If you don't run, you can't win." Using her own candidacy for vice-president as an example, she stressed how important a barrier-breaker it was for women to run for public office. With each candidacy, more stereotypes are destroyed, and a "ripple effect" is created. Noting a familiar bias of the press, she claimed that women today are more interested in coattails than mini-skirts.

And the list of speakers and issues continues. I heard a lot of talk about reproductive freedom, maternal/paternal leave, pregnancy discrimination and child care, to name only some. For myself, I feel I have become more aware of the reality of the situation. After all, it was only decided four years ago that I could not be denied partnership to that law firm of my aunt's dreams on the basis of being a woman. I learned a lot from the women I met. They were not bitter about the problems women have dealt with since the framing of the Constitution but were reasonable and dedicated to continuing progress. They were also looking for a new generation of women to keep the vigil. Where do I sign? ■

HELP

Please check your personal collections of *Ms.* magazine. The Women's Center Library is missing the following issues and would appreciate donations of:

January, 1986

March, 1986

June, 1986

In addition the circulation department is missing the following books:

Rubin, Mary. *How to Get Money for Research*. Old Westbury, NY: Feminist Press, 1983.

Women's Survival Manual: A Feminist Handbook on Separation and Divorce. Philadelphia: Women in Transition Press, 1972.

Call the Women's Center at 322-4843 if you can help.



In the library

Unfortunately, the language we use discriminates against many different kinds of people. Language can discriminate against people of different race, age, culture, religion, handicap, appearance and sex. Without being aware that you are doing it, you could be transmitting sexism through your language. Sexist language perpetuates the myth that males are the norm and females are something less, or are somehow inferior.

In their book *The Handbook of Nonsexist Writing*, Casey Miller and Kate Swift introduce readers to the idea of generic terms and false generics. Consider the following:

"Development of the Uterus in Rats, Guinea Pigs, and Men." Miller and Swift say, "Generic terms, like *rats* and *guinea pigs*, are equally applicable to a class or group and to its individual members. Terms used of a class or group that are not applicable to all its members are false generics. The reason the research-report title quoted above sounds incongruous is that *men* in that context is a false generic."

The solution, Miller and Swift suggest, is to find gender-neutral terms as alternatives to the generic "man." *The Handbook of Nonsexist Writing* provides numerous examples of biased language, and proposes workable and logical alternatives.

The Nonsexist Communicator, by Bobbie D. Sorrels, is a similar book but slightly more comprehensive. One of the best features of the book is the Appendix A, which provides an extensive listing of nonsexist words and phrases.

Whether you are a student writing a paper for a class, a staff member writing for a campus publication, or a professor writing an article for publication, everyone can work to remove sexist biases from his/her written work. *The Nonsexist Communicator* and *The Handbook of Nonsexist Writing* can guide you in your efforts. ■

It's your health, continued

cough from cigarette smoking may have more problems with incontinence both before and after surgery due to the pressure put on the bladder.

If you have urinary incontinence, you are not alone, and you may not be headed for a lifetime supply of adult diapers. See your gynecologist for a pelvic exam, instruction in Kegel's exercises, evaluation of your symptoms, and discussion of treatment methods. ■

It's your health

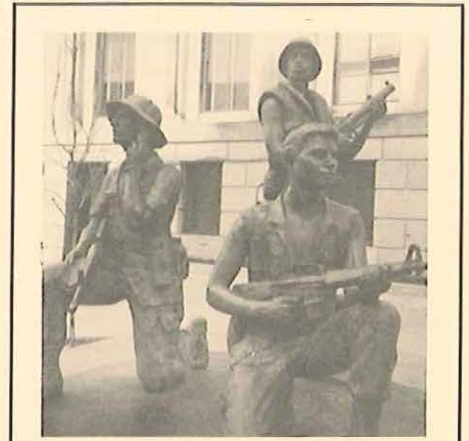
Beth Colvin, RN, MSN
Dept. of Obstetrics and Gynecology

The causes of female urinary incontinence, or the involuntary loss of urine, are many. Studies indicate that thirty-five to fifty percent of all women over the age thirty-five experience some degree of urinary leakage. Incontinence can vary from losing a few drops of urine with coughing or laughing to almost total lack of bladder control. With June Allyson now advertising a brand of "super absorbency shields" on TV, the problem has become public and women are seeking help for this bothersome condition.

