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# Advancement for Women in Hierarchical Organizations: A Multilevel Analysis of Problems and Prospects

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framework such as the one presented here. It can serve as a "consciousness raiser" for both scholars and change agents regarding the many issues involved in women's advancement prospects in hierarchical organizations. It can serve as a guide to action, admittedly global, for organizational consultants and change agents (including, it is hoped, top-level administrators as well as affirmative action officers) interested in improving women's status. Finally, it can stimulate and guide future research. The reciprocal and reinforcing forces within the broader society, the work organization, and the individual female worker regarding the rights, roles, and responsibilities of men and women converge to shape the everyday experiences of women workers. Research on the interrelationships among these various levels would be helpful in identifying contradictory or nonconverging influences that, if better explicated and understood, could be instrumental in producing effective corrective action on women workers' behalf.

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2. Change in any realm requires political action against historical and institutionally entrenched barriers and against ideological justifications and claims for women's exclusion. Historical patterns resulting in women's exclusion from leadership positions in work contexts are supported by elaborate ideological claims and rationales that justify the status quo and depict it as proper and preferred. If women are to succeed in rising to leadership positions, an all-out assault against such ideological barriers must be launched at every level of social organization. Recognition that ideology plays a role in maintaining the status quo can empower women workers—and their friends—to debunk stereotypical claims and to expose the normative and nonobjective grounds for decisions whenever these lead to women's undeserved disadvantage.

3. The division of labor between the sexes in relation to work and child/family/home responsibilities must change before women can accede to and succeed in upper echelon jobs in hierarchical organizations. Current responsibilities as primary childrearsers and homemakers objectively harm women's chances for rising to influential leadership positions. Either work itself must change to incorporate family as well as job commitments or else men and women workers must re-define their home and occupational roles to more nearly equalize the demands of and opportunities in each. Both are likely required for long-lasting changes to occur.

The variety and range of "corrective actions" enumerated here reflect a number of considerations. Among them is evidence on the indeterminate effectiveness of affirmative action programs (Liss, 1977). Hacker's (1979) research on efforts to end sex-segregation of jobs in the American Telephone and Telegraph corporation demonstrates the potential for negative and un-

intended consequences of affirmative action for women workers. Salancik (1979) reports that only those organizations dependent on substantial government funds and subject to strong government pressures to hire and advance more women show evidence of positive effects of affirmative action for female employees. Smith (1979) reports that despite affirmative action, newly created jobs in the civil service system of one state were as sex segregated in the 1970s as those in place earlier. Assumptions that affirmative action has taken care of (or will in the future) the problems enumerated here are unwarranted.

Many analyses of women's "failure to succeed" in leadership roles in organizational contexts suggest that women are unwilling or unable to "play strong leadership roles" (cf. Fennell et al., 1978). Remedies to such problems are often couched in terms of the need for women to master better "leadership skills" or gain a better understanding of "group processes" (cf. Zander, 1969). The small-group research on the functioning of women (vs. men) as leaders is, at best, contradictory (cf. Eskilson & Wiley, 1976) and, at worst, misleading by suggesting that the problem lies in women themselves. Fennell et al. conclude, "...organizational authorities are actually less likely to back up the authority of a female incumbent in a leadership role than...to support a male incumbent" (1978, p. 601). For reasons such as this, a holistic and nonreductionistic perspective is needed. The continued existence of extensive occupational sex segregation and the perpetuation of women's exclusion from positions of authority, particularly powerful positions, underscores the dearth of definitive solutions to these problems or the lack of resolve on the part of those in power to avail themselves of the solutions at hand. Again, both are likely involved.

There are several potential uses for a

involve themselves in interactions that may suggest or foster implications of sexual intrigue or innuendo (Bradford, Sargent & Sprague, 1975; Quinn, 1977). As a result, individual women workers (especially but not exclusively young and attractive ones) may be excluded from informal social gatherings (e.g., lunch or conference cocktails), acquisition of a mentor, and participation in group or other collective activities. They may also be excluded from informal channels of information on the job, thereby remaining ignorant of valuable information that has more relevance than that received through formal channels. Quinn (1977) found, moreover, that women who become involved in romantic relationships in the work organization are twice as likely to be terminated as men in similar circumstances.

