

Babcock, Linda and Sara Laschever. 2007.
Women Don't Ask: The High Cost of Avoiding
Negotiation + Positive Strategies for Change.
NY: Bantam Books. pp. 1-67.

INTRODUCTION

Women Don't Ask

A FEW YEARS AGO, when Linda was serving as the director of the Ph.D. program at her school, a delegation of women graduate students came to her office. Many of the male graduate students were teaching courses of their own, the women explained, while most of the female graduate students had been assigned to work as teaching assistants to regular faculty. Linda agreed that this didn't sound fair, and that afternoon she asked the associate dean who handled teaching assignments about the women's complaint. She received a simple answer: "I try to find teaching opportunities for any student who approaches me with a good idea for a course, the ability to teach, and a reasonable offer about what it will cost," he explained. "More men ask. The women just don't ask."

The women just don't ask. This incident and the associate dean's explanation suggested to Linda the existence of a more pervasive problem. Could it be that women don't get more of the things they want in life in part because they don't think to ask for them? Are there external pressures that discourage women from asking as much as men do—and even keep them from realizing that they can ask? Are women really less likely than men to ask for what they want?

To explore this question, Linda conducted a study that looked at the starting salaries of students graduating from Carnegie Mellon University

with their master's degrees.¹ When Linda looked exclusively at gender, the difference was fairly large: The starting salaries of the men were 7.6 percent or almost \$4,000 higher on average than those of the women. Trying to explain this difference, Linda looked next at who had negotiated his or her salary (who had asked for more money) and who had simply accepted the initial offer he or she had received. It turned out that only 7 percent of the female students had negotiated but 57 percent (eight times as many) of the men had asked for more money. Linda was particularly surprised to find such a dramatic difference between men and women at Carnegie Mellon because graduating students are strongly advised by the school's Career Services department to negotiate their job offers. Nonetheless, hardly any of the women had done so. The most striking finding, however, was that the students who had negotiated (most of them men) were able to increase their starting salaries by 7.4 percent on average, or \$4,053—almost exactly the difference between men's and women's average starting pay. This suggests that the salary differences between the men and the women might have been eliminated if the women had negotiated their offers.

Spurred on by this finding, Linda and two colleagues, Deborah Small and Michele Gelfand, designed another study to look at the propensity of men and women to ask for more than they are offered.² They recruited students at Carnegie Mellon for an experiment and told them that they would be paid between three and ten dollars for playing *Boggle*TM, a game by Milton Bradley. In *Boggle*, players shake a cube of tile letters until all the letters fall into a grid at the bottom of the cube. They must then identify words that can be formed from the letters vertically, horizontally, or diagonally. Each research subject was asked to play four rounds of the game, and then an experimenter handed him or her three dollars and said, "Here's three dollars. Is three dollars okay?" If a subject asked for more money, the experimenters would pay that participant ten dollars, but they would not give anyone more money if he or she just complained about the compensation (an indirect method of asking). The results were striking—almost *nine times* as many male as female subjects asked for more money.³ Both male and female subjects rated how well they'd played the game about equally,

meaning that women didn't feel they should be paid less or should accept less because they'd played poorly. There were also no gender differences in how much men and women complained about the compensation (there was plenty of complaining all around). The significant factor seemed to be that for men, unhappiness with what they were offered was more likely to make them try to fix their unhappiness—by asking for more.

In a much larger study, Linda, Michele Gelfand, Deborah Small, and another colleague, Heidi Stayn, conducted a survey of several hundred people with access to the Internet (subjects were paid ten dollars to log on to a website and answer a series of questions).⁴ The survey asked respondents about the most recent negotiations they'd attempted or initiated (as opposed to negotiations they'd participated in that had been prompted or initiated by others). For the men, the most recent negotiation they'd initiated themselves had occurred two weeks earlier on average, while for the women the most recent negotiation they'd initiated had occurred a full month before. Averages for the second-most-recent negotiations attempted or initiated were about seven weeks earlier for men and twenty-four weeks earlier for women.

These results suggest that men are asking for things they want and initiating negotiations much more often than women—two to three times as often.⁵ Linda and her colleagues wanted to be sure that this discrepancy was not produced simply by memory lapses, however, so the survey also asked people about the *next* negotiation they planned to initiate. In keeping with the earlier findings, the negotiations planned by the women were much further in the future than those being planned by the men—one month ahead for the women but only one week ahead for the men. This means that men may be initiating *four* times as many negotiations as women. The sheer magnitude of this difference is dramatic, especially since respondents to the survey included people of all ages, from a wide range of professions, and with varied levels of education. It confirms that men really do take a more active approach than women to getting what they want by asking for it.

The more than 100 interviews we conducted in the process of writing this book—with men and women from a range of professions (including

full-time mothers) and from Britain and Europe as well as the United States—supported these findings.⁶ When asked to identify the last negotiation in which they had participated, the majority of the women we talked to named an event several months in the past and described a recognized type of structured negotiation, such as buying a car. (The exceptions were women with small children, who uniformly said, “I negotiate with my kids all the time.”) The majority of the men described an event that had occurred within the preceding week, and frequently identified more informal transactions, such as negotiating with a spouse over who would take the kids to soccer practice, with a boss to pay for a larger-size rental car because of a strained back, or with a colleague about which parts of a joint project each team member would undertake. Men were also more likely to mention more ambiguous situations—situations that could be construed as negotiations but might not be by many people. For the most part, the men we talked to saw negotiation as a bigger part of their lives and a more common event than the women did.

One particularly striking aspect of our findings was how they broke down by age. The changes brought about by the women’s movement over the last 40 years had led us to expect greater differences between older men and women than between their younger counterparts. And indeed when we discussed the ideas in the book with younger women they often suggested that the problems we were studying were “boomer” problems, afflicting older women but not themselves. To our surprise, however, when we looked exclusively at respondents to the web survey who were in their twenties and early thirties, the gender differences in how often they initiated negotiations were similar to or slightly *larger* than the differences in older cohorts (with men attempting many more negotiations than women).⁷ In addition, both the starting salary study and the *Boggle* study used subjects who were in their twenties. This persuaded us that the tendency among women to accept what they’re offered and not ask for more is far from just a “boomer” problem.

The Asking Advantage

But just because women don’t ask for things as often as men do, is that necessarily a problem? Perhaps directly negotiating for advantage—asking for what you want—is a male strategy and women simply employ other equally effective strategies to get what they want. This is an important point, but only partly accurate. Women often worry more than men about the impact their actions will have on their relationships. This can prompt them to change their behavior to protect personal connections, sometimes by asking for things indirectly, sometimes by asking for less than they really want, and sometimes simply by trying to be more deserving of what they want (say, by working harder) so they’ll be given what they want without asking. Women also frequently take a more collaborative approach to problem-solving than men take, trying to find solutions that benefit both parties or trying to align their own requests with shared goals. In many situations, women’s methods can be superior to those typically employed by men (we explore the advantages of women’s different approaches and styles in the last chapter of the book). Unfortunately, however, in our largely male-defined work culture, women’s strategies can often be misinterpreted and can leave them operating from a position of weakness. And in many cases, the only way to get something is to ask for it directly.

So let’s look at the importance of asking.

First, consider the situation of the graduating students at Carnegie Mellon, in which eight times as many men as women negotiated their starting salaries. The women who did not negotiate started out not just behind their male peers, but behind where they could and should have been. With every future raise predicated on this starting point, they could be paying for this error for a long time—perhaps for the rest of their careers.

Liliane, now 46, is an electrical engineer and a successful software designer in New England’s competitive high-tech industry. Although she earned excellent grades in college, she was so insecure when she started out in her field that she felt she didn’t even deserve to be interviewed for an engineering job—she was only “faking it.” Despite her doubts, she quickly

received an offer from a highly regarded company. When the company's personnel manager asked her what kind of salary she was looking for, she said, "I don't care what you pay me as long as you give me a job." A big smile spread across the personnel manager's face, she remembers. She later learned that he gave her the absolute bottom of the range for her position, which was 10 to 20 percent less than her peers were earning. It took her ten years to fix this inequity, and she only did so, finally, by changing jobs.

Quantifying—in terms of dollars and cents—the loss to Liliane and women like her from not negotiating their salaries produces sobering results. Take the following example. Suppose that at age 22 an equally qualified man and woman receive job offers for \$25,000 a year. The man negotiates and gets his offer raised to \$30,000. The woman does not negotiate and accepts the job for \$25,000. Even if each of them receives identical 3 percent raises every year throughout their careers (which is unlikely, given their different propensity to negotiate and other research showing that women's achievements tend to be undervalued), by the time they reach age 60 the gap between their salaries will have widened to more than \$15,000 a year, with the man earning \$92,243 and the woman only \$76,870. While that may not seem like an enormous spread, remember that the man will have been making more all along, with his extra earnings over the 38 years totaling \$361,171. If the man had simply banked the difference every year in a savings account earning 3 percent interest, by age 60 he would have \$568,834 more than the woman—enough to underwrite a comfortable retirement nest egg, purchase a second home, or pay for the college education of a few children. This is an enormous "return on investment" for a *one-time* negotiation. It can mean a higher standard of living throughout one's working years, financial security in old age, or a top-flight education for one's kids.

The impact of neglecting to negotiate in this one instance—when starting a new job—is so substantial and difficult to overcome that some researchers who study the persistence of the wage gap between men and women speculate that much of the disparity can be traced to differences in entering salaries rather than differences in raises.⁸

Another estimate of a woman's potential lost earnings from not negotiating appears in the book *Get Paid What You're Worth* by two professors

of management, Robin L. Pinkley and Gregory B. Northcraft. They estimate that a woman who routinely negotiates her salary increases will earn over one million dollars more by the time she retires than a woman who accepts what she's offered every time without asking for more. And that figure doesn't include the interest on the extra amount earned.⁹ Even in such a small matter as the *Boggle* experiment, the gains to asking were great. Everyone who asked for more money received ten dollars, more than three times as much as those who didn't ask and received only three dollars.

We all know that few employers will pay us any more than they need to. They're prepared to spend extra to get an applicant they want, but happy to pay less if they can. Assuming applicants will negotiate, they routinely offer less than they're able to pay.¹⁰ But if we fail to ask for more, it's a rare employer who will insist that we're not being paid enough. A recent study shows that this is true even at institutions with a committed policy against discriminating between men and women. This study describes a man and a woman with equivalent credentials who were offered assistant professorships by the same large university. Shortly after the two were hired, a male administrator noticed that the man's salary was significantly higher than the woman's. Looking into it, he learned that both were offered the same starting salary. The man negotiated for more, but the woman accepted what she was offered. Satisfied, the administrator let the matter drop. He didn't try to adjust the discrepancy or alert the female professor to her mistake. The university was saving money and enjoying the benefits of a talented woman's hard work and expertise. He didn't see the long-term damage to his institution and to society from not correcting such inequities (which we explore later in the book), and she didn't know how much she had sacrificed by not negotiating the offer she'd received.¹¹

Other new research emphasizes how important asking can be. Deepak Malhotra, who is now a professor at the Harvard Business School, assigned every student in a negotiation class he was teaching at the Kellogg School of Management to "go negotiate something in the real world." The students were then asked to write a report about what had happened. All of the students were part-timers who worked during the day and took classes at night. Of the 45 students in the class, 35 negotiated something

for themselves (the purchase of an antique, the rental fee for an apartment, the salary for a job) and ten negotiated something on behalf of an employer (a contract with a consultant or supplier, a work agreement with a client). The median amount of money saved by the students who negotiated something for themselves was \$2,200. The median amount saved by those who negotiated something for their employers was \$390,000 (and these are just the medians; some people saved much more). More significant than the amounts saved, however, was the answer the students gave when asked to name the most important tactic that enabled them to achieve such extraordinary results: "Choosing to negotiate at all." They reported that the biggest benefit of completing the exercise was learning that they could negotiate for things (such as rental fees) that they never knew were negotiable.¹²

Because Molehills Become Mountains

We've demonstrated how negotiating your starting salary for your first job can produce a gain of more than a half-million dollars by the end of your career. This one example illustrates a truth that has become better understood in recent years—that even small initial differences can quickly turn into big discrepancies over time. As a result, the cumulative effects of the gender gap in asking can be enormous. In the realm of social equity, small inequalities between men and women, between racial groups, or between heterosexuals and homosexuals have been shown to accumulate rapidly and dramatically to one group's advantage and the other's disadvantage.

To illustrate this phenomenon, three psychologists, Richard Martell, David Lane, and Cynthia Emrich, looked at what would happen if men in an organization consistently received slightly higher performance evaluations than women.¹³ (In chapter 4 we explore the dynamics of how this can occur even when there are no real differences in performance or productivity.) The researchers constructed a hypothetical "pyramid structure" organization, in which many people labor at the bottom levels of the organization and successively fewer people are promoted upward to the organization's top levels. In this type of organization, people with the highest

performance evaluations tend to be promoted more quickly from lower levels to higher ones. They also tend to go further—to get promoted higher up the ladders of responsibility and power than people with lower evaluations. The researchers noted that even when differences in the performance evaluations awarded to men and women were miniscule (as low as 1 percent), and men and women started out in identical positions in the organization, it didn't take long before the overwhelming majority of people at the highest levels were men.