The three major types of correctable incontinence are stress, urge, and overflow. Stress incontinence is dribbling of urine with the "stress" of coughing, sneezing, laughing and/or exercise (jogging/aerobics). These activities tighten the abdominal muscles which puts pressure on the bladder. Weakened pelvic structures from childbirth or obesity can lead to a "dropped" bladder with a sense of pelvic pressure or feeling of something "falling out". Urge incontinence is an abnormality of the bladder's muscle wall which produces a sudden, unexpected contraction of the bladder leading to leakage. Overflow incontinence occurs when the bladder is very full and simply "overflows" with urine. Factors that contribute to all three types of incontinence are thinning of the urinary tract tissues which normally occurs after menopause; benign or malignant growths in the pelvis causing bladder pressure; and certain medications.

Prevention of urinary incontinence is often possible by two very simple measures. One is to keep the bladder empty. Many women allow their bladders to stay too full on a chronic basis which can lead to infection and incontinence. Voiding every two to three hours will keep the bladder relatively empty and will minimize problems. Second, a very simple exercise, called Kegel's exercise, strengthens the vaginal muscles so that a "dropped" bladder is less likely to occur. You may practice this by squeezing the vaginal muscles tightly while urinating to stop the flow of urine in mid-stream. Ask your health care provider to discuss this exercise with you.

Other methods are designed to treat urinary incontinence. Sometimes the addition of estrogen, either orally or as a vaginal cream, will help the postmenopausal urinary tract tissues to become stronger and healthier. Passaries provide structural support in the vagina and may bring significant improvement of symptoms for the woman who is unable or unwilling to have surgery. Surgical correction may be the preferred treatment for some women. As with all types of surgery, there are risks and benefits when correcting urinary incontinence. A second opinion is always a good idea and should be obtained from someone with expertise in this area. It is important to mention that women with a chronic



This statue stands in the Vietnam Veterans Park in downtown Nashville. It was erected by the Tennessee Vietnam Veterans Leadership Program. Alan Le Quire, sculptor.

Shelley Nail

War Memorial

In paying tribute to the hero-soldiers of past wars, Americans are ignoring one important faction: women.

In November 1987 sex discrimination threatened to thwart the efforts of the Vietnam Women's Memorial Project (VWMP), which aims to erect a statue in honor of the 250,000 women who aided the American war effort both at home and abroad, in military and civilian capacities.

VWMP proposes to add a statue of a female military nurse at the Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Washington, DC. In a four-to-one vote, however, the U.S. Commission on Fine Arts rejected the idea, asserting that "allowing a statue of a woman might encourage other ethnic groups or organizations to seek recognition also." According to Commission Chairman J. Carter Brown, such an addition "would stand for the perpetual incompleteness of the Memorial."

Determined to garner support, however, the VWMP would not stop there. Sens. Alan Cranston, D-Calif., and David Durenberger, R-Minn., introduced into legislation a bill in February. With 61 co-sponsors in the Senate, it is expected to pass by the end of May.

"It's necessary to build this memorial because most people simply don't know that women served during the war," said Suzanne Mills-Rittmann, executive director of the project. "If you look at a statue of only men, you don't visualize or even think that women were an integral part of serving our country in the war."

—Adapted from *National NOW Times* ■

Book Group will meet Monday, May 9, from 5:15 p.m. until 6:15 p.m. at the Women's Center. GayNell Doll will lead the discussion of *Song of Solomon* by Toni Morrison. New members are welcome. Light refreshments. Call 322-4843 for further information.

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Announcements et cetera

Planned Parenthood of Nashville offers a series on four Tuesday evenings in May from 7:00 p.m. until 9:00 p.m. on "Women and Sexuality". \$50 fee for all four sessions.

"Families Together: Communications at Home" will be offered on May 7 from 10:00 a.m. until 1:00 p.m. for parents and teenagers. Fee is \$10 per family. Call 327-1097 for information and to register for either of these workshops.

Nursing Week, May 2 - 6, 1988

National Conference for College Women Student Leaders. Vanderbilt campus leaders, get involved in "Leadership for Today and Tomorrow." Conducted this year in Washington, DC, the national conference is a medium of exchange for college women who hold leadership positions in student government and organizations. In its fourth year, the conference will be held June 2 through 4 and will feature an awards ceremony for women who have distinguished themselves in an array of career fields. These Women of Distinction Awards will be presented in the Cannon House Caucus Room on Capital Hill. Among the objectives of the event are:

- 1) To focus women's attention on the challenges they face on their campuses and to devise adaptive strategies, and
- 2) To encourage women student leaders to see their campus experiences as foundations for continuing leadership at the community, state, and federal levels.

Interested in taking part? Come by the Women's Center for a copy of the brochure. Registration deadline is May 13.

The Rape and Sexual Abuse Center was totally destroyed by fire April 7. Temporary offices have been set up at the United Way Building, Metro Center, 250 Venture Circle, 259-9055. They are in need of furniture, office supplies, filing cabinets, and art supplies for the children's activities. Persons wishing to donate should call Valerie Sherlock at 259-3666 during the day. Arrangements can be made for items to be picked up.

Thanks. Many of you have noticed Shelley Neill's byline in *Women's VU* over the past several issues. In addition to the obvious contributions, Shelley has been adding her journalist expertise to many aspects of the newsletter including layout, ideas for articles and style.

Another person who has been invaluable to the editor is Katy Ginanni who has not only written the "In the library" column this year but has provided excellent proofreading and advice. Katy, Kathy Thornton, Monica Peek, Julia Schultz and Laurie Southall have contributed many hours to the mailing of the publication. A big thanks to all these people.
Judith T. Helfer, editor

Appleworks, Vanderbilt Employees' Wellness Program, is presently offering Children's Wellness Activities for elementary school-age children. Classes run from 3:15 p.m. until 4:00 p.m. but children may be dropped off as early as 2:45 p.m. and picked up as late as 4:30 p.m. Classes will include aerobic routines to music with warm-up and cool-down stretches as well as fitness tests and brief educational presentations to help acquaint children with the principles of wellness. Call Joan at 322-4751 for more information.

Eliminating Sexual Harassment on Campus: a workshop co-sponsored by the U.S. Department of Education, Office of Civil Rights and Vanderbilt University to be held June 23-24 in Sarratt Cinema. Cost of \$20 includes lunch. For further information call 322-4705.

Tuning in

By *Cynthia L. Schipper*
Building Superintendent
Minneapolis, Minnesota

As a building superintendent, I always carry a walkie-talkie. On a recent tour through one of my buildings, I ran into a panicky new employee who was desperately struggling to stop a leaky pressure valve. Each time he let go of it to call for help, a geyser of water spewed all over the room. When the man saw me, he abruptly ordered me to hold the valve closed. I obediently did so and then tried to tell him how to shut down the entire system.

Unwilling to take my advice, he insisted instead on using the paging system to call "the building superintendent." Rather ceremoniously, I waited for the beep, and then took my walkie-talkie out from under my blazer, carefully readjusted its squelch control, and used it to tell him how to shut down the system.

Savvy, February 1986

Note from editor: In this and numerous past issues we have printed women's humorous experiences, which are gender related, from *Savvy*. We realize that our readers probably have similar experiences which could be printed in future *Women's VU*. Please submit half page, double spaced manuscript to Judith T. Helfer, Box 1513, Station B, Nashville, TN 37235.

Edited by Judith T. Helfer

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