#### Individual corrective actions

1. *Recognize that criticism is often ideological, not factual.* Women are generally unwanted by incumbents of and aspirants to upper echelon positions and must take this into account when their behavior or "performance" is evaluated or assessed by male superiors (Epstein, 1981). Failure to recognize and resist ideologically based claims regarding inadequacies or deficiencies can result in women becoming doubtful of their own capabilities and a loss of desire for further occupational achievements and organizational advancement (Martin, 1980).

If rejected for a job or passed over for a promotion, women can assess the situation to determine the basis for the decision. Careful evaluation of personal strengths and shortcomings can be useful in deciding whether normative standards based on gender formed the basis for the outcome (Josefowitz, 1980). If and when a woman suspects that normative criteria form the grounds for a negative decision, she may wish to move to another organi-

zation where women's opportunities are greater or where less emphasis is placed on gender-based criteria.

2. *Avoid implications of sexual innuendo with male colleagues.* Women workers may have to accept much of the onus for reducing the possibility of sexual implications with male superiors and co-workers (Harragan, 1977). This requires discretion regarding attire, demeanor, interpersonal style, and acceptance or rejection of various informal social invitations. As unfair as it seems, it is women who must exercise discretion, for when it comes to the game of sexual politics, "women can't win this game" (Harragan, 1977; Quinn, 1977). Mary Cunningham Agee's recent experience with the Bendix Corporation is a case in point.

#### DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

The major contribution of the present analysis lies not in the particular problems and corrective actions identified but in their collective illustration that women's prospects for rising to leadership positions in hierarchical organizations entail multiple, highly interrelated, and complex phenomena. A minimum of three conclusions are suggested by the analysis.

1. Fundamental change in women's status in hierarchical organizations will require simultaneous efforts on all five levels of social organization. Situations and events inside work organizations must be viewed as a reflection of and in relation to those on the outside. Since the problems faced by women workers are diverse and many-faceted, efforts to surmount them require attention to all levels simultaneously. Corrective action on only one or two levels will, in the long run, be undone by influences from other levels on which amelioration has not occurred.

2. *Greater responsibility for child rearing should be assumed by men, work organizations, and the state.* If women are to have equal opportunities in the workplace, responsibilities for child care and rearing must be more equitably shared by husbands/fathers. Work organizations can grant both paternity and maternity leave and provide child-care services for workers, regardless of gender. Special considerations for parents of small children—such as flex-time, job-sharing, even temporarily altered assignments—would be helpful if they were available to both fathers and mothers and if workers who avail themselves of such opportunities were not affected in terms of later career advancement.

Concerted political action may be required to alter the work world on these issues. Women can organize in their work organizations, through unions or other groups (e.g., networks), to pressure administrators to alter employment and advancement criteria so that young workers, of either sex, are not forced to sacrifice family and personal lives to succeed inside the organization. They can lobby politicians and opinion-leaders outside the work organization to change laws and attitudes that reinforce the assumptions that wives stay home and raise the children while husbands devote themselves totally to their careers. Finally, women are advised to insist that both husbands and children assume a greater share of housekeeping chores and tasks (Laws, 1979; Oakley, 1976).

## INDIVIDUAL LEVEL

An extensive literature catalogs the numerous "deficiencies" of women workers in relation to their concentration at the lower levels of hierarchical work organizations (Chernesky, 1980; Harragan, 1977; Hennig & Jardim, 1976; Williams, 1977). Viewed at face value, many of these analyses take a "blame-the-victim" approach,

suggesting that women are excluded from powerful, upper level positions because of failings and/or deficiencies in their upbringing, socialization, or personal qualities or styles. Typical claims are that women, in comparison to men, are "non-assertive," "noncompetitive," "nurturant," "person-oriented," and "wary of taking risks." These qualities, in turn, lead to their being less career-oriented, less ambitious, and less adept at career advancement skills than men (Harragan, 1977). Others claim, on the contrary, that women are less successful than men in organizational contexts because they are too task-oriented and too intolerant of incompetence, suggesting that women behave too much like stereotypical males to succeed (Hennig & Jardim, 1976).

## Individual problems

1. *Females in male-dominant jobs will be criticized, regardless of factual "performance."* If women workers are assertive, ambitious, skilled in time management, and able to produce results, they may be labelled as "bitchy" or "pushy broads" (Harrison, Martin & DiNitto, Note 3). If they are unassertive, unambitious, or unable to manage time well, they may be criticized for being "typical women" and told they "don't have what it takes" (Hesselbart, 1982). If women are person-oriented, they are viewed as too concerned with process and not sufficiently concerned with producing results (Williams, 1977). If they are task and "outcome" oriented, they may be criticized for failing to be good "team players" or being intolerant of others' incompetence (Harragan, 1977; Hennig & Jardim, 1976). In short, whatever women do in skewed sex-ratio situations is likely to be criticized and labelled as "not right" or "not good enough" (Kanter, 1977a).

2. *Close working relationships with male colleagues may be criticized.* Male and female colleagues are often reluctant to

and rewards these provide (Brown, 1976; Edwards, 1979; Smith, 1979).

Women's extra-job roles and responsibilities affect their on-the-job prospects, opportunities, and behaviors. Most fundamentally, they shape the way women are viewed in work contexts, both individually and collectively (Epstein, 1981). The time and energy demands of marriage, housework, child care and supervision, pregnancies, and spouse-related geographical moves are much greater for women than for men (Hartmann, 1981; Oakley, 1976; Marwell, Rosenfeld & Spilerman, 1979).

### Role problems

1. *Women participate in their own subordination through acceptance of nonline, dead-end, underpaid jobs.* Through acceptance of unpaid work at home and underpaid, dull, and dead-end jobs in the marketplace, women actively participate in their own subordination (Stacey & Price, 1981). Although a dual labor market and widespread occupational segregation shape women's choices as they enter the labor force, women workers are, nevertheless, *collectively essential* to the market economies of all developed societies (Braverman, 1974). If their labor were withheld, it is certain that the competitive markets of developed nations would suffer, possibly even to the point of collapse (Edwards, 1979).

2. *Women's primary responsibilities for child care and home negatively affect hiring and advancement prospects.* Primary responsibility for home and children affects the ability of women to accept highly demanding jobs, to travel for their jobs, and to delegate housekeeping and child care to other adults (particularly, their male spouses). The lack of child-care facilities provided by work organizations (or the state) demonstrates the division of labor between the sexes regarding child rearing

and reinforces the disadvantages of women who have both children and paying jobs (Sokoloff, 1980).

As the primary child rearers, women are disadvantaged in their ability to rise in organizations because they are unable to give "their all" to their jobs *or else* they are forced to sacrifice marriage and/or children in order to succeed in the organization (Brown, 1979). Hennig and Jardim (1976) note that few of the successful female executives in their study were married and *none had children*.

### Role corrective actions

1. *Avoid traditional "women's jobs" and accept only jobs in the organization's internal labor market (cf. Baron & Bielby, 1980).* Historian Linda Gordon notes that when all is said and done, women and only women can "stand up and reject victimization."

If we accept the idea that women are completely powerless, and never participants, however unintentionally, in the system of male supremacy, then we are not attributing to women enough strength to have the possibility of change, let alone the revolutionary change that will be required (as quoted in *Signs*, 1980, p. 387).

To do this, women can apply for and accept only those jobs that are in the organization's internal labor market (i.e., with career ladders or tracks) and demand and insist on "equal opportunities" for advancement and promotion. They can also insist that all jobs be paid in line with their "true worth" to the organization and that differential pay scales for women performing work comparable to that of men be eliminated (Union for Democratic Action Education Fund, Note 3). Career development workshops and institutes can be helpful in both directing and supporting women as they attempt to enter and advance in non-traditional spheres (Masi, 1981).

for purposes of sharing information regarding procedures, criteria, and standards that, in the experience of older, more secure women, are utilized in decision-making processes. Such networks are of benefit not only informationally but also serve as support groups for younger women, encouraging them to "put themselves forward" for various openings, opportunities, or awards. If women "flood" the applicant pool, the likelihood for selection of at least some of them is enhanced.

*2. Increase the number of female "bosses" and enhance their effectiveness.*

As women advance in sufficient numbers to no longer stand out as tokens, their prospects for acquiring and succeeding in top-level jobs will improve (Epstein, 1975; Kanter, 1977b). Brown (1979) suggests that approximately 15 to 20 years will be required for the greatly increased number of female MBAs to work their way into and up through corporate structures and hierarchies. Once in leadership positions, women must demonstrate success and effectiveness in traditional ways or risk being "pushed out" by subordinates. Female subordinates must be willing to support and "take a chance on" female superiors and encourage their male peers to do likewise. Women who accede to important positions can inspire other women (and men) by mastering the techniques of leadership and group dynamics and by demonstrating skill in their personal and interpersonal behaviors and attitudes (Josefowitz, 1980). Recent research by Ferber, Huber, and Spitze (1979) provides encouragement regarding the prospects of the woman "boss." Data from a sample of university faculty and staff showed that the highly educated of both sexes are least likely to prefer men as bosses and persons with the most experience with female superiors are the most favorably inclined toward them.

