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WOMEN A SPECIAL REPORT & POWER

The shocking truth about being a female professional in Milwaukee
and the ominous implications for the economic future of Wisconsin.

[April 2002]

by Mary Van de Kamp Nohl

It was a celebration of sorts. Immediate past president John Burns had argued for the admission of women to Milwaukee's Downtown Rotary even as some of his male colleagues donned black armbands in protest. It was 1988 and a handful of female members were completing their first year as Rotarians. Burns donned a special outfit for the occasion and proceeded to the podium - in drag. Arms outstretched so that the pillow beneath his dress protruded prominently, he intoned the Rotarians' motto: "Service [to others] before self."

His joke fell terribly short of salving the situation. Says one of the female Rotarians: "We nearly fell through our chairs." In the years since, Rotary has changed. Ten percent of its 360 members are women, and the organization has its second female president. But when I related this story to two male interns, they were sure I meant 1888, not 1988. I didn't. Milwaukee's Rotary, creator of both the Greater Milwaukee Committee (GMC) - the bastion of the city's CEOs - and the Better Business Bureau, began admitting women members a mere 15 years ago. But the impression is typical of the way many people, especially males, view gender equity. They assume that was taken care of years ago.

Most professional women in metro Milwaukee will tell you, though, that women are not, even now, full and equal partners in the leadership of Milwaukee or Wisconsin. This is true three decades after substantial numbers of women graduated with the proper academic credentials (see "Women's Census: Where the Girls Aren't," page 46), making it incredible to suggest that women have not been in the pipeline long enough. "If men's attitudes don't change, the pipeline will burst," predicts attorney Deborah Patel, president of Professional Dimensions, an organization of executive women.

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The barriers for Milwaukee women today are "subtle, but they are there in terms of who makes key decisions in this community," says Julia Taylor, executive director and chief executive officer of the YWCA of Greater Milwaukee. Few women sit at the city's vital decisionmaking tables. "I walk into meetings and I ask myself, 'Why am I the only one of 12?' " says Mary Ellen Stanek, managing director and chief investment officer of Baird Advisors. And "what does it say about a community that for years has tolerated its Catholic girls' college prep school, Divine Savior Holy Angels, being so academically inferior to its Catholic boys' school, Marquette University High School?"

You can see the gender disparity when you examine the November 2001 Economic Development Task Force Report prepared by the GMC. Of 24 individuals involved with the study, only one was a woman, Alverno College President Sister Joel Read, and Read says she told GMC President Bob Milbourne that her name shouldn't be attached because she didn't attend the meetings. (Milbourne, she says, included it anyway because she'd offered suggestions after reading a draft.)

You can see it, too, say other women, in the way Gov. Scott McCallum's hired hand, Morris Andrews, gathered state leaders in the North Woods, an overwhelmingly male entourage, to agree on a state education policy. Among the uninvited was Elizabeth Burmaster, only the second woman ever elected superintendent of schools in the state's 154-year history but clearly the electorate's designee on matters involving schools.

Five years after the Rotary incident, I was asked to write about Milwaukee leadership ("The Powerbrokers," February 1993). After the story appeared, professional women complained that there weren't enough women on the list. So I met with these capable, intelligent women employed in responsible positions, and they raised serious issues concerning women and power, but no one would be quoted. To speak up on this subject in Milwaukee would mean being dismissed as a rabid feminist, they said, or worse, being excluded entirely. "For a woman to have power and influence in Milwaukee," one woman told me, with others agreeing, "you need to do it behind the scenes." (It may be no accident that two of the three most powerful women here today are from outside the city and were not subject to this socialization.)

"Keep quiet and be good soldiers. That's exactly what the male establishment wanted them to do," says Sister Kathleen O'Brien, Ph.D., vice president for academic affairs at Alverno College, where she teaches women's leadership. "I'm not a loud feminist," she says, "but I am sitting here quietly seething... listening to the things men say. What we have done to women and minorities is say that if they are powerless, it's their problem. They have to fix it. But power comes from position, and you change the culture from the top."

I didn't write about the things the women told me in 1993, but I began collecting information. Then, last October, I stopped at Lynde Uihlein's office shortly after the death of her mother, philanthropist Jane Pettit. Uihlein was on the phone explaining why her Brico Fund, a foundation dedicated to the advancement of women and girls as equal partners in society, was planning to reject a grant request for a program aimed at adolescent girls. When The United Way of Greater Milwaukee has addressed the lack of adequate representation of women on its board of directors, Uihlein said, it could reapply. I left Uihlein's office realizing it was time to re-examine the issue of men, women and power.

Things have changed. This time, there are women with significant power in Milwaukee, and they are no longer keeping quiet. "God bless [Brady Corp. CEO] Katherine Hudson and [UWM Chancellor] Nancy Zimpher," says O'Brien. "They have made being visible acceptable."

There are also men who understand the importance of including women in decision-making and the cost of excluding them. But many do not, and it's no coincidence that college-educated women are leaving the state at twice the rate of their male classmates! The GMC's Economic Development Task Force lamented the brain drain as "perhaps the biggest concern in Wisconsin," noting that "the state is losing far more than its share of young college grads to other states [100,000 in the 1990s]." The GMC formed a task force to find ways of making the region more hospitable to minority professionals, but it never mentioned the gender disparity.

Had there been more women on the task force, this might have occurred to them. It's too bad it did not because, some argue, this gender inequity left unchecked will affect the state's economic future and your wallet, even if you're a male.

Wisconsin Public Radio "Career Talk" co-host Pat Alea, a Madison-based organizational change consultant, likes to point to a November 20, 2000 Business Week article that summed up a series of research studies. It concluded: "Female managers outperform their male counterparts on almost every measure: motivating others, fostering communication, producing high-quality work and listening to others." Only on strategic planning and analyzing issues did male and female managers have similar scores.

Unlike previous studies, which relied on opinion surveys or experiments simulating business situations, these were based on actual performance reviews. "Contrary to stereotypes, women outperformed men in all kinds of intellectual

areas, such as producing high-quality work, recognizing trends and generating new ideas and acting on them," the article said, citing several studies, one including 58,000 managers.

Given all of this, you'd expect organizations hungry for talent to promote women to top management in droves, says Alea, but they are not, although Wisconsin women face fewer obstacles nowadays to garnering middle-management posts. In a report released last August by the UWM Center for Economic Development, Director Marc Levine, Ph.D., along with researchers Ryan Ranker and Lisa Heuler Williams, found "a crack" in Milwaukee's glass ceiling. Studying data from the EEOC workforce survey, they concluded that between 1990 and 1999, 70 percent of Milwaukee's new managerial jobs went to women. Their report netted little attention for its disturbing revelation: "Despite these encouraging trends," the authors wrote, "Milwaukee remained near the bottom of U.S. metro areas in the proportion of women and minorities holding managerial jobs in large enterprises. The region has a long way to go simply to reach the median of major metropolitan areas."

"It's a factual thing. There are not enough women in leadership in Milwaukee," says Zimpher. "When I look at the GMC, I think, 'Thank God for female university presidents.' So when people say, 'The GMC looks this way because to be a member you have to be a CEO,' I say change the rule. Because... you have to lead until the world catches up with you."

While Milwaukee crept up the metropolitan rankings for women in supervisory posts (from 44 to 39), Minneapolis leapt 20 spots (36 to 16). To prime the pump there in 1991, some of the largest corporations in the state and a Republican state senator organized the "Minnesota 100," pairing 100 "outstanding women" with 100 business leaders in year-long relationships across company lines. Their mission was to "end the stalling of women in middle management."

Not only did the city's ruling executives get to know talented women, they had a vested interest in their advancement. Today, Minneapolis attracts women in substantial numbers from other states, including ours.

It seems less likely that what happened recently in Milwaukee would occur in Minneapolis. When the board of Milwaukee's United Way was given the names of 15 women who run their own businesses as potential nominees for board membership (to remedy the board's gender imbalance), few of the men knew even one woman on the list.

But while the "Minnesota 100" began its work, Milwaukee held a kickoff breakfast for its United Performing Arts Fund drive. Johnson

Controls CEO Jim Keyes urged the executives present, all of whom had been invited because they earned more than \$60,000 a year, to make "a leadership contribution." Only three women were in the room. "They were serving the food," says an attendee.

In 1994, Wisconsin Gov. Tommy Thompson formed the country's first ongoing state Glass Ceiling Commission. But when he couldn't get the Legislature to fund it, the commission had to borrow staff from other agencies to fulfill its mission. That included establishing an employer compact where businesses would voluntarily set goals for adding women and minorities in upper management, creating the Diamond Awards to recognize companies with a significant number of women and minorities in top management, and generating names of qualified women and minorities for businesses to consult when making their boards more inclusive.

"We knew we had to have corporate CEOs involved or nothing would change," recalls Carol Skornicka, senior vice president and general counsel of Midwest Express Airlines. Thompson and U.S. Labor Secretary Elizabeth Dole gave keynote speeches. The commission offered workshops teaching CEOs to communicate that they wanted women and minorities to play key roles, then hold managers accountable for advancing them. With TV cameras rolling and 1,000 in attendance, the first Glass Ceiling Awards were distributed in 1995. But when the lights dimmed, the commission's responsibilities were aborted, diluted and pawned off on others.

The employer compact never got off the ground, says Lt. Gov. Margaret Farrow, commission co-chair. There weren't enough companies with women and minorities in top management to give awards to "so we had to change the rules and recognize companies with programs in place to help women advance," says Skornicka.

When the Glass Ceiling Commission gave its last awards in 2000, its database of women and minorities had already been dumped on UW-Madison Business School. "Companies rarely consulted it, and it was expensive to maintain, so we discontinued it," says Helen Capellaro, business school PR director. "It was in and trendy to address the glass ceiling in the '90s. You could get a lot of Brownie points. But when you couldn't get that anymore, the state government disappeared on us." The commission has not met since 2000, though not for lack of work.

In 1999, Madison Magazine declared the '90s "a great decade for the rise of women to posts of political power in Dane

County." The same can't be said of Milwaukee. Even "rural Wisconsin elects far more women than urban Milwaukee," says Dane County Executive Kathleen Falk, a gubernatorial candidate.

"Why don't more women run for political office here? Because women always think, 'I don't know enough. I'm not good enough at x, y, z.' Men don't think those things. It's socialization," says former state legislator Rosemary Potter, now a consultant.

When UWM's Zimpher arrived in Milwaukee, she says she was warned to "take it nice and easy and other things that all subtly referred to gender." She laughed off the warnings, and her subsequent risk-taking helped her become the most powerful woman in Milwaukee today.

Several years ago, when the UW-Madison Business School asked some Milwaukee women to discuss the obstacles to advancement they face, it found a striking difference between businesswomen in the state's two largest cities. "The Milwaukee women were very edgy about coming out and discussing it," says Capellaro.

Perhaps this is because in Milwaukee, women are still viewed as the workhorses of organizations, not corner office material, speculates one female exec with experience in both cities. "The guys get the glory jobs; the women do all the work," says the female president of a Milwaukee corporate division.

Even a sterling track record doesn't guarantee a woman won't encounter stereotypes. For 15 years as executive director, Susan Dragisic led the city's United Performing Arts Fund to one record year after another. Across the country, only Los Angeles raised more money. But when she was interviewing for the post of executive director of United Way of Greater Milwaukee two years ago, a board member asked Dragisic whether she thought "the corporate leadership in this community" was "ready for a woman head of United Way." The board member who asked the question was another woman.

On May 9, 1994, four months after she became the first female to head a major Wisconsin public company, manufacturer Brady Corp. CEO Katherine Hudson gave a speech that made her both a local hero and a villain. She said the ceiling keeping women out of top management isn't glass, it's steel, recalls one woman exec. The occasion was a rare joint meeting of the male CEO-dominated GMC and the city's executive women's groups, Tempo and Professional Dimensions (begun in the '70s as an option to Rotary when it didn't admit women).

Nearly eight years later, women still refer to Hudson's "woodshed speech" because the city's male leadership was taken behind the woodshed and spanked, verbally anyway, for failing to welcome women into the halls of power. Hudson's speech inspired what many women call an "Aha!" moment, in which they realize they are smart enough and work hard enough but that the playing field is uneven and they will need help righting it.

In the years since, when these annual joint ventures have occurred, the female organizers have habitually deferred to the GMC men, complains Alverno's Read, "and I am furious at them. They don't take it over and say, 'I am in charge,' perhaps because all the male bosses in town are there. But sometimes women don't see themselves as equals, and they betray themselves in their actions."

But at the 1994 meeting, Hudson stepped up to the plate. This is what she said: "I speak to women all the time, so this is for the guys. You miss out on one-half of the potential of your worlds, your markets... There are certain things that may be different for women, and guys don't see them. Look how you spend your time in the corner office surrounded by guys. How do people get tapped for new jobs? Do you post the job description with all the hiring criteria? Or is the job filled by word of mouth? How many women do you have in profit-and-loss positions?"

Hudson then remembers saying, "When you're in a meeting with 10 guys and one woman, and the woman says, 'We ought to do A,' everyone ignores her, and a guy says the same thing, and then it's 'Oh, yeah. Let's do it.' Do you realize that if there is only one woman or minority in that room, they are invisible? But that if there are three, it's okay? There is actually behavioral psychology research on this - The Rule of Three."

("Until you get a critical mass of women," YWCA's Taylor adds now, "people don't see that each woman executive is different, like men." Until then, the actions of one woman become generalized to all of the rest, as they have inside one of Milwaukee's largest companies. There, the failure of two female supervisors is so often recounted, says a woman executive in the company, "it has ruined it for every other woman. They won't get a chance. But no one ever mentions all the men who failed in those posts.")

Hudson didn't stop with The Rule of Three. "At Kodak [where she headed a \$2 billion division], everybody was in at 7 a.m., out at 7 p.m. or you were slacking off," she said. "But if you're more flexible, everybody benefits. You have less turnover and fewer devastated people. If you don't do this, you're not thinking about the \$15,000 it takes to find and

train a worker to replace every one who leaves. Of course, if there's a crisis, everybody works 24 hours a day until it's over."

When Hudson finished, the room was quiet. One male CEO leaned over to a female executive, whispering, "it was nice seeing you, but I guess we've all been taken to the woodshed." He took Hudson's message better than many. "A quarter of the men who were there are still mad about what she said," says Paul Purcell, CEO of Robert W. Baird & Co.

Afterward, Hudson put her money where her mouth was. She tore out Brady Corp.'s punch clocks, instituted flexible hours and gave Groucho Marx glasses to top managers, telling them to lighten up. Together, they completed 20 acquisitions, expanding operations to as many countries. Brady added 1,800 employees, more than doubled annual sales to nearly a half-billion dollars and increased shareholder dividends every year. While Hudson grew the company at a compound annual rate of 16 percent, she made the once rule-bound Brady a place where initiative, not waiting for permission from a patriarchal superior, is rewarded.

More than one female executive points out that few of the male CEOs who heard Hudson's speech could match her performance, although even those with underperforming and foundering companies, such as Wisconsin Energy's Richard Abdo and Cobalt's Thomas Hefty, play bigger roles at Milwaukee's decisionmaking table.

Eight years after Hudson's speech, relations are not much closer between the GMC and the women's groups. Last winter, the GMC's Stanek, Tempo's Susan Stein and Professional Dimensions' Patel waited in Milbourne's office for the GMC president to arrive for a scheduled meeting to arrange another joint gathering after a year's absence. Milbourne never showed up. One member of his staff explained that his previous meeting was running late; another told them he had a sick child at home. Weeks passed, and as this was being written, Milbourne still had not called to explain or reschedule.

When Maria Monreal-Cameron became Hispanic Chamber of Commerce director, she looked forward to joining the Coalition of Hispanic Agency Directors. Approaching the meeting room, she heard voices and laughter, but as she entered, an uneasy silence settled over the all-male group.

"I thought because I'm so new in my job, you didn't have a chance to invite me," Monreal-Cameron says she offered. "You don't understand," several of the men said. "This meeting is only for social service agencies." Monreal-Cameron got up and put on her coat. She said, "Okay, you obviously don't want me here, so I will leave, but I know the real reason you're excluding me and I have the wherewithal to challenge you."

She won. Monreal-Cameron attended every meeting after that. Since then, she has become a recognized force on her own. While Monreal-Cameron refused to leave, other women do. Most callers who complained about the lack of women in the 1993 "Powerbrokers" article have since left corporate jobs. Half have started their own businesses; several do consulting, like Lisa Berman Cabaniss. "It's not despair behind this," she says. "It's reality. You devote most of your waking time to work and still feel you're not making the most of your talents. There is a whole group of us who have left, and you would practically have to set us on fire to get us to go back to corporate jobs. Personally, I'd rather starve."

In 1993, Wisconsin's Glass Ceiling Task Force, forerunner of the Glass Ceiling Commission, found that 80 percent of women who said there was a glass ceiling at their previous company listed it as an important reason why they left. That's consistent with the surprise findings of accounting firm Deloitte & Touche's 1995 inquiry into the unusually high turnover among its up-and-coming female employees. Contrary to the belief of top management that the women wanted to stay home and raise their children, more than 90 percent were working elsewhere.

This corporate exodus may be fueling the 40 percent rise in women-owned firms (to 21,677) between 1997 and 2002. That growth rate is more rapid than the national average and more than three times the rate for all employer firms in Wisconsin, according to the Center for Women's Business Research. "Women are saying that if we're going to have to work this hard, we're going to put our lives in our own hands," says Joan Lloyd, organizational change consultant. The real challenge for corporations becomes getting and keeping the bright women here.

Even young males are beginning to see it that way. Earlier this year, Catalyst, the Washington, D.C.-based research center on women in business, surveyed 5,000 male and female Gen-Xers. Rather than perks like gym memberships, it found that both males and females wanted "programs and policies that will help them balance their work and personal lives" and "strategies to help navigate advancement."

The implications are not good for organizations wedded to the old definition of a proper executive work ethic as requiring a 60-hour work week, judging performance by face time rather than accomplishments. But that is still the

case in many companies. "There is no question Wisconsin is much more conservative in its definition of work ethic than other places," says Terry Ludeman, chief labor economist with the Wisconsin Department of Workforce Development. At most Wisconsin companies, the expectations of workers remain the same as they were when only one parent worked, even though a greater percentage of women work in Wisconsin than in any other state.

Does this help explain why, over the past decade, Wisconsin has lost twice as many college-educated women to the brain drain as men? (Women also graduate in greater numbers.) "This is a very important issue, and it's not talked about," says Louise Root-Robbins, UW System coordinator for women's issues. "Younger people want a life outside of work," she says. "We're so far behind on this,... but employers here don't look at why kids are leaving. They just say, 'Oh, they got a better offer.' But number one, our taxes are too high. Our wages are too low [Wisconsin women rank 46th among the 50 states on pay equity with men] and there is this whole area of work-life balance. We're just not in the game."

In mid-January, Ludeman told GMC members that the flight of young women has ominous implications. "It was just the kind of group who needs to hear this," he says, "96 percent white male CEOs." Tracking 16- and 18-year-olds from 1990 to 1998, when they turned 24 to 26 years old, "Wisconsin lost 4.7 percent of males and 9.3 percent of females to other states," confirms Dale Knapp, senior researcher for Wisconsin Taxpayer's Alliance.

The number of females aged 22 to 30 drops off considerably, too, says Ludeman. "Not only are we losing educated females, we're also losing the childbearer, and Wisconsin is already aging much faster than the rest of the U.S." While the rest of the country has returned to near baby boom birthrates, Wisconsin's has dropped 30 percent.

By 2015, "Wisconsin will be up against a wall," predicts Ludeman, with more residents turning 65 than 18. The labor force won't grow and "it will be hard for companies to even replace retirees." GMC members asked what they could do to ward off the drastic effects on the state's economy. He told them: "Become more hospitable to minorities and immigrants and get women into areas where we haven't traditionally allowed them."

Kimberly Wedell experienced an "Aha!" moment while recounting her story.

Wedell was the sole woman principal in the Milwaukee office of the worldwide human resources consulting firm, William M. Mercer Inc., and the only woman on its operating committee. She headed the office's communications practice, which helps large firms tell employees about changes in benefits. Wedell's practice wasn't as "important" as the retirement or healthcare practices of her male colleagues, but she didn't care. She just wanted to enjoy her job and grow her practice.

Her staff was all women, most with children, and when she would bring up their need for flexibility to the operating committee, her male colleagues would say, "We can't do that." They weren't rude to her. "They were just so unaware of why these issues would be issues to me," she says. "They probably thought, 'We've got this covered. We've got a woman on our operating committee.'"

Wedell worked from 5:15 a.m. until 7 p.m. "I was putting in so many hours," she says, "I just lost sight of parts of my life." If you'd ask the name of her son's dentist, she didn't know, yet because Mercer liked its executives to entertain clients, she learned to golf, although she was never invited to an outing.

By 1997, she'd begun thinking she wasn't any good at her job. "In absolute frustration [and with plenty of self-doubt from years of not being taken seriously]," Wedell quit, without another job. She joined Professional Dimensions, where, to her amazement, she met three African-American women starting their own bank. "I didn't even think you could do that," she says. "But that's what got me on fire. That's what gave me the vision." The women opened Legacy Bank, and Wedell, with two former Mercer employees, started her own communications practice.

Today, The Roc Group has offices in Mequon, Chicago and Muskegon, Michigan, with affiliates in San Francisco and England. Most of Wedell's former staff left the old firm and work for her on a contract basis, giving them the flexibility they'd wanted. Many of her old clients seek services from her firm. She's brought in lots of new business, too. "I guess I am pretty good at this after all," she says. Her clients include Northwestern Mutual, Journal Communications, Snap-On Tools, Briggs & Stratton, Johnson Controls, Miller Brewing, the University of Chicago and other large employers.

"For someone who left feeling totally washed up, the last four years have been the most exciting period of my life," she says.

"Driving home, I experienced an epiphany of sorts," Wedell e-mailed me later. "...It dawned on me that although I felt like the illegitimate child on Mercer's operating committee, the fact was, I was the only one with an MBA... yet I was the one who felt inferior!"

Philanthropist Lynde Uihlein is even more reclusive than her notoriously private mother, the late Jane Pettit, and though few even know her name, she is poised to have more influence on the uneven playing field than just about anyone else in Wisconsin. She has begun using her Brico Fund's mission, equality of girls and women, as both carrot and stick, putting pressure on local wallets. Things began to change in 2000 when she underwrote the first local study of gender bias in youth programs. Looking at United Way, it found that girls' programs received a half-million dollars less than boys' programs.

A quiet revolution began when United Way then took up Uihlein's concern about the gender balance of its board. In 1991, women accounted for a third of the seats. By last October, it was just 17 percent. "We had drifted," says United Way President Dragisic.

Word seems to be spreading that Uihlein is looking at different criteria than did her mother. Not-for-profits that exclude women won't get funding. For 50 years, the board of Milwaukee's Boys and Girls Clubs was the ultimate male bunker. Last November, it departed dramatically from its previous succession plan, choosing Mary Ellen Stanek as its chair-elect. In January, the Milwaukee Symphony Orchestra followed suit, naming its first-ever female president-elect, Judy Jorgensen. It wasn't that there hadn't been qualified women. Jorgensen, a retired Waukesha County Technical College dean, had already led MSO's annual fund drive and headed its governance committee.

Uihlein is working on other fronts, too. In January, Planned Parenthood and Wisconsin Citizen Action offered a day of intense training for women interested in running for political office. Event planners would have been happy to see 30 women in attendance; when 130 showed up, they were ecstatic.

Uihlein is also behind the YWCA-sponsored "Living Room Project," a statewide grass-roots effort based on the belief that women get together for book clubs and PTAs but rarely consider the issue of women and power. Already there are some 30 groups. Says Madison-based Executive Director Kate Peyton: The Living Room Project is "a call to action, not another coping mechanism. It will help us say, 'Here's the data - we can do something more about it besides cry.'"

When the city's most powerful women discuss gender and power, they take solace in the emergence of a number of male CEOs, the "guys who get it." By this they mean men who realize the importance of a diverse decisionmaking group and are willing to stand up to the old boys' network to make it happen. The same names come up: Manpower's Jeff Joerres, Baird's Paul Purcell and Journal Communications' Steve Smith. Others say there are "promising signs" that Edward Zore, head of the 2000-pound gorilla, Northwestern Mutual, will be one, too.

"You want to take these people and get 'em in faster because it will really help the corporation. I consider it essential to have people with diverse backgrounds and views," says Joerres, who just hired Executive Vice President Barbara Beck to run Manpower's U.S. and Canadian operations. "How do we make Milwaukee an electric place? The kind of place I know we can be? We have to challenge ourselves... break all the traditional rules of how people get invited to the table. It's time to bring in fresh and energetic talent."

Purcell says putting women in positions of power is so important that he's made it part of his strategic plan "because despite what everybody tells you, women have had to be better than men in this business. [Baird Advisor's Stanek has beat the industry average for bond funds in 10 of the past 11 years.] Women are outliving men. The women will end up with the assets, and women like to deal with women. And when it comes to civic leadership, somebody's going to finally get it right and stop thinking, 'You're a woman and I'm a guy' and realize we're partners."

There are other signs things are changing for local women. Last winter, the Rotary Club formed a focus group to figure out why it has such high turnover of its female members. It also established policies to create a friendlier climate for a diverse membership. Many women say it's time for the GMC and Metropolitan Milwaukee Association of Commerce to do the same soul-searching.

Certainly, opportunities have been lost. The past decade "should have been a time when women and people of color moved ahead, but in good economic times, no one wants to rock the boat," says YWCA's Taylor. Now that may be the silver lining in the dark cloud of the current recession. Given the leadership void in Milwaukee, it couldn't be a better time for women to step forward.

Clearly, women like Zimpher are. Together with MMAC President Tim Sheehy, Firststar Bank President Jay Williams and SC Johnson Senior Vice President/General Counsel Jo Anne Brandes, Zimpher has organized a remarkably inclusive ongoing metro-area economic summit that dwarfs the GMC's in size and scope, involving seven counties and stakeholders from six arenas, including labor, business and education. "That's the new day," says Zimpher.

Is the most powerful woman in Milwaukee confident the budding revolution will succeed? "I don't know yet, but I'm on a

committee trying to do that," she says.

Perhaps this can become Milwaukee's "Aha!" moment.

The Survey: How we did it

In December 2001, Milwaukee Magazine sent anonymous surveys to 968 prominent Milwaukeeans on the subject of women, men and power. We culled our mailing list from the membership rosters of the Greater Milwaukee Committee; the board of directors of the Metropolitan Milwaukee Association of Commerce; the professional women's organizations, including Tempo, Professional Dimensions and the Society of Women Engineers; the directors of the Women's Fund and the Greater Milwaukee Foundation; trustees of the Public Policy Forum Inc.; female members of The Executive Committee; and a sampling of Milwaukee Rotary members.

Of the total 446 men and 522 women surveyed, 15 percent of men and 25 percent of women responded for an overall response rate of 21 percent. Professor Marc Levine, director of the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee Center for Economic Development, and his staff aided us in the detailed analysis of those 203 surveys.

UWM professor of management Belle Rose Ragins, Ph.D., whose "The Gender Gap in the Executive Suite" was published by the Academy of Management Executive, helped design our survey. Catalyst, the New York nonprofit research organization that focuses on working women, allowed us to duplicate some of its survey questions, while others came from the 1993 Wisconsin Glass Ceiling Commission state survey.

Where Are the Politicians?

As when Milwaukee Magazine published its last look at civic leadership almost 10 years ago, we eliminated politicians. Our rationale? Unlike business, academic and nonprofit organization leaders, politicians are elected to wield civic power.

However, some interesting facts emerged from our recent survey. Only three politicians received a significant number of votes: Milwaukee Mayor John Norquist, Milwaukee County Board Chairman Karen Ordinans and former County Executive F. Thomas Ament (our survey pre-dated the pension scandal).

The most startling finding of the survey may be that Norquist would have placed third on the most powerful men list based almost entirely on the number of votes he received from women younger than 56. Older women and men did not name Norquist even to their top 10 most powerful men. "That's a bellwether finding," says Madison-based management consultant Pat Alea. "It shows how men and women view power differently."

Despite the sexual harassment charges filed against him and complaints about his inability to be an effective leader, Norquist received five times as many votes from women as from men. How do we explain this?

"Women are more likely to perceive men as exerting power and control," says Susan Macpherson, vice president of the National Jury Project-Midwest, one of the premier jury-analysis consultants in the country. "Women understand the dynamics of power in a more real way than men do," she says.

That said, one man who evaluated the disparity in male/female votes for Norquist said that women just don't get it. "Men understand that after the scandal and everything else, Norquist is finished."

Mars, Venus and Milwaukee Leadership

Men and women surveyed often had very different views on the workplace.

Statement	Females Agreeing	Males Agreeing
Male managers are frequently intimidated by or experience difficulties managing women.	57%	29%
Men have difficulty being supervised by women.	58%	43%
Men and women are equally qualified to assume senior-level positions with my	93%	81%

company.

A significant number of white men in my company are concerned with reverse discrimination.	33%	22%
Having children hinders a woman's chance to advance.	59%	43%
Providing opportunities for women at the highest levels may mean filling an important post with an unprepared individual.	9%	30%
Women have difficulty being supervised by women.	30%	50%
It is up to women to change to fit into the corporate culture.	61%	70%

Best and Worst Workplaces for Women

When asked to name the best and worst working climates for women, our male and female survey respondents had no difficulty agreeing on these companies.

Best Places	Worst Places
Northwestern Mutual	Marshall & Ilsley Corporation
Brady Corp.	Wisconsin Energy Corporation
Harley-Davidson Motor Company	Northwestern Mutual
Runners-up	Foley & Lardner
University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee	Quarles & Brady LLP
Baird Advisors	Runners-up
YWCA of Greater Milwaukee	Johnson Controls, Inc.
SC Johnson	Rockwell Automation
	Ameritech

Milwaukee-area companies identified as having favorable working climates for women employ women in large numbers, including some in high-level positions, and encourage them.

Thirty-eight percent of Brady Corp.'s executives were women and minorities in 2000. Family-friendly perks include flex time, dependent care assistance, a vacation-buy program and the demise of the punch clock.

"At Harley-Davidson, men are actually saying to women, 'I want to encourage you,'" says Sister Kathleen O'Brien, Alverno College women and leadership professor who instructs some of Harley's middle managers. Northwestern Mutual has three women directors (out of 26), more female board members than any of the 28 largest public corporations in Milwaukee.

But civic power does not come automatically to women in high-level positions. Harley-Davidson, for example, employs two of only five women among the 100 highest-paid executives in the metro area (see "Women's Census," page 46), but neither showed up as powerful women in our survey. "Power is not just about how much money you make or your title," observed one woman surveyed. "It's your role in the community and how many people you bring along behind you. It's being able to use your clout."

In the "worst climate for women" category, M&I, the bank holding company, received 50 percent more votes than did the next closest contender. Ironically, the president of a division of that company, M&I Bank's Thomas Bolger, is the brother of Mary Ellen Stanek, one of the most powerful women on our list.

Curiously, Northwestern Mutual showed up on both lists. How could one of the best climates for women also be one of the worst? "NML is a giant bureaucracy, and some parts of the company are more hospitable to women than others," says one observer.

Obstacles Milwaukee Women Face

Seven greatest obstacles identified in the survey.

Obstacle	Females agreeing	Males agreeing
Male stereotyping and preconceptions of women	21.4%	19.9%
Exclusion from informal networks of communication	23%	12.8%
Commitment to family responsibilities	11.8%	12.8%
Inhospitable corporate climate	11.2%	12.8%
Lack of mentoring	10.7%	11.5 %

Lack of significant general management experience	5.5%	11.5%
Women have not been in the pipeline long enough	4.4%	9%

Most Powerful Women

1. Nancy Zimpher, chancellor, University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee (85 votes).
 2. Katherine Hudson, president and CEO, Brady Corp. (37).
 3. Mary Ellen Stanek, managing director and chief investment officer, Baird Advisors; president, Baird Funds (36).
 4. Julia Taylor, executive director and CEO, YWCA of Greater Milwaukee (28).
 5. Betty Quadracci, publisher, Milwaukee Magazine; president, Quad/Creative Group (27).*
 6. Susan Dragisic, president, United Way of Greater Milwaukee (22).
 7. Bo Black, executive director, Milwaukee World Festivals Inc. (21).
 8. Sister Joel Read, president, Alverno College (18).
 9. Linda Mellowes, community volunteer (12).
 10. (tie) Jane Pettit (deceased), philanthropist; and Wendy Selig-Prieb, president and CEO, Milwaukee Brewers (7).
- Runners-up: Miller Brewing Vice President Patricia Brash McKeithan; Pettit's daughter, philanthropist Lynde Uihlein; former broadcast journalist Melodie Wilson; Helen Bader Foundation officer Jeanette Mitchell; and others.

Most Powerful Men

1. Gary Grunau, chairman, Grunau Project Development (65).
 2. Marty Stein, fund-raiser and Stein Optical founder (41).
 3. Michael Cudahy, philanthropist and co-founder, Marquette Electronics (40).
 4. Ed Zore, president and CEO, Northwestern Mutual Financial Network (32).
 5. Jack Pelisek, fund-raiser and senior partner, Michael Best and Friedrich (30).
 6. Michael Grebe, chairman and CEO, Foley & Lardner; in July, president and CEO, the Bradley Foundation (26).
 7. T. Michael Bolger, president and CEO, Medical College of Wisconsin (24).
 8. (tie) James Keyes, chairman and CEO, Johnson Controls, Inc.; Archbishop Rembert G. Weakland (23).
 10. Dick Abdo, chairman, president and CEO, Wisconsin Energy Corporation (20).
- Runners-up: Metropolitan Milwaukee Association of Commerce President Tim Sheehy, attorney Franklyn Gimbel, Allen-Edmonds president/CEO John Stollenwerk, Marcus Corp. chairman/CEO Steve Marcus and others.

** Editor's note: Milwaukee Magazine maintains a policy of not writing about its owners, but in a public survey of this kind, we thought it necessary to report full findings. While others on this list were interviewed and photographed, we chose not to make Quadracci a part of this story.*

We asked survey recipients to name the three most powerful women and men in Milwaukee's civic arena. We defined power as "the ability to influence action and opinion, marshal resources and get things done."

Overall, 100 different men received at least two votes, compared to 33 women, reflecting the fact that there are simply many more men in powerful positions.

A majority of both male and female respondents agreed that to influence community developments, shape public policy and launch civic projects in Milwaukee, a person must head a major corporation or foundation. Milwaukee has very few women in those posts. On the other hand, "such a post does not automatically equate with power," as one male respondent explained.

Males had more trouble than females naming three powerful women. In fact, only 53 percent of male CEOs and corporate presidents named three women, while 77 percent of female CEOs and presidents did. Both groups were equally able to name three powerful males.

Several decades after women began graduating in large numbers from business and law schools, the number of women in top corporate jobs remains woefully low nationwide. By many indicators, the situation is worse in Milwaukee than elsewhere. As one woman CEO wrote: "Just comparing the number of women in upper management in Milwaukee companies versus other cities our size will show you how far behind the times Milwaukee is. There are far fewer opportunities for women here. The old boys' network is still in charge!"

Unlike the state of affairs nearly 10 years ago when Milwaukee Magazine last looked at the city's powerbrokers, Milwaukee has women who stand out prominently, particularly UWM Chancellor Nancy Zimpher, Brady Corp. President and CEO Katherine Hudson and Baird Advisors Managing Director and Chief Investment Officer Mary Ellen Stanek. In the community at large, the role of not-for-profit organizations has increased, bringing the women who head many of those organizations into positions of community leadership. Overall, the gender-based disparity in power remains most evident further down the scale where CEOs of major corporations placed 20th or below on the male power hierarchy, an area on the female hierarchy populated by middle managers and heads of small

organizations.

Perhaps the most dramatic illustration of the overall sorry state of affairs for women is that a deceased woman ranked 10th as the most powerful woman in Milwaukee. Jane Pettit, Milwaukee's greatest philanthropist, received more votes than 22 other women, even though she died three months before our survey was taken! More encouraging was the fact that the top vote-getter, UWM's Zimpher, received 30 percent more votes than the top-ranked male, well-connected Downtown developer Gary Grunau.

We discovered that Milwaukee men and women view power differently, just as they bring different perspectives to the examination of issues. For example, younger women named Mayor John Norquist among the most powerful, while men didn't (see "[Where Are the Politicians?](#)"). Women were more likely to mention retired executive and fund-raiser Marty Stein, Catholic Archbishop Rembert Weakland and Northwestern Mutual's president and CEO, Ed Zore, although beyond that, men identified by male and female respondents were the same.

When it came to identifying powerful women, female respondents rated YWCA Executive Director and CEO Julia Taylor, Alverno College President Sister Joel Read and Milwaukee World Festivals Executive Director Bo Black higher than did males. Men included County Board Chair Karen Ordinans in their list of powerful women (the survey was taken before the pension scandal), whereas females did not. Women were more likely to name United Way President Susan Dragisic among the powerful.

Surprising, given that we defined power in part as being able to influence public opinion or action, was the finding that few respondents identified members of the media.

Women's Census: Where the Girls Aren't

Business

- 1: Wisconsin's rank among the 50 states in percentage of women working.
- 46: Wisconsin's rank among the 50 states in ratio of women's earnings to men's.
- 9: Percent of corporate officer posts held by women at metro Milwaukee's 28 largest public companies.
- 12.5: Percent of corporate officer posts held by women at U.S. Fortune 1000 companies.
- 8: Percent of board of directors seats held by women at metro Milwaukee's 28 largest public companies.
- 10.9: Percent of all board seats held by women at U.S. Fortune 1000 companies.
- 1: Number of women among the chief executives of Wisconsin's 15 largest businesses and professional associations (Mary Anne Moore-Church, president, Wisconsin Builders Association).
- 1: Number of the 25 largest Milwaukee-area manufacturing firms headed by a woman (Katherine Hudson, Brady Corp.).
- 5: Percent of women among the metro area's 100 highest-paid executives of public companies as of June 2001.
- Rankings by pay:*
- #18: Katherine Hudson, Brady Corp., \$1,006,271.
- #33: Helen Johnson-Leipold, Johnson Outdoors, Inc., \$764,775.
- #39: Arlene Meier; Kohl's Corporation, \$670,917.
- #40: Donna Zarcone, Harley-Davidson Motor Company, \$668,175.
- #57: Gail Lione, Harley-Davidson, \$517,560.
- 1: Number of the 25 largest metro-area banks headed by a woman (Lincoln State Bank, Cynthia Lowe).
- 7: Percent of female managing partners at Milwaukee's 20 largest architectural firms.
- 1: Number of companies among the 25 Milwaukee-area corporations with the highest 2001 director's fees with more than one female outside director (Sensient Technologies Corporation).
- 36: Percent of those 25 corporate boards having no female directors.
- 18: Percent of Midwestern Fortune 1000 companies having no female directors.

Percent, by state, of Fortune 1000 company corporate board seats held by women, according to the 2001 Catalyst Census of Women Board Directors:

18: Iowa

13: Minnesota

10: Wisconsin.8: Percent of Metropolitan Milwaukee Association of Commerce board of directors seats occupied by women in 2001 (0.5 percent more than in 1991).

12: Percent of the board of directors seats of the Greater Milwaukee Committee held by women in 2000 (6.5 percent more than in 1991).

Government

- 39: Percent of public policy posts in Wisconsin state government held by women in 2001, according to The Center for

Women in Government.

16: Wisconsin's rank among the 50 states in the percent of female public policy positions in 2001 (down three positions from its 1999 ranking).

51: Percent of Wisconsin's population who are females.

25: Percent of female-held seats in the Wisconsin Legislature.

9: Percent of Wisconsin's U.S. senate and congressional delegation that is female.

Percent of chief executive positions (mayor, village president or town chair) held by women in metro-area municipalities by county:

21: Milwaukee

14: Waukesha

13: Ozaukee

5: Washington

6: Racine

Percent of metro-area county board seats held by women, by county:

36: Milwaukee

26: Waukesha

25: Ozaukee

20: Washington

16: Racine

18: Percent of the Milwaukee City Council that is female (January 2002).

0: Percent of Milwaukee city finance or personnel committee seats held by women.

Medicine

18: Percent of trustee seats on the Medical College of Wisconsin board held by women.

0: Number of women who have been chair of the Medical College board.

38: Percent of total 2001 Medical College of Wisconsin graduates who were female.

43: Percent of total U.S. medical school graduates who were women.

1: Number of women chairs in the Medical College of Wisconsin's 25 departments.

16: Percent of Wisconsin licensed doctors who are female (1998).

22: Percent of U.S. licensed doctors who are female (1998).

Law

27: Percent of licensed Wisconsin attorneys in 2002 who are women (in 1993, women made up 21 percent of the total).

18: Percent of female partners in metro Milwaukee's 10 largest law firms.

1: Number of major law firms in the state headed by a woman (Cook & Franke S.C. Managing Partner Margaret Lund).

12: Percent of state Circuit Court judges who are women (the same percent as in 1993).

Percent of female Circuit Court judges by county:

23: Milwaukee

17: Waukesha

0: Ozaukee

25: Washington

10: Racine

19: Percent of Wisconsin Appeals Court posts held by women in 2001 (none in 1993).

4: Number of women among seven Wisconsin Supreme Court justices in 2001.

Academia

4: Number of female superintendents heading metro Milwaukee's 25 largest school districts.

0: Number of female superintendents heading the 10 largest metro Milwaukee school districts.

Percent of female administrators in the University of Wisconsin System:

23: UW System Board of Regents

13: Chancellors

20: Provosts

34: Deans

25: Department chairs

Education

Percent of degrees earned by women:

39: All UW-Madison in 1972.

