

UTILIZING THE OTHER HALF: WORLD TRENDS IN THE EMPLOYMENT OF WOMEN*



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OPSOMMING

Die aantal vroue in Suid-Afrika wat bestuursposisies beklee, het in slegs agt jaar verdriedubbel. Hierdie toename word beskou teen die agtergrond van die wêreldwye toename van vroue in die werksituasie en veral in bestuursloopbane. Redes vir hierdie toename sluit in 'n groter bewuswording onder sowel mans as vroue van die loopbaanpotensiaal en prestasiebehoefte van vroue; ekonomiese druk; die stygende aantal vroue wat gesinshoofde is; en die behoefte aan bekwame menslike hulpbronne. Ten spyte van die menigte probleme en vooroordele waarvoor die bestuursvrou te staan kom, beweeg 'n groeiende groep vroue opwaarts in nie-tradisionele loopbane, en maak hulle so ook die pad oop vir nog meer vroue om hulle bydrae te maak in belang van sowel hulle werkgewers as die ekonomie, as hulleself.

WOMEN MANAGERS IN SOUTH AFRICA

The past decade has seen a dramatic increase in the numbers of South African women holding managerial positions. From 1969 to April 1977, the number of white women in the employment category "Managerial, administrative and executive" almost trebled from 5 277 to 15 535.⁽¹⁾ Whereas these women represented 6,5% of all managers in South Africa in 1969, the percentage increased to 10,8% in 1977. Over the same period the percentages of black, coloured and Asian men and women in this category also increased considerably, although the real numbers of incumbents were still low.

This did not, however, take place at the expense of white male managers, since their numbers increased from 72 891 in 1969 to 122 853 in 1977. White males as a percentage of all managers dropped, however, from 90,65% in 1969 to 85,77% in 1977. These statistics (obtained from the South African Department of Labour) indicate that due to the need for capable managers in the South African economy, white male managers are not being "pushed out", but the other managers are mostly moving upwards to fill the gap as more managers are required by a growing economy.

A BROADER VIEW

This trend is, of course, not unique to South Africa, and as in most other countries in the world, it has formed part of a general increase in the labour force participation rates of women. There are some apparent similarities in practices, problems and trends in the employment of women in different countries.

For this reason this first in a series of three articles on the utilization of women will look mainly at world trends, while the second will focus on the South African situation, and the third will review research on women in management careers.

In the past decade much has been said, written and researched world-wide around the subject of women in employment. Particularly in the past few years this has become one of the most "fashionable" topics in the media, in scientific journals in a wide range of fields, and on the bookshelves. Very little formal theory exists in this field, however, although many related topics have been discussed and researched in depth, as well as emotionally, politically and radically. These topics include: history and tradition; male/female stereotypes based on a combination of male chauvinism and self-protection, and on culture and habit; self-defeating attitudes among women; the desire among some women (and many men) to retain the "old system"; the dual role of the working woman and the issue of dual-career families; action programmes to get more women into management; career guidance, training and retraining; labour force, employment and economic considerations; and sociological and psychological implications of all these trends.

Not much has been written in South Africa on this topic to date, so where local material is not available, information and research from other countries provide a valuable background on women in management. Particularly in the United States and Canada, where pressure groups and strong government action and legislation have raised awareness about, and have given strong impetus to, the development of the

* First in a series of three articles on the utilization of women in management.

managerial potential of this large "minority group", a wealth of material exists on women and careers.

GENERAL INCREASE IN ECONOMICALLY ACTIVE WOMEN

According to an International Labour Office publication on "Womanpower" (2, pp. 8, 9) some four out of every ten people living in 1975 were economically active; 550 million, or 34%, of the total workforce of over 1 600 million persons, were women. About 28% of all women in the world were economically active — while over 50% of all men were members of the labour force.

Female labour force participation rates (i.e. the number of women working as a percentage of the total work-age female population) varied considerably between different countries — from as high as 48% in the USSR in 1971, to 4% in Northern Africa. A variety of factors were said to influence these participation rates in different countries, including the sex-age structure and size of each country's population, but more particularly "the mixture of social, religious, cultural, economic and political factors which affect the role and status of women in every society". Although there were some exceptions, the more developed regions generally tended to have a higher, and a faster-growing female labour force participation rate, than the less developed regions. Developed regions with high participation rates were the USSR (48%), Eastern Europe (42%), Japan (39%), Western Europe (30%), Northern Europe (29%) and Northern America (28%).

Virtually throughout the world, the past quarter-century brought a dramatic increase in both the actual numbers and participation percentages of economically active women, and their ratio to the total labour force (2, p. 35). While these increases tended to be more rapid in the more developed than in less developed countries, the occupational distribution of the female labour force in the more developed countries

also showed a wider spread and higher percentages of women in less traditional and non-agricultural occupations than in developing countries. (2, p. 12).

In the United States as in most other countries (in spite of the past decade of "women's liberation") the role of women in the labour market is still largely confined to "traditionally female occupations", and their pay, even when working full-time and permanently, is considerably less, at about three-fifths of that of men. In order to establish whether these differences are caused mainly by inherent, nature-determined differences between men and women, or by cultural and societal influences, Ferber and Lowry (3, pp. 23-30) examined the situation in a variety of 68 countries with different cultural, religious, political and economic influences. They examined labour force participation, occupational distribution and earnings of women in the different countries, and found very marked international differences in the statistics and situations of women in the various countries. They concluded that the economic status of women is primarily culturally determined, and not so much by inherent, immutable differences between the sexes. Their study indicated both room for, and the possibility of, improvement in the economic position of women in the United States (and presumably also elsewhere). They concluded: "It should also help if people become aware of the fact that biology need not be destiny, that women not only can, but have achieved a greater degree of equality in some other countries."

A particularly interesting analysis in the Ferber and Lowry study relates to a ranking of the "femaleness" of different occupations. Tables 1 and 2 show the countries with the highest and lowest percentages of women in the different occupations; and the percentages of women in various professions by country. The large differences between countries challenge some of the stereotypes relating to what is "women's work" and what not, by showing up that culture and tradition, rather than innate ability, influence this distribution.

Table 1
Highest and lowest percentage women in major occupational categories*

Occupations	Highest % Women	Lowest % Women
Professional, Technical and Related Workers	58% Brazil	11% Libyan Arab Republic
Administrative, Executive and Managerial Workers	30% Martinique	0% Syrian Arab Republic
Clerical Workers	80% Bermuda	1% Libyan Arab Republic
Sales Workers	88% Ghana	1% Bahrain, Iran, Kuwait
Farmers, Fishermen, Loggers and Related Workers	59% Rumania	0% Bahrain, Bermuda, Kuwait
Craftsmen, Production Process Workers and Labourers	36% Hong Kong	0% Bahrain
Service, Sports and Recreation Workers	88% Western Samoa	4% Algeria

* Source: Ferber & Lowry, p. 26.

Table 2
Percentage of women in various professions by country*

Country	University Faculty	Physicians	Dentists	Pharmacists	Lawyers	Engineers	Members of Parliament
Finland	18%	23%	77%	86%	7-8%	4%	17%
France	21	12	25				
Germany (FR)	2	20	13				7-8
Great Britain	11	18	17	33	5	0.4	4
Japan		9	3				
Norway	2	10	20	92		0.6	9
Sweden	10	17	24	69	7-8		14
USA	20	7	1	12	3	2	2
USSR		75	83		37	33	28

* Source: Ferber & Lowry, p. 28.

REASONS FOR INCREASE IN EMPLOYMENT OF WOMEN

As one would expect with any meaningful change in social and cultural patterns, a large complex of factors has interacted to cause and accelerate the participation of women in employment, and particularly their subsequent moves into less traditional and higher-level occupations.(4, p. 5)

Increased consciousness of potential of women

Of course, the idea of women working, and even occupying positions of high responsibility and status, is nothing new in world history, even dating back to Biblical times. In the past decade, numerous studies have both gone back into the history and done current research in order to explode myths and commonly-held stereotypes about women and particularly their managerial abilities. Research done in the United States and in many other countries has indicated clearly that employers have little rational reason for keeping career-oriented women out of jobs, particularly out of higher-level jobs, on account of their being less capable than men. Researchers as well as several top executives have been explicit that the "traditionalist" employers who discriminate against women are doing so to their own disadvantage.

Boyle(5, pp. 87, 95) quotes IBM senior vice president George S. Beitzel as having defined industry's biggest problem in the coming years as "a shortage of capable people at all levels of management". According to Boyle, "If this is true, corporate leaders can no longer ignore half of the population when they are looking for creative and executive talent. It has long been obvious that we are not utilizing the capabilities of the women in our companies ... From a dollar standpoint, the female labour force constitutes an important reservoir of talent which is necessary for companies to use to remain competitive in the business world."

In a review of myths about women, appropriately subtitled "What every businessman ought to know about women but may be afraid to ask", Athanassiades (6, p.

4) said that business, government, the church and the military were the major institutions today that, for all practical purposes, excluded women from their upper ranks. "Whether from machismo, inertia, or other reasons, these institutions are burying their heads in the sand of sex discrimination. By denying women full participation, they not only help perpetuate the second-class status of women, but also forego the opportunity to tap the talents, creativity, and energy of one half of society's human resources."

This increased consciousness of the potential and ability of women is, however, still far from general, and a lot of convincing work and consciousness raising would still be required in the United States, in Europe, in South Africa and elsewhere, if many of the deep-seated stereotypes, prejudices and traditions were to give way sufficiently to allow career-minded women really equal opportunities.

The Women's Movement

The increased consciousness mentioned above did not occur of its own accord. A major trigger to this was the Women's Movement and the activities, pressure groups, attitude changes and even legislation to which it led in the past decade or more. Although one may personally disagree with some of the approaches and methods of the more radical members of the movement, there is no doubt that their very positive, even dramatic, campaigning has contributed to raising awareness among both sexes of inequities suffered by most women, and to getting a better deal for women in many countries.

Although women still have a long way to go if they are to attain full equality, and many companies are still at this stage only paying lip service to the issue of equality,(7, 8, 9) a valuable start has been made and there is no turning back. Several large corporations in the United States and Canada at least are seriously seeking to improve the utilization of women at all levels in their organizations. An example is a reference to the movement for equality in women's rights in a

corporate directive to all General Electric managers: "This movement is not a fad or an aberration, but a major social force with great and growing impact on business and other social, political, and economic institutions. As such, it must be taken seriously by business managers; its future potential must be foreseen and constructive responses must be designed to meet legitimate demands." (5, p. 85)

Economic reasons force women to work*

In spite of the myth that women mostly only work for pocket money or for luxuries, most women work for economic reasons. In a brochure issued by the US Labor Department(10) this myth is challenged by the following facts: "Of the nearly 34 million women in the (US) labour force in March 1973, nearly half were working because of pressing economic need.(11) They were either single, widowed, divorced, or separated, or had husbands whose incomes were less than \$3 000 a year. Another 4,7 million had husbands with incomes between \$3 000 and \$7 000", that is below the estimate for a low standard of living for an urban family in 1972.

A 1969 survey among working mothers indicated that 89% of clerical, sales, service and blue collar workers, and 71% of mothers who were professional workers, said they were working for economic reasons.(12, p. 457)

The high inflation rates of the past decade have also forced families above the poverty line to consider the wife's return to work for economic reasons since it has become increasingly difficult to live comfortably on one income only. According to Gail Sheehy, (13, p. 380) as of 1970, seven-eighths of all women who held jobs were working "to help make ends meet". The "necessity factor" extended even into high income brackets, since "women in all social classes define making ends meet by whatever style of life their family would like to become accustomed to". This would include improving the quality of housing or schooling.