This is what sociologists call "accumulation of disadvantage." As the psychologist Virginia Valian writes in her book *Why So Slow: The Advancement of Women*: "It is unfair to neglect even minor instances of group-based bias, because they add up to major inequalities."¹⁴ The bottom line is that even if women were asking for comparable things and were equally successful at getting what they ask for when they *do* ask, this simple difference in the "asking propensity" of men and women would inevitably lead to men having more opportunities and accumulating more resources. But women don't ask for comparable things—they ask for less when they do ask, and they usually get less, too. The net result is a huge imbalance in the distribution of resources and opportunities between men and women. Because women ask for what they want less often than men do, and therefore get what they want much less of the time, the inequities in our society, and all the problems they create, continue to pile up. Or, as Virginia Valian has written, "molehills become mountains."¹⁵

More than Money

The penalties for not negotiating extend far beyond the merely monetary, too. As Pinkley and Northcraft demonstrate,

Applicants with identical experience and performance records but different salary histories are rated differently by employers. If your compensation record is better than others, employers will assume that your performance is better too. . . . Accepting less will imply that you have less value than other new hires.¹⁶

In many cases, employers actually respect candidates more for pushing to get paid what they're worth. This means that women don't merely sacrifice additional income when they don't push to be paid more, they may sacrifice some of their employers' regard too. The experience of Hope, a business school professor, tells this story clearly. When she completed graduate school, Hope was offered a job at a prestigious management consulting firm. Not wanting to "start off on the wrong foot," she accepted the firm's initial salary offer without asking for more. Although she feared that negotiating her salary would damage her new bosses' impression of her, the opposite occurred: She later learned that her failure to negotiate almost convinced the senior management team that they'd made a mistake in hiring her.

Similarly, Ellen, 44, a senior partner at a large law firm, was checking the references of an experienced paralegal named Lucy whom she wanted to hire. One of Lucy's former supervisors described a long list of Lucy's strengths and recommended her highly. But when Ellen asked about Lucy's weaknesses, the supervisor said that Lucy could be more assertive. Ellen asked if she meant Lucy needed to be more assertive on behalf of the firm's clients. The supervisor said no, Lucy was terrific at tracking down any information that could benefit a client's case. What she meant, the supervisor explained, was that Lucy needed to be more assertive on her own behalf. "She could be a lot more assertive when it comes to her own professional needs and rewards," the woman explained. This supervisor felt that not asking for more on her own behalf was a professional weakness in Lucy—and a serious enough weakness that she mentioned it when providing an otherwise glowing reference.

Women also make sacrifices in their personal lives by not asking for what they need more of the time. Miriam, 46, an architect, is also married to an architect. But whereas her husband works for an internationally known firm and travels regularly for his job, Miriam works for herself. And because they have two children, she restricts herself to residential projects in her home state. When her children were small, her husband was out of town two to five days a week, and she was taking care of the children pretty much by herself. Although she enjoyed a lot of artistic freedom in her work and built up a successful practice constructing two- and three-million-

dollar houses (houses that won awards and were featured in design magazines), the demands of her family life felt crushing. "I just felt like this is the way that life is for me and there is not anything that I can do about this." Now she wonders "if there would have been ways of asking for more help" instead of "working and working until I fell apart." The problem was that "asking didn't really seem like a possibility, but I'm sure that it was."

Missing the Chance

Besides not realizing that asking is possible, many women avoid negotiating even in situations in which they know that negotiation is appropriate and expected (like the female students in the starting salary study). In another one of Linda's studies, 20 percent of the women polled said that they never negotiate at all.¹⁷ Although this seems unlikely (perhaps these women think of their negotiations as something else, such as "problem-solving" or "compromising" or even "going along to get along"), their statement conveys a strong antipathy toward negotiating among a huge number of women. (In the United States alone, 20 percent of the female adult population equals 22 million people.)

That many women feel uncomfortable using negotiation to advance their interests—and feel more uncomfortable on average than men—was confirmed by a section of Linda's Internet survey. This part of the survey asked respondents to consider various scenarios and indicate whether they thought negotiation would be appropriate in the situations described. In situations in which they thought negotiation was appropriate, respondents were also asked to report how likely they would be to negotiate in that situation. Particularly around work scenarios, such as thinking they were due for a promotion or a salary increase, women as a group were less likely to try to negotiate than men—even though they recognized that negotiation was appropriate and probably even necessary.¹⁸

These findings are momentous because until now research on negotiation has mostly ignored the issue of when and why people attempt to negotiate, focusing instead on tactics that are successful once a negotiation is underway—what kinds of offers to make, when to concede, and which

strategies are most effective in different types of negotiations.¹⁹ With few exceptions, researchers have ignored the crucial fact that the most important step in any negotiation process must be deciding to negotiate in the first place.²⁰ Asking for what you want is the essential first step that “kicks off” a negotiation. If you miss your chance to negotiate, the best negotiation advice in the world isn’t going to help you much. And women simply aren’t “asking” at the same rate as men.

A New Perspective

Our goal in this book is to explore the causes of this difference between men and women, using “asking” as a lens through which to examine how women negotiate life in the broadest sense. In the following pages, we will examine why many women often don’t realize that change is possible—why they don’t know that they *can* ask. We will look at the social forces that school women, from the time they are very young, to focus on the needs of others rather than on their own needs. And we will show how our shared assumptions, as a society, about what constitutes appropriate female behavior can act as a kind of psychological straitjacket when a woman wants to assert her own wishes and desires.

Despite recent gains made by women in many realms and the comparative openness of Western democracies to progress, our society still perpetuates rigid gender-based standards for behavior—standards that require women to behave modestly and unselfishly and to avoid promoting their own self-interest. New generations of children are taught to abide by and internalize these standards, making them less likely as adults to rebel against these common beliefs. In addition, women who do rebel against these standards by pushing more overtly on their own behalf often risk being punished. Sometimes they’re called “pushy” or “bitchy” or “difficult to work with.” Sometimes their skills and contributions are undervalued and they’re passed over for promotions they deserve. Other times, they’re left out of information-sharing networks. Experiencing this treatment themselves or seeing other women treated this way, many women struggle with intense anxiety when they consider asking for something

they want—anxiety that can deter them from asking at all or interfere with their ability to ask well.

In addition, even when women do negotiate, they often get less than a man in the same situation might get. Sometimes this happens because women set less aggressive goals going into their negotiations than men set and sometimes it happens because both men and women in our society typically take a harder line against women than they take against men in a negotiation. They make worse first offers to women, pressure women to concede more, and themselves concede much less. This doesn’t simply limit the results women produce when they do negotiate. If the benefits from negotiating are likely to be small and the process promises to be difficult, many women feel less incentive to ask in the first place.

By exposing the social forces that constrain women from promoting their own interests and limit them from getting more when they try, we hope to make it easier for women to do things differently. We’re convinced that for behavior to change, women must understand, at a very deep level, the forces that shape their beliefs, attitudes, and impulses. Simply telling women what they should do differently without helping them understand the root causes of their behavior will make women feel anxious and inadequate, we suspect, but won’t help them achieve meaningful change. So in the pages that follow we explore the many causes and ramifications of this newly recognized problem.

Working from this foundation, we also describe in every chapter ways in which women can resist and even retool their early social training, reframe their interactions with others, and overcome the low sense of entitlement, fear, or extreme caution that can keep them from taking full advantage of their talents. We don’t mean to imply that this problem has a simple solution, however—that women just need to wake up and ask for things more of the time and the problem will go away. Women tend to hesitate before asking for what they want not because of a silly blind spot that’s entirely their own responsibility but because they are taught early on that pushing on their own behalf is unfeminine, unattractive, and unwelcome—not to mention ineffective.

So we want to be clear: This book is not simply a study of an inexplicable female failing that can easily be corrected. It is not about ways in

which women need to “fix” themselves. It is an examination of how our culture—modern Western culture—strongly discourages women from asking for what they want. (The situations of women in other parts of the world bear many similarities to those of women in the West, but they’re beyond the scope of this book.) We hope it will help individual women improve their circumstances and increase their happiness. But even more, we hope it will provoke social change on a larger scale by inspiring everyone—in the workforce and at home—to think differently about how women can and should behave. To this end, we also include suggestions for how managers in the workplace and adults both at work and at home can change their behavior toward the women around them. Until society accepts that it is a good thing for women to promote their own interests and negotiate on their own behalf, women will continue to find it difficult to pursue their dreams and ambitions in straightforward and effective ways. And we’ll show that preventing women from doing so involves substantial social and economic costs for us all.

Affirming the Right to Ask

Can women learn to recognize more hidden opportunities in their circumstances—and can the world learn to accept women who ask? Can women overcome their anxiety and find effective ways to negotiate—and can people stop taking a harder line when they negotiate with women? Luckily, the answer to all of these questions is yes. Recognizing more opportunities for negotiation in your circumstances is a skill that can be learned—in many cases quite easily. In the three years we spent writing this book, we discussed our ideas with many women who went out and applied them in their lives, with dramatic results (many of their stories appear in the chapters that follow). Research also shows that certain kinds of training can help women become more effective negotiators (and can substantially decrease their anxiety) by increasing their sense of control over the negotiation process and teaching them to anticipate roadblocks, plan countermoves, and resist conceding too much or too soon. Rather than merely imitating men (which often doesn’t work), women can learn to ask

as women. They can find their own “negotiating voices,” develop more ambitious goals—and get good results.

Society can also change. Malcolm Gladwell, in his book *The Tipping Point*, describes how New York City dramatically reduced its crime rate in a very short time by making crime seem less permissible in the streets of New York. The city did this by cleaning up those streets—eradicating graffiti, replacing broken windows, removing garbage—and by cracking down on even the most minor crimes, such as fare-jumping in the subways. Through these seemingly small changes, the city was able to achieve a profound cultural shift: It was able to change people’s behavior. People with the same deprived backgrounds or bad motives—whatever drives people into crime—stopped committing criminal acts simply because small changes in their environment signaled that such behavior was no longer appropriate there. As Gladwell writes, “We like to think of ourselves as autonomous and inner-directed, that who we are and how we act is something permanently set by our genes and our temperament.”²¹ Instead, he shows, “We are actually powerfully influenced by our surroundings, our immediate context, and the personalities of those around us.”²²

Similarly, changing the context and the cultural environment in which women live and work can change the behavior of the people who live and work with them, making certain ways of responding to women seem less permissible. This type of change can be achieved by a few people in a group consciously deciding to treat men and women more equally—and by their example influencing the behavior and beliefs of others. It can be achieved by men in positions of power making a commitment to mentoring talented women. It can be achieved by a lot of people paying closer attention to the different ways in which they treat men and women and raise their male and female children.

Gladwell calls rapid, large-scale social changes (such as the crime reduction in New York) social “epidemics.” As *The Tipping Point* demonstrates, epidemics of social change are rarely the result of a single, unified effort by millions of people. Because subtle adjustments in their circumstances can strongly influence people’s beliefs and behavior, even small changes sometimes have a “multiplier” effect. Or, as Gladwell writes, “big changes follow from small events.”²³ We hope this book will prompt an

epidemic of small changes and lead to a genuine loosening of the constraints that bind women.

This is not to say that change on a larger scale is not possible as well. One organization, the international accounting and consulting firm of Deloitte and Touche, which employs about 29,000 people in the United States and a total of 95,000 worldwide, has already demonstrated that with hard work and commitment large-scale cultural change is also possible. In 1991, Deloitte and Touche decided that it had a problem concerning women. Only 5 percent of the firm's partners were women, and even though it had been hiring large numbers of women since 1980, by 1991 only 8 percent of the new candidates for partner were female.²⁴ A task force formed to look into the problem discovered that so few women were coming up for partnerships because most of them were leaving before they qualified for partner. The average annual turnover rate among female managers was huge: 33 percent. The task force also calculated that every percentage point in turnover translated into an estimated 13 million dollars for costs such as recruitment, hiring bonuses, and training. Although the members of the task force assumed that women were leaving Deloitte and Touche to stay home and have children, they quickly learned that this was not the case. Women were not leaving to stay home but were moving to other firms. When polled, women cited Deloitte and Touche's male-dominated culture as a big reason for leaving: The company was just not a comfortable place for women to work. The task force also found that within the firm, both men and women wanted the freedom to balance work and family better. No one wanted what was then the standard 80-hour work week.

The task force set about fixing these problems by conducting a series of workshops—attended by more than five thousand people in groups of 24—to talk about gender issues in the workplace. As a way for them to identify common assumptions made about women in the workplace, the teams were given scenarios to discuss. For example, in one, a man and a woman both came late to a meeting. Although the team members ignored the man's tardiness, they automatically assumed that the woman was having child-care problems. In discussing the impact of this discrepancy in their responses, the team members realized that assumptions like this can

negatively influence how a woman is evaluated. This led them to look more closely at how men and women at the firm were evaluated, and they discovered that men were typically evaluated on their "potential" while women were more commonly evaluated on their performance. The net result was that men were being promoted much faster than women. Other common practices looked at by the teams included a firmwide tendency to give men and women different work assignments (which make a big difference in who advances) based on unexamined and often unfounded assumptions. These included assuming that women wouldn't be comfortable in manufacturing environments or that women wouldn't want to travel too much—the latter a particularly career-damaging assumption at a company that relies heavily on travel to serve its clients.

Once people at Deloitte and Touche started looking at their assumptions about men and women, they began to see the implications of their beliefs—and how they made the atmosphere at the firm inhospitable to women and limited their advancement. The next step was to make changes. Prompted by the task force, all the firm's offices were required to produce annual reviews documenting how well women were progressing through their portion of the organization. They were also required to track the number of women recruited and retained by each office, and these numbers were widely circulated across offices. This basic accountability changed the way assignments were made and evaluations determined. Individual offices also started networking events and career-planning programs especially for women. Firmwide, the requirements for travel were changed, lessening the time that everyone—both men and women—was expected to be away from the office. The company also advertised that taking advantage of flexible work arrangements wouldn't hinder one's professional advancement within the organization. This dramatically increased the use of these programs by men as well as women.