## ROLE LEVEL

Two role-related problems that affect women's prospects for advancement in hierarchical organizations are (1) the characteristics of jobs women can obtain in the paid market economy; and (2) the relation between women's roles at work, i.e., at a paid job, and their roles as unpaid workers at home, having responsibility for children and husband. The jobs women are able to obtain are typically outside the organization's internal labor market (i.e., career ladders or tracks; see Baron & Bielby, 1980) and are characterized by one or more of the following: (1) a limited opportunity structure for advancement; (2) advancement based on personal relationships rather than skills; and (3) tasks that are dull, routine, and boring but simultaneously demanding and stressful (Barker & Downing, 1980; Kanter, 1977a; Masi, 1981). Ninety-eight percent of all secretaries are, for example, female (Bruegal, 1979), yet secretarial jobs entail short promotion ladders with quick advancement to the top (for some at least), low pay even for those at the top, and little to no authority or rights of decision making over anyone (Barker & Downing, 1980). Women who become "executive secretaries" tend to advance because their bosses are promoted to executive levels (and they accompany them) rather than because of skills (e.g., typing, dictation, organizing, word processing) of their own. Dull and routine tasks (e.g., as in typing pools, practical nursing, food stamps eligibility determination, key punching, factory seamstress work, etc.) combined with high stress and heavy demands have profound consequences for women workers. Charges that women workers have higher turnover rates, greater absenteeism, and less commitment to job and work organization (than males) often reflect the kinds of jobs women are able to obtain and the limited advancement opportunities

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ected for employment because they are managers or administrators" and normative-executive" who is s, and a "comer" s, production, or likely to be viewed ified" or the "best stein, 1975), par-

ticularly if the position entails extensive authority over others (Wolf & Fligstein, 1979) or the right to make decisions affecting substantial resources or capital (Silver, 1981).

### Organizational problems

1. *Advancement in hierarchical organizations is fundamentally political in nature.* The work managers do is highly indeterminate, full of uncertainty, and fraught with difficulty in discerning the consequences of actions or decisions (Kanter, 1977a; Mintzberg, 1975). For these reasons, and self-interest as well, managers are likely to select successors who share their own backgrounds, lifestyles, prejudices, politics, and goals (Smith, 1979). Persons who share central interests, experiences, and goals are, in Kanter's view (1977a), more comfortable in each other's company. Also, they can be counted on to pursue the same material interests as those who select them, assuring the status quo regarding the distribution of rights, privileges, and rewards (Offe, 1976). People who, on normative grounds, are assumed to be "known quantities" are preferred in organizational succession processes over those who are assumed on similar grounds to be "different," unknown, or possibly unpredictable. Women, of course, fall generally in the latter category. "Objective" qualifications, while perhaps necessary, are insufficient grounds for women to advance in hierarchical organizations. Beyond objective criteria, reliance on normative standards suggests that subjective or political processes play a role in organizational advancement (Halaby, 1979; Skvoretz & Mayhew, Note 1).

2. *Female "bosses" are viewed as liabilities.* Kanter (1977a) reports that both men and women resist female bosses because of fears of ineffectiveness on their behalf. Junior executives flock to experienced and proven "bosses" with "clout,"

that is, upward and outward influence. In business and manufacturing organizations, subordinates typically "move up with" their bosses. Concern that a woman will not advance as fast as a man, have as much clout, or go as high may influence subordinates to resist a female "boss" regardless of her "objective" qualifications or capabilities or even their personal respect or regard for her. Women who gain leadership positions in hierarchical organizations are likely to face a confidence gap.

### Organizational corrective actions

1. *Become adept at political processes in hierarchical organizations.* In regard to "objective qualifications and experiences," Perlmutter and Alexander (1978) advise women to demand and pursue the same "routes to the top" as male executives do. Dead-end staff or advisory jobs should be avoided. Women must apply for and insist on the opportunity to advance through accepted and standard routes (e.g., in business, through sales, production, or finance) to top administrative posts (Kanter, 1977a). Advancement or promotion should occur at the same rate or timetable as that of typical male executives. Too rapid or atypical advancement may result in lack of essential knowledge and skills and a dearth of interpersonal ties and allegiances necessary to "get the job done."

Women are advised to seek powerful male and, if available, female mentors (Rowe, Note 2) who can teach them the ropes, give them advice, serve as advocates, and provide information and advancement opportunities. Likewise, they can select and reject traits of various "partial role models," in an effort to create for themselves a "... composite ideal that represents the kind of professional toward which they aspire" (Shapiro, Haseltine & Rowe, 1978, p. 54).

An additional tack is to form networks across divisions, departments, and levels

(e.g., construction, mining, transportation, plumbing).

Corporations (and other work organizations) can encourage women to apply for nontraditional jobs including those that lead to executive positions. Kanter (1977a) suggests that cohorts of female managers be advanced at once to prevent the undesirable effects of "tokenism." Klein's (1980) suggestions for integrating minorities into upper level management are directly applicable to the incorporation of women. Among other things, he suggests that incentives be provided to senior executives for sponsoring the welfare and advancement of junior (minority) executives and that senior management consult directly and regularly with junior level (minority) executives to ascertain how well integration goals are being met.

2. *Use unions to further women's issues and concerns.* Women workers may be advised to join unions or form their own and to participate actively to assure attention to women's issues and concerns (Feldberg, 1980). The material interests of women workers, generally saddled with responsibilities for child care and home in addition to job, are not synonymous with those of male workers (Hartmann, 1979). Women cannot expect men to take a primary interest in women's issues and affairs but must become active enough to organize and lobby for their own particular concerns. Otherwise, union membership may entail little more for women than a drain on their paychecks.

## ORGANIZATIONAL LEVEL

Offe (1976) develops the thesis that the criterion of "performance" increasingly dominates all behavioral assessment in the industrialized Western world. Such a criterion is based on the *achievement principle*, which assumes performance to be capable of objective, neutral, and unbiased

evaluation. Offe questions whether job performance in complex, hierarchical organizations *can* be so evaluated and concludes, for a variety of reasons, that it cannot. Since performance is incapable of (totally) objective evaluation while appeals to the achievement principle claim that it is, Offe argues that performance is often evaluated on the basis of normative criteria (cf. Smith, 1979; Thompson, 1964; Skvoretz & Mayhew, Note 1). Normative criteria include any and all considerations that are irrelevant to job performance, such as gender, age, marital status, social class, appearance, ethnicity, and so forth.

Martin (1980) applies two aspects of Offe's thesis to an analysis of women's exclusion from upper level positions in hierarchical organizations. First, to the extent that "objective" criteria are actually employed as the basis for decisions on hiring and advancement, women are often "factually" disadvantaged. Defined by society as primarily "child-rearers" and "homemakers," women are more likely than men to have interrupted careers because of children, to have moved less often for promotion or advancement opportunities (cf. Marwell, Rosenfeld & Spilerman, 1979), and to appear less committed to their careers and employing organizations because of the type of jobs they hold, the demands of home/family roles, an absence of opportunities for advancement, and lack of support equivalent to that enjoyed by most males/husbands (Safilios-Rothschild, 1976).

Second, women are rejected for employment and advancement simply because they are women. Female managers or administrators violate the "admired" and normative model of the "good executive" who is white, male, aggressive, and a "comer" from the ranks of sales, production, or finance. Women are less likely to be viewed as "appropriate" or "qualified" or the "best choice for the job" (Epstein, 1975), par-

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intensive, small, geographically dispersed,  
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In addition to the effects of sector dual-  
 ism, women are harmed in the labor mar-  
 ket by occupational sex segregation. Nor-  
 matively appropriate "jobs" for women  
 have, historically, been those that are ex-  
 tensions of women's domestic activities  
 and roles (Hartmann, 1976; Lipman-Blu-  
 men, 1976). Nursing (Davies, 1979), ser-  
 vice work (e.g., cleaning, child care, cook-  
 ing), social work, and in the twentieth  
 century, school teaching (Strober & Tyack,  
 1980) and clerical work (Braverman, 1974)  
 are those spheres particularly reserved for  
 "women workers." Statistics that have re-  
 mained consistent for decades reveal that  
 75% of women in the competitive labor  
 market are concentrated in a total of 25  
 occupations whereas 75% of male workers  
 are spread across approximately 56 occu-  
 pations (Hartmann, 1976; Laws, 1979).  
 The range of occupational choices for  
 women is generally less than one-half that  
 for men.

