

# **COMPARABLE WORTH:**

**Questions and Answers for  
Early Childhood Staff**



**Child Care Employee Project**

**A Program of the Child Care Staff Education Project**



# COMPARABLE WORTH: QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS FOR EARLY CHILDHOOD STAFF

By

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# COMPARABLE WORTH: QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS FOR EARLY CHILDHOOD STAFF

## INTRODUCTION

*There are villages in which men fish and women weave and in which women fish and men weave, but in either type of village, the work done by the men is valued higher than the work done by the women . . . Margaret Mead*

For those of us who work in child care, low pay is hardly news. Yet, as with many troubling conditions that worsen over time, poor wages now threaten the very existence of a trained and experienced child care workforce. The shortage of adequately prepared personnel and the alarmingly high staff turnover are evidence that this chronic condition has become acute. A steady diet of undercompensation for child care workers, over 90% of whom are women, has led to serious recruitment and retention problems which have a devastating impact on the quantity and quality of available child care.

Over the last few years, child care advocates across the country have been experimenting with remedies for these ills, hoping to stave off the growing exit of our experienced colleagues and to encourage potential co-workers to join the field. As we have documented our plight and examined strategies, it has become clear we are not as isolated as we often feel. Sadly, the vast majority of the now fifty million women workers in the United States suffer from a similar malady: they are segregated into low paying jobs performed primarily by women, earning on the average \$.64 to every \$1.00 made by male workers. Black and Latina women earn less — \$.58 and \$.53 to every \$1 by white males. With these meager earnings, women must try to support themselves and their families. Over two thirds of working women in the United States are either single, divorced, single heads of households or living with a partner who makes less than \$15,000 a year.

In the search for solutions to the problem of low pay, the concept of **comparable worth** has emerged as a strategy for women and/or minority workers seeking to upgrade wages in jobs segregated by race and sex. Nurses, teachers, clerical and other service workers have begun to utilize comparable worth strategies in their effort to secure better compensation. Understandably, many child care employees are wondering how to utilize the comparable worth concept to upgrade early childhood jobs. This booklet is intended to help child care advocates understand and use the concept of comparable worth.

### *What exactly is comparable worth?*

Comparable worth has multiple meanings. Most generally, it refers to a movement to get wages to reflect the value of work rather than the sex and/or race of the worker. As such, comparable worth forms the basis of a wide range of efforts such as educational campaigns, collective bargaining, strike actions, law suits and legislation.



More specifically, comparable worth refers to a job evaluation method used to assess whether pay discrepancies between men and women and/or whites and minorities reflect differences in skill and responsibility or discriminatory judgments. It also creates a framework for offering wages based on a worker's contribution (i.e. the effort, skill, experience and responsibility) rather than on false assumptions about the worker's needs (e.g. a woman works for pin money, rather than to support her family, therefore she needs less). In other words, comparable worth is a tool for examining how salaries at a particular workplace are and should be determined.

In addition to variable meanings, different terms also refer to comparable worth. These include: pay equity or parity, wage justice and job worth.

**COMPARABLE WORTH:** A movement to get wages in any one workplace to reflect a just assessment of the skills and responsibilities demanded by a job rather than false assumptions about the financial needs of the worker or the skills involved in the job based on the sex or race of the worker. Also known as pay equity, pay parity, wage justice, job worth.

**EQUAL PAY FOR EQUAL WORK:** A movement to insure that the same wages are paid to all who perform the *same job* regardless of the sex or race of the worker.

### *How can comparable worth strategies work for you?*

It depends on your particular child care work setting. Comparable worth is both a job evaluation technique and a political and educational strategy for redressing historical grievances experienced by women and minorities. For many workers comparable worth is a logical place to start the push for better wages. For others, comparable worth can supplement other advocacy efforts. Because of the considerable variation in the child care delivery system, comparable worth remedies will be more applicable in some settings than others. Examples of how child care workers have benefitted and can continue to benefit from the movement for equality at the workplace are discussed in this booklet. It is designed to answer the most commonly asked questions about comparable worth as it relates to child care workers. In the final portion, we've included the names of resource organizations that can help interested readers seeking more information about comparable worth. We hope that this booklet will assist you in assessing your own particular work setting and in developing a realistic strategy for increasing compensation. Comparable worth deserves close examination by child care advocates so that every possible solution will be considered in our quest for wages commensurate with our true skills and responsibilities.

## UNDERSTANDING COMPARABLE WORTH

### *How do comparable worth efforts differ from attempts to secure equal pay for equal work?*

Both are calls to eliminate wage discrimination in the labor force. Equal pay for equal work seeks to end the long held practice of paying women and minorities lower wages than white males for the *same job*. For example, prior to the mid-sixties it was both legal and common for a white male teacher to receive a higher salary than a female or minority counterpart. The 1963 Equal Pay Act outlawed paying different wages for equal work in most instances and Title VII of the 1964 Civil Rights Acts called for an end to sex and race discrimination in the workplace and other situations.

Despite these laws and many successful attempts to secure equal pay for equal work, inequality continues to pervade the labor force. But while legislation and affirmative action programs can begin to bring women and minorities into situations of equal pay, a problem persists. Women and minorities as groups continue to earn less money than white men not because they are paid less for the same work, but because they don't *do* the same work.

Women earn less than men primarily because most of them are segregated into *lower paying jobs with little opportunity for advancement*. Consider that 80% of women work in five major job categories, all of which are at the bottom end of the pay scale. Even as the number of working women increases, they are shepherded into clerical, teaching, nursing, sales or other service jobs most of which are low paid. Equal pay for equal work does not address the inequalities caused by the widespread **occupational segregation** in this country.

**Question:** WHICH STRATEGY ADDRESSES THIS SITUATION?

In a large child care program, teachers and aides, all of whom are women, receive a lower hourly wage than the custodial staff who are all male.

- a. Comparable Worth
- b. Equal Pay for Equal Work

**Answer:** a. Comparable worth because it provides a framework for comparing different job categories to one another. Equal pay for equal works speaks only to insuring the same compensation for the same job.



Growing realization of these structural inequalities of the workforce has led to the development of the comparable worth strategy. Simply put, comparable worth demands equal pay for *equivalent* work. It enables women and/or minority workers to compare jobs held primarily by themselves with those held by men in the same workplace. You may be familiar with such problems at your job. Often teachers and aides in a child care program, all of whom are women, will receive a lower hourly rate than the custodial staff who are male. No matter that the teachers and aides are required to have more training and experience. In fact nationally, women with three years of college earn on the average \$2,000 a year less than men with an **8th grade** education!

### ***What has been accomplished by comparable worth advocates?***

Thanks to the movement for comparable worth there is increased recognition of wage discrimination against women and minorities stemming from their segregation into low paying jobs. This awareness has created a forum for examining and improving jobs untouched by affirmative action programs. Beyond changes in consciousness, comparable worth advocates have secured or set the stage for wage increases to rectify historic injustices. Summarized below are key gains accomplished through collective bargaining, legislation, and litigation strategies. All of these efforts also rely upon extensive community education.

### **Bargaining Victories**

San Jose, California city employees, represented by the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees (AFSCME), called the first comparable worth strike in the summer of 1981 when the city failed to respond to a job evaluation study which found systematic discrimination against female dominated positions, rendering them lower paid than equivalently skilled jobs held primarily by men. After ten days, the city and union agreed to a contract which remedied many of the inequities. In Los Angeles, California, city officials voluntarily complied with demands made by unionized city workers to restructure the wage system.

More recently at Yale University, 1600 clerical and technical workers completed a successful four month strike in which comparable worth figured as a key demand. The average yearly salary for members of striking Local 34, composed of 82% female and 17% minorities, is \$13,400; the average male truck driver employed by Yale earns over \$18,000 a year, even though he has worked less years, and has lower educational and skill levels. The final agreement did not result in a new male/female job classification system but rather a new step system which recognizes longevity, includes some reclassification procedures and across-the-board salary raises (which always work in favor of the lowest paid workers).

## **Legislative and Regulatory Action**

Organized workers in many communities have worked to pass laws or develop regulations which mandate public sector employers to address comparable worth. For example, in 1982 Minnesota passed a pay equity act that affected 9000 state government employees represented by AFSCME. In 1984 a similar measure calling for each locality to develop a plan for local government employees to reverse existing inequities by Fall, 1985 was passed. It is estimated that ten percent of Minnesota workers are affected by these measures. Many other similar efforts are underway around the country. Thirty nine states have passed comparable worth acts and sixteen have developed comparable worth pay standards. Over twenty five states and local governments have commissioned job evaluation studies of their own employment systems to examine pay inequities between male and female jobs. While these legislative and regulatory gains have been made only by organized government workers, their impact clearly reverberates throughout the entire labor force. For a comprehensive survey of state and local government pay equity initiatives, see "Who's Working for Working Women?," described in the resource section.

### **Legal Gains**

Comparable worth advocates and foes have jostled in the courts to determine the validity of comparable worth as a remedy for wage discrimination. To date, comparable worth has been endorsed and rejected in varying degrees by several courts.

One of the most pertinent cases is AFSCME v. Washington. Suspecting discrimination, AFSCME (the union representing workers employed by the State of Washington) requested a job evaluation study to be conducted by the state. This 1973 study found that systematic discrimination existed when wages were set for government employees. Despite similar levels of responsibility, jobs held by males were paid more than those predominantly held by females: clerical, secretarial, nursing, food, social, health and library services. After a second study failed to move the state to set a new wage scale, a court battle ensued in the U.S. District Court in which intentional discrimination was found and back pay was ordered for all affected workers. Recently however, a Ninth Circuit court handed down an appeal decision in AFSCME v. Washington arguing that the State of Washington was under no obligation to eliminate economic inequality among its employees which stem from market forces which the State did not create.

AFSCME, the union representing Washington State workers, plans to appeal the ruling to the U.S. Supreme Court. Several other major comparable worth cases are also pending in the nation's courts. (See Bibliography for more information.) Thus, a final determination of the legal status of comparable worth as a basis for discrimination under Title VII of the 1964 Civil Rights Act has yet to be decided.



## Have comparable worth advocates encountered much resistance?

Yes. Comparable worth is controversial. Conservative critics claim that pay equity would disrupt the American economy, requiring billions of dollars to correct historical injustices. Other critics claim that comparable worth will mean that men will have to lower their wages and that minorities will be overlooked because of the emphasis on sex discrimination. The current presidential administration seeks to defeat comparable worth. Reagan appointee Clarence Pendleton, the present chair of the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, stated that the concept was "the looniest idea since Looney Tunes came to the screen." The U.S. Civil Rights Commission opposed comparable worth as a means of dealing with the economic gender gap. Such critics consider existing laws sufficient for ending discrimination and consider wage differences a reflection of essential economic laws. They claim that employers have the right to set wages that reflect the "market value" of jobs, and feel they cannot be expected to address cultural practices which value some jobs over others.

### COMPARABLE WORTH CRITICISMS:

- Too expensive/would disrupt economy.
- Men will have to lower their wages.
- Minorities will be overlooked.
- Existing laws are sufficient to deal with the problem.
- Wages reflect the true "market value" and cultural worth of jobs.

### ADVOCATES' RESPONSE:

- Enforce gradual, incremental corrections; review historical precedents and true impact.
- The law (Title VII of the Civil Rights Act) prohibits reducing male wages as a remedy.
- Develop less biased job evaluation methods.
- Existing laws do not address inequities caused by occupational segregation.
- The "market value" is false when an entire occupation is severely underpaid.

## How do comparable worth advocates respond to these criticisms?

Obviously, an employer would incur substantial expenses in reversing discriminatory wages. Recognizing this, comparable worth advocates have sought gradual, incremental corrections to wage disparities. They also remind critics that similar arguments about the threat to the economy were used against slavery and child labor reforms. In response to claims that comparable worth will reduce male earnings, advocates respond that the law (Title VII of the Civil Rights Act) explicitly prohibits reducing male wages to remedy sex discrimination. Attempts to discredit pay equity as a form of discrimination against minorities is countered with explanations about how the comparable worth method applies both to sex and racial discrimination. As those of us in child care know, market value or "going pay rate" wage scales contain serious pitfalls when an entire occupation is severely underpaid. Not only do such wage setting practices rely on wage information that is often out-of-date, they accept the status quo as reasonable and viable wages.

Regardless of how well advocates respond to critics, the reality is that those who oppose comparable worth are well organized and powerful. The conservative think tank, the Heritage Foundation, declared pay equity the "most significant employment discrimination issue of 1984," and urged that its defeat "must become a top priority for the [Reagan] administration." Advocates can expect resistance at many workplaces as well as more litigation challenging legal support for pay equity.





## How does the comparable worth method work?

Remember that comparable worth refers to both a *specific job evaluation method* as well as a *general public education strategy* to end inequality at the workplace. As we describe the evaluation method you may realize it won't work for your particular child care job, but keep in mind how the general issue *can* be used in an educational campaign.

### Establishing Wage Gap and Other Necessary Background Information

A comparable worth evaluation is used to determine sexual or racial bias in the development of job structure and wage scales. To begin you must *collect wage gap information* for all the workers of any one employer. (A word of caution: don't assume that this information or wage scales will necessarily be easy to obtain. If you are represented by a union seek their assistance in these efforts. Recognize that some employers carefully guard this information and may not act kindly toward those who make inquiries. If you work for a government agency, this should be public information. But again, exercise care in researching this data.)

#### HOW TO COLLECT WAGE GAP INFORMATION

1. **Compute the average salary for all employers.**
2. **Determine an average for each sub category of employees.**
3. **Look at the total number of jobs and the distribution of certain jobs by sex and race.** Certain jobs are over-identified with women and/or people of color. Traditionally it has been assumed that if 70% of the workers in any one job category are of one sex, this percentage is considered indicative of segregation and possible discrimination. However, this 70% figure is not functional when defining over-representation by minorities and it is even high for over-representation by sex in some female dominated job classifications. The Comparable Worth Project has developed a formula which more accurately measures over-representation by sex and race. Over-representation exists whenever a job has a higher proportion of women or racial groups than the total presence of women or the particular racial group in the local labor force as a whole. For example, you might find that only 20% of the local labor force is Latina, yet 55% of aides and only 5% of teachers in local child care agencies are Latina. Such figures would suggest job segregation in lower paying jobs and exclusion from higher level ones.
4. **Calculate the percentage of male earnings to those of females or minorities.** You may find that your rate is greater or less than the current national average of \$.64 to \$1.00. The rate varies by location and industry.

Wage gap information is only the first step. It's possible that some of the differences you find may result from variations in employment patterns (women may have worked fewer years or taken more time off) rather than directly from discriminatory practices which disregard education, experience and skill. Thus, the next step is to *investigate how your employer sets wages*.

Some employers have very formal systems for classifying jobs and determining salaries. Others do not, relying on personal preference, agency history, or by checking the prevailing wages in the community (which in child care usually reflects the historic devaluation of the work.) If you work for a small employer you will more likely encounter such informal approaches. Larger employers have usually been forced to develop a formal system to handle the volume of personnel. But a formal system does not necessarily indicate fairness. For example, large employers commonly use a point system whereby each job is rated by certain criteria and then wages are assigned based on the total number of points (this job evaluation process is described below). Sometimes women and men with the same points receive different wages or women find their jobs rated lower because of historic devaluation of women's work. It is important to understand how wages are established in order to determine what accounts for wage gaps between different groups of employees.

### Job Evaluation Studies

If you have read about comparable worth in the papers, you can't help but wonder about the role of job evaluation studies as a way to diagnose and remedy discrimination. Job evaluation studies first were developed by employers after WWII as a common way to determine wages in large business enterprises. Using a point system, each job category is evaluated in terms of criteria necessary for optimal job performance such as:

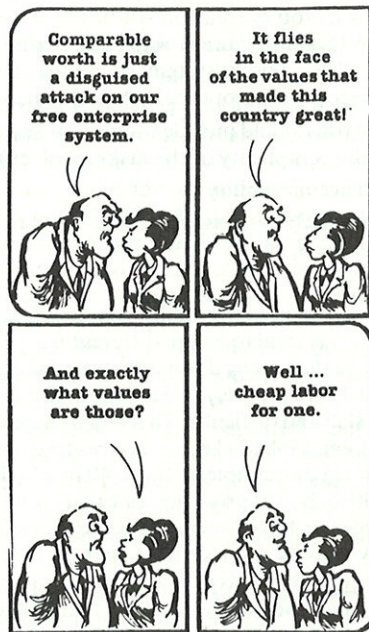
1. skill and knowledge (this would include training and experience as well as an evaluation of the complexity of the tasks involved)
2. responsibility and accountability
3. working conditions (such as stress on the job, lifting requirements, noise level, exposure to illness, etc.)
4. mental demands

These rankings were then used to establish pay scales. But remember that until the mid-1960's it was legal to assign different pay rates to equivalently ranked jobs and since then many discriminatory ranking systems have remained unchallenged. Furthermore, job evaluation studies often were biased in determinations of skill and difficulty. They often tended to underestimate non-supervisory tasks and jobs linked to services traditionally performed by women in the home. For example, lifting a 40 lb. child could be ranked lower than lifting a 40 lb. box of groceries, or caring for forty caged rats in a laboratory might receive a higher score than supervising 20 three year olds! Job evaluations rely heavily upon criteria such as formal education to establish the skill level of a job. This may work against lower income and/or minority people who face inequality of access to higher education.



In recent years comparable worth advocates have initiated the development of job evaluation instruments that contain fewer biases and they have begun to utilize job evaluations to identify and remedy pay discrimination. It is important to note that job evaluations are based on comparisons of one group of employees to another, usually large groups of workers of single employers or several similar employers who fall into easily codified distinct job titles. If your initial exploration of your workplace suggests a wage gap based on discrimination, you may call for a formal job evaluation to support your claim as well as to generate alternative structures. Once the positions are rated, comparisons are made to determine if similarly ranked positions receive equivalent wages. If not, an alternative wage scale can be proposed and the job evaluation provides criteria for determining how different jobs will be compensated. Job evaluation studies are time consuming and costly, which limits their feasibility for most workplaces. However, sometimes job evaluations conducted in similar workplaces can be applied to different employers.

Once job evaluation information exists for a particular employer or industry, the findings may provide the basis for a lawsuit under Title VII of the 1964 Civil Rights Act or the 1963 Pay Equity Act. Efforts to resolve comparable worth issues can also be brought to the bargaining table; in some instances employers have voluntarily complied to demands to change wage scales. If you work for a government agency, developing legislation or regulations such as those in Minnesota may be feasible. Whether you pursue collective bargaining, litigation, regulation, or legislation, your strategies will depend upon your particular circumstances such as how organized the workforce is, the range of public support, and the viewpoints of local policy makers.



## COMPARABLE WORTH AND CHILD CARE WORK: PROMISES AND PITFALLS

### *Can comparable worth help child care workers?*

Yes, within limits. Theoretically, child care workers are prime candidates for comparable worth strategies. The child care workforce is female dominated and characterized by low wages. Despite considerable education and training, child care workers are likely to find themselves at the bottom of any organizational pay scale. Indeed, until quite recently the U.S. Department of Labor classified child care workers as comparably skilled to gas station attendants, reflecting the cultural value of the work as unskilled. Thus there exist numerous possibilities for employing comparable worth arguments when seeking to educate and influence those who set child care wages.

The structure of the child care delivery system, however, works against widespread use of comparable worth *job evaluation* as a specific method to remedy wage discrimination for the majority of child care workers. Successful comparable worth efforts have focused on single employers with large numbers of workers in a variety of distinct, codified job categories. There should be large numbers of women and/or minorities performing jobs that compare favorably in terms of skill, but not wages, to jobs held by large numbers of men, as in city or state governments, universities, and some large corporations. The most successful attempts have occurred among workers represented by unions who work in public sector jobs.

Currently, most child care workers do not find themselves in such situations. Only 20,000 of the several hundred thousand center based child care workers in this country are represented by unions. Not only are the majority of child care centers relatively small (under 100 workers) but they usually are single function enterprises. Thus, there is no other group of workers to whom comparisons can be made even if there are large numbers of staff. Although these workers can still benefit from comparable worth as an *educational* strategy (as described in the following pages), they cannot easily employ the specific job evaluation remedy used in other workplaces. Also, most child care staff work in the private sector, where comparable worth gains have yet to be made.

Some child care personnel, however, work in situations which much more readily lend themselves to the comparable worth remedy. These include child care workers within school districts and universities or those who are employed by city or county governments. Staff working for large nonprofit enterprises such as churches and other social service agencies may be able to apply the comparable worth job evaluation method. And, of course, child care staff in employer supported child care programs could benefit, provided that the center is a department within the business rather than a legally separate entity from the sponsoring company. It is interesting that unionized child care staff most often work for government or large agencies thus increasing the feasibility of using a comparable worth evaluation to correct wage inequities.



## ***How does comparable worth apply to family day care providers?***

The largest number of child care providers in this country work in family day care, and almost all are self employed. Although they receive low fees which largely reflect the cultural perception that caring for children is unskilled, they do not technically receive a "wage." Their income is based on fees that they themselves set and therefore it is impossible to charge discrimination in a legal sense. If family day care providers work in or are employed as part of a larger child care agency, and if they are considered employees, they might be able to apply some comparable worth assessments to their situations. However, it is unlikely that they will find themselves in a large agency or one where there are larger groups of employees working on other jobs to which they can be compared. But family day care providers can use the comparable worth concept as the basis of an educational campaign to garner parental and community support for improving their situation.

## ***Has anyone used comparable worth evaluations to improve child care salaries?***

The comparable worth remedy specifically focuses on wage inequities stemming from job discrimination based on sex or race. While most child care workers find themselves victims of low pay and inequality, it is often impossible to identify specific discrimination as the cause. As previously discussed, while many child care jobs do not lend themselves to a formal job evaluation, there have been a few successful gains for child care workers through this method. Hopefully these improvements will reverberate throughout the field, establishing precedents for better pay.

### **IT PAYS TO BE A MAN**

#### **Sex Segregated Work Force**

<i>Occupation</i>	<i>Average Annual Salary</i>	<i>Percentage of Women Employed</i>
Secretary	\$12,000	99%
Truck Driver	\$16,300	2%
Private Household Worker	\$ 5,600	95%
Janitor	\$11,400	15%
Child Care Worker	\$ 7,900	87%
Mail Carrier	\$21,100	12%
Waiter/Waitress	\$ 7,800	85%
Butcher/Meat Cutter	\$16,400	7%

Source: U.S. Dept. of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, March, 1982

On a limited scale, child care workers employed by large governmental agencies have been the recipients of positive changes resulting from job evaluations. The United States Army employs thousands of child care workers throughout the world. Dissatisfaction among child care personnel with the classification system used led to a job evaluation study which has already resulted in upgrading of several key child care positions. Although employees still take issue with the existing classification system, they are hopeful that improvement of child care jobs will continue.

Child care workers in school districts and universities can also be helped. At the University of Connecticut, teachers at the day care center on campus benefitted from a job classification study for all professional non-classified employees. The study was requested by the University of Connecticut Professional Employees Union, an AFT local. The study, which took three years to complete, looked at day care teachers in relation to other employees such as librarians, computer programmers, nurses, doctors, and department managers in terms of four major criteria: Independent Action and Authority, Knowledge and Skills Required to Do the Job, Complexity and Variety of Tasks, and Leadership. After a year and a half of negotiations, the union secured new pay scales for twelve groups of employees. Day care teachers were placed in Group #4 where their minimum entry level salary rose from \$14,500 to \$18,452 a year. (Teachers with ten years of experience could earn \$35,000.) All day care teachers have been moved to the new minimum and over the next three years the union hopes to negotiate an additional \$3-4,000 per employee to reward years of experience on the job.

The University has agreed to pay for the new salaries for the next two years. Union representatives foresee a prolonged battle to extend University responsibility in this area, as opposed to passing the costs of higher salaries on to parents with limited incomes.

The experience of day care teachers at the University of Connecticut underscores how comparable worth as a job evaluation method is most applicable to child care employees with union representation in large, public sector workplaces. It further suggests that whenever child care workers begin to raise their salaries, the question of "who will foot the bill" cannot be ignored.

## ***Has comparable worth been used as a successful educational strategy for child care workers?***

Yes. This is probably the area where comparable worth can currently have the greatest impact on the child care community. As the child care community grows and becomes better organized, and the comparable worth movement develops, newer tactics may emerge that will apply more directly to child care settings. Still, there is much that can be done now as the following examples indicate.

Child care workers in Ann Arbor, Michigan recently completed a salary and job satisfaction survey which represented over 80% of the staff of their community. In order to maximize the educational impact of their findings, they compared their wages and educational levels to comparable positions



in their local school district. Combined with information about the standard of living in the community, these findings assume even greater impact as child care workers seek better pay.

EDUCATION × WAGES/HOUR		
	average for all respondents	range for public school teachers at same educational levels**
Less than high school	\$4.80	
High School	\$5.00	
Some College/A.A.	\$5.02	
B.A./B.S.	\$5.66	\$9.98 - 18.09
Some Graduate	\$6.55	
M.A./M.Ed.	\$8.55	\$11.96 - 21.59
Ph.D.	\$10.44	\$12.62 - 23.72

\*\*Ann Arbor and Ypsilanti Public School 83-84 salaries  
(Administrators' salaries not ascertained)

From the Washtenaw County AEYC Survey of Teachers and Directors,  
*Preliminary Report, 1985.*

Workers in Minneapolis, Minnesota, where successful efforts to require comparable worth for state and local government employees were already under way, recently held a Child Care Comparable Worth Day to strategize possibilities in their community. Each worker received a child care quiz to help them assess their situation. The quiz included powerful examples of how child care workers' salaries compare to those of others in the community.

The most impressive comparable worth efforts in child care have occurred in Massachusetts. In 1981, child care workers raised the issue of pay equity in centers receiving public funds. They released findings indicating that child care workers received less than the lowest paid state workers. These child care workers, represented by District 65, UAW, approached policy makers with language for a "Living Wage" bill on behalf of themselves and other social service workers in agencies receiving state funds.

Although the bill failed to pass, it nonetheless sparked dialogue between the Governor, other policy makers, and the child care community about problems such as teacher shortages and turnover stemming from the underpayment of child care workers. After two years of negotiating, the hard work of child care advocates paid off in the spring of 1985. The Legislature passed a \$5 million appropriation to bring child care workers' wages in line with comparably skilled workers over a two year period. Additional monies to complete the process are promised for 1986.

In examining the Massachusetts example, it is important to recognize the key characteristics of the situation which led to success. First, the recipients of the wage increases were child care workers in the public sector. It is assum-

ed, of course, that raising public sector wages will stimulate improvement in the private sector as well, thus making other child care workers indirect beneficiaries of the comparable worth effort. Second, these workers were represented by a union. Besides being a large group of hundreds of employees, they were well organized and able to coordinate efforts to influence public policy. They received support from other organized labor as well. Third, the union worked closely with other child care groups, being careful to build a strategy that did not ignore other serious child care needs such as expanded services, training, and greater assistance for parents unable to afford fees. Funds for these concerns were requested along with the wage increases. Finally, these workers understood the long range nature of their requests, and the need to build support for their goals over several years, including the harnessing of political support for their cause.

The Massachusetts victory demonstrates the value of comparable worth as an educational strategy. Although workers utilized comparisons of child

The following salaries are paid to workers in other fields who have various levels of training and responsibility:

<b>Level 1:</b>	
Teacher's Aide	\$5.74 - 7.99 per hour
Dietary Aide	\$6.36
<b>Level 2</b>	
Heavy Equipment Mechanic Apprentice	\$19,476 per year
Nursing Assistant	\$12,365 per year or \$6.44/hour
<b>Level 3:</b>	
Zookeeper	\$16,641 - 20,830/year
General Repair Worker	\$18,768/year
Teacher	\$16,355 - 36,659/year
<b>Level 4:</b>	
Business Manager	\$24,492/year
Institution Education Supervisor	\$32,700/year
<b>HOW DO YOUR WAGES COMPARE?</b>	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Way off
<input type="checkbox"/>	Close, but not close enough
<input type="checkbox"/>	Comparable

Excerpted from *How Does Your Child Care Wage Compare to A Zookeepers?*,  
Child Care Workers Alliance, Minnesota.



care workers to other state workers, a formal job evaluation which demonstrated discrimination was never conducted. And as the Massachusetts child care workers strictly speaking are not state employees, (as they work in agencies funded by the state), the demands varied from those which might be used by employees at one workplace, such as the University of Connecticut. Advocates sought increased funds to establish reimbursement rates for services and salary schedules within these agencies, rather than a new job classification system within the state government.

As with the Connecticut example, the Massachusetts situation raises the serious question of who will pay for just wages for child care staff. In Massachusetts, higher reimbursement rates for programs translates into high fees for parents who use services without benefit of subsidies from the government or their employers. And, in Massachusetts as in other states, many families who do not qualify for subsidized care cannot afford existing, let alone increased fees for services. Massachusetts workers were thus sorely disappointed when the funds for their salary increases were not accompanied with sufficient funds to expand parent subsidies. Some programs found themselves in a terrible bind: whether to keep fees affordable or to raise terribly low salaries. Fortunately, child care advocates maintain close cooperation with parents and are committed to avoiding this dilemma in future years by tying demands for higher reimbursement rates to expanded subsidies, and by pushing for a comprehensive national day care policy that helps fee paying parents.