By the year 2000, the number of female partners at Deloitte and Touche had almost tripled, from 5 to 14 percent—a huge gain in nine years. The firm had also eliminated the gender gap in turnover (now about 18 percent annually for both men and women), and saved close to \$250 million in hiring and training costs. Particularly heartening about this story is the evidence that the changes at Deloitte and Touche benefited

both men and women—women because they could stay at the company, enjoy working there more, and advance at a better pace, and men because they too could take advantage of flexible work arrangements, reduced travel loads, and a more supportive work environment without negative repercussions. And the bottom line is that rather than costing money, the company actually saved millions of dollars—and stopped hemorrhaging talented people.²⁵ Building on this success, the company was pushing toward even more ambitious goals by 2005.

The experience of this one far-sighted company provides a wonderful model for how the rest of us, with a little commitment and persistent focus, can change our world. Gender equality, with the benefits it can bring to all of us, our sons as well as our daughters, will not be attainable unless our society has the courage, the resolve, and—perhaps most important—the information and the insight to make across-the-board changes. Harvard Business School professor Rosabeth Moss Kanter explains it this way:

Individual trickle-up is not enough. . . . The whole social system must be changed if women in general, not just a hardy, pioneering few, are to gain economic power. The apparent openness of American society to the overachiever from an underprivileged minority group who can pull herself up by the pantyhose and succeed makes it too easy to assume that the problems and solutions are all individual ones. It makes it easy for those in power to point to the token overachiever as an example.²⁶

In other words, just because a few women manage to succeed despite the impediments our society erects in their paths doesn't mean that these impediments don't exist or that there's no problem. Kanter also says that "a vision of what is possible, a source of hope and inspiration, is the necessary ingredient for energizing change."²⁷ We hope that this book, by shining a spotlight on the barriers that prevent women from asking for what they want—and suggesting ways for those barriers to be removed—will play a part in providing that vision of what is possible.

1

OPPORTUNITY DOESN'T ALWAYS KNOCK

HEATHER, 34, WAS THE PASTOR at a struggling urban church in the Boston area. Heather was also an officer of her denomination's local association council—a group of pastors from around the region that ordains ministers, reviews clergy on disciplinary charges, and helps churches find pastors. At a meeting of the council, another pastor, a man, asked the council to extend the support it had been giving him for the past three years. Heather was unfamiliar with this man's situation and sat up to listen. It turned out that this male pastor had worked for many years at a prosperous Back Bay parish, where he'd been paid a generous salary. Three years before the meeting Heather attended, he'd decided to move to a poor urban parish that was struggling to revive itself. He hadn't wanted to give up the salary he'd made at the rich downtown church, so he'd asked the council to supplement his income—to make up the difference between what he'd been making in the wealthy parish and what he would be paid at his new church. The council controlled a small discretionary fund—a fund very few people knew about—and had agreed to supplement the male pastor's income from this fund for three years. Now those three years were coming to an end, and he was asking the council to renew the subsidy.

Once Heather understood what was happening, she also realized that

the impoverished church this man served was comparable in most respects to her church—and the salary he wanted supplemented was similar to the one on which she'd been struggling to support her four children for seven years.

Heather's response revealed a kind of fatalistic dismay:

This fund—I never knew of its existence. I mean, I was on the Association Council!... It had never been publicized.... There had never been any discussion about it in any meeting, there had never been any sort of sense that his time with it was up now, so that it was time for other churches to apply.... There is no application procedure; it's not like it's a grant that you can apply to get or something. It was really a matter of this guy being able to somehow finagle this.

Heather's experience perfectly captures one of the major barriers preventing women from asking for what they need more of the time: Their perception that their circumstances are more fixed and absolute—less negotiable—than they really are. It also highlights the assumption made by many women that someone or something else is in control. This assumption—the result of powerful social influences that go to work the day a woman is born—has a broad impact on women's behavior. Instead of looking for ways to improve a difficult situation, women often assume that they are “stuck” with their circumstances. Instead of publicizing their accomplishments, they hope that hard work alone will earn them the recognition and rewards they deserve. Instead of expressing interest in new opportunities as they arise, they bide their time, assuming that they will be invited to participate if their participation is wanted. They think any allowable divergences from the status quo will be announced and offered to everyone. Women expect life to be fair, and despite often dramatic evidence to the contrary, many of them persist in believing that it will be.

Stephanie, 32, an administrative assistant, illustrates how this belief can play out in a woman's life. Stephanie told us that she tends to think that “things will just happen and if they don't there's a reason why they don't.” Because of this attitude, she was unhappy with certain aspects of

her job for some time but never approached her supervisor to see if changes could be made. Finally, Stephanie received another job offer. When she announced that she was leaving, her supervisor asked what it would take to keep her. After her supervisor made every change Stephanie wanted, Stephanie decided to stay. When we asked why she hadn't told her supervisor sooner what was bothering her, Stephanie said, “I tend to think people are pretty fair, so maybe I'm too trusting and expect that I'm getting what I deserve in that I work really hard.”

This chapter looks at this barrier and its origins—why it is that many women assume that they must wait to be given the things they want or need and don't realize more of the time that opportunity doesn't always knock.

Turnip or Oyster?

If people's beliefs about the opportunities in life lie along a spectrum, at one end would be the view that “you can't get blood from a turnip.” People holding this outlook believe that “what you see is what you get” and most situations cannot be changed. They may also assume, like Heather, that if a situation could be changed, this fact would be advertised to all. At the other end of the spectrum is the view that “the world is your oyster.” People with this outlook believe that life is full of opportunities, most situations are flexible, rules are made to be broken, and much can be gained by asking for what you want.

Linda and several colleagues decided to systematically investigate whether men and women differ in their positions along this “turnip to oyster” spectrum. To do so, they developed a scale that measures the degree to which a person recognizes opportunities to negotiate and sees negotiation as critical for realizing those opportunities.¹ Scales are research tools that have been used for many years to measure behavioral and perceptual differences across people. Perhaps the most famous is the Myers-Briggs scale, which maps an individual's personality profile according to where he or she scores on four related scales (extroverted—introverted,

sensing—intuitive, thinking—feeling, judging—perceiving). Other scales capture individual differences in beliefs, perceptions, and behavioral tendencies. Not all of these differences are innate or biological, of course. Psychologists believe that behavior is heavily influenced by the situations in which people find themselves—a person may drink more at a party where other people are drinking than he or she would drink if alone, for example. Nonetheless, some stable traits and attitudes do lead to differences in the ways people behave. Scales are used to try to identify those traits and attitudes. People who are rated high on a “shyness” scale, for example, have been shown to talk less and engage in less frequent eye contact than people who rate low on that scale.

Unlike some of Linda’s earlier studies, which measured the frequency with which respondents took the lead in starting negotiations, this “recognition of opportunity” or “turnip-to-oyster” scale measured people’s propensity to see possibilities for change in their circumstances. This is how it worked: As part of the web survey described in the introduction, Linda and her colleagues presented respondents with a series of statements such as:

- I think a person has to ask for what he or she wants rather than wait for someone to provide it.
- There are many things available to people, if only people ask for them.
- Many interactions I have during the day can be opportunities to improve my situation.

The survey asked respondents to rate along a seven-point scale the extent to which they agreed or disagreed with each statement. Low scorers would be people who see little benefit to asking for what they want because they perceive their environment as unchangeable (these would be the “turnip” people). High scorers would be people who see most situations as adaptable to their needs and regularly look for ways to improve their circumstances (the “oyster” folks).

Confirming our expectations, women were 45 percent more likely than men to score low on this scale, indicating that women are much less

likely than men to see the benefits and importance of asking for what they want. Even more telling, we found that a difference of as little as 10 percent on this scale—that is, a score that was only 10 percent higher—translated into about 30 percent more attempts to negotiate (as demonstrated by another part of the survey). The strong correlation between high scores and a much greater tendency to try to negotiate confirmed our hunch that “oyster” people ask for what they want much more often than “turnip” folks—and that many more men than women are “oysters.” Since men are more likely than women to believe opportunities can be “had for the asking,” or at least that change may be possible, is it any wonder that they’re more likely to speak up and let people know what they want?

During our interviews, we found women recounting story after story of not realizing what could be changed by asking—a problem that can arise early and persist well into old age. Amanda, 23, a management consultant, seems to be a very self-possessed and confident young woman. Interested in math and science, she studied engineering in college and was offered an excellent consulting job as soon as she graduated. By her own description, she has always been less like her mother and more like her father, who taught her to be focused and direct, and to go after what she wants. She said of herself “I don’t like nonaction.” Nonetheless, as a child she assumed that her parents wouldn’t let her do all sorts of things—such as going away to camp, or taking trips with friends—that they permitted her younger brother to do. She isn’t sure why she made these assumptions, and when as an adult she asked her parents about the different things that they allowed her brother to do, they were surprised. “You never asked us,” they said, adding that it would have been fine with them for her to do the things she mentioned.

Kay, 41, a jeweler in Colorado, had worked for many months on a project creating minutely accurate reproductions of ornate antique jeweled boxes. For a year and a half, she and the other jewelers on the project had maintained a schedule that she describes as “insane, inhumane,” working nights and weekends without any kind of a break. The pressure was straining Kay’s relationship with her partner and her health was suffering. Finally, exhausted, she approached her boss and said she couldn’t work nights and weekends anymore. She expected “all kinds of groaning and

grumbling," but her boss agreed without a fuss. "I just came in one day and said that, and that was the way it was from then on," she told us.

Renata, 53, a vice president of a cosmetics company, collects art. Once, when she first began collecting, she fell in love with a piece by a particular artist. She loved it so much that she took it home and hung it in her house to see how it looked. She loved it even more, but she couldn't afford it and with great regret she returned it to the dealer. Shortly afterward, the artist who painted the picture died. Realizing that the work's value would skyrocket, Renata rushed back to the dealer, only to find that the piece had already been sold. "If you loved it that much, you should have asked me to work out a payment plan," the dealer said. "I would have figured out a way for you to have it." This had never occurred to Renata. She assumed that the price was the price, she either had the money or she didn't, and there was no flexibility in the situation.

In stark contrast, the men we interviewed recounted numerous tales of assuming that opportunity abounds—and reaping big rewards. Here are a few of their stories.

Steven, 36, a college administrator, is married to a professor at the school where he works. Shortly after the birth of their first child, Steven's wife was invited to spend a year as a visiting professor at a prestigious university in another city. Steven's job involved managing a staff of almost 100 people, which is hard to do from another city, but there was no question about his wife's accepting the invitation—it was a great opportunity. His wife assumed they were in for a year apart, but Steven was unwilling to accept this. Instead, he devised a plan whereby he could do part of his job from out of town and hand off some of his responsibilities to a colleague who would be on-site. In return, he took over several of her duties that didn't need to be done on-site. And he went further: He persuaded this colleague to take on some *extra* duties so that he could reduce the number of hours he worked and spend more time with his newborn daughter. Steven presented the plan to his boss, who was happy to accommodate the needs of a valued employee. Steven and his family enjoyed a wonderful year together, he and his colleague each acquired new skills from trading responsibilities, and Steven's job was waiting for him when he returned.

Hal, 41, owns a small chain of athletic clubs in northern California.

For several years, he'd owned two adjacent lofts in San Francisco, living in one and renting out the other. After his girlfriend moved in with him, he wanted to enlarge his living space by expanding into the loft he'd been renting, but he didn't want to pay the exorbitant prices charged in San Francisco for design and renovation services. Hal had recently joined the board of directors of an Italian furniture and design company, and after a little thought he approached the company's president with the following proposal: "I will pay you to renovate my apartment at cost," he said, "but I will pay you up-front for the work. This will help your cash flow, and it will give work to the employees of your San Francisco store, which has just opened and is not yet busy. You'll also get a local reference and a local project to showcase." The president of the firm agreed, the store's staff took particular care with the project because they wanted to show the San Francisco market what they could do, and for far less than he could have paid any other way, Hal got himself a gorgeously renovated apartment.

Mike, 63, an entrepreneur, attended a New England private school as a boy. After an injury forced him to give up football, he became head cheerleader in order to continue supporting his team. As a big game with a major rival approached, Mike overheard a lot of boys expressing regret that they wouldn't be able to see the game because it would be played at the other school. Looking for a solution, Mike approached the local train company and asked if it would be possible to rent a train! To his surprise, the railway was happy to oblige for a reasonable price, and the entire school was able to ride in style to the football game. At the time, Mike's school sent close to 100 boys a year to Yale. The administrators and college counselors at Mike's school were so impressed by his initiative that they made sure his name was on the Yale list, even though his grades made him a borderline candidate. Going to Yale not only gave him a wonderful education, it provided him with contacts and opportunities that he relies on to this day.

Who's in Control?