### Institutional problems

1. *Sector segmentation and occupational  
 sex segregation prevent women from en-  
 tering many desirable occupations.* Laws  
 stating that women shall receive "equal  
 pay for equal work" matter little when  
 "... women do not in practice do 'equal'  
 work, concentrated as they are in particu-  
 lar sectors of employment in which they  
 predominate" (Murray, 1979, p. 62).  
 Though the mass media suggest a decline  
 in occupational segregation, recent statisti-  
 cal evidence fails to support such a con-  
 clusion (Epstein, 1975; Smith, 1979).  
 Women are, in fact, less well-represented  
 in some industrial sectors today than they  
 were in the 1930s. Their proportional rep-  
 resentation in management has decreased  
 in some sectors, e.g., in banking adminis-  
 tration between 1950 and 1970 (Silver,  
 1981). Even recent studies of career choices

among college students of the late 1970s  
 reveal that women students continue to  
 gravitate to female-dominant fields and male  
 students to male-dominant fields (Harren,  
 Kass, Tinsley & Moreland, 1979).

2. *Women have historically failed to  
 benefit from unionization.* For the most  
 part, unions have not been the friends of  
 women (Bibb & Form, 1977). Neverthe-  
 less, most of the growth in unions since  
 World War II has been in white-collar oc-  
 cupations (e.g., teachers, secretaries, clerks,  
 university faculties) and many of the most  
 recently unionized are women (Braverman,  
 1974). For persons in the bargaining unit,  
 unions provide guarantees of due process  
 that assure (ostensibly) that valid grievances  
 receive attention from the highest decision-  
 making levels in the work organization.

### Institutional corrective actions

1. *Enter and gain acceptance in all job  
 levels and sectors of the labor market and  
 economy.* Sector and occupational segre-  
 gation are such deeply entrenched aspects  
 of the developed world's competitive labor  
 market that it is difficult to pinpoint opti-  
 mal leverage points for altering the status  
 quo. Certainly, one place to begin is with  
 children and schools.

The role of the schools in "tracking"  
 students at early ages into the "sciences"  
 vs. the "arts" is well-documented (Tobias,  
 1978). Male students are encouraged to  
 take as much math as possible, to keep all  
 options open, whereas female students are  
 not so encouraged. Greater encouragement  
 of female students to enroll in more math-  
 ematics courses would increase their car-  
 eer choice options and prevent automatic  
 exclusion from such fields as engineering,  
 biology, or finance. Vocational training  
 schools also can be encouraged to re-  
 examine their admission and advisement  
 procedures to foster the entry of females  
 into areas traditionally "reserved" for males

than leaders. World-wide, women are denied access to high-level elective and appointive political positions. In the majority of parliamentary democracies, women constitute around 5% or less of the national political elite and in no instance do they constitute as much as one-half of the public office holders, even in one-party socialist systems (Newland, 1975; Putnam, 1976; Staudt, 1980). Although women's participation in public office is somewhat higher at regional and local levels than nationally "...the disproportionate advantage of male, educated, high-status elite recruits increases as we move up the political stratification system" (Putnam, 1976, p. 33). The exclusion of women from public-sector leadership positions supports stereotypical assumptions that women are less capable leaders than men and that women belong in the "private" sphere of home and family whereas men belong in the "public" sphere of political leadership and influence.

### Societal corrective actions

1. *Combat sexist stereotypes in the broader society.* Female workers (and others) are advised to combat sexism outside the employing organization while combatting it on the inside as well. If women are to be treated as genuine "equals" with men in work organizations, laws, attitudes, and discriminatory stereotypes in the wider society that harm women will have to be neutralized or changed. This will require extensive assaults on both subtle and blatant "sex role scripting" (Laws, 1979) in the family, home, schools, churches, and other institutional realms besides the economy (Martin, 1980). To achieve societal change, women employees are advised to establish coalitions with extra-organizational interest and political groups and to lobby legislators, corporate chiefs, government bureaucrats, and other influential persons to work toward equity for women in all societal realms (Cosser, 1981; Martin, 1980).

