I

OVERVIEW

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ADVANCING WOMEN IN MANAGEMENT: PROGRESS AND PROSPECTS

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During the past two decades there has been a dramatic increase in the number of women who are pursuing managerial and professional careers (Fagenson, 1993). Many of these women have prepared themselves for careers by undertaking university education and they now comprise almost half of the graduates of professional schools such as accounting, business and law (Catalyst, 1999a, 2000). Research evidence suggests that these graduates enter the workforce at levels comparable to their male colleagues and with similar credentials and expectations, but it seems that women's and men's corporate experience and career paths begin to diverge soon after that point (Davidson and Burke, 2000).

It is evident that although managerial and professional women are at least as well educated and trained as their male counterparts and are being hired by organizations in approximately equal numbers, they are not entering the ranks of senior management at comparable rates. The supply of qualified women for these management jobs has increased steadily as more women accumulate experience and education. Women are more likely to occupy managerial jobs in fields in which more women are employed in non-management jobs. Women in executive and managerial jobs are more likely to be found in services, insurance, and real estate industries. They are less likely to be found in manufacturing, construction, transportation, and public utilities (Catalyst, 1999a, 2000).

Women are gaining the necessary experience and paying their dues but they still encounter a "glass ceiling" (Powell, 1999a). The relative failure of these women to

move into the ranks of senior management, in both private- and public-sector organizations in all developed countries, has been well documented (Adler and Izraeli, 1988; Davidson and Cooper, 1993).

Why should organizations be interested in developing and utilizing the talents of women? Schwartz (1992) summarizes reasons why supporting the career aspirations of talented and successful managerial women makes good business sense. These include: obtaining the best people for leadership positions; giving the chief executive officer (CEO) experience in working with capable women; providing female role models for younger high-potential women; ensuring that companies' opportunities for women will be noticed by both women graduates in recruiting and women customers; and guaranteeing that all ranks of management will be filled with strong executives. The recruitment, hiring, and development of managerial women is increasingly seen as a bottom-line issue related to corporate success.

Research on women in management has reflected these changes in organizations. The first women in management researchers asked: "Why are there so few women in management?", and their work had an impact on the practice of management. Early writers (for example Riger and Galligan, 1980; Hennig and Jardim, 1977) considered both person-centered (personality traits, skills, education) and situation-centered factors (different rewards and training opportunities, men's attitudes, token status). It was concluded that person-centered variables were less important than situation-centered variables in explaining the small numbers of women in management.

The appearance of *Breaking the Glass Ceiling* (Morrison, White, and Van Velsor, 1987) gave renewed energy to women in management research. This book, with its attendant publicity, captured the attention of women managers and professionals, researchers interested in women in management issues, and organizations interested in furthering the careers of managerial and professional women. Later reviews (Burke and McKeen, 1992; Davidson and Cooper, 1992; Morrison and Von Glinow, 1990) showed that women had made considerable progress in some areas (entering the workforce, occupying managerial and professional jobs) but limited progress in other areas (senior management jobs, top wage earners, clout positions, corporate directorships).

This interest, coupled with increased research attention, highlighted the importance to business leaders and educators of understanding the impact of large numbers of managerial and professional women entering the workplace. These demographic changes are some of the most significant organizational changes taking place in the industrialized world. During the 1980s and 1990s the numbers of women in management (broadly defined) increased substantially, yet the numbers of women holding top management positions held fairly constant at about 5 percent. This leads to a second, and more contemporary, question: "Why are there so few women in top management?"

■   **Good news: progress and success stories**   ■

The advancement picture for women, in some respects, contains reasons for optimism. Of the corporate officers in *Fortune* 500 companies, 12 percent are women. Of these

women, 149 hold the high-ranking positions of CEO, president, COO, and EVP (Catalyst, 1999a). Three quarters of the *Fortune* 500 have at least one woman corporate officer. Recent Canadian data is consistent with the progress in the US. Thus 43 percent of all managers and administrators are female, up from 29 percent in 1982; but women are relatively rare at the top (Catalyst, 2000).