Why do men and women differ so much in their propensity to recognize opportunities in their circumstances? Why are men more likely than women to take the chance of asking for something they want, even when there's no obvious evidence that the change they want is possible? A group of psychologists has identified an interesting gender difference that helps answer this question. Using something called a "locus of control" scale, these researchers measure the extent to which individuals believe that their behavior influences their circumstances.² The lower people score on the scale, the more they perceive their fate to be influenced by internal rather than external factors. That is, those who have an "internal locus of control" (the low scorers) feel that they "make life happen" whereas those with an "external locus of control" (the high scorers) feel that life happens to them. Research has found that people with an internal locus of control spontaneously undertake activities to advance their own interests more than people with an external locus of control. They're more likely to seek out information in their environment that will help advance their goals and more likely to be assertive toward others. People with an internal locus of control may also be less vulnerable to negative feedback.³ As it turns out, the average scores for women are significantly higher on locus of control scales than those for men. This tells us that women are more likely to believe that their circumstances are controlled by others while men are more likely to believe that they can influence their circumstances and opportunities through their own actions.⁴

This is not just true of American women. In an unusually far-reaching study, this finding was replicated in 14 countries, including Britain, Belgium, the Netherlands, and Sweden in Western Europe; Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Poland, and Rumania in Eastern Europe; the former U.S.S.R., India, China, Mexico, and Brazil.⁵ The study also controlled for occupational status, meaning that even among senior managers, who might be expected to perceive themselves as having more control over their lives than lower-level, unskilled workers, women still scored higher than men. This indicates that even women who exercise a great deal of

control in their jobs still believe that external forces influence their lives more than men in the same jobs believe.

Locus of control issues also help explain the discomfort women feel about negotiations involving money. Martha, 43, a career counselor, described being offered a job and gratefully accepting what her new employer offered to pay her. After she was hired, she learned that she was the only employee who hadn't negotiated her starting salary. But it hadn't occurred to her that she had any control over what she was paid, she said. She assumed the salary for the job was "like a price on an item in a store." Many women, like Martha, go through life thinking that money is something that is controlled by other people, not by themselves.

That women feel as though their lives are controlled by others should not surprise us, perhaps. As the psychiatrist Linda Austin notes in her book *What's Holding You Back?*, "the lives of women have been largely controlled by men until quite recently."⁶ A few facts explain what she means. Although women were given the right to vote in Wyoming in 1869 and in Utah in 1870, no nation-state gave them national voting rights until New Zealand in 1893, little more than a hundred years ago. The United States followed in 1920 and Britain in 1924. Switzerland didn't give women this essential form of control over their lives until the astonishingly late date of 1971. No woman was allowed to earn a Bachelor of Science degree anywhere in the British Empire until 1875; the first Bachelor of Arts degree awarded to a woman followed two years later. Battling for other forms of control—such as the right to own property, make free and informed choices about procreation and birth control, and work in any profession of their choosing—occupied women in Western culture for much of the twentieth century.

Even today, men control both the economic and political environments in which women live and work. In 2001 in the United States, only 10.9 percent of the board of directors' seats at Fortune 1000 companies were held by women.⁷ Although women now own about 40 percent of all businesses in the United States, they receive only 2.3 percent of the available equity capital needed for growth—male-owned companies receive the other 97.7 percent⁸ (a statistic that helps explain Martha's widely shared feeling that "other people" besides women control the money in

the world). In politics, no woman has ever been elected president or vice president of the United States; only 14 out of 100 U.S. senators are women; and only 13.5 percent (59 out of 435) U.S. representatives are women. There have been only two female Supreme Court justices since the United States was founded in 1776 (and both were appointed in the past 25 years), despite the fact that women represent more than 50 percent of the population. (Women are not the only group with good reason to feel as though their lives are controlled by others, of course. Many cultural and ethnic minorities suffer a similar "outsider effect," seeing themselves closed out of most positions of political and economic power.)

The situation is not much different in other English-speaking countries or in Europe. Britain had a woman prime minister, Margaret Thatcher, for 11 years (1979–1990), but membership of the House of Commons remains strongly tilted in favor of men (only 18 percent of the 659 members are women). In the judiciary in England and Wales, only 4 percent of the high court judges and only 6 percent of the circuit court judges are women. Women occupy similarly low percentages of the top jobs in government and at major corporations in Australia, New Zealand, and the countries of Western Europe. Although parts of Northern Europe, particularly Scandinavia, have made significant strides in this area over the past two decades, the representation of women in positions of political and economic power in all of these countries remains far below 50 percent.⁹

Long barred from access to formal education and denied the right to vote, own property, and control their own bodies, women were in very material ways dependent on the will and whims of others to decide their fates. Women's collective identity, as Austin writes, "for millennia . . . rested on the accurate acknowledgment that our lives were indeed controlled by external forces."¹⁰

The impact of this legacy can be enormous, influencing women's actions in their private lives, at school, and in the workplace. In the personal realm, for example, it has long been customary in matters of the heart for women to leave the "asking" to men. Until quite recently, women were taught that they needed to wait for men to ask them to dance, to go out on dates, and to marry them, and the influence of this idea persists to this day. For LaKetia, 23, a sergeant in the U.S. Army who has a two-year-old child,

this assumption produced drastic consequences. Unmarried when she became pregnant, LaKetia wanted the father of her child to marry her. But he never offered, so she assumed he was unwilling. Only much later, after her daughter was born and relations with the father had deteriorated, did she discover that he'd been willing to marry her and would have if she had asked. But even though LaKetia is extremely capable, professionally ambitious, and accustomed to exercising a high degree of control over both men and women in her job, she thought control of this particular decision—about whether or not they would marry—rested outside of her. Because the father of her child didn't offer, she concluded that she had no alternative but to raise her daughter on her own.

Another good personal example—less life-determining but still telling—comes from Emma, 36. A social science researcher with a doctorate in education, Emma is extremely successful and makes more money than her husband, a musician. She kept her own name when she married, and pays particular attention to the different ways in which her two children, a boy and a girl, are treated by teachers, family members, and friends. Despite this awareness, however, she found herself taking a "vacation from hell" a few years ago at a ranch in the Southwest. For a week, she and her children (both under four) shared a cabin and rudimentary bathroom facilities with 20 other guests. This happened, she told us, because it was her husband's turn to choose their vacation destination. Since it was his turn, Emma had assumed that his choice was final and nonnegotiable, although he is not an inflexible man. Only later did she realize that she could have exerted some control over the decision by saying "these are the things I'll accept, these are the things I won't accept, and . . . No, really, if I go on vacation, I need a bathtub for the kids."

The belief that control over their lives rests with others can have a big impact on women's experiences in school as well, as Linda learned from the female graduate students who complained to her because they weren't teaching courses of their own. Since then, Linda has encountered numerous other examples of this problem. One year, a female student asked why two male students had been allowed to participate in the university's May graduation ceremony even though they weren't going to complete their degree requirements until late summer. The female student would have

liked to be part of the ceremony too but assumed she needed to finish her degree requirements first. She never asked if she could participate (Linda would have said yes); both the male students had asked. Another time, a woman student asked Linda why she'd given a male student permission to use department resources to print up business cards and had not offered the same opportunity to her. Once again, the answer was the same: The male student had asked; the woman hadn't. Once she did ask, Linda readily approved her request.

The conclusions are obvious: The women believed that control over what they could teach, when they could celebrate their graduations, and which department resources they could use rested entirely with others; the men thought they might be able to exert some control over these issues—and tried.

Examples of women ceding control over their lives in the professional realm also abound. Susannah, a 29-year-old political strategist for a child advocacy organization, was hired by a think tank studying children's rights shortly after she graduated from college. Initially, Susannah willingly "paid her dues" by getting to know the organization and working through its ground-level departments. But after 18 months, she had identified the particular area in which she wanted to work and spotted an open job she thought she could do well. Although she mentioned her interest in the area to her boss more than once, she never named the job she wanted or asked directly to be considered for it. As a result, she spent two more years grinding away at a low-level job far below her capabilities. As soon as she realized that she could exert some control over her future in the organization and asked directly for the higher position (which had remained unfilled for two years), she got the job.

Why This Difference in Perceptions?

As we've already shown, women's continuing lack of political and economic power ensures that much of the control over their lives does in fact remain in other hands. This basic reality of life—the unequal balance of power between men and women—determines adult perceptions about

who is in control and influences the developing beliefs of children. Keen observers, children study the different ways in which men and women act, the different roles they play in society, and the different preferences and abilities they display. A central part of their development involves arranging this information into an organized understanding of what constitutes maleness and femaleness—a mental catalogue of the physical attributes, tastes, interests, abilities, and modes of behavior that characterize the different sexes. Psychologists call this understanding a "gender schema."¹¹

Research has shown that children begin formulating their gender schemas at a very young age.¹² By around the age of two, children can distinguish the gender of adults. They also learn early that boys and girls play with different types of toys, play in different ways, and wear different clothing. Children learn that adult men and women hold different types of jobs and learn to categorize the "gender" of household objects (such as ironing boards and tool boxes). By the age of six, psychologists believe, "children are experts at gender schemas,"¹³ able to recognize and understand the multiple gender cues all around them.

Observing that much of the world is controlled by men, children incorporate this information into their gender schemas and conclude that this is not merely the way things are, but the way things should be. Often, despite parents' best efforts to the contrary, the patterns of family life bolster this point of view. At the dinner table, men often remain seated and women serve, suggesting that men are the "bosses" and women are the "workers" in the household—men are in control and women do their bidding. When both parents are in the car, men drive more than women, suggesting that men control the family's movements and safety. Men rarely change their names at marriage but many women do, and children are usually given the father's rather than the mother's surname, indicating that men determine a family's name and by extension its collective identity.

Even families that consciously strive for gender equality can send unintended messages to their children about control issues. Linda, for example, has always made considerably more money than her husband, who is a university administrator. Nevertheless, when the two of them went out together, or when they went out as a family with their young daughter,

Linda rarely carried cash and deferred to her husband to pay for whatever they needed. Once, when their daughter was three, Linda stopped in a drugstore for something and the child saw a stuffed animal she wanted. "Do you have enough money to buy that for me, Mommy?" she asked. "Do girls have money, or is it just boys that have money?" Linda was horrified. Their family habits had unwittingly communicated to their daughter that men control money, not women. She and her husband now make sure that their daughter sees Linda paying for things frequently; they also bought their daughter a piggy bank so that she can have money of her own.

Similarly, in Sara's household, her husband was the person who usually fixed things when they broke—screen doors, electronic equipment, toilets, toys. He'd recharge exhausted batteries, replace light bulbs when they burned out, and pound down nails that popped up through the floorboards of their front porch. Although Sara is perfectly capable of doing most of these things, her husband enjoyed taking care of them and she got into the habit of leaving them to him. Then, when their older son was four, he broke a toy when his father wasn't around. Sara told him to bring it to her and she'd see what she could do. "No," said her son. "Daddy will fix it. Daddy knows how to fix things." Sara realized that she and her husband had been teaching their son lessons about the limits of female competence. They had also been teaching him that men can control the physical world and the proper functioning of objects in ways that women cannot. (Sara now fixes toys, recharges batteries, and changes a lot more light bulbs.)

Incorporating lessons like these into their gender schemas, children adapt their behavior accordingly. Boys develop a belief that they are or should be in control and act on this understanding, seeking out ways to get the things they want and assert their needs. Girls learn that they will not control their own lives and learn not to behave as if they do. This "learning," a response to strong social pressures, is often subconscious.¹⁴

Children learn about control issues in other ways as well. Research has shown that many parents encourage boys to be more independent than girls, for example.¹⁵ One study even found that parents perceive their boy and girl babies differently in the hospital (within the first 24 hours of their birth) even though research can discover no differences in objective mea-

asures. Both parents tend to see boy babies as more alert, stronger, and more coordinated than girls, whom they perceive to be smaller and more fragile.¹⁶ A child who is perceived to be stronger would also presumably seem more capable, whereas a child who is perceived to be more fragile would seem more in need of care and therefore more dependent. One of the ways in which parents transmit these skewed perceptions is through the types of chores they assign to their male and female children. In an extensive summary of research on children's household chores, the developmental psychologist Jacqueline Goodnow observed that boys are typically given more independent tasks, such as work that must be done on their own outdoors (mowing the lawn, shoveling snow) while girls tend to be assigned indoor tasks that must be supervised and therefore controlled by others (helping to prepare food, caring for younger children).¹⁷ Believing that girls are more vulnerable than boys, many parents are more protective of their daughters as well, controlling their movements and restricting their activities, but allowing their sons more freedom. Some psychologists speculate that it may also be easier for mothers to help their sons separate from them, forge their own identities, and become independent during adolescence, but harder for them to let their daughters go.¹⁸ These types of behavior teach boys that they can and should take control of their lives; girls become accustomed to having their fate directed by others.

The journalist Peggy Orenstein, in her book *Schoolgirls: Young Women, Self-Esteem, and the Confidence Gap*, describes observing a sixth-grade classroom in which the teacher asked her students to think about how their lives would be different if they'd been born the opposite gender. With a lot of giggling, the students compiled two lists. Items on the boys' list included: "I'd have to help my mom cook"; "I'd have to stand around at recess instead of getting to play basketball"; "I'd worry about getting pregnant." Examples from the girls' list included: "I could stay out later"; "I'd get to play more sports"; "I wouldn't care how I look or if my clothes matched." As Orenstein observes, "Almost all of the boys' observations about gender swapping involve disparaging 'have to's,' whereas the girls seem wistful with longing. By sixth grade, it is clear that both girls and boys have learned to equate maleness with opportunity and femininity with constraint."¹⁹

We heard many stories of how parents communicate this difference to their children. Martha, the career counselor, described a conversation she had with her husband about “how his father had taken the boys out and . . . taught them how to tip—basically, taught them how to slip the maitre d’ money for good tables or give some money to the guys who were in the band to play a good song.” She’d never met a woman who’d had a comparable experience, she said, in which a parent or other authority figure took her out and showed her, as Martha put it, “how to circumvent the system” to get what she wanted. Where Martha’s husband and his brothers were taught that they could change many situations to suit their needs, girls are taught a different lesson, she believes: “I think we teach little girls to be deeply invested exteriorly—that everybody’s a stakeholder, that everybody gets to have an opinion about them. . . . I think we raise men to let go of that, and . . . be much more inwardly functioned—‘What do you think? Be a man about it.’ . . . We still, in some ways—in many ways—train women to be that to whom things are provided.”