2. *Seek and gain leadership positions in politics.* To challenge the myth that "the only good leaders are males," women are advised to seek and gain leadership positions in the public arena. The substantial presence of women in local, regional, and national elective and appointive offices serves as an antidote to prejudices against women as leaders in work organizations (Newland, 1975). The major route to elective public office for women in the United States, other than through family connections (cf. Stacey & Price, 1981), has been through voluntary organization participation. Kirkpatrick (1974) reports that the majority of female legislators in her study gained both organizational leadership experience and the motivation to run for political office from their experiences in women's voluntary organizations (notably, the League of Women Voters). Staudt (1980) emphasizes the advantages to women of first gaining experience in all-women organizations prior to moving into the "political mainstream." Such experience, for example, "...provides women with the opportunity to develop leadership skills and to accumulate resources for leverage and coalition building with other groups" (Staudt, 1980, p. 58).

### INSTITUTIONAL LEVEL

A number of social scientists have argued that the labor market of modern industrialized societies is segmented into two or more sectors, e.g., core vs. periphery (Bibb & Form, 1977) or primary vs. secondary (Barron & Norris, 1976). From this perspective, women workers are located generally in the periphery and, as a consequence, are restricted to certain types of industries and/or firms (Baron & Bielby, 1980; Bridges, 1980). Bibb and Form (1977) show that female blue-collar workers, in contrast to blue-collar males, are concentrated in work organizations that are predominantly labor- (vs. technology-)

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Level of Social Organization	Unit of Analysis
Societal	Cultural values, ideologies, and societal practices (including historical ones) that affect women in society generally and as leaders or authority figures; fundamental qualities of the "workplace," e.g., the separation of home and work, bureaucratic organizational forms, etc.
Institutional	Sector of the economy, including market and industry variables; whether the sectors are core or peripheral, expanding or contracting, etc.; degree and form of occupational sex segregation within and across market sectors; historical practices regarding women as workers and as authority figures in economic endeavors; historical and present routes to leadership in various market sectors
Organizational	Work organization particulars, such as size, mission, resources, geographic location, prestige (e.g., of universities), form of internal labor market(s), and extent to which women are considered and consider themselves a part of this market; structures, processes, and ideological aspects of advancement or promotion in hierarchical work settings
Role	Job characteristics, such as required skill levels, visibility, financial rewards, amount of authority involved; whether job enhances skills or not, whether line or staff; the relationship of extra-workplace responsibilities and duties such as those of wife/mother to those inside the work organization
Individual	Female worker characteristics such as qualifications, experience, style, marital and family status, confidence/ambition, intelligence, ability to "get things done," willingness to support other females as "bosses," extent to which inspires trust, etc.

Figure 1. Levels of social organization and corresponding units of analysis relevant to women in hierarchical organizations.

Note. Adapted from Baron and Bielby, Table 1 (1980, p. 743).

the analysis should not be interpreted as acceptance of their appropriateness or inevitability.

**SOCIETAL LEVEL**

Work organizations are located in societies with particular cultural values, expectations, and stereotypes regarding appropriate roles and behaviors for men and women, and the influence of these factors on the internal structure and processes of such organizations is extensive (Salaman, 1979). Organizations, furthermore, find it difficult to sustain internal changes that contradict the structures, values, and practices of the external environment (Fox, 1974; Gould, 1979; Rothschild-Whitt, 1979).

**Societal problems**

1. *Societal stereotypes depict women as nonserious workers.* Societal stereotypes

of women as "properly in the home" rather than the workplace harm women in work organizations. The separation of "work" from the domains of family and home, a development consonant with industrialization and urbanization in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, preceded and shaped the view of the work world as a domain for men and the family/home as a domain for women (Marglin, 1976; Osmond, forthcoming). As a result, claims abound that depict women as less committed than men to jobs and careers, to advancement inside the organization, and to self-fulfillment through work itself (Brown, 1976). Such claims are used as justification to discount women as serious candidates for important or powerful positions and to deny opportunities for entry and advancement in career lines leading to top administrative posts (Smith, 1979).