## *How can I determine which comparable worth strategy will be most effective in my center?*

Your first step would be to analyze your workplace. Ask the following questions:

1. Are you organized? Would people work together on these issues?
2. Is there any group who would assist you in efforts to negotiate with your employer or policy makers?
3. Who can you compare yourselves to? Are there other employees in the agency with different types of jobs? Are these jobs held by men or women? Are there other ethnic groups which predominate in your job category? For example, you might find a large social service agency which includes child care, where most of the aides and teachers are minorities and all the supervisory personnel are Caucasian. Is there any basis for claiming discrimination?
4. If no other job categories exist within the workplace, what comparisons beyond the workplace would serve to educate parents, policy makers and the community at large? Consider those types of jobs which are equivalent in some respects (other teachers or social service workers) as well as those jobs which are quite different but which require less training or skill (gas pumping, some forms of custodial work, etc.) Compute your local wage gap, whether for your particular workplace or for key positions in your community.
5. How can you generate support for your situation? What types of information beyond comparisons will influence people? Consider information about the average standard of living: for instance, changes in the cost of living versus changes in your wages. What are better ways to share information about your situation? Who will support you in your effort? parents? community groups?

6. Who has the power to change your situation? What is the best way to approach those with power? What information will make them sympathetic to your situation? (Some people are impressed by turnover and teacher shortage information, others by facts about inadequate standards of living or comparisons between types of jobs. Some will be impressed by the impact of all of this on the quality of care children receive.)

For many child care workers a formal job evaluation may not be appropriate or even necessary. One group of church related nursery school teachers gathered salary statistics in their community and compared their wages to those paid to janitors at the churches. Across the board, the janitors (who required no prior training or experience), received higher wages. The church authorities were embarrassed by the findings and revised the salary scales by bringing teachers in line with maintenance staff. A small, but significant first step. Still to be addressed is who should child care workers be compared to.

If you work for a large social service agency you may discover that certain jobs working with children, such as recreational leaders, are always held by men and paid at a higher rate. Find out about requirements for this job; you may have a good basis for requesting an examination of the salary scales. Many community agencies pride themselves upon adhering to principles of equality and fairness. They may act favorably rather than risk negative com-



**TO DETERMINE HOW YOUR GROUP CAN BEST USE COMPARABLE WORTH STRATEGIES ASK YOURSELVES:**

- Are you organized and willing to work together on this issue?
- Who can assist you?
- With what other employees can you compare your jobs?
- If necessary, what comparisons beyond the workplace would serve to educate parents, policy makers, and the community?
- How can you generate support for your situation?
- Who has the power to change your situation and how will you approach them?

munity publicity. Similarly, you may want to check with your local United Way. Many United Way agencies set recommended pay scales for their grantees. Ascertain if these scales may reflect biases which can have an impact upon your local center policy.

If you work for a school district, it is likely that you will be represented by a collective bargaining agent and that salary data for all employees is available. Take the opportunity to examine pay scales and qualifications for maintenance workers and child care staff. The starting salary for the former often is the top of the range for the latter! You may be able to negotiate on this issue without a formal study.

If you work in an employer sponsored center, you may find child care work ranked unfairly. Several hospital child care centers have successfully sought reclassification for administrative and teaching staff. The danger here is that increased costs of adjusting salaries may be used as a rationale to abandon child care services altogether or may lead to creating a separate agency for child care where such comparisons cannot be made or have no legal effect.

## CONCLUSION

Within limits, the movement for pay equity holds promise for the child care community. Certainly all providers can utilize the general principle of comparable worth in educating parents, policy makers, and the public about our plight. And some workers will be able to directly apply comparable worth as a remedy in their workplace. But the most important contribution of comparable worth to the child care community may be that it enables us to examine our situation in a wider context, revealing a broader potential community of support.

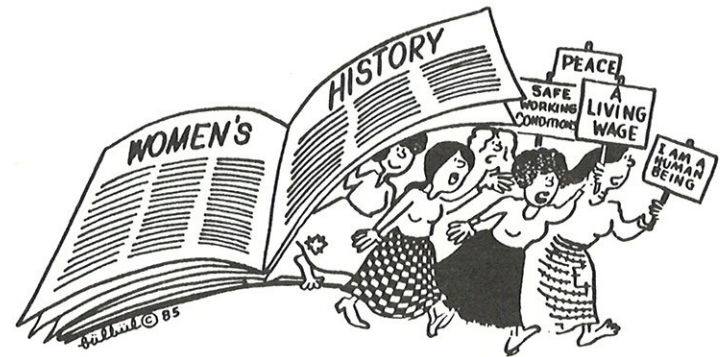
Child care workers are only one group of many primarily female service workers who are inadequately compensated. Indeed, the movement for pay equity has contributed to our understanding of widespread segregation of women in low paying jobs and the accompanying feminization of poverty in this country. During the past ten years the economic status of women has

been steadily declining; estimates are that two out of three adults living in poverty are women and that seventy-five percent of our nation's impoverished are women and children. Yet we know that full employment is no security against poverty: 3/5 of women working full-time earn less than \$10,000 a year. The poverty of half the families in America would be alleviated if women were paid wages earned by similarly qualified men. The movement for comparable worth addresses this situation and helps us to recognize those working on similar problems.