Learning very early that “everybody gets to have an opinion about them,” girls learn to abide by this external social authority, which decrees not only what is permissible behavior for them, but what is not. (We look at the ways in which women can be punished for defying this authority in chapter 4.) They may also learn that this external authority will control decisions about their worth or value—and that these are decisions they must accept rather than question or try to change.

Ellen, the senior partner at a law firm, remembers:

The very first job I had, I think, was baby-sitting. I was in maybe the sixth or seventh grade. The people who I was going to be baby-sitting for asked me how much money I wanted for baby-sitting and I had no idea so I got off the phone and asked my mother what I should be paid. She said, “Tell them to pay you whatever they are comfortable with.” I think I got 35 cents an hour. That was my first lesson in salary negotiation.

In this brief transaction, Ellen learned that it was not appropriate for her to consider what she wanted or needed, and it was not okay for her to

ask for what she felt her time and work were worth. She learned instead that she should accept what she was given and be happy with that.

Research in organizational behavior sheds a bright light on the impact this type of experience can have on women. In a study involving salary negotiations for a job (with experienced recruiters playing the employers and business students playing the job candidates), professor of management Lisa Barron carried out detailed post-negotiation interviews with the participants to understand their thinking. She found two distinct groups in terms of how the participants thought their “worth” should be determined. The first group assumed that they determined their own worth and that it was up to them to make sure the company paid them what they were worth. The second group felt that their worth was determined by what the company would pay them. In a striking disparity, 85 percent of the male participants but only 17 percent of the women in the study fell into the first group. In direct contrast, only 15 percent of the men but 83 percent of the women fell into the second group, the group that believed their worth was determined by others.²⁰ Clearly, the perspective held by most of the men reveals their confidence in their own talents as well as their strong belief that it is their responsibility to make sure that they get what they deserve (they believe that they can exert some control over what they are paid). The perspective held by most of the women reveals their expectation that others will decide what they are worth and determine what they are offered (they assume they have no control over what they are paid). The implications for asking for what you want are obvious. If a woman believes that forces outside herself will decide what to give her based on her performance and value, the possibility that she *can* ask may not even occur to her.

Christine, a 30-year-old investment banker from Columbus, Ohio, noticed after six months at her first job that she was doing very well, and far better than a man who had started at the same time. She was therefore surprised a few months later when the man was promoted before she was. Mystified, she asked her supervisor why someone whose performance was inferior had been promoted sooner. The answer taught her what she felt was a crucial lesson: The man had spoken up and asked for the promotion, while she had waited for her good work to be noticed and rewarded.

Even though by all objective criteria she probably deserved the promotion more (and would do better work for the company in the higher-level job), he was promoted because he asked—and she wasn't because she didn't ask. Her expectation, she reported, was, "I'm doing my job, I'm working hard, so they should recognize that and move me along." Because she assumed that only her supervisors could exercise control over the progress of her career, she failed to realize that an opportunity for constructive action was passing her by.

Liz, 45, a senior analyst at an influential government agency, had always been one of the hardest-working people in her department. For several years, she had been producing high-visibility work and powerful policy makers frequently asked for her by name to brief them. Nonetheless, she found herself waiting and waiting for a promotion she believed she deserved, but never asked for. Eventually, she grew tired of waiting and put out feelers for another job. She was quickly offered a position in which she would net \$10,000 more per year than she was currently grossing. Before she quit, she mentioned the situation to her father. He insisted that she tell her current boss about the other offer first. Her boss immediately gave her the promotion she had wanted and a substantial raise. Liz's mistake had been in believing that a promotion was something her boss controlled and would give her as soon as he decided she'd earned it—not something over which she could exert any influence. She didn't understand that what she wanted was something for which she could ask.

Why Can't Life Be a Meritocracy?

Research suggests that Christine and Liz are not alone. The linguist Deborah Tannen, in her book *Talking from 9 to 5: Women and Men in the Workplace: Language, Sex, and Power*, has shown that women are much more likely than men to think that simply working hard and doing a good job will earn them success and advancement.²¹ This, too, relates to women's perception that external forces control their lives. They expect that these forces will hand out rewards and opportunities in a reasonable way and that it's reasonable for hard work and good work to be recognized. They

expect life to be fair, and they often don't realize that it's up to them to make sure that it is. Of course, the belief that merit will be rewarded is fundamental to the American Dream—in this country if we're talented and work hard, we believe that recognition and rewards will follow. Although both men and women are raised with this idea, evidence suggests that women hold tighter to the conviction that hard work alone is—or should be—sufficient.

Even enormously accomplished and successful women often retain a strong wish for the rewards of their success to be dispensed by others. Louise, 37, a high-ranking power company executive, routinely negotiates deals worth millions of dollars. But when it comes to her own compensation, she would rather be given what she deserves and spared the necessity of asking for it. In a well-managed company, she believes, senior management should recognize everyone's individual contributions and give them what they're worth. "They ought to just deal with those inequities," she said. "And it shouldn't be always on the employee to ask."

And even though Christine learned early that she needs to promote her own interests on the job, she persists in feeling that when an industry is moving ahead and pay levels are increasing, valuable employees shouldn't be forced to ask for their salaries to be adjusted accordingly. "My own feeling," she said, "was and still is that [if you're doing superior work] you should be identified, and your salary should be identified by what the market will bear. I think it's up to the people that you work for, whether it's H.R. or your management, to identify that and keep current with what's in the industry."

In contrast, men seem to be socialized—both on the playing field and in the workplace—according to a scrappier paradigm. Part of doing your best, they learn, is being aggressive in pursuit of what you want. Ben, 42, president of a financial management company, said his parents drummed into him as a kid that the most important thing was to do his best. When he first started out in business, he thought that would be enough. He assumed that his good work would bring him all the advantages and opportunities he deserved. But in the competitive world in which he moved, he quickly realized that he couldn't wait for people to recognize his ability. He had to "hustle," sell himself, collar the attention of clients he desired,

advertise his achievements and good ideas, and ask for the plum assignments and advantageous postings he knew would propel him forward. Initially, like many women, he dreaded asking for what he wanted because he feared rejection. But he forced himself to do it, and he quickly learned that it was less difficult than it seemed; in fact, he discovered that most people were grateful to know what he wanted. His bosses, colleagues, and clients regarded knowledge of his desires as useful and important information. They often couldn't give him what he wanted, but when the resources were available and they agreed that his requests made good business sense, they tried to accommodate him. Women's greater reluctance to ask for what they want often prevents them from learning this lesson—or means that they learn it more slowly.

Following Rules

Girls who are raised to believe that external forces control their lives may also be more reluctant than boys (who are taught that they control their own fates) to question rules—and by extension situations—that are not of their own making. The developmental psychologists Jan Carpenter and Aletha Huston have shown that adults encourage boys and girls to play together in different ways.²² Although no one has yet identified all the causes for this phenomenon, girls tend to engage in more “structured” play activities while boys gravitate toward “unstructured” forms of play. In structured activities, children follow rules and guidelines set by adults; in unstructured play they act more independently, develop their own rules, attempt to lead, and behave more aggressively.²³ Girls' more structured forms of play teach them compliance behavior and accustom them to doing what they're told rather than deciding for themselves what they want to do. Boys' more unstructured forms of play teach them the opposite—to make their own rules and assert themselves more.

Curious about whether these differences in the ways children play are simply natural expressions of their gender or whether the types of play prompt the behavior differences, Carpenter and Huston, with Wilma Holt, another psychologist, designed an experiment to try to find out. For

the experiment, they randomly assigned groups of preschoolers, both boys and girls, to structured or unstructured play activities. They observed that the kids' behavior changed with the activity and was not determined by their gender.²⁴ This tells us that children's forms of play determine how they behave. So if adults are guiding girls toward more structured activities, they're actually training them to follow externally imposed rules, let others control their circumstances, and assert themselves less. They're teaching them to accept the status quo and go along with it, rather than question it. If they're directing boys toward more unstructured play, they're helping them become good at different things, such as exercising independence and acting as leaders. They're also allowing boys to learn that taking control of a situation and trying to adjust it to suit their needs or wishes can be a good strategy. They're teaching them that they don't have to accept the limits of every situation—that alternatives often exist.

Practicing these different types of behavior as children leads girls and boys to behave differently as adults. Geri, 36, the director of a day care center and preschool, said, “Men, for some reason, are more trained from an early age to express themselves. . . . As a girl I was not encouraged to ask for things. And I was not encouraged to speak up.” Geri was trained in compliance behavior—she was taught that control over her life was retained by someone else and it was not appropriate for her to ask for something other than what she was given. As an adult, Geri still feels reluctant to push for what she wants or to make her own needs a priority.

Is There Anything We Can Do?

Some obvious changes can help women recognize more opportunities in their circumstances and take greater control of their fate. Parents can give their female children chores that emphasize independence, guide them toward unstructured rather than structured play, resist the urge to overprotect them, and demonstrate in their own lives that women as well as men earn and spend money, fix things, and exercise other essential forms of control over their own and their families' lives.

In the workplace, people who mentor women can encourage women

not to accept the status quo. They can teach them that the world is more “negotiable” than it often seems, and they can demonstrate that seeking out opportunities to improve their circumstances can be an effective and often necessary strategy for getting ahead. Managers who supervise both men and women can take a more active approach to ensuring that their employees are all treated fairly, enjoy the same advantages, and have access to the same opportunities. They can do this by paying attention to what men and women ask for and by extending the same benefits to female employees that male employees request. Otherwise, even if they’re committed to treating men and women equitably, the men they supervise will probably end up with more resources simply because they ask for more. This is especially important when women are a minority in the work force, as Linda’s experience when she was the director of her school’s Ph.D. program illustrates.

Linda, with the best intentions in the world, believed that helping students was a central part of her job. Whenever one of them came to her with a request, she did her best to grant it. She didn’t realize that the men were asking more than the women because she wasn’t tracking the gender of people who came to her with requests. And since women made up only 30 percent of the students at her school, the fact that fewer women were making requests didn’t stand out. As a result, Linda presided over an inequitable distribution of resources, with men getting more than their fair share of opportunities. This led to several unintended consequences. First, while they were in school the male students earned more money than the females because teachers get paid more than teaching assistants. Second, when they completed their studies the men looked like better candidates on the job market (and probably got better jobs) because they had real classroom experience and the women did not. These differences paved the way for even greater disparities—both in income and professional opportunities—as these early disadvantages accumulated over the course of her students’ careers.

We know that every time one person asks for a promotion, managers can’t promote everyone else they supervise. Each time one person asks for a raise, managers can’t raise everybody else’s salary too. But we’re convinced that whenever a man asks for and receives some significant reward or op-

portunity, a really good manager will consider doing the same for his or her female employees with the same qualifications. And the best managers will investigate whether any of the women they supervise have skills and experience that aren’t being fully used because those women haven’t asked to do more. This can achieve several important goals: It can compensate for women’s reluctance to ask, reward deserving employees (thereby building loyalty), and boost efficiency and productivity by making the most of the organization’s “human resources.” Susannah, the political strategist, waited two years before asking for a promotion. Not only did she lose out, but her employer lost out because that job went unfilled for such a long time. In her case, a truly astute manager might have spotted the opportunity to reward a talented and committed employee while producing benefits for the organization at the same time—a classic “win/win” situation.

In addition, people often ask for smaller things, such as flexible schedules or tuition stipends or computer upgrades or even just better titles—and many of these things cost relatively little. Granting this type of request in a consciously equitable manner can increase productivity by building loyalty to the organization. It can also save turnover costs by encouraging people to stay in a place where they feel that they are treated fairly and their contributions are recognized.

From Turnip to Oyster

Women can also change from “turnips” into “oysters”—they can learn how important it is to go after what they want. Susannah told us:

Over time I’ve learned that actually asking for what you want is the first big step. I sat for a long time in that one job thinking that people would see that I deserved more and just give it to me because they saw it when actually you really have to . . . make yourself known and ask for it bluntly—and repeatedly—at times. That was a very difficult lesson and I think I’m still learning that lesson, but it does work. I think it’s like [political] message work. . . . You have to tell people [what you want] three times for them to hear it.

Christine, too, has realized that whether she likes it or not she needs to speak up on her own behalf. She said: "Nobody's a mind reader. And, as bad as it sounds, you're the only one who's going to look out for you in a business-type atmosphere. So if you don't speak up, you only have yourself to blame if something goes wrong."

Kim, 43, a radio news anchor in a large Southwestern city, described her gradual realization that there's much more you can get for yourself in life just by asking:

It never occurred to me that you could, for instance, ask a credit card company for a lower interest rate, you know. Or, if there's a late fee, if you're a good customer, you can ask them to waive the late fee because you usually pay your bills on time—that people will extend some kind of a courtesy to you. And it only occurred to me after I had read that somebody had done it, or heard about somebody who had done it. Somebody told me once that you can negotiate the price of any hotel room, anywhere. Number one, I never even thought of that. Number two, I wouldn't necessarily do it, but if I needed to, it sure is good to know that this is how the game is played outside of my little world.