45: All UW-Milwaukee in 1972.

Marquette University (2001):

54: Bachelor's
 47: Graduate
 31: MBAs
 46: Law
 29: Master's in engineering

University of Wisconsin-Madison (2000-'01):

56: Bachelor's
 52: Master's
 34: MBAs
 31: Business Ph.D.s
 40: All other doctorates
 54: Medicine and law (41: percent of UW-Madison law in 1992)
 22: Engineering

University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee (2000-'01):

55: Bachelor's
 62: Master's
 41: Ph.D.s

Milwaukee School of Engineering ('01):

17: Bachelor's of engineering
 21: Master's of engineering

Timeline: Wisconsin Women

1836: With all of the men out of town, Josette Juneau, mother of 17, single handedly averts a massacre of Milwaukee's first settlers, 10 years before her husband becomes the city's first mayor.

1846: The state constitutional convention considers radical proposals: 1: married women's independent property rights (passed in 1850); 2: Women's suffrage (a sarcastic proposal offered as delegates tied on giving nonwhite males the vote).

1852: Wisconsin's first female publisher and editor, Mathilde Anneke, starts Milwaukee's *Deutsche Frauen-Zeitung*, a radical free-thinker's journal dedicated to the complete emancipation of women. Male typesetters upset over women in the composing room boycott the paper, shutting it down. Anneke moves to New Jersey.

1853: Milwaukee Female College opens its doors, railing against the view of women as modest, "obeying and pleasing her lord."

1856: Margarethe Meyer Schurz founds the first U.S. kindergarten in Watertown.

1856-1866: With her brother the paper's public face, Emma Brown secretly edits the *Wisconsin Chief* in Fort Atkinson. The nation's longest-lasting temperance sheet, it exposes poor conditions in factories and prisons and covers women's rights.

1870: The first woman graduates from the University of Wisconsin-Madison.

1871: The first female dorm opens at UW-Madison. UW President Paul Chadbourne warns that co-education will disrupt higher education and seeks support for a woman's college elsewhere. Today, a co-ed dorm bears his name.

1872: The Legislature gives Wisconsin women the right to control their earnings.

1874: Milwaukeean Mary Blanchard Lynde becomes the first woman in the United States appointed to a state board.

1875: Wisconsin women become eligible for election to school boards.

1876: The Wisconsin Women's Suffrage Association stages a protest on the Centennial, arguing that 20 million women "are still denied the right to self-government, trial by a jury of their peers, and taxed without representation."

1876: Frustrated over "the mess" men have made in local government, founders of the Woman's Club of Wisconsin create an organization to improve the influence of women, "from slave of man to companion to 'almost equal.'"

1878: A women's suffrage amendment is introduced in the U.S. Congress. It takes 42 years to pass.

1886: The Woman's Club of Wisconsin forms the first U.S. stock company owned entirely by women and constructs a new clubhouse. The *Milwaukee Sentinel* proclaims: "No man... will ever again... ask, 'What can women do?'"

1890: The *Milwaukee Journal* and *Milwaukee Sentinel* hire their first full-time newswomen, but for the next 70 years, they are relegated to the women's section.

1895: Mary Ellen Freeman Merrill is appointed Milwaukee's first female school commissioner and alderperson.

1909: Marquette University becomes the first Jesuit school to admit a woman.

1910: A state commission asks Wisconsin sculptor Helen Farnsworth Mears to create a statue for the top of the state Capitol. A year later, it reneges, giving the contract to a male sculptor with more influence.

1917: State women mobilize to aid the war effort and immigrant assimilation.

1920: The 19th Amendment gives women the right to vote. Wisconsin is the first state to bring its papers to Washington.

1925: The first three women are elected to the Wisconsin Assembly.

1938: Georgia Cozzini becomes the first woman to run for governor of Wisconsin.

1956: Vel Phillips becomes the first woman elected to the Milwaukee Common Council.

1960: Wisconsin treasurer Dena Smith is the first woman elected to statewide office.

1960s: Wedding ceremonies in Wisconsin begin to leave out the word "obey." Options for female students expand beyond wife-volunteer, teacher, librarian, nurse and nun.

1960-'70s: Catherine Cleary, president of First Wisconsin Trust Co., becomes a female pioneer in executive suites and boardrooms. At a conference at a company on whose board she serves, she points out to the vice president of human resources that she's the only woman among 500 managers present. "He was thunderstruck; he hadn't seen it."

1964: The Governor's Commission on the Status of Women is formed.

1965: The first woman graduates from Milwaukee School of Engineering.

1971: UW-Madison appoints a chancellor's commission to look into the status of women.

1973: Virginia Hart, head of licensing, becomes the first woman appointed to a Wisconsin governor's cabinet. Barbara Thompson becomes the first woman elected state school superintendent.

1974: At WISN-TV, Bunny Raash-Hooten becomes Milwaukee's first female prime-time news anchor.

1975: Kathryn Morrison is the first woman elected to the state Senate.

1976: Shirley Abrahamson becomes the first female justice on the Wisconsin Supreme Court, and 20 years later, its first female chief justice.

1978: Jill Geisler becomes Milwaukee's first female TV news director.

1983: Marge Beil, director of Gov. Tony Earl's Milwaukee office, is denied entry to the male-only University Club dining room. When Earl cancels all future meetings there, the U-Club dining room goes co-ed.

1986: Wisconsin Marital Property Law goes into effect.

1987: Milwaukee Rotary opens membership to women executives.

1990: The Center for Women in Government finds that in only eight other states do women occupy a smaller percentage of high-level government posts than in Wisconsin.

1993: Wisconsin is the first state to have a governor's Glass Ceiling Task Force. It finds that a glass ceiling exists, keeping "women and minorities from top management."

1994: Katherine Hudson becomes the first woman president/CEO of a major public company in Wisconsin.

1998: Tammy Baldwin becomes Wisconsin's first congresswoman.

2000: Unable to find companies with a significant number of women in top management to receive its awards, the Glass Ceiling Commission dilutes its criteria, then drifts into oblivion.

2002: A larger percentage of women work in Wisconsin than in any other state, but it ranks 46th in male-female pay equity.

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