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Women: How Real The Recent Gains In Business And The Professions?

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Approximately ten million women hold professional or managerial positions in the civilian labor force. In law, medicine, postsecondary education, and the professional category of management, the number of women in each has increased significantly during the last few decades. However, the gains that women have made in the professions have been hard won and may prove even harder to maintain in a labor market which is in the process of downsizing and restructuring. In professions that are as male-dominated today as they were a decade ago, women are still likely to be over represented in low-paid and low-prestige subspecialties.

Over the last twenty years, in editions of the text *Women: A Feminist Perspective*, I have updated the chapter upon which this article is based three times. I have hoped that each edition would be the last and that there would no longer be any need to show how women's gains are still questionable. In short, that there would be no need to question those gains because they would be real; they would be equitable- and they would show signs of permanence. Unfortunately, such is not the case. The often subtle and invidious barriers-to success, inherent in the social organization and the interpersonal dynamics of the professions still persist. Moreover, despite modest changes, women still maintain the primary responsibilities for childcare and domestic work the message is the same. As the corporate world of business has increasingly come to resemble the professional world, it takes on the same subtle structural and interpersonal dynamics of other male-dominated professions and consequently, it, too, discriminates against women in many of the same ways.¹

For instance, from the beginning of this century to the 1990's, the professions have been sex-segregated. The prestige professions remain male-dominated: only 8.4% of the clergy, 21.4% of lawyers and judges, 20.4% of physicians, and 40.9% percent of college and university teachers are women. Conversely, the percentages of women who are social workers (68.9%), other than post-secondary teachers (74.8%), registered nurses (94.3%), and librarians (87.6%), indicate that those professions remain female dominated (Employment and Earnings, January 1992, Table 22). Workers are distributed differently within the professions by race and gender. While the male-dominated professions are overwhelmingly white, in the female professions, African-American women are approaching parity with their proportion of the population. However, this is not true of Hispanic women. Perhaps even more revealing of women's status in the professions is that the female dominated occupations, although classified by the Bureau of the Census as professions, are often referred to in the sociological literature as the "semi professions" (Etzioni, 1969; Ritzer, 1972, England, 1992).

This distinction is more than academic. The term profession seems to be

reserved for only those whose careers are structured for the lives that men lead. Such careers are predicated on the notion that the professional is relatively free from childcare and home responsibilities. This permits great investments of time, energy, devotion, and "overtime" work. The professions are, in Pose Coser's words, "greedy institutions" demanding of their workers full time commitment, dedication, and attention.² In the 1990's, women report that they are and are expected to be the primary caretakers of children and the household. Virtually all studies concur, that despite men's increased participation in both childcare and domestic responsibilities, women still maintain the primary responsibilities for both.

In 1992, women in the United States represented 41.5 percent of all persons employed in managerial, executive, and administrative occupations, indicating an increase from 26.5 percent in 1978. In 1970-71, women earned 9.1 percent of the bachelors and 3.9 percent of the master's degrees awarded. In 1989-90, they earned 46.7 percent of the bachelors degrees and 34 percent of the masters degrees. Much of this significant gain can be attributed to the women's movement, affirmative action, and the passage in 1972 of Title IX of the Education Amendments. These amendments legally recognized and prohibited sex discrimination in institutions of higher education. Along with other professional schools which had once excluded or had dissuaded women from enrolling in them, business schools opened their doors to women. These gains are reflected in the dramatic increase in the number of women receiving their bachelors and masters degrees in business management over the last two decades.

However, despite these real gains, closer inspection of women's distribution within-the corporate world reflects some disturbing patterns common to all women aspiring to prestigious, high-paying and male-dominated professions: women are more likely to be managers in areas where the pay and prestige are less and where there are already more women employees at lower levels. Women (and minorities) are more often found in staff (e.g., personnel and labor relations) than in line (marketing and sales) positions. This distinction is important since line positions are considered to be important entry points to upper-arrangement jobs (Levine, 1991, p. 4). Although more women hold management positions than at any other time, few have made the breakthrough to top-level executive positions. Findings from a 1991 study done by the feminist Majority Foundation indicate that of the 6502 jobs at the vice-presidential level and higher within the nation's largest corporations, only 175, or 2.6 percent, were held by women (reported in the *New York Times*, September 11, 1991, p.B11). According to a survey of seven hundred companies by Korn Ferry, a leading executive recruiting firm, women and minorities were virtually the same percentage of officials with ranks of vice-president or higher as they were a decade ago (Department of Labor Library Informaiton Brief No. 1, May 1991, p. 3). In Greene and Green's 1996 review of the 1,000 largest firms in the U.S. only 60 out of 5000 (1%) of the top five jobs within

these corporations were occupied by women (cited in Valian, 1998, P. 192).

While there are problems in looking at these aggregate data as evidence of inequity, the consistent pattern over the decades (see Kaufman 1995; 1989; 1984) demonstrate a persistent pattern for women aspiring to the top of their respective professions. Business is clearly no exception. In 1978 there were 2 women heading Fortune 1,000 companies, by 1996 there were 4 (Valian, 1998, p.192). Virginia Valian reports that in a study of college graduates who had majored in business and who had graduated between 1983 and 1985, females were paid lower starting salaries. The important point here is that the females, as a group, had better credentials, had higher grade-point averages, had more internship experience and were more likely to major in high paid subspecialties than males (1998, p.193). Perhaps even more revealing, as Valian points out, when the women's higher qualifications were taken into account, "the gap in starting salaries was even greater than it initially appeared to be" (1998, p. 193). Other studies corroborate the fact that women who are MBAs with higher qualifications than men are often paid less than men (Olson and Frieze, 1987; Cox and Harquail, 1991). Interestingly, Valian reports that although men and women in international business were similar on many dimensions, they differed in four ways, two of which were related to family obligations. men were more often the sole earners in their households and fewer of them had limited their careers for the benefit of their spouses' career (1998, p. 196).

Not only are the professions sex-segregated, they have been affected greatly by the even more invidious process of gender role-typing. When a majority of those in a profession are of one sex, the "normative expectations develops that this is how it should be. The model of the practitioner then takes on the personality and behavioral characteristics associated with the more prominent sex. Earlier research on accountants with my colleague, Michael Fetters, done over two decades ago when the major accounting firms were still referred to as the "Big Eight," suggest that despite the recent gains for women in almost all of the male dominated professions, the male professional and managerial model still persists. My argument is that, the upper management levels within accounting, as within the corporate setting, have come to look less like the bureaucratically oriented models of the past and more like the professions in both their structure and function. in this sense, they have taken on some of the features of the professions as described by C.F. Epstein (1988) and have come to take on the attributes as described by Rosabeth Moss Kanter (1978) in her work: that is, the upper echelons are described as having tight inner circles composed of mostly like-minded men. While the lines of communication may be less hierarchical and more collegial, the upper echelons are still decidedly fraternal. That is, the values, attitudes and attributes are still based on the norms of "male bonding." And, just as the professions they have come to resemble, the corporate setting provides little space for women within those fraternal circles. in sum, women are not strategically placed within business to

effect change. The increased number of women in the business and professional setting has forced change in the rhetoric, but not particularly in the practice of the professional norms of competitive aggressiveness and male modeling. Measures of success and avenues of mobility are still distinctly masculine.

The male managerial model is characterized by aggressiveness, decisiveness, competitiveness, and risk taking. Gender role stereotypes about women's personality traits (for example, less aggressive, less decisive, less committed than men) and abilities (for instance, less rational) follow women into the workplace and affect both the professional track they are placed upon and the evaluation of the work that they do. More encouraging, however, unlike earlier studies which showed that male managers and administrators held uniformly more negative perceptions of women compared to men regarding aptitude, motivation, temperament, and work habits, more recent research shows that negative correlations about women supervisors are weaker among women, well-educated males and workers with female bosses (Kaufman, 1995). However, recent data suggest that managers still have a very great impact on the ways in which employees feel free to balance their work/family obligations. The findings of one of the more recent explorations into accounting firms suggests that manager supportiveness has a significant effect upon employees' abilities to balance work/family demands, irrespective of the firm's official policies on the issue (Anderson and Kaenzig, 1999).

In general, women remain at a disadvantage both structurally and interpersonally, within upper-level management. Some brief examples from earlier research I conducted with a colleague, which more recent data suggest may still persist, indicate how this happens (Kaufman and Fetters, 1980). For instance, in our study of 208 accountants in one of the former "Big Eight" international public accounting firms there were no significant differences between males and females on any of the components of work motivation measured. That is, women did not appear to differ from men in the rewards they valued on the job or on the job characteristics they valued (Kaufman and Fetters, 1980, p. 251). Moreover, distinctions between men and women on motivational orientation, suggest that men and women were both extrinsically and intrinsically oriented toward their jobs. That is, the distinction often made in the motivation literature that men are more intrinsically oriented toward their work (motivated by job content factors such as use of best abilities, growth on the job and recognition) and that women are extrinsically oriented (motivated by job context factors such as supervisory relations, home life, job flexibility) did not hold in this study. However, this changed when we looked to where women were placed upon entry into the firm and in terms of their career line, especially with regard to fast track opportunities and the kinds of audits and teams they were assigned. Women, for instance, were not chosen for choice audits nor put on the fast track teams as often as men. Compared to men, women were found in the less prestigious and less de-

manding audits, such as, not-forprofit audits. Unlike men, they were not given a variety of audits to test and challenge their skills. Interpersonally, they were often evaluated in accord with social stereotypes rather than real performance. They were perceived as not being as committed or dedicated to their work as men (either seen as potentially marriageable, or if married, as potentially pregnant, or if post menopausal, as too old for the job).

The interview data (Kaufman and Feters, 1983) suggest that women were often seen as too aggressive or not aggressive in the "right way." Typical of this perception is the following quote from a male partner:

Women's position in life until recently has been primarily subservient. That's why not enough of them are assertive in a nice sort of way. We have a girl who is a supervisor and has an excellent opportunity for partner. She was much too aggressive in the beginning. I told her that she wasn't like that 'really' and that was not the way to make it, I think now that she has toned down she might make it here, She is intelligent, attractive, and personable.

A male manager, made clear the feelings about women within the firm. He put it this way:

The only real question I have about promotion is can someone stand up to the pressure. Let me put it this way, are women career oriented enough to withstand daily pressures? Men have an advantage here...

I agree with the manager that men do seem to have an advantage. For it is as true today as it was sixteen years ago. Careers are based on the lives that men lead. Stella and Kaenzig (1999) sum up the literature on accountancy by noting that the professional service firms still stress the "value of long hours and client service without regard to personal sacrifice" (p. 10). Our data suggest that client relationships presented the most problems for women. One male supervisor summed up the problem for women vis-a-vis clients this way:

The attitudes toward females are more covert, subtle, none of the blatant and obvious hostility you might expect. The clients are simply rude, patronizing and offensive in their personal remarks about women auditors.

In our data, it was clear that gender stereotypes were significantly reduced among those who worked on teams together over a significant period of time. Moreover, although the respondents did not internalize gender stereotypes about themselves as individuals, both men and women firmly believed that their clients did (and there was some corroboration for this; as one client asked when a female manager was sent to audit his firm, why did the accounting firm send in the "girls"). Therefore, different placement within the firm

and, thereby, different access to learning, are often cited not as a result of the firm's decision making or discrimination against women, but rather as a result of their clients, perceptions and requests. In this way the accounting firm felt it was not to blame for women's different audit placement than men.

Supervisors and managers are critical for success in all firms. Evaluation reports often determine how quickly and where one's career is headed. The male managerial model is the model for the accounting firm we studied, therefore, deviations from that model and the attendant norms can have damaging results for one's career. In some of their preliminary findings on one of the few current studies of accounting firms, Stella Anderson and Rebecca Kaenzig report that manager's attitudes (supportiveness) with regard to flexible work arrangements affect accountants' use of "family-friendly" policies and practices (1999, p.2). In their review of other research, they report that employee often report serious concerns about requesting flexibility in work arrangements for a fear of a negative impact upon their careers. I suggest that the closer the firm adheres to a male managerial model, the less likely we will find managerial support for flexible work arrangements. That accounting firms continue to be concerned with a higher turnover rate for women than men, suggests to me that the male managerial model is still very much in tact in most firms.

Anderson and Kaenzig (1999) suggest that the subfield of accounting is a perfect place to examine questions of career and work conflict since the firm culture is still very wedded to long hours and client service (p. 4). Although their sample size was not large enough to test male and female differences, their data do indicate that flexibility and managerial supportiveness both had significant and (expected) effects on work-family conflict.

I am arguing that the upper levels of corporate/business life are quite similar to the professions in both structure and function. Therefore, corporate women, as other professional women, face many of the same barriers. As outright discriminatory practices and policies recede in the face of legal and social changes, other less obvious, but equally powerful forces, still persist (Kaufman and Feters, 1983; Kaufman, 1995). Despite the significant changes in the numbers of women in the corporate setting, the model for those in the world of business is still based on the personality and behavioral characteristics associated with men. Research on the subject has clearly shown that traits associated with femininity are not as highly valued in our culture as those associated with men. Furthermore, although the scientific data show that the overlap between the sexes on most personality and behavioral measures is extensive, gender role stereotypes persist in both the popular culture and in the work culture (Valian, 1998). Popular social stereotypes leave women at a distinct disadvantage in the work place.

Barriers for women, deeply embedded in the very organization of corporate life itself, still persist. Perhaps among the most critical are those which exclude women from the "old boy" networks that are critical for their ad-

vancement. When excluded from such networks women are made invisible when important professional decisions and judgments are made. It is within those networks that the ongoing dynamics of professional life are carried out and learned. If women are denied access to this arena of corporate life (even if they have formed their own networks), they are left out of the power centers of their professions. Moreover, this exclusion often prevents the breakdown of myths about women's professional work habits, attitudes and commitment. Gender role stereotypes, then, remain unchallenged and we are once again back into a vicious cycle.

The costs of professional success still remain high for women. Many have had to give up or delay marriage, family, and significant relationships. Those who have not given up family have had to add to their demanding career commitments, the major responsibilities of managing home and childcare tasks. Almost all the data on childcare suggest that both men and women expect women to be the primary child caregivers. Biernat and Wortman (1991) report that even among partners who had roughly equal professional commitments and responsibilities, women carried out more of all childcare tasks than men but for one, playing with children (cited in Valian, p. 39). As Valian reports, almost all the survey data show that most married men and women who work see nothing wrong with an unequal division of labor at home (p. 40). There are, however, cut-off points for this inequality. When wives average just over 70 percent of the work than husbands see this inequality as unfair. For wives the cut-off point is about 75 percent of the work. No matter how you examine the data, it is clear that irrespective of what the wife earns or how many hours she works, husbands, in the main, do little of the housework. Valian explains the acceptance of this inequality as gender stereotyped. She writes: "If housework, especially child care, is a woman's labor of love, equity does not come into the picture" (1999, p.43).

Families and professional careers still remain, in one of Rose Coser's most often cited phrases, "greedy institutions." The data from research I have conducted in the past corroborate this; at every level, within the accounting firms my colleague and I studied, more women than men were unmarried; and when married, more women than men were childless. In conclusion, then at the micro level, the social organization of the professions systematically works against women's mobility within them. The macro changes within the labor force and professions (such as, downsizing and restructuring) work against women who have just made it to the middle management level. Ideological backlash, from both the right and the left, only serves to deflect us from a critical analysis of women's most recent professional gains. Postfeminist bravado, from the "would be left," argues that we have made it in every profession and that feminist rhetoric has become an ideological tactic which only serves to frighten a younger generation of women. Right wing rhetoric argues that we are deserting our children and families. Both only serve to deflect our focus from the subtle and still invidious barriers to success for women or from

strategizing about the future of family and work life. That is, it diverts us from creatively thinking about transformations within the business world itself- the number of hours we work, where we work, and the ways in which we "make it" within the corporate and professional world. It sidesteps important decision making about how we care for the young and the elderly in our society and how we live our daily domestic lives. Both forms of backlash lead to a reproduction of the structure and interpersonal dynamics which perpetuate current values and goals both in the world of management and business and within the family.

¹ For a more detailed discussion of the professionalization of the corporate world see Kaufman and Fetters, 1982- 1980 and Kanter, 1978.

² Whether they truly need such investments of time and commitment is a subject of debate, but nonetheless most scholars on the subject agree that this still represents the corporate culture of the 1990s. Such great investments of time and commitment are not seen as possible for those whose primary obligations are to a family.

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Do Workers Prefer The Workplace To Home?: An Empirical Assessment Of 'The Time Bind'*

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After studying the lives of men and women who work for a Fortune-500 firm, Arlie Hochschild concluded in The Time Bind that at least some (if not a majority of) Americans choose to spend more time at work. We examined this claim using data from the Survey of Ohio's Working Families. We found that most people preferred to reduce the time they spend in paid labor, and increase the time they spend at home. We also found that other than providing recognition for one's contributions, very few individuals said their work provided a greater source of fulfillment and happiness than their home lives. We estimate that perhaps 10-20 percent of workers say work is more enjoyable than family life, and conclude that there is little support for Hochschild's claim that the rewards of work and family are reversing.

INTRODUCTION

For three years, sociologist Arlie Hochschild studied the lives of men and women employed by a Fortune-500 firm. She concluded that at least some (if not a majority) of Americans prefer to spend long hours at work rather than spend more time at home. Hochschild explained that for many the workplace has become a haven from the hurried pace of family life. In addition, the workplace offers greater recognition and emotional support than the family. Hochschild indicated that the pull of work is stronger than the attachment to home for about half of those she interviewed, and is an emerging theme for the nation as a whole.

The book describing her conclusions was an immediate sensation. *The Time Bind* was featured on the covers of *Newsweek* and *U.S. News and World Report*, and received lengthy coverage in *Business Week*, *Fortune*, and the *Wall Street Journal*. One reviewer commented, "Not since Whyte's *The Organization Man* . . . has a serious sociological study of workplace culture defined the terms of public debate on Americans' commitments to work and family" (Bielby 1998:32). While Hochschild's book received considerable media attention, public debate about work/family issues has been ongoing for some time. Women's increased labor force participation during the past three decades has focused discussion on the consequences of women's employment for husbands and children, as well as for women themselves.

Corporations and businesses have recently entered discussions concerning the struggle to balance work and family commitments. Some employers have attempted to attract workers and reduce work/family conflict with "family-friendly" policies (Jacobs and Gerson 1997). Yet Hochschild's findings challenge these policy initiatives by suggesting that workers *prefer* to be at