The other good news is that gender differences around perceptions of negotiability *may* be changing. On the "recognition of opportunity" scale (the turnip/oyster scale), the scores of women in their twenties were about the same as those of men in their twenties. Women in their thirties, forties, fifties, and sixties, in contrast, scored lower than men of the same age. This suggests that younger adults of both sexes seem to recognize to an equal degree the importance of taking an active approach to promoting change.²⁵ Several factors may explain this finding. One theory posits that increased awareness of gender inequities has led parents, schools, and the media to treat children in a more gender-neutral fashion than they did in the past. Another explanation may be that women are making real gains in our society even though they still lag behind men in terms of status and power. Greater representation of women at the higher levels of an organization has been shown to help entering women advance and prosper. In this context, the success of older women may be teaching younger women

important lessons about the existence of opportunities in apparently static situations—and about the importance of pursuing those opportunities.²⁶ If this continues to happen, women will not only begin to control their own lives and the workings of the world far more than they have in the past, they will also be *seen* to be in control to a far greater degree than ever before. As a result, children growing up today and young adults starting out in the world will internalize gender schemas that differ significantly from those of a few decades back.

The least heartening interpretation of the similar scores earned by men and women in their twenties is that young men and women have always had similar attitudes about the existence of opportunity in their lives (this has never been measured before), but as they age men and women learn different things about opportunity. In other words, it's possible that men become more "oysterlike"—more prone to see opportunity everywhere—as they grow older because in fact the world of opportunity opens up more easily to men than to women. While men advance in power, social status, and prestige, women may experience far fewer situations that teach them how much of life is amenable to change. As a result, women's scores on the "turnip-to-oyster" scale may remain essentially unchanged while men's increase.

But even if the scores of women and men in their twenties do not tell of a shift already underway, there is hope in the rapidity with which women seem able to change their "turniplike" attitudes once they recognize them. In the process of writing this book, we met dozens of women who described having a "light-bulb" experience when they heard about our ideas. For the first time, they said, they recognized the reasons for their behavior and the price they paid for not asking for what they wanted more of the time. We heard many stories of women making changes that they previously thought were out of reach. We even heard stories like this from women we hadn't met. Judi, 58, is a psychologist and the mother of one of Linda's male Ph.D. students, whose name is Josh. One day Josh told Linda that his mother wanted to thank her. It turned out that Judi was working part-time for a start-up company. She'd had some ideas about new areas the company could pursue and when she explained her ideas to her boss, he told her to get started on them right away. But Judi wasn't working

enough hours to pursue these new areas and still complete her other job responsibilities. She confided in her son that she wished she could work more hours so that she could do a good job on both. Josh suggested that she ask her boss if this was possible. Judi's first response was that she couldn't do this—it would feel awkward and not right and might even damage her relationship with her boss. Josh explained Linda's research and encouraged his mother to try. When she did, her boss was thrilled that she wanted to work more hours and said, "I'm glad you asked!"

Asking for what you want doesn't always guarantee you'll get it, of course. As we will show, our culture often discourages women from saying what they need and responds badly when they do. Nonetheless, until now the average man has approached life both inside and outside the workplace with a powerful advantage over the average woman simply because he suspected that life holds more possibilities than those publicly announced and widely available. What Judi's story reveals (and the experiences of Susannah and Christine and many more women confirm) is that women possess a wonderful capacity to learn this lesson, a lesson that can change their lives in ways both large and small.

2

A PRICE HIGHER THAN RUBIES

ONE OF LINDA'S GRADUATE STUDENTS—a young woman who had taken her negotiation class—visited Linda in her office to share some good news. The student had just accepted a job offer from a great company and couldn't wait to begin her new career. When Linda asked how the negotiations had gone, the student seemed surprised. Her new employer had offered her so much more than she'd expected, it hadn't occurred to her to negotiate. She simply accepted what she was offered.

This story points out an obvious truth: Before we decide to negotiate for something we must first be dissatisfied with what we have. We need to believe that something else—more money, a better title, or a different division of household chores—would make us happier or more satisfied. But if we're already satisfied with what we have or with what we've been offered, asking for something else might not occur to us. Ironically, this turns out to be a big problem for women: being satisfied with less.

Expecting Less

In 1978, psychologists discovered that women's pay satisfaction tends to be equal to or higher than that of men in similar positions, even though

women typically earn less than men doing the same work.¹ Four years later, a broader study looked at many different types of organizations and reached a similar conclusion, which the author of that study, the social psychologist Faye Crosby, called “the paradox of the contented female worker.”² Seventeen years later, in 1999, a study by two management researchers confirmed this finding again.³ Even at the turn of the twenty-first century, in other words, with all of the gains made by women during the previous four decades, women still feel at least as satisfied as men with their salaries, even though they continue to earn less for the same work.

How to explain this strange phenomenon? Why would women be just as satisfied as men while earning less? Many scholars believe that women are satisfied with less because they expect less: They go into the work force expecting to be paid less than men, so they're not disappointed when those expectations are met.⁴ To test this theory, the psychologist Beth Martin surveyed a group of undergraduate business students. After presenting them with information about salary ranges for the different types of jobs they would be qualified to take after graduating, she asked them to identify which job they expected to obtain and what they thought their starting salary would be. Working from the same information, women reported salary expectations between 3 and 32 percent lower than those reported by men for the same jobs. There was no evidence that the men were more qualified for the jobs they chose—just that women expected to earn less for doing the same work.⁵

In another study, two social psychologists, Brenda Major and Ellen Konar, conducted a mail survey of students in management programs at the State University of New York at Buffalo. In this survey, students were asked to indicate their salary expectations upon graduation as well as at their “career peak”—how much they expected to earn the year they earned the most. They found that the men expected to earn about 13 percent more than the women during their first year of working full-time and expected to earn 32 percent more at their career peaks. Major and Konar ruled out several potential explanations for these differences, such as gender differences in the importance of pay or in the importance of doing interesting work, gender differences in the students' perceptions of their

skills or qualifications, and gender differences in their supervisors' assessments of the students' skills or qualifications.⁶

Another study also found similar gender differences in ideas about how much money was “fair pay” for particular jobs. Using college seniors at Michigan State University, researchers discovered that women's estimates of “fair pay” averaged 4 percent less than men's estimates for their first jobs and 23 percent less than men's for fair career-peak pay.⁷ These three studies suggest that women as a rule expect to be paid less than men expect to be paid for the same work.

Our interviews bore out these findings. One standard question we asked was “Are you usually successful in getting what you want?” To our initial surprise, almost every woman we talked to said yes. When we probed further, however, it turned out that many of the women we talked to felt as though they were successful at getting what they wanted in part because they didn't want very much. Angela, 28, the marketing director of a community development bank, said she's usually successful at getting what she wants because “I don't think I ever want something that's that far out of my reach.” Julianne, 36, a graphic designer who is now a full-time mother, said she usually gets what she wants because “I have pretty realistic expectations in my life, both professionally and personally.” Cheryl, 45, the owner of a small toy store, said she's good at getting what she wants because she's not very demanding and “readily pleased.” These women, like so many others, hold modest expectations for what will constitute appropriate rewards for their work and time. Since lower expectations are more likely to be filled than higher ones, the odds are better that these women—and most women—will be satisfied with the rewards that life sends their way.

But this doesn't make sense, you may say. Why would a woman who is poorly paid be satisfied with her salary under any circumstances? Surprisingly, extensive research has documented that pay satisfaction correlates with pay expectations, and not with how much may be possible or with what the market will bear. In other words, satisfaction depends not on whether your salary is comparable to what others like you are paid, but on whether it falls in line with your expectations. People are dissatisfied

with their pay only when it falls short of what they expected to get, not when it falls short of what they could have gotten.⁸ And most women don't expect to get paid very much, so when they don't get much—as so often happens—they are less likely to be disappointed.

No Value to Women's Work

What leads women to undervalue the work they do and set their expectations so low? The Old Testament says that a good woman is worth “a price higher than rubies.”⁹ But because most women until recently devoted much of their lives to unpaid labor in the home they're unaccustomed to thinking of their work in terms of its dollar value. Many factors play into this problem, with perhaps the most obvious being our historical predisposition against recognizing the economic value of what society deems to be women's work. The economics journalist Ann Crittenden, in her book *The Price of Motherhood*, explains: “Two-thirds of all wealth is created by human skills, creativity, and enterprise—what is known as ‘human capital.’ And that means parents who are conscientiously and effectively rearing children are literally, in the words of economist Shirley Burggraf, ‘the major wealth producers in our economy.’”¹⁰

A society's education system also makes a huge contribution to the creation of “human capital,” of course—by training children, guiding their creativity, and helping them direct their skills toward productive forms of enterprise. But children who do not grow up with attentive caregivers in safe, stable homes tend to derive far less benefit from their education system and only rarely grow up to become “major wealth producers.” Schools can only do so much to compensate for deprivation or neglect at home.

Despite the demonstrated economic importance of child rearing, however, women who devote themselves either full- or part-time to raising their children are not only thought by many people to be doing nothing (“not working”), they suffer a loss of income that, Crittenden reports, “produces a bigger wage gap between mothers and childless women than

the wage gap between young men and women. This forgone income, the equivalent of a huge ‘mommy tax,’ is typically more than \$1 million for a college-educated American woman.”¹¹ Looked at this way, doing “women's work” not only means working at an occupation with no recognized monetary value, but working at one that is perceived to have *negative* value. Rather than being paid to do this terribly demanding and important work, in other words, women must pay—with lost earnings, missed opportunities, and, in many cases, radically diminished financial security.

Lest we think that all this has changed since the women's movement propelled so many women into the work force, and that these statistics refer to what is now a relatively small group of women, Crittenden reports that “homemaking... is still the largest single occupation in the United States.... Even among women in their thirties, by far the most common occupation is full-time housekeeping and caregiving.”¹² Even the most advantaged and best-educated women fall into this category: “The persistence of traditional family patterns cuts across economic, class, and racial lines.... The United States also has one of the lowest labor force participation rates for college-educated women in the developed world; only in Turkey, Ireland, Switzerland, and the Netherlands does a smaller proportion of female college graduates work for pay.”¹³

The cumulative impact of these realities on women cannot be exaggerated. Accustomed to laboring without pay at work that is devalued by every objective financial measure, and to seeing most other women devote a huge proportion of their adult lives to unpaid work, women enter the traditional work force unaccustomed to evaluating their time and abilities in economic terms.

Our interviews produced many examples of this handicap. Angela, the marketing director for the community development bank, had a college degree from Princeton, five years' experience as a successful lobbyist on Capitol Hill, and a year of working on a presidential campaign. When her candidate lost, she began looking for another job and quickly identified two that she found attractive. But neither job matched exactly the work she had been doing before, making her fear that she wasn't qualified for either. As a result, when one of the firms made her an offer, she was so

surprised and grateful that she just accepted it. When she called the other company to withdraw her name, she learned to her surprise that they had been planning to make her an offer as well. If she had waited before accepting the first offer, the existence of the second offer would have put her in a better negotiating position. But because she undervalued her skills and her appeal, she accepted the first offer she received—and a salary that was less than she had been making before and less than she almost certainly could have gotten.

Similarly, Joan, 41, a magazine editor, described being sought after to serve as the editor of a new magazine targeted at working women. At one point during the hiring discussions, her future boss asked what she wanted to be paid. "In hindsight," she said, "I was so naïve and clueless, and I just had never really made a lot of money in my life, and I didn't need a lot of money, so what I asked for seemed like a lot of money. And it was just not a lot of money." After she was hired and spoke to other people in similar positions, she discovered how "pathetic" her salary was. Her explanation for her naïveté was that she "hadn't been in the work force for a lot of years of her working life" and was "very young in the world of business"—an explanation that might accurately describe the lives of many, if not most, women.

Like many of their female peers, Angela and Joan were suffering from a limited understanding of their market power. That is, they didn't realize that a market existed for their particular skills and talent and experience—and that this market could help them establish what they were worth to prospective employers. Evidence from our interviews suggests that this is a common problem among women. Kim, the radio news anchor, admits with embarrassment that at one job her immediate boss (who did not control salary decisions) laughed when she discovered what Kim was paid, it was so little. The station's most prominent "on-air" talent, Kim hosted the morning "drive-time" news program at the leading station in an intensely competitive radio market. Although she was widely admired by her colleagues and audience, she later discovered that her peers and even many people who were junior to her in both rank and public prominence—most of them male—were paid far more. She probably could have drummed up

an offer from a competing station in short order and might even have been able to double her salary, but at the time she had no idea what her work was worth—or that she could use the market to her advantage in this way.

Even when they recognize their market power, many women feel uncomfortable about using it as leverage in a negotiation. Stephanie, the administrative assistant, didn't ask for an increase in her salary even when she had another job offer and her boss asked what it would take to keep her. "I thought it would be taking advantage of an opportunity but an unfair advantage," she explained. Stephanie understood that she had some market power, but she didn't think it was right to use that power.

The Stanford linguist Penelope Eckert traces women's lack of awareness about their market value to traditional labor divisions between men and women. A man's personal worth, she notes, has long been based on his "accumulation of goods, status, and power in the marketplace," while a woman's worth was until recently based largely on "her ability to maintain order in, and control over, her domestic realm."¹⁴ Because this historical legacy makes men more accustomed to evaluating their worth in the marketplace, they also seem more comfortable using their market power to get what they want—by researching average salaries for comparable work, bringing in competing offers, and emphasizing that they have objective value outside their organizations.