The same applies in Europe. According to an article in *Time*: (14) "What makes the situation particularly painful now is that the crushing pressures of inflation are forcing more women to take on the classic 'dual burden' of children and job whether they want to or not."

Need for human resources

If organizations need people to fill their "manpower" needs, they are forced to consider women as well, particularly if there are not enough men available. This occurs specially in periods of economic expansion, and in time of war. Such needs have frequently created new employment opportunities for women, in more

diversified occupations and at a higher skill level than before. "In times of crisis the economic or military demands may, at least temporarily, lead to a breakdown of cultural norms and ideals pertaining to men's and women's tasks. The fact that gender differentiation is reestablished, although often in novel forms, when crisis conditions disappear does not render the 'crisis theory (of women's equality)' useless." (15) Holter said such times illustrated the importance of material resources, and of time necessary for changing ascribed roles, as well as the possibilities for and limitations on sex role change inherent in a society.

The other side of this coin — which leads to much dissatisfaction — is that women employees are usually regarded and treated as more expendable than males. "European women are often regarded as a reserve labour force to be recruited when the economy requires (them) and sent home when male employment is in jeopardy. 'They have stopped using immigrant labor and turned to us', says Swedish journalist Birgitta Lagerstrom. 'We are their new migrant workers.' " (14)

Unemployment rates for women are also consistently higher than those for men. In the United States these were 9,3% for women and 7,9% for men in 1975, with 10% of female family heads unemployed, compared with 6% of male family heads. (11) In the Federal Republic of Germany, Hack-Unterkircher (16) reports a similar situation, which in fact deteriorated from June 1975 to July 1976:

	June 1975	July 1976
Men unemployed	4,3%	3,3%
Women unemployed	5,3%	5,5%

In spite of the retrenchment of women and increased unemployment in times of economic downturn, the overall long-term picture still shows that women in most countries are gradually climbing the employment mountain (in spite of occasional backslides), and are steadily increasing their representation in the total workforce, due to a real need existing for their services.

Demographical and social changes

Referring to women in business in Canada, Sinclair (17) wrote in 1971: "Women are having a revolutionary effect on the labour market. This fact is not fully appreciated yet but the adjustments that will have to be made to accommodate the new role of women are only now being recognized. Higher education and declining motherhood are propelling women into the labour stream. A woman today works because she has gone to school long enough to discover she has talents worth utilizing and she sees motherhood transformed from a lifetime vocation to a brief interlude."

* Please note: Unless otherwise mentioned, statistics in this section refer to the situation of women in employment in the United States.

Although the myth of the "inevitable" marriage and child-bearing of women is frequently used to deny the careerworthiness of women, this assumption is becoming increasingly less valid. A high proportion of women in the United States in the 20-24 age group, 40%, were single in 1975, compared with 28% of that age group in 1950. (18, p. 14) Besides this, the labour force participation rate of married women with children has also increased rapidly — even that for women with preschool children rose from 14% in 1950 to 33% in 1973. (12, p. 455) These factors, together with the increasing life expectancy of women — estimated in 1973 at 75,3 years for women and 67,6 years for men (18, p. 15) — have led to an increase in the worklife expectancy of women. When the average married American woman reenters the working world at age 35, she can expect to work for the next 24 years or more. (13, p. 379) The work-life expectancy of the woman who does not interrupt her career for family reasons is practically the same as that for men. (19, pp. 15-16) Trends in the education of women, with growing percentages of women attending and graduating from universities, also stimulate occupational activity and career progress of women. "This is not just a matter of job qualifications, but of employment opportunities and motivation to work." (18, p. 17)

Social changes, such as attitudes towards women working, accelerating divorce rates, less rigidity regarding sex roles both within and outside marriage, and postponement of, or alternatives to marriage, have all contributed to the increasing occupational involvement of women. (20, pp. 50-55)

The increasing availability of day-care for children (although in most cases still inadequate), as well as the growth of service industries and technological developments which have made it possible to better plan and to reduce domestic workloads, have also helped women to overcome some of the former obstacles to their career involvement. (21)