In the process of reaching out to others seeking to redress similar grievances, we have the unprecedented opportunity to build a support network for the very real needs of child care, workers *and* the working women who rely upon them. Until now most women's advocates concerned with child care have focused primarily on how child care (or the lack of it) contributes to the feminization of poverty. Indeed, child care expenses are a tremendous drain on most women's very meager salaries. Only recently have people outside the child care community recognized that child care is more than a *barrier* to women's economic equity. As a form of employment it is frequently a *cause* of many women's poor financial situation. Several million women care for the children of working mothers and many more will enter the field as demand grows. As working women themselves, often with families to support, they do not earn a living wage.

By becoming involved with women's equity advocates, the child care community stands to receive double benefits. Not only can we learn about strategies such as comparable worth to upgrade our pay, but we also have the unique opportunity to reaffirm the need for both affordable services and adequate pay for providers. We can assist those grappling with child care policy to avoid solutions that support one group of low income women — working mothers — by merely shifting the burden to another — child care providers.

The movement for comparable worth raises basic questions about the organization of society and the value placed on different services. In so doing, it provides a forum for those in the child care community to speak out against the historic disregard of those who care for children and the negative implications of this policy. Comparable worth offers us the unique opportunity for self study, and it also points us toward our potential allies — the millions of other undervalued working people — in seeking remedies for the many needs of working mothers and their children.





## RESOURCES FOR COMPARABLE WORTH

*Bargaining for Equality: A guide to legal and collective bargaining solutions for workplace problems that particularly affect women*, Women's Labor Project, 1980. Available for \$5.50 + 15% postage and handling from the National Labor Law Center, Suite 615, 2000 P St., NW, Washington, D.C. 20036.

*Comparable Worth and Wage Discrimination: Technical Possibilities and Political Realities*, Remick, Helen, Ed., Temple University Press, 1984.

*Equal Pay for Work of Comparable Worth: An Annotated Bibliography*, Seldon, Catherine, American Library Association, 1982. Available for \$4.40 from the American Library Association, Office for Library Personnel Resources, 50 E. Huron St., Chicago, IL 60611.

*The Feminization of Poverty: Issues and Answers*, Report by the California Lt. Governor's Task Force on the Feminization of Poverty, January 1985. Available for \$4.00 from the Office of the Lt. Governor, State Capitol, Room 1028, Sacramento, CA 95814, (916) 445-8994.

*First Steps to Identifying Sex and Race-Based Pay Inequities in a Workplace*. Available for \$2.00 + .25 handling from the Comparable Worth Project, 488 41st St. #5, Oakland, CA 94609.

*Pay Equity: A Union Issue for the 1980's*, American Federation of State, County, and Municipal Employees, 1625 L Street, N.W., Washington, C.C. 20036.

*Strategies for Creating Sound, Bias-Free Job Evaluation Plans*, Remick, Helen, 1978. Available from Helen Remick, 101 Lewis Hall, DW-08, University of Washington, Seattle, WA 98195.

*Who's Working for Working Women?*, Comparable Worth Project, The National Committee on Pay Equity, National Women's Political Caucus. A comprehensive survey of state and local government pay equity initiatives. Available for \$6 from the Comparable Worth Project, 488 41st St. #5, Oakland, CA 94609.

*Women, Work and Wages: Equal Pay for Work of Equal Value*, Treiman, Donald J., and Hartmann, Heidi, Eds., Academy Press, Washington, D.C., 1981.



## ANIZATIONS

Project, 488 41st St., #5, Oakland, CA 94609, Comparable Worth Project publishes a quarterly clearinghouse of materials, sponsors a speakers assistance. Write for a full publication list and

25 Market St., Suite 815, San Francisco, CA Law Center provides services and resources and care. Write for a publication list and more

on Working Women, 2000 P St., NW, Suite 5, (202) 872-1782. The Commission conducts information on women in the work force.

on Pay Equity, 1201 16th St., NW, Rm. 422, (202) 822-7304. The NCPE is a national coalition materials and advice on strategies for comparable *Equal on Pay Equity: Raising Wages for Women's*

Business and Professional Women's Founda- Ave., NW, Washington, D.C. 20036, (202) free introductory packet on comparable worth relevant material.

730 M St., NW, Washington, D.C. 20036, (202) developed a flyer which summarizes major com- munication #110, .20/each.)

at the University of Connecticut Job Classifica- tion, Connecticut State Federation of Teachers, Berlin, CT 06037, (203) 828-1400.

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