2. *Women are viewed as followers rather*

this previous work. Our aim is to present, explain, and illustrate an analytical framework for conceptualizing and understanding the problems and prospects of women in advancing to powerful positions in work organizations. To accomplish this, we identify five levels of social organization and five corresponding units of analysis relevant to the experiences of women in hierarchical organizations (Baron & Bielby, 1980). From more inclusive to less inclusive, the five levels of organization are

1. societal;
2. institutional;
3. organizational;
4. role; and
5. individual (see Figure 1).

Corresponding units of analysis for each level are, respectively:

1. cultural values, ideologies, and societal practices that affect women;
2. market and sector issues including occupational sex segregation;
3. work organization particulars;
4. job characteristics; and
5. female worker characteristics and issues.

The omission of groups as a distinct level of social organization rests on the assumption that group phenomena and processes are an inherent aspect of organizational reality and can be addressed under this rubric.

For each level of social organization in Figure 1, we identify two "problems" with women's advancement along with plausible "corrective actions" for overcoming or transcending them. Although the problems (and corrective actions) identified are illustrative rather than exhaustive, the framework is intended to serve as a guide for organizations, groups, and individuals interested in effecting organizational change on behalf of women (and other excluded groups). The corrective action suggestions encompass ideal or preferred changes, practical solutions, and specific action steps

that individual women can take. Reasons for this variability rest on the range and variety of "social contexts" represented by the five levels of organization and the relative dearth of evidence on the effectiveness or practicality of specific strategies and remedies (cf. Fennell, Barchas, Cohen, McMahon & Hildebrand, 1978; Rigan & Galligan, 1980).

A fundamental theme of our analysis is that work organizations are social contexts in which societal inequities are enacted or constituted and reconstituted (Baron & Bielby, 1980; Clegg & Dunkerley, 1979; Miller, Lincoln & Olson, 1981). For this reason, intra-organizational processes and structures are analyzed in relation to extra-organizational situations and developments. Failure to consider the environment when attempting to initiate and sustain organizational change relative to women in leadership roles will result either in erroneous analyses of the problem or in adoption of "solutions" whose effectiveness is, over the long haul, minimal (Gould, 1979). A second major theme is that processes by which access is gained to the upper echelons of hierarchical organizations are fundamentally political in nature. Despite claims that "achievement-based" criteria regarding "objective" qualifications and performance are the basis for advancement and promotion to the higher ranks, the position developed here is that ascribed characteristics—such as gender, race, appearance—also play a substantial role (Martin, 1980; Offe, 1976; Smith, 1979; Skvoretz & Mayhew, Note 1).

The present paper assumes the status quo in regard to the nature and prevalence of hierarchical, bureaucratic organizations that employ the majority of paid workers in the modern world. Because they constitute *a priori* structures of frustration for the majority of employees, such organizations are often "unhealthy" work sites for both men and women (Weinstein, 1979). Taking such organizations as given for

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## Advancement for Women in Hierarchical Organizations: A Multilevel Analysis of Problems and Prospects

PATRICIA YANCEY MARTIN  
DIANNE HARRISON  
DIANA DINITTO

*Women's problems and prospects for advancement to upper level positions in hierarchical organizations are analyzed within a five-level framework of social organization. The five levels are (1) societal; (2) institutional; (3) organizational; (4) role; and (5) individual. Corresponding units of analysis for each level are identified and discussed. To illustrate the framework, two problems confronting women are identified for each level, along with possible corrective actions. Conclusions are that (1) fundamental change in women's status in hierarchical work organizations will require simultaneous efforts on all five levels of social organization; (2) change in any realm requires political action against ideological justifications and claims for women's exclusion; and (3) the division of labor between the sexes in relation to work and child/family/home responsibilities must change before women can receive equitable treatment in the workplace. The authors call for more research on the interrelations between influences and factors across levels of social organization.*

A number of recent publications have identified the problems of women in rising to positions of leadership and authority in societal and organizational spheres (cf. Epstein, 1981; Coser, 1981; Kanter, 1977a; Rigan & Galligan, 1980; Brown, 1979; Chernesky, 1980; Martin, 1980; Stacey & Price, 1981; and Staudt, 1980). Two common themes characterize these analyses. (1) Despite their ever-increasing num-

bers in the workplace, very few women have risen to positions of leadership and authority. And (2) efforts to change this situation must go beyond a "blame-the-victim" approach and penetrate the societal and structural barriers that impede women's opportunities and successes in gaining leadership positions.

The present paper builds on and extends

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