Working for personal fulfilment

A growing trend

A meaningful trend relating to women in employment is the personal need among growing numbers of married women to express themselves and find a new identity beyond that of wife and mother, by holding an independent job — or more, by making a career in the full sense of the word, that is pursuing a sequence of jobs requiring a high degree of commitment and implying continuous development. (22)

Some women may work to get away from home and family, seeing outside jobs as more glamorous, exciting, challenging, personally rewarding and better recognized by society than household tasks. According to Lazer and Smallwood, (18, p. 19) "Even as working wives, women are not denying their roles of wives, mothers and homemakers. Rather they want to fulfil

these roles in a manner that permits them to realize themselves, to establish a valid sense of identity and a sense of self-esteem." They say the role of the working wife is fast becoming the norm, and represents a shift in mores and life styles. "In previous decades, if a wife worked, this was interpreted as an indication of the inadequacy of the husband as a provider for his family. Couples worried about what neighbours would think, and the wife was concerned about the image of not fulfilling her responsibilities as a mother. Now, however, a working wife is considered to be the sign of a liberated woman, with a happy, understanding husband and family, who is realizing herself without short-changing her family obligations. Previously, it was the working wife who tended to justify her position to others. Now, and in the future, it is more likely to be the non-working wife who will feel a need to do so." Even when women initially start working outside purely for financial reasons, they frequently discover that "some expression of personal competence and mastery outside the family setting often enhances their sense of well being ... and gives them an opportunity to get out of themselves and to feel that they have some autonomy". (23)

The investment in female human capital is also an important consideration. (20, p. 66) Although the educated woman need not be "wasted" because she is a housewife — she may be a more efficient homemaker and a better educator of her children, as well as a more intellectually stimulating spouse — investment in education also tends to encourage women to take market jobs, irrespective of their marital status. "Throughout the age range of 30 to 60 years, the participation rate for married women with 16 or more years of school remains well above 50%, while the rate for those with the least education (less than 8 years) ranges between 25 and 35 percent." (20, p. 69)

The commitment of women to the labour force and to own careers is also becoming less sensitive to the incomes of their husbands. Kreps and Clark (20, p. 68) quote that in a study of women aged 30 to 44, 60% of the white and 67% of the black workers reported that they would continue working even if they could live comfortably without their earnings. These same women expressed a high degree of job satisfaction and job attachment.

The last chance — at 35

Although the modern trend is for many women to return to employment even while their children are still young, 35 is the average age at which the married American woman reenters the working world. This is usually when her children are becoming less dependent on her, so that she is not needed at home full-time. Along with the "empty nest" also comes the "watershed age", or the "deadline decade" between 35 and 45 as described by Sheehy. (13, p. 377) "The time pinch around 35 sets off a 'my last chance' urgency. What a woman feels it is her 'last chance' to

do depends on the pattern she has followed so far." Every woman, whether she chose family life, career achievement, or a combination of these in her early adulthood, "finds unanticipated questions knocking at the back door of her mind around 35, urging her to review those roles and options she has already tried against those she has set aside, and those that ageing and biology will close off in the *now foreseeable future*."

Some "deferred achievers" have a college degree and a comfortable socio-economic background which make the career reentry crisis mainly a matter of overcoming internal timidity and their "addiction to the luxury of *not having to work*, which cannot be stressed enough as a powerful counterforce." (13, pp. 380-381) For many others, however, finding a suitable and satisfying job is difficult, since most women lack career-oriented training, and there are severe penalties in pay for the number of years that a woman has been out of the labour force as a homemaker. Many women above 30, and more over 40, find it difficult to make career progress, and after 40 the unemployment rate for women is more than one-third higher than that for men of the same age.

Conflict and choice: The old or the new

There has, however, also been a reaction against the movement of the housewife to seek fulfilment outside her home, an example of which is the cult of the extremely submissive, husband-pampering housewife started by Marabel Morgan with her two books *Total Woman* and *Total Joy*. An article in *Time* (24) describes a number of responses to feminism, some not as way-out as the Morgan approach, seeking new recognition for the status of the housewife, and of the potential risk to family life if both parents enter the career "rat-race".

According to the 1972 Virginia Slims American Women's Opinion Poll, almost half of a national sample of women said they were unsympathetic to "women's liberation", and more than a third said they "opposed efforts to strengthen or change women's status in society". (25) Torrey ascribes this "psychology of the nonfeminist" to the sex-role stereotypes and beliefs which are deeply ingrained in men as well as women in the American society. She says many women accept these images of the personality and life-pattern of women, and regard them as natural and inevitable, "so that all else must accommodate to the stereotype as a given fact".

A further contributory factor to the resistance to the women's movement may have been the radical approach of many of the early feminists of the past decade — which alienated them from many women, and particularly from the more conservative housewife.

A quote attributed to Dr Joyce Brothers (26) probably represents a growing consciousness and self-determination among women in the United States and in

many parts of the world: "A woman cannot rely on her husband to give her life meaning. Ultimately she alone is responsible for her happiness."

Pearl Buck (27) summarised the housewife's dilemma well: "The door of the house is wide open for women to walk through and out into the world, but the stupendous scene beyond terrifies her. She slams the door shut and pulls down the shades. She is so terrified that she sometimes even rails against the exceptional woman, the daring individual who accepts the invitation of the open door and enters into wider opportunity and assumes the new responsibility ... Old prejudices are fading, intelligent men are eagerly seeking intelligence wherever it can be found, and they are impatient when intelligent women continue to live in narrow ways, apart from the world's problems and dangers."

The combination of career achievement with the responsibilities that a marriage usually places on a woman is certainly no small problem. The decision whether a married woman should reenter a career or not, is a personal one in which the interests and preferences of the individual woman and of her husband and children should be considered thoroughly, without undue pressure from feminist demands. Particularly when a married woman is to enter a career such as management with its concomitant demands and responsibilities (in contrast to a more usual "woman's job" with regular or even shorter hours) all the costs and benefits of dual career responsibilities must be taken into account. Some aspects of the dual career situation will be discussed in the third article in this series.

Ideally, education for handling this situation should start early, as part of career education at school. "Girls and women need particular help in preparing for and carrying out the complicated dual role of homemaker and careerist that is increasingly the lot and choice of many of them. They need also to be made aware that homemaker and parent are admirable career roles, just as a career outside the home that involves neither is admirable. The choice is theirs. Young men need to learn that the role of homemaker and parent, except for the obvious biological specialization, is as much a male as a female responsibility." (19, p. 223)

WOMEN IN MANAGEMENT

Considering the host of problems and prejudices women managers have to face, (28) besides the reasonable demands that they prove their abilities and competence in a competitive business world, it is understandable, although still regrettable, that there are few women who have made it to the top.

Statistics available on percentages of women occupying managerial positions in different countries vary, possibly due to cultural factors, but it could also be due to different bases and classifications used in the compilation of statistics. It must also be borne in mind

that even if women are classified under "managerial and administrative" they usually tend to be at the lower levels of this category. Tabel 3 gives an overview of women's representation in the labour force and in management in selected developed countries. Since the table has been compiled from a variety of sources, and definitions and levels of management are likely to differ somewhat, the table should be interpreted with care. It must also be considered that the information for most countries is several years old, and that the participation rates of women both in the workforce and in management are likely to have increased considerably in the interim.

Table 3
Representation of women in labour force and in management in selected developed countries

Country	Women as % of total workforce	Women managers as % of total managers	Women managers as % of all working women	Year of data
Britain _a	40	10	1	1971
Canada _b	34	15	2	1971
Germany _c	34	10	2	1971
Japan _d	38	5	0,5	1972
Russia _{e,f}	48	12		1968/70
United States _g	40	20	3	1975
South Africa _h (whites)	36	8	2	1975

Sources:

- a. Chiplin, B & Sloane, P J: *Sex discrimination in the labour market*. London, MacMillan, 1976, pp. 26-27 and 36.
- b. Gunderson, M: "Work Patterns" in *Opportunity for choice*, ed by G C A Cook. Ottawa, Information Canada, 1976, pp. 113-117.
- c. Hack-Unterkircher, E: "Das Karrieredefizit der Berufsfrau." *Management International*, 1977/1, pp. 24-25.
- d. "Female employment in Japan": *Now in Japan*, December 1975, pp. 2-4.
- e. International Labour Office: *Womanpower*. Geneva, 1975, pp. 7, 15.
- f. Sullerot, E: *Histoire et sociologie du travail feminin*. Gauthier, 1968, p. 208.
- g. US Department of Labor: *Women workers today*. Washington, 1976, pp. 1, 7.
- h. SA Department of Labour: Personal communication. Pretoria, 1977.

In two other developed countries, women managers appear to be even more rare: In Italy, it is estimated that only 1% of all executives are women, (29) while in an Australian survey of managers and directors in 1961, (30) only two respondents were women, both executives in family concerns.

The underrepresentation of women in management, in spite of their making up between one third and almost half of the total labour force in the countries listed, has the following implications important to this study:

South African white women appear to be not too badly off compared with women in most other developed countries, although their representation in higher levels could obviously be improved.

The low representation of women in top-level jobs would obviously affect the remuneration of women

compared to that of men. The question of unequal pay will be dealt with later in this paper.

The implication of the paucity of women executives which is of concern here as a problem holding back potential women managers is that there are usually very few women executives who can serve as mentors and role models for women who are still on their way up.

Several studies have indicated that role models or mentors are very important in the career development of individuals. Sheehy (31) states that almost every achieving young man has somewhere above him on the ladder an older, wiser, professionally paternalistic man who has guided and helped him in his career. She points out that most of the successful women she has studied were at some point in their careers also nurtured by a mentor.

Hennig and Jardim (32) also found that the mentor relationship had been vitally important in the careers of the 25 executive women that they studied. "To each woman, he was her supporter, her encourager, her teacher and her strength in the company." In their earlier career years, the women moved up in their organizations along with their mentors, until they had reached the stage where they could become independent. But the mutual respect and friendship lasted. According to Wells, (33) the informal sponsor or mentor pattern is one of five important elements in management training and development, and one of the most effective means of "getting to the top".

For obvious social reasons there are potential problems involved in a male-female mentor relationship, even if they are only those of appearances. Therefore, as women move up in business, they could also "adopt" younger women with potential and guide them, probably even better than most of the male mentors who have helped women up to now, since the senior woman will herself have experienced and overcome many of the problems that still await the newcomer woman. Most of the small but growing number of women executives are already playing this role of helping other women up the ladder by their advice, encouragement and by their very presence. The fact that the trail-blazers were appointed and have proved their value to their companies, makes it more likely that other women will be appointed to similar positions. Rosen and Jerdee (34) have also found that if these senior women are in positions where they have to decide about appointments and other issues relating to women, they would be less inclined to be guided by sex-role stereotypes and would have a better understanding of the position of their female subordinates. The above also indicates that women executives are generally inclined to help other women, in opposition to the myth that "queen bees" begrudge other women success and are extremely harsh on female subordinates. While the scarcity of top women, and hence of career role models, could slow down the progress of women into management, aspiring

women must recognize the importance of guidance from mentors or senior colleagues, male or female, and must look out for the opportunity to establish such relationships.

UNEQUAL PAY

Looking at remuneration practices in various countries, it appears that unequal pay for women is a fact of life. The following are a few examples from a variety of sources, looking first at the general picture, without allowing for differences in occupation or level:

- Women employed full-time, full-year in the United States, earn 58% of what men get, in spite of the fact that they average more years of education. (25)
- The median salary of women college graduates in the United States is 67% of that of their male counterparts. (6, p. 7)
- White women in the United States earn 65% of the average white male wage, and black women 67% of that of black males. In the absence of sex discrimination these figures would have been 88% for white, and 96% for black women, this is allowing for the differences that would be caused by other factors such as a marital status, child-bearing and part-time work. (35)
- In Canada, full-year, full-time women earned 59% of male earnings both in 1961 and in 1971 — so there was no improvement in 10 years. If part-time workers are included, the rates for women were 54% in 1961 and 50% in 1971. (36)
- In 1972 women in Japan earned 50,2% of male earnings, an improvement on the 1950 rate of 46,5%. (37)
- Other rates that may be interesting are the United Kingdom: 61%; the German Federal Republic: 71%; France: 64%; Sweden: 84%; the Netherlands: 74%; and Australia: 78%. (3, p. 29)

Even in specific job levels, that is with people doing the same work, there are marked differences:

- In Germany, in an analysis of managers earning more than DM80 000 (about R32 000), only 0,3%, or 16 out of 5 053, were women. In 1975 female officials in Germany earned 37% less than their male counterparts, that is 63% of their earnings; while as industrial workers women earned 30% less than men. (16, p. 24-25)
- In a large US organization, all officers at a certain responsibility level are reported to have been in an annual salary range of \$14 000 – \$21 000; with only two exceptions, both women, who were in the \$12 000 – \$14 000 range — but were paid \$10 600 and \$10 900 respectively. (7)
- In Canada women in the category Manager/Professional (full-time) earned 56% of the income of similar males in 1971; while the rates for female Clerical and Sales workers were 67% and 49% of the male incomes respectively. (36)

These discrepancies cannot be blamed on discrimination only. Other factors include occupational level;

lack of career-oriented training; and the fact that more women looking for work, mostly in the "traditionally female" fields, are competing with one another for work and tend to push down their own "market price". (4, p. 8) Wage differentials also tend to increase with marital status, length of marriage, number of and spacing of children. (38) Length of service, career commitment and working hours (full-time vs part-time) are also relevant.

Fact remains, however, that sex discrimination is still a major factor in these wage differences, and that many companies which may officially have an "equal pay for equal work" policy, do not always practice it. (7) Whatever the reasons (or excuses) for these inequitable pay policies may be, the women concerned understandably find them demotivating, frustrating and even insulting — particularly if they carry management responsibilities. Sometimes this could even cause them to lose interest in their careers.

With such a universal pattern, it appears as if there is little that women can do to improve the situation. Although it will naturally take time to remedy this tradition, recent legislation in many countries could contribute in some way. Women in all countries could, however, also play an important role in attaining greater pay equality for themselves and for other women, by developing the right approaches and abilities concerning their careers: A positive attitude towards their careers, including doing the necessary career planning and training; developing their self-confidence and a more assertive manner; and getting to grips with politics and power in their business situation.

CONCLUSION

In almost all countries there has been a steady increase in the economic activity of women. Women are also moving into non-traditional roles at an increasing pace. Reasons for these trends include: An increased consciousness among women and among some potential employers, of the abilities of women, and a wish among women to realize this potential outside their homes; a need existing in most countries for capable human resources; changes in social attitudes and in social structures which have made the employment of women more acceptable, and in many cases even essential; technological developments which have changed both the physical nature of many occupations, and some demands and tasks of house-keeping. Economic reward is still one of the main reasons why women are going out to work — independently of marital or parental status.

Working women are faced with many problems, in addition to the usual work-related problems. These problems include: The dual responsibilities of the "workwife", and possible conflict of interests due to careers of both husband and wife; the collection of myths and stereotypical beliefs about women which influence opportunities open to, and behaviour to-

wards women; by accepting many of these stereotypes, women often even have a poor self-image which could affect their behaviour and ability to achieve; women are usually paid considerably less than men, even when doing comparable work; and most women lack political power and skills to handle certain situations that occur at work.

These problems appear to occur world-wide, and appear to increase as women move into higher levels in organizations. The existence of a small but growing group of women who have achieved top positions in business indicates that the problems are not insurmountable, and that the increase of women both in employment and in management can be expected to continue — in the interests of employers, society, the economy and women alike.

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