For Love, Not Money

In her review of research on children's household chores, Jacqueline Goodnow observed that, in addition to being given chores that emphasize their dependence, girls are also assigned chores that must be performed on a more routine basis, such as cooking and cleaning. Boys' chores, while encouraging their independence, also tend to involve less frequent tasks such as washing the car, shoveling snow, and taking out the garbage.¹⁵ Goodnow surmises that girls rarely earn money by performing the housekeeping chores they shoulder at home (such as cleaning, cooking, and washing dishes) for their neighbors, because those jobs are identified as

female responsibilities and are typically performed by the woman in each house. In contrast, more infrequent tasks, such as lawn-mowing and shoveling snow, tend to be identified as male responsibilities, but the man in each house, instead of performing them himself, often pays a neighborhood child—usually a boy—to fill in for him.¹⁶

Virginia Valian agrees with this analysis: “Because parents see infrequent tasks as ones that call for payment, they are not likely to pay a daughter, for example, for washing the dishes, but they will pay a son for washing the family car.”¹⁷ Valian believes that this “gendered” approach to chore assignments teaches children not only that there is a difference between “men’s work” and “women’s work,” but also that the appropriate rewards are different for each. “Children have reason to think that boys labor for payment, while girls labor ‘for love,’” she writes.¹⁸

As a result of this early training, many women struggle when they must assign a value to their work. Lory, a 30-year-old theater production manager, said, “I have a hard time putting a monetary figure on the work that I do.” Although she manages three productions (in three cities) of a long-running hit show and works punishing hours, including most nights and weekends, she “feels weird” asking for more money because she thinks she should be working for “the love of the theater.” Emma, the social science researcher, said that at the beginning of her career she didn’t have many reference points to help her evaluate her work, and she actually worried that she was making *more* money than she should: “I genuinely thought that I was overpaid. And I also thought that I was working on social service issues, where there’s this sense of ‘How can I be making all this money when I’m working on issues related to improving services for low-income people? It’s not really fair or appropriate.’” If women believe that doing important work—work that they care about and even love—means that they can’t place a value on their time and contribution, or that their time and contribution therefore have a lower value, it’s no wonder that they have trouble gauging what their work is worth.

Having been trained to think that they should work “for love” rather than money also makes gratitude, strangely enough, another limiting factor for women. Grateful to be paid at all, many women accept what they are offered without negotiating. Angela feels that she made only a half-

hearted attempt to negotiate a higher salary for her current position in part because “I was glad to get this job. . . . I really, really wanted the job and I knew I was going to take it no matter what.” Emma described a similar experience in which gratitude held her back from asking for more than she was offered:

I talked to people in Personnel, and they said, “Well, this is the high end of the salary range, and this is all we can do.” And so I just accepted that. And then after my son was born, my costs were so high for child care and other things that I went to the person responsible for administration and said, “I have to have a substantial increase.” And I got it. And I realized after that that I could have really negotiated for much more. I could have negotiated for fewer hours; I could have negotiated for a signing bonus; there were a lot of things I could have negotiated for, but I didn’t. Because I accepted, “Oh, I want to tie in with the range. I should feel lucky I have this job.”

Barbara, 59, a human resources consultant, told us about being hired by a consulting firm to create and head a whole new division. Brought in at what the company called “Level 2,” she quickly realized that as a division head she should have been at “Level 1.” But there were practically no women at Level 1 in the company, and, she said, “at the time I was kind of grateful,” so she didn’t fight it.

We’re not saying, of course, that any of these women should have pushed so hard for more that they jeopardized jobs that they obviously wanted and liked. We’re simply saying that an exaggerated sense of gratitude should not have prevented them from gathering information about what was fair and available—and using that information to get more of what they needed or deserved.

Sometimes, women feel grateful simply for being paid enough to live well. Louise, the power company executive, explained that she never pushes too hard for higher compensation, even though she knows she is paid significantly less than her peers. “I think it is this whole thing about feeling like I have a lot and . . . I’m pretty grateful for what I have,” she said. This highlights another reason women have trouble estimating what their

work is worth: Rather than thinking about their value in the marketplace, they instead focus more narrowly on what they need. This may be because until quite recently women in western culture worked at jobs outside the home only if they “needed” to—if their spouses weren’t bringing in enough to support the family, or if they had no other source of income because they were orphaned, unmarried, divorced, or widowed. Even now, when a woman is divorced, many judges determine her financial settlement from her husband based on what the judge decides she “needs”—not based on any objective evaluation of her contribution toward the accumulated assets in the marriage.¹⁹ As a result, women have learned to think of their incomes in terms of what they need rather than in terms of what their work is worth. As Angela explained, another reason she didn’t negotiate for a higher salary at her current job was that “It would have been difficult for me to even make the case that it was an issue of what I needed.”

Wrong Comparisons

Even when women do collect information about the market value of their work, they often make the mistake of comparing themselves to the wrong people. Research has shown that people typically compare themselves to others whom they consider to be similar, meaning that men are more likely to compare themselves to other men and women to other women.²⁰ As a result, rather than looking at everyone performing a comparable job who has comparable training, experience, and skill, male or female, women tend to compare themselves only to other women²¹—women who are still paid 76 cents to every man’s dollar.²² Women therefore compare themselves only to people who are likely to be underpaid—and men compare themselves to people who are typically paid more. In addition, since professional networks tend to be gender-segregated, as we describe later in the book, women often have fewer opportunities to compare themselves to men because they know fewer men and have less access to information about what men earn.

Eleanor, 34, a literature professor and biographer, has been reluctant to push for more pay and better “perks” (such as a larger office and adequate funding for her research) because compared with her female peers of the same age, she has “way more.” “The people who have more than I do are not my peers,” she said. “They’re people who are more senior than I am.” A committed teacher with a high professional profile and an excellent reputation, Eleanor had already written two highly regarded books that were published by a prestigious publisher and won several important prizes. She confidently declared to Sara that she was far more valuable to her department and to her university than many more senior people who were better paid and enjoyed more perks. But when it came to concrete rewards for her contributions, she didn’t compare herself to them; she compared herself to her female friends from graduate school, few of whom had been as successful as she.

Angela, the community development bank marketing director, told us how, in the early years of her career as a lobbyist, she worried that she was “getting away with something” or fooling her employers because she was making such a good salary. Eventually, she traced her concern to a misplaced comparison. “I was comparing myself to my peers age-wise. But when I began to compare myself to my peers professionally, what other lobbyists were making, and even though I was very junior, I was a lobbyist and I was out there, you know, spending the same time and energy. I thought, ‘yeah, I deserve this.’”

Once she learned this lesson, she was able to go to her boss and say, “Hey, I’m a bargain to you right now.” He agreed, and immediately gave her a raise to keep from losing her. The critical change, for Angela, came when she began “spending more time professionally with my peers versus my personal buddies.” She didn’t compare herself to lobbyists who had 25 more years of experience than she had, but she compared herself to other lobbyists of *both* sexes with experience comparable to hers. This is a lesson from which many women can learn: In order to judge their worth more accurately and develop a well-founded idea of what the market will pay them, women need to learn how to make the right comparisons by seeking out information about their professional peers of both sexes.

Unsure of What They Deserve

Women may also expect less and feel satisfied with less because they're not sure that they deserve more. Liliane, the electrical engineer, described feeling as though she didn't deserve to be interviewed for an engineering job despite her impressive college record. This lack of self-confidence made her so thrilled when she was offered a job, she didn't care what she was paid—and didn't negotiate her starting salary. Later on in her career, despite notable success, she is still struggling with this issue of what she deserves. Although she feels well compensated in many ways for her work, she hasn't negotiated for a higher title that she wants and that more accurately describes her role. When asked why, she explains that other people might deserve the title more, although she also admits that many less talented and productive people have already been awarded the higher title. Liliane is struggling with what social scientists call a low sense of personal entitlement—a problem that research has shown to be rampant among women.

Before deciding to negotiate for more than you've got, then, you don't just need to feel dissatisfied. You also need to feel sure that you deserve the change you want. Here, too, women struggle with a powerful disadvantage—a disadvantage that they often manage by waiting to be offered what they want rather than asking for it directly. When we interviewed Lory, the production stage manager, she told us that for the past several months she'd worked hundreds of hours of overtime and was waiting for her bosses to notice. She wanted them to recognize her dedication and reward her. Having them acknowledge her work without her needing to ask would make her feel good, she said, and asking for the recognition was not going to feel nearly as good—even if she got it.

Being given a reward (a raise, a promotion, access to an opportunity, even just praise and thanks) without asking not only spares a woman the discomfort of announcing her belief that she deserves that reward, it can also relieve her uncertainty about whether in fact she does deserve it. Julianne, the graphic designer, said that her approach when she wants something is to “work harder so it will be clear I deserve it. I tend not to

ask. Because it's a little more rewarding... because what that means is that the people who are giving it to me think I deserve it.” This testimony is particularly telling because neither Lory nor Julianne is particularly shy or lacking in self-confidence. Nonetheless, both of them felt that being rewarded for their hard work without having to ask would confirm the value of their contribution and boost their self-esteem.

These examples highlight the importance of external factors to a woman's sense of entitlement. Although all of us feel better when we receive praise and approval, extensive research has shown that the average woman's feelings of self-worth tend to fluctuate in response to feedback—whether positive or negative—more than the average man's.²³ One study found that women's positive feelings about their abilities and their work performance increased significantly in response to positive feedback and plummeted dramatically in response to negative feedback. In comparison, men's feelings about the quality of their work changed very little in response to either type of feedback.²⁴ Being rewarded for their accomplishments (as opposed to asking for recognition) may not only increase a woman's pride about her work, it can also enhance her sense of entitlement. Many women wait to be rewarded for their efforts, in other words, because they don't know whether they deserve something unless someone else tells them that they do.

In one of the first studies on entitlement, the psychologists Charlene Callahan-Levy and Lawrence Messe recruited students to write a series of opinions about campus-related issues. Half of the students were instructed to decide how much money to pay themselves and half were instructed to decide how much to pay someone else for the work. The researchers found that women paid themselves much less than men paid themselves—19 percent less. Furthermore, women paid others, including other women, more than they paid themselves. The researchers found no gender differences in the students' evaluations of how well they had performed the task, meaning that women were not paying themselves less because they believed their work was inferior to the work of men or other women. They simply lost their ability to accurately evaluate what the work was worth when they were the ones performing the task.²⁵

In a study by the social psychologists Brenda Major, Dean McFarlin,

and Diana Gagnon that followed up this research, men and women were asked to evaluate the application materials of incoming freshmen and predict their college success. They were then told to pay themselves what they felt was fair for their labor. Although the researchers expected gender differences, the disparity they uncovered was dramatic: Men paid themselves *63 percent more on average* than women paid themselves for the same task. Once again, the researchers asked the subjects how well they had performed the task and found no gender differences in their performance evaluations.²⁶

In another study, Major, McFarlin, and Gagnon gave male and female research subjects four dollars to perform a “visual perception task” in which they counted the number of dots in a sequence of pictures. They instructed the subjects to keep working until they had “earned” their four dollars. They found that women worked 22 percent longer than men and counted 32 percent more pictures of dots. This result occurred even though privacy was maximized—the students were not being observed by the experimenter and were instructed to put identification numbers, not names, on their materials. But even though women worked longer and faster, the men and women were equally satisfied with their pay and did not differ in terms of how they evaluated their performance.²⁷ The results of these three studies suggest that women can correctly evaluate and set expectations for others—their low sense of entitlement is reserved for themselves.

A few examples illustrate how women struggle with this issue of what they deserve. Susannah, the political strategist, said that pursuing something she wants makes her uncomfortable because “I don’t always feel that I deserve it.” She said she often doesn’t ask for things “because I get nervous about asking or I don’t think I deserve it so I sort of talk myself down from going toward it.” Lisa, 46, the receptionist-manager of an animal hospital, said that as a child, “my training—what is really engrained in me—is that you’re never quite deserving of what you might want.”

When we asked men how they feel about what they deserve, we got very different answers. Brian, 32, an intensive-care nurse, gave an answer that suggested that he thought this was a strange question, with an obvious answer. “Um, sure,” he said. “I deserve the things I want—yeah.” This

is a confident answer, while the answers we heard from many women tended to be far more tentative about what they deserved. Mike, the entrepreneur, responded to this question with what amounted to confusion, saying, “Interesting question! . . . The sense that I deserve something is not a sense that I carry with me, generally. Do I deserve this, or deserve that?” Where women are often preoccupied with ascertaining what exactly they deserve, it doesn’t really cross Mike’s mind to consider whether he deserves something or not—this approach isn’t relevant to his thinking.

Another study looked at this question of entitlement in a different way. Lisa Barron asked MBA students to negotiate for a hypothetical job with an actual job recruiter; afterward, she interviewed the students about their experience. To explore entitlement issues, she asked whether the students thought they were entitled to a salary similar to or greater than that offered to other job candidates. Of the subjects who thought they belonged in the “entitled to more than others” category, 70 percent were men and 30 percent were women; of the subjects who fit into the “entitled to the same as others” category, 29 percent were men and 71 percent were women.²⁸

Hoping to further illuminate this issue, Linda and her colleagues created an entitlement scale to ask men and women directly about their sense of entitlement. Using the web survey described in the introduction, they presented people with a series of statements about what they thought they might or might not deserve and asked them to rate, on a seven-point scale, the extent to which they agreed or disagreed with each statement. Not surprisingly, men scored significantly higher on this scale than women.²⁹ What was surprising was the extent of the disparity: More than half the women respondents and almost twice as many women as men turned out to be suffering from a low sense of entitlement (52 percent of the women and only 29 percent of the men). Only 6 percent of the women displayed extremely high levels of entitlement, whereas almost twice as many men (11 percent) fell into this category. In addition—and this is important, because the younger people we interviewed insisted that this would not be the case—the gender differences in entitlement for people in their twenties and early thirties were just as large as the gender differences for older people.

All of these studies, using different approaches, go a long way toward explaining why women are less likely than men to ask for more than they already have: *Women are not sure that they deserve more.* As a result, even when women can imagine changes that might increase their productivity at work, their happiness at home, or their overall contentment with their lives, their suppressed sense of entitlement creates real barriers to their asking. Because they're not dissatisfied with what they have and not sure they deserve more, women often settle for less.

Where's the Problem?

But if women are satisfied with the personal and professional rewards they receive, where's the problem? Who are we to decide that people shouldn't be satisfied with what they have? Does it do anyone a service to persuade satisfied people to be unsatisfied? We think it does. We're convinced that as a society we are paying a substantial price for leaving women undisturbed and unaware of how much they may be missing. We wouldn't be comfortable with a system that consistently paid people born on even-numbered days less than it paid people born on odd-numbered days—such a suggestion sounds preposterous. But women make up half of our society, just as people born on even-numbered days do. Why should we tolerate a society in which half our citizens are arbitrarily undervalued and underpaid? Fairness as a principle doesn't work if applied only in response to demand; it must be safeguarded and promoted even when its beneficiaries don't realize what they are missing.

Let's start with the social costs. Undervaluing themselves and being undervalued by society can be bad for women's health. The close link between a positive "self-perception" and psychological good health is well known.³⁰ More recent research now indicates that the opposite is also true. A negative self-evaluation combined with stress can lead to depression,³¹ and two-thirds of all depressed adults are women.³² Depression is not only a problem in itself but can lead to other health problems. As reported in the January 20, 2003, issue of *Time* magazine, "Each year in the U.S., an es-

timated 30,000 people commit suicide, with the vast majority of cases attributable to depression." *Time* also points out that depression makes "other serious diseases dramatically worse," such as heart disease, cancer, diabetes, epilepsy, and osteoporosis.³³ Unfortunate for each individual, depression often represents a real cost to society as well—to provide care for the uninsured or underinsured at a time when health-care costs are skyrocketing. (And most people are underinsured for mental health care.) Then there's the question of lost productivity due to depression, which *Time* estimates "costs the U.S. economy about \$50 billion a year."³⁴

We're not claiming, of course, that persuading women to ask for what they want more of the time, and convincing society to accept and encourage this, will do away with depression and increase production. But, as one set of researchers put it: "Because of the potentially serious implications of negative self-perceptions for achievement behavior and psychological health, more attention should be devoted to discovering factors that produce inaccurately negative self-perceptions. A better understanding of the causes of negative self-perceptions may enable us to prevent or at least alleviate these biases, which presently may hold back some females and males from achieving their full potential."³⁵

There are other social costs as well from women as a group being unequally rewarded for their work. With many types of benefits (such as social security, disability insurance, unemployment insurance, and pensions) linked to one's salary, paying women less means apportioning inadequate amounts of these "rainy day" guarantees to huge numbers of the populace. As a result "American women over sixty-five are more than twice as likely to be poor as men of the same age."³⁶ In addition to forcing so many women to struggle at the ends of their lives, leaving this situation uncorrected imposes substantial economic costs on society to support all of these indigent female elderly.

The phenomenon that Faye Crosby has called "the denial of personal disadvantage" also contributes to the social costs we all pay for underestimating the value of women's work and time. Since, as Crosby has shown, "people typically imagine themselves to be exempt from the injustices that they can recognize as affecting their membership or reference groups,"³⁷ a

woman may see that other women earn lower salaries than comparable men and yet believe herself to be exempt from this problem. This is unfortunate for several reasons. First, at a personal level, because this woman doesn't recognize the reality of her situation, she may take no action to fight it. Second, at a broader societal level, people are more likely to push for changes in which they have a personal stake—changes from which they themselves will benefit. The longer women labor under the misapprehension that they personally are doing okay, the longer it will take for the system as a whole to adjust this fundamental and counterproductive inequity.³⁸

There are real market costs as well. As we already reported, in the year 2000, women owned 40 percent of all the businesses in the United States (a total of 9.1 million female-owned businesses) but received only 2.3 percent of the available venture capital dollars.³⁹ How to explain this? Although there are undoubtedly many contributing causes, Joanna Rees Gallanter, a venture capitalist herself, has observed, "Women are often not comfortable talking about what they're worth. They'll go in to pitch a project and naturally put a lower value on it than men do."⁴⁰ You may think—well, that's too bad, that's business. Businesses go under every day. But sheer scale puts this problem into perspective. If 40 percent of the businesses in this country may be undercapitalized, this puts far more than the long-term survival of a few businesses at risk. It puts at risk the employees of those 9.1 million businesses, the fiscal health of the communities those businesses serve, and at some level the health of our national economy.

What are some other costs? Just as a person who decides to buy a bottle of wine usually assumes that a higher-priced bottle will be of better quality than a more inexpensive one, employers tend to assume that applicants with better compensation records are more capable than those who have been paid less. Because women's salary histories don't always accurately reflect their true capabilities, employers sometimes fail to hire the most talented people for the jobs they need to fill, and their companies as well as the female applicants lose out. With this happening in every type of business at every level, we as a society are inevitably misusing our resources—our human capital. We may also be limiting potential business

growth and related gains in productivity (a major index of economic health), if more than 50 percent of our citizens are not making full use of their talents or being given the opportunity to do the best work of which they are capable.

Finally, businesses suffer when managers don't know what their employees need to do their jobs well. Influential management texts, such as *The Human Equation: Building Profits by Putting People First*, by Jeffrey Pfeffer, stress that being a good manager means keeping your employees happy and productive.⁴¹ An employee who doesn't realize that changes in her working conditions could improve the quality of her work makes her manager's job that much harder. An employee who doesn't communicate to her boss that her work performance is being undermined by financial strain, a conflict with a coworker, or a mismatch between her talents and the needs of a particular project prevents her boss from managing her most effectively. This is not just theoretical. Many senior people we interviewed said that it helps them to know what their people want. Rather than frowning on employees who ask for more money, new opportunities, or different "perks" and benefits, these managers appreciate knowing what they can do to make their employees' lives easier and their work better. The trap of low expectations combined with a depressed sense of entitlement doesn't merely punish women by preventing them from recognizing and pursuing changes that might improve their situation. It deprives their bosses, colleagues, friends, and intimates of valuable information about them. In its worst manifestations, it wastes women's talents and prevents them from realizing their full potential.

As the sociologist Cynthia Fuchs Epstein has written, "it is in the nature of human motivation that when people are not appropriately rewarded for their efforts and contributions, they cease to aim high."⁴²

She also points out that "women, like men, find that when others honor their contributions, listen to their ideas, and acknowledge their [work], they perform at higher levels."⁴³

Managers also don't want to lose good people because their employees don't ask for what they want and then get lured away by better offers. In many cases, departing employees might have saved themselves the trouble of changing jobs simply by telling their managers what they needed to

improve their working conditions and increase their job satisfaction. The responsibility goes the other way too. Managers need to realize that women are less likely to ask for promotions or raises that haven't been given to them. If managers don't take steps to correct the resulting wage inequities, they leave their organizations open to lawsuits when such discrepancies are discovered. They also risk souring morale in their organizations and seeing talented women leave for better-paying jobs when they realize that they've been treated shabbily. Worker turnover costs businesses millions of dollars every year—and much of it could be avoided if managers made a point of finding out what their employees want and need, and workers felt free to tell them.

Here's an example from Linda's own experience. Two male colleagues became eligible for promotion at the same time she did. Although all three of them were equally qualified for promotion, the two men were promoted and Linda was not. Linda had an excellent relationship with her dean and couldn't understand how he'd failed to recognize her significant professional accomplishments and her contributions to the school. She felt angry and unappreciated, and she thought the dean should know how she felt and want to do something about it.

Linda was lucky because she knew she was unhappy, she could clearly identify what she wanted (the promotion), and she felt confident that she deserved the promotion she wanted (perhaps because she was comparing herself to both male and female colleagues). So she spoke to her boss. The colleagues who'd been promoted, it turned out, had received offers from other institutions. They'd threatened to leave unless they were promoted. The dean wanted to keep them, so he gave them what they asked for. Because Linda hadn't asked to be promoted, the dean never even thought of her—she was off his radar. Once she asked, he readily agreed to promote her too.

As Linda left the dean's office, the words "I'm glad you asked" rang in her ears. The dean made it clear that knowing what she wanted was useful information: He wanted to take good care of his people and be a good manager; Linda was a valuable employee, and asking for what she wanted helped him do that.

Greater Expectations

Fortunately, women can learn to avoid the trap of low expectations. Research has identified situations in which gender differences in entitlement disappear—situations that help us think about ways in which women can overcome their tendency to underestimate what they deserve. In the 1984 study mentioned earlier in which people were asked to review application folders and predict the success of incoming college freshmen (the study in which men paid themselves 63 percent more on average than women did), the researchers, Major, McFarlin, and Gagnon, also ran a variant condition that produced interesting results. In this condition, they left a bogus list at the students' desks that listed what earlier participants in the study had paid themselves. This list contained eight names (four male and four female) along with the amount each subject had paid him- or herself. The average amounts male and female subjects had paid themselves were about the same. In this condition, they found, male and female subjects paid themselves about the same amount, which corresponded to the average of this list. The researchers also ran two other conditions. One used a bogus list in which the men paid themselves more on average than the women and the other used a list in which the women paid themselves more than the men. Both of these conditions produced no gender differences in what men and women paid themselves.⁴⁴ A similar study published eight years later (in 1992) by Brenda Major and another colleague, Wayne Bylsma, reached the same conclusion—gender differences disappear when men and women receive the same information about the "going rates" for given jobs.⁴⁵

These studies tell us that in unambiguous situations that provide women with appropriate comparison information, knowledge of what the market will pay for their skills and time can help override their inaccurate sense of self-worth. But situations like these are rare. More common are situations in which information about prevailing salary rates is not readily available—situations in which women's low sense of entitlement makes them most vulnerable to unfair treatment (or simply to the natural tendency of the market to reward people no more than they require).

One of Linda's studies confirms that ambiguous negotiating situations, in which comparison information is hard to come by, can produce big gender differences in outcomes. Using data collected by the career services department of an Ivy League business school, Linda and two colleagues, Hannah Riley and Kathleen McGinn, both negotiation experts at Harvard, found that the women's starting salaries for their first jobs after graduation were 6 percent lower on average than the men's—even adjusting for the industries they entered, their pre-MBA salaries, their functional areas, and the cities in which their jobs were located.⁴⁶ This is a pretty big difference. But even more striking was that the guaranteed yearly bonuses negotiated by the women were *19 percent smaller* than those obtained by the men (again, taking into account significant differentiating factors). When Hannah Riley discussed these findings with the career services counselors at the school, an interesting detail emerged: Reliable guidelines about starting salary ranges exist for many industries and jobs, but few guidelines exist for standard bonus amounts.

These results suggest that bonus negotiations represent a more ambiguous situation in which women's impaired sense of entitlement makes them more likely to price themselves too low. They also suggest ways for women to reduce their vulnerability in these ambiguous situations—by tracking down the information they need for themselves. How can this be done? The first step involves tapping one's networks—both personal and professional connections—to find out as much as possible about what people in similar positions earn and about the titles or job grades, office assignments, levels of administrative support, workloads, travel requirements, bonuses, vacation time, and benefits that go along with those positions. In a hiring or promotion situation, this type of information can become a valuable resource. Someone who wants more vacation time to spend with her kids might offer to trade her bonus for an extra two weeks off, for example. Someone else who wants more administrative support might offer to do more traveling. The first step in doing this kind of research is to make sure to collect information from both women and men. The second step is to collect information from outside sources that compile salary ranges for particular jobs, such as Internet sites, trade journals, and career counseling offices at colleges, universities, and professional

schools. Web sites that contain information about salary ranges for particular jobs include www.salary.com, www.careerjournal.com, www.jobstar.org, and <http://content.monster.com/>. Detailed information about salaries in various types of businesses and lines of both public- and private-sector work can often be found on industry- or sector-specific sites as well. These resources can provide women with hard data to back up their requests—and give them a concrete idea of their market power.

Gillian, 52, a rehabilitation counselor, had been working on a contract basis at a large hospital for 12 years. She put in a lot of hours, but because hers was not a permanent position, she was paid by the hour and paid poorly—only \$16.37 an hour, despite 29 years' experience in her field. When the hospital finally offered her a full-time position, she wasn't sure whether she could also request a higher salary or she should just be grateful to have the security of a permanent job. Her friends told her that she should definitely ask for more money, but she was so uncertain that one of her friends, a colleague of Linda's, suggested that she talk to Linda. Linda told her that her hourly wage was very low and that full-time hourly wages tend to be much higher than those paid to part-timers. Linda encouraged Gillian to research the salaries paid to other people doing comparable work (both men and women), and Gillian discovered that these ranged from \$20 to \$25 an hour. Encouraged by Linda and her other friends, and with this data in hand, Gillian asked for \$23 an hour and got it—a raise of 41 percent. This is a perfect example of how much more women can get for themselves when they question their low sense of entitlement, research appropriate goals, and get the kinds of support they need to ask for what they deserve.