Notable examples of females who lead major corporations are Marion Sandler of Golden West Financial Corporation, Andrea Jung of Avon, and Carly Fiorina of Hewlett-Packard. A recent addition to this small group is Anne Mulcahy, president and chief operating officer of Xerox Corporation. Interestingly, Fiorina of Hewlett-Packard has argued that there are no glass ceilings for women; Mulcahy wrote an angry response detailing the low number of women leaders in technology companies.

Women's presence on corporate boards is also increasing (Catalyst, 1999b, 1999c). Since 1993, the number of *Fortune* 500 boards with women directors has increased 21 percent. The greatest gains in women directors has come in companies that already hold three or more women directors. Given more women in top leadership positions and more women serving on corporate boards, women's influence at the top of organizations is increasing. While this news looks encouraging, it must be acknowledged that still among *Fortune* 1500, a larger group, 95 to 97 percent of vice-presidents and above are men.

The proportion of women in management jobs overall has increased substantially in recent years. In the US, over 7.1 million women were employed in full-time executive, managerial, or administrative positions. This represents a gain of 29 percent over 1993. These statistics represent progress: more women at the top of organizations (but still few and far between), more women on corporate boards, and more women in management jobs overall. It is important to examine the reasons for this progress. Why has the proportion of women in management overall increased in recent years? Powell (l999) offers a number of reasons for the gains women have enjoyed. Women have increased their human capital through increasing their education. Falling birth rates mean that there are fewer candidates for managerial jobs. There are simply more women who want to work and fewer men who are available. Societal norms regarding women's roles have facilitated women's move into management. Equal opportunity and affirmative action, along with organizational programs that support women's advancement, have played a role. And, women at more senior levels influence the numbers of women at more junior levels of management. These societal forces have undoubtedly played a role in women's progress.

It is also important to ask women why they believe they succeed. Catalyst surveyed 325 CEOs and 461 women at levels of vice-president and above to determine how women attribute their success (Catalyst, 1996). Consistently exceeding performance expectations (77 percent), developing a style with which male managers were comfortable (61 percent), and seeking out difficult or high-visibility assignments (50 percent) were the factors women believed were most important to their progress. Many women managers believed that women must over-perform to demonstrate their abilities in a male-dominated environment. In addition to exemplary performance, women had to make men feel comfortable with them. Others (Morrison, White, and Van Velsor, 1997; Ragins, Townsend and Mattis, 1998) have reported very similar findings in other samples of women.

■ The bad news: substantial barriers remain ■

Women are making great inroads in some executive ranks; in others, their progress has been slow. Organizations seem to be doing a good job at recruiting and hiring capable women, but they appear to have difficulty in developing and retaining managerial women and advancing them into ranks of senior management: estimates of women in "clout" jobs in senior management remain at 5 percent. Clout titles are those that convey policy-making power, and include chairman, CEO, COO, and executive vice-president. Most of the women in senior management are in staff functions without direct line responsibility. This indicates the existence of not only the glass ceiling but also glass walls. Men hold 93.2 percent of the top line officer jobs (those with profit and loss responsibility). A notable exception is Southwest Airlines, where 56 percent of the line officers in the company are women.

Women's earnings are still not at parity with men's. Women continue to earn approximately 76 percent as much as their male counterparts (US Department of Labor, 1998). The lack of comparable earnings is magnified by the fact that benefits are tied to salary, extending women's disadvantages to such benefits as health care and retirement.

Three major hypotheses have been offered to explain why these barriers have kept most women from senior levels of organizations (Fagenson, 1990). The first builds on ways in which women are different from men and concludes that these deficiencies in women are responsible for their lack of career progress. This hypothesis suggests that women's characteristics, such as attitudes, behaviours, traits, and socialization, handicap them in particular ways. It also suggests that women may lack the education and job training necessary to qualify for managerial and professional jobs. However, research support for this explanation is limited (Morrison and von Glinow, 1990). Almost all the evidence shows little or no difference in the traits, abilities, education and motivations of managerial and professional women and men (Powell, 1990).

A second hypothesis builds on notions of bias and discrimination by the majority toward the minority. It suggests that managerial and professional women are held back as a result of bias toward, and stereotypes of, women. The dynamics of this situation are well explained by Kanter (1977) in *Men and Women of the Corporation*. Such bias or discrimination is either sanctioned by the labor market or rewarded by organizations despite the level of job performance of women. In addition, there is widespread agreement that the good manager is seen as male or masculine (Schein, 1973, 1975). Thus there is some research support for this hypothesis.

The third hypothesis emphasizes structural and systematic discrimination as revealed in organizational policies and practices which affect the treatment of women and which limit their advancement (Morrison, 1992). These policies and practices include women's lack of opportunity and power in organizations, the existing sex ratio of groups in organizations, tokenism, lack of mentors and sponsors, and denial of access to challenging assignments. This hypothesis has also received empirical support. In attempting to identify specific reasons for women's lack of advancement, it is important to remember that managerial and professional women live and work in a larger society that is patriarchal, a society in which men have historically had greater

access to power, privilege and wealth than women. The mechanisms by which this has occurred and is perpetuated are the subject of feminist theory and research. A useful analogy for conceptualizing the intricacy of the structure enforcing this status quo is presented by Frye, quoted by Code (1988). She envisions a bird cage in which if one examines each individual wire one cannot understand why the cage is so confining. It is only by stepping back to contemplate the entire structure, the interconnected and mutually enforcing system of barriers, that one can see why the bird is trapped.

Catalyst (1998) has identified the following as the most powerful barriers to female career advancement:

- negative assumptions in executive ranks about women, their abilities, and their commitment to careers
- perceptions that women don't fit with the corporate culture
- lack of career planning and the range of job experiences commensurate with the future needs of the organization
- lack of core opportunities for female employees who have management potential
- assumption that women will not relocate for career advancement
- failure to make managers accountable for advancing women
- management reluctance to giving women line (that is, revenue-generating) experience
- absence of, or too limited, succession planning
- "negative mentoring" and self-selection where women move into staff areas instead of line positions
- lack of mentoring and exclusion from informal career networks, where men have typically learned the unwritten rules of success
- appraisal and compensation systems that are not uniform for men and women
- corporate systems designed prior to women's large-scale infusion into the workplace, such as benefits systems and productivity measures that don't take into account new policies such as flexible work arrangements
- other forms of "cultural discouragement," like a work environment that values long hours over actual performance or that offers limited support for work–family initiatives and limited commitment to diversity programs in general
- discrimination and sexual harassment.

The barriers that Catalyst identified are in line with the second and third hypotheses about the barriers to women's advancement; they follow a theme of bias and discrimination, whether individual or structural.

Powell (1999a) addressed more specifically the issue of why the proportion of women in top management has remained relatively small. He noted that there are many interested and qualified male candidates for senior jobs. It is difficult to prevent bias and discrimination at these levels, because objective credentials (for example, more education) are less important at these levels, and male decision makers at the top more are likely to use gender-based models and criteria in selection. Men may be more comfortable with other men, and may view women as less competent. Decision processes at top levels of the organization are often unstructured and unscrutinized. Women at lower organizational levels may not be developed or groomed as often or as well, and may have more trouble getting mentors. In addition, women themselves may select out of top jobs because of family responsibilities, and the desire to make fewer personal

sacrifices. Frustrated by the glass ceiling, they may quit, often to start their own businesses.

It is notable that sometimes CEOs and senior female managers do not agree on what constitutes barriers to women's advancement (Ragins, Townsend, and Mattis, 1998). Key barriers noted by male CEOs were: lack of general management or line experience (82 percent), not being in the pipeline long enough (64 percent) male stereotyping and preconceptions (25 percent), an inhospitable corporate culture (18 percent) and exclusion from informal networks (15 percent). The major barriers noted by senior women were: male stereotypes and preconceptions (52 percent), exclusion from informal networks (49 percent), lack of general management or line experience (47 percent), an inhospitable corporate culture (35 percent) and women not in the pipeline long enough (29 percent). Thus, while there was agreement on some barriers there remained disagreement on others. This may contribute to the problems facing managerial women.

A Canadian study (Conference Board of Canada, 1997) showed similar results, in that women cited male stereotyping, preconceptions of women's roles and abilities, and exclusion from informal networks as barriers more often than did male CEOs. Male CEOs noted lack of significant general management or line experience and lack of time in the pipeline more often than did senior women. More senior women than CEOs believed that commitment to family responsibilities and having children hindered women's advancement.

Pollara, a strategic public opinion and market research firm located in Toronto conducted a telephone interview study of 350 executive women in Canada for the Women's Executive Network (Pollara, 2000). In addition, a survey of 1,000 Canadians was undertaken to determine the influence of gender in the workplace. When executive women ($n = 350$) were asked to estimate the period it will take for equality to be achieved in ten key areas, most estimates fell between 2017 and 2034. They believed that women would be equally represented on corporate boards of directors until 2027 and that women will not hold half of all CEO positions in large companies until 2033. They were most pessimistic about gender-based discrimination completely disappearing from the workplace, estimating that this will take until 2034. Interestingly, younger women were more pessimistic than older executive women in each of the ten areas. 42 percent of Canada's executive women believed that gender-based discrimination would never completely disappear in Canadian workplaces. One quarter of these women (26 percent) believed that women would never hold half of all CEO positions in large, private sector companies in Canada. Surprisingly, 47 percent of the executive women could not name a Canadian organization that does the most to reduce the barriers to women's advancement to senior positions.

The sample of executive women believed that the equal representation of men and women in corporate management would have very favorable effects in the way employees were treated, productivity, and the profitability of businesses. Younger women generally saw more benefits from equal representation than did older executive women.

There is also recently emerging evidence that fewer people, both women and men, may be pursuing undergraduate and graduate business education programs in universities. Catalyst, the University of Michigan Business School and the University of Michigan's Center for the Education of Women, undertook a study of women and men MBA graduates of 12 prestigious American business schools. The results showed that

women as a group did not recognize the advantages of an MBA degree because they did not believe that they would have the same access to opportunities for income and achievement that the MBA degree has afforded men.

The current environment for women in management reflects progress, but not enough. Glass ceilings, glass walls, prejudices, and discrimination remain. There are many changes that must be made for women to see additional strides in career advancement.

■   The challenge of change   ■

Of the three hypotheses presented earlier concerning the factors that limit women's career advancement, two are viable: those that argue that discrimination and prejudices, and organizational policies/practices, hinder women's progress. It follows, then, that change efforts should be directed toward these obstacles. It is also important to understand the forces that affect the overall proportion of women in management. Efforts to increase this proportion should not diminish. Powell (1999a) notes that there are a number of factors that affect the number of women in management, including societal norms regarding women's roles and women's educational attainment. Other factors relate to the demand for labor, the participation rates of women relative to men, and the structure of the economy. There are organizational factors cited by Powell as well: enforcement of equal opportunity/affirmative action, organizational attitudes toward diversity, and organizational work/family initiatives. These factors should be the target of ongoing efforts to ensure women's participation in management positions.

The new challenge in the women in management arena is to foster the advancement of capable women into the ranks of executive leadership. The evidence available to date suggests that this challenge will be formidable. Success here requires addressing the issues posed by Powell (1999b) concerning the forces that will influence the proportion of women in top management positions. One such force is societal norms regarding women's status. A reduction in norms of male superiority and patriarchy will help women. Another influence is the persistence of masculine stereotypes of effective managers (Butterfield and Grinnell, 1999). A change in stereotypes emphasizing traditionally female characteristics will increase perceptions of women's abilities to fill these jobs. Increasing visibility of successful high-profile women executives will counter the prevailing masculine stereotypes.

The use of gender schemas by senior male decision makers also affects the proportion of women in top level jobs. More female candidates for these jobs will create a more gender-neutral decision making situation. This assumes that there will be an increasing number of women in lower-level managerial jobs to vie for these positions. In addition, a more structured and accountable decision-making process is called for.

Another force affecting women's progression to top leadership positions is the uncertainty associated with having women in top management positions. As more women enter top management, this uncertainty is likely to diminish, leading to an increase in the proportion of women in top management. Organizational attitudes toward diversity must also be reckoned with. Organizations valuing diversity, with specific initiatives to attract and retain female executives, will increase the proportion of women in top

management. Opening up more development experiences to women will also provide a broader talent pool.

Some efforts involve attracting women to top positions. If women show less interest in balance (or men show more) this will increase the number of women in top management. Greater availability of meaningful family support will make it easier for women with family responsibilities to hold managerial jobs, thus increasing the proportion of women interested in holding top management jobs. Women may be inclined to quit the corporate world when faced with limited career opportunities. Reducing the number of women in management who quit when frustrated will increase the proportion of women in top management.

Increasing the proportion of women in top leadership positions inevitably involves changes in the way those currently in top management positions view the necessity of supporting women's advancement and involving themselves in systemic (total culture) change. Fortunately, there are signs of increasing movement in this direction. A number of publications have appeared highlighting the importance of such efforts providing detailed descriptions of how leading-edge organizations are responding to this need and the identification of common themes associated with more successful change efforts. And there are some bright spots. Avon, for example, has a global mission of being the "company for women." CEO Andrea Jung leads a team with 47 percent female officers and 89 percent female managers. In a more traditionally male-dominated industry, Charles Schwab has a strong initiative to develop its female employees so it can promote from within. Networking and mentoring programs are key parts of the initiative, and 37 percent of the brokerage's managers are female (Cleaver, 2000).

Meyerson and Fletcher (2000) offer what they term "a modest manifesto for shattering the glass ceiling." Instead of a revolution, Meyerson and Fletcher advocate a series of small wins, incremental changes aimed at long-entrenched biases in the organizational system. Their research, undertaken in 11 organizations over the past eight years, showed that the small-wins approach was successful in tackling some of the barriers holding women back without creating high levels of resistance or backlash. The small-wins strategy starts with a gender-related problem, moves to a diagnosis of possible causes, attempts to identify cultural patterns in the organization that serve as the root cause, and concludes with the design of the small wins.

Catalyst (1998) has distilled best practices for advancing women in business based on their work with companies trying to eliminate gender barriers to executive levels and undertaking initiatives supporting the advancement of capable women and their retention. This volume, emphasizing as it does an inclusive, problem-solving, comprehensive approach, identifies characteristics of successful change initiatives as well as detailed illustrations of model company efforts. Characteristics of successful change initiatives are:

- motivation and rationale linked to business strategy and profitability
- support from the highest levels of the organization
- built-in communication plan clearly stating how the best practices are linked to business issues
- built-in accountability mechanism so that the initiative doesn't become a management fad that employees can ignore.

Aspects of a systemic women's initiative are:

- leadership development programs
- identification and development of high-potential women
- cross-functional training
- supports that ensure women gain line experience
- succession planning
- mentoring programs
- women's networks
- worklife balance and flexibility initiatives
- accountability
- measuring of results
- training
- evaluating and modifying the initiative.

Senior women who have made it to top management attribute their success, in part, to company strategies. The factors they report as most beneficial include identification and development of high-potential employees, high visibility assignments, and cross-functional job rotations. CEOs in the Catalyst study who were asked to identify strategies for advancing women to top positions also cited high visibility assignments as important. The CEOs added succession plans that incorporate gender diversity, formal mentoring programs, and programs that hold managers accountable for women's career advancement.

Increasing the proportion of women in management, and the proportion of women in top leadership positions, will not be accomplished by implementing a few women's programs. Instead, it requires systemic and cultural changes in organizations. In particular, it requires support and commitment from top management. A clear case must be communicated from the top of the organization that new policies and practices are good for women; and, that what is good for women benefits the business as a whole.

The last ten years has demonstrated increased attention to women in management research (Davidson and Burke, 1994; Fagenson, 1993; Nelson and Burke, 2000; Sekaran and Leong, 1992). We have a good understanding of the barriers women face as they pursue careers in medium-size and large organizations (Morrison, 1992; Catalyst, 1998). An increasing number of organizations have realized that the full utilization and development of the talents of all employees has become a business imperative (Schwartz, 1992). Supporting the career aspirations of women is not just the right thing to do: it is the smart thing to do if organizations are to remain productive and competitive in an increasingly demanding marketplace (Totta and Burke, 1995).

It is important to integrate research and practice in this area. Research findings are now being used to develop strategies for organizational change. A range of initiatives are increasingly being undertaken by organizations to create a level playing field on which women and men are similarly advantaged.

Unfortunately, there are relatively few case studies of such corporate initiatives and few evaluations of corporate policies and programs supportive of women's career aspirations (Kinsley, 1993). Much more research and descriptive work is needed here. We need to learn from the experiences of these model organizations so that future corporate initiatives can benefit from the learnings (and mistakes) of others (Mattis, 1994).

Finally, there is the range of available options and how they might proceed. Organizational leaders are more likely to be influenced by the activities and attitudes of their peers than by researchers in universities.

The intent is to encourage more organizations to take action to bring about cultural change. In addition, there is a role for consultants and researchers to initiate, chronicle, and evaluate these efforts. Research and practice should combine in efforts to foster women's development in organizations.

At least three countries (Canada, the US and the UK) have begun to monitor the progress of women in management in various sectors in a meaningful way, to highlight companies that are doing well (and not so well) and to identify both model programs and best practices.

■   Rhetoric versus reality   ■

In a recent discussion about the value of corporate initiatives for advancing women in management, a colleague, Leonie Still, raised the issue of rhetoric versus reality. That is, might this particular collection contain contributions outlining what could be done to support women's career aspirations coupled with a few success stories, or would it convey a reality of slow (or no) progress and even backsliding? On the latter point, some industrialized countries have taken steps to eliminate employment equity/affirmative action initiatives. These equity initiatives, however imperfect, have had a positive effect on the numbers of women hired and advanced in organizations. The reality that we encounter in some Canadian and US organizations is somewhere between these two extremes. We have observed organizations that are different now as a result of initiatives to support women's career aspirations. Is the playing field level and are there no instances of male advantage in these firms? Absolutely not. But progress is slowly being made. Hopefully this collection of articles from three countries will contribute to further movement.

Conclusions

One of the great social paradoxes of the past two decades involves the massive influx of women into managerial and professional ranks and the continuation of inequality in both employment and family responsibilities. Women now represent over 40 percent of the workforce and will be an even more significant component in the future, but organizations have been slow to capitalize on the potential of their women employees. In particular, competent, promising female professionals and managers represent a human resource that is frequently left underdeveloped. It is important that organizational leaders recognize the valuable resource that women represent in management and administrative positions and use them effectively (Bass and Avolio, 1994). Managers at all levels need to develop the attitudes and expertise to make full use of their female managers and professionals.

Research can provide a recognition of the major issues involved and the knowledge of how to deal with them that will add to the knowledge and practical experience of managers, more of whom are becoming increasingly aware of their responsibilities in increasing the women friendliness of their organizations. As for researchers, research on women in corporate management should lead to increasing the satisfaction and well-being of both women and men in management.

A pressing need in this regard is to document efforts by organizations to develop the talent of women managers and professionals. This will serve to identify what works and does not work, and why. In addition, the successful efforts of some organizations will provide a blueprint for others in their own efforts. Efforts by organizations in this area will be more credible to senior corporate leaders. It is also important to have successful CEOs committed to full partnership for women at senior ranks, so that they can influence others at those levels.

Understanding the experiences of this large and growing segment of the workforce, in whom education, effort, and hopes have been invested, is critical for economic survival. Organizations cannot afford to under-utilize or lose this talent. Educators need to understand the barriers encountered by women, both in the organizations employing them and in their own educational institutions, and managerial and professional women need to understand why they are experiencing particular work situations.

We hope this collection will serve to interest more organizational researchers to consider women-in-management issues; to develop projects in areas that are just now emerging; and to envision projects that will have value to the individuals whose work and life experiences we are trying to better understand women and men in managerial and professional jobs, and organizations that are currently struggling with developing a level playing field. These demographic changes and the questions they raise have the potential for creating new ways of thinking about work, careers, and organizational purposes and policies as well as family and leisure. Organizations must grasp the significance of these issues, adjust to them, and focus on the positive opportunities these forces offer. The economic success of business hinges on their efforts.

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