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The Quality of Women's Working Life

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There is a fundamental difference in female and male work roles and a need for examination of the nature of these socially accepted sex-bound roles. Although no society is without a sex-based division of labor, there is an extraordinary variety of sex typing of occupations across cultures suggesting that the sex typing is not based on unchangeable, genetic, physiological, or psychological differences between the sexes, but is and has been a social construct- Industrialization brought a huge expansion of service occupations which, accompanied by increased education for girls, has created many more work opportunities and brought to the fore problems concerning "women's two roles." In all countries, to varying degrees, women's jobs remain inferior in matters of skill, pay, prestige, and authority. The main vehicle for maintaining this inferiority is the stereotype of femininity, held widely by members of both sexes- a stereotype in sharp conflict with women's actual success in the world of work. It is not only the pressure of norms which weakens women's commitment to work; it is also the inequality and low quality of their job. Several societal trends, however, are weakening these latter norms: the rise of the women's movement and concern over population growth. Women at work are not equally distributed within the economy. While some differences in sex distribution are understandable, others are due to prejudice and to the vested interests of the present predomil1ailtly male incumbents in many kinds of jobs. There is an erroneous impression in some

quarters that most, women's jobs are somehow better than men's: less difficult, more refined, and involving more service to others. However, women in industry are now performing the most fragmented and stressful Jobs, which require high levels of accuracy but offer little intrinsic interest. Most women do not compete in an open labor market; most are shunted into “women’s work” - a matter of inequality and discrimination, which, until recently, has been both widespread and legal.

New anti-discrimination laws in Western countries have brought some redress, but de facto discrimination is still rampant. Needed are more real choices for women in and out of the home: community support services, career ladders, and development of meaningful rewarding job designs.

It is futile to discuss the quality of women's working life without analyzing the very basic difference between the female and male work role. This requires an examination of the nature of the socially accepted sex roles today as well as an evaluation of the chances for their alteration in the future. At present, both sex roles in general and sex-based work roles in particular are in a considerable state of flux all over the Western world; not only is there intense criticism leveled against the status quo, and increasing experimentation with divergent patterns, but statistical evidence shows that we are now witnessing considerable changes in the work behavior of a large part of the female population.

The Female Work Role: Its History

One feature of the present division of labor of the sexes appears to be basic: women almost universally have the care of the children, especially infants and small children at least up to age 6 or 7. The physical care of small children does not necessarily involve either confinement to a nuclear family home or exclusive pursuit of the domestic chores of food preparation and the making and care of clothes; yet the female work role nearly always involves these services for the children and, with the exception of men who live outside a family-type house-hold, for the male members of the family as well. In agricultural societies women also pursue "productive activities"- ranging from the gathering of food or its cultivation through horticulture, agriculture, and animal husbandry to food processing- not only for their own household but also for exchange or sale.

One thing is clear: As varied and extensive as the work activities outside the domestic sphere may have been in different societies and in various periods in time, it has been taken for granted that a married woman would first fill the domestic and child-care role, either by doing the work herself or by supervising other women doing it.

The Emergence of Women's Two Roles

Industrialization brought far-reaching changes in the world of work. On the one hand, the proportion of small independent self-employed entrepreneurs, farmers, artisans, storekeepers, merchants, and manufacturers in the population declined drastically. On the other hand, the numbers of those working for wages and salaries increased.

One immediate result of the Industrial Revolution was that masses of girls and women went into the new factories, just like men. Thus, the place

of economic activity and the home became separated, and the old economic partnership between husband and wife, parents and children, became increasingly rare. Girls and women in great numbers worked in factories and in mines, for long hours under the harsh conditions of the time, often at great detriment to their own health and that of their children.

With time, however, parallel and coeducational schools began to offer formal education for girls, similar to that for boys. In addition, high industrialism brought with it the enormous expansion of the tertiary or service sector of the economy, with jobs for which girls and women often were at least as well qualified as men and which did not involve harsh physical conditions or night work that progressive labor legislation had meanwhile made illegal for women. In the United States unmarried girls streamed into offices, stores, banks, schools, and hospitals. Since World War II they ceased leaving automatically upon getting married, and those who did leave often returned several years later. More and more middle-class women married; the ratio of married women rose considerably and, also, of working married women. The problems of women's two roles- reentry Into the labor market, part-time work, sex typing of occupations, widespread inequality and discrimination in hiring, training, promotion, pay, and fringe benefits-have now come to the fore.

Some Statistical Signposts toward Equalization

In industrialized countries today, the most important factor determining the rate of female participation in the labor force is society's attitude toward the employment of married women and especially of mothers: in the Nether lands and rural Norway, the opposition to their employment is still strong and only 7 and 9.5 percent of married women go out to work; the rate of

female labor participants is 22.6 and 23.8 percent, respectively. In the United States and Great Britain, where norms have adapted to the "two roles," the figures are 41 percent and 39 percent, respectively. In Sweden and Finland, countries which have openly encouraged and favored their economic activity, 53 percent and 60 percent, respectively, of married women work ((1)).

While everywhere more married women enter the labor force, the percentage of young girls in the labor market is declining in all those countries that have recently raised the age of compulsory and free education arid increased the number of their student populations. In most Western countries, age curves of female labor participation still show a peak during the ages 15 to 25. Yet there is a change: before World War II there was a continuous decline after the age of 25, and no older age group achieved as high a labor participation; nowadays most countries still show a steep dip in the 25 to 30 age groups, but they also show a steady climb from age 35 upward, Female labor participation remains on a plateau until about age 55 or 60, the difference being largely determined by the official retirement age of women. In some countries this middle-age plateau is now as high and even higher than the peak participation of young women before motherhood ((2)).

Though at present there are still many women in Western countries who do not work outside their own households, the percentage of employed married women, including mothers with children of school age, is constantly rising. Even at the present level of labor market participation, nine out of each ten baby-girls will be employed during their lifetime. While these statistics point toward an equalization of women's work-life with that of

men, it would be wrong to underrate the still existing inequalities and basic differences.

The Norms of Female Roles and Their Effect on Women's commitment to Non-domestic Work

Statistics point to the increasing participation of women in productive work whose value is included in the GNP. Yet the degree of their participation remains less extensive- 51 percent of the population making up 24-43 percent of the labor force in Western countries- and less intensive; many more women than men work part time. In addition, women's position in the world of "productive labor" is inferior in matters of skill, pay, prestige, and authority. It is argued here that the average intrinsic quality of women's jobs is also inferior to that of men's jobs. An obvious explanation of this situation derives from the fact that women are late-comers in the relatively open, competitive labor market; and, as usual, incumbents try to exclude newcomers from the better positions. The main vehicle for keeping them out and down has always been the stereotype of femininity, held widely by members of both sexes. This stereotype is in sharp conflict with women's success in the world of work.

Women's Preparation for Work

Women's education was until recently based on the assumptions that women's major achievement is marriage and children, not work and career; that proper feminine characteristics are supportive, nurturing qualities; that women are or should be noncompetitive, non-aggressive, passive, averse to taking responsibility and authority, concerned with nest-building but

unadventurous and devoid of the capacity for abstract thinking. Therefore, the domestic' sphere of activity is deemed more appropriate to women than the labor market; and if in the labor market, their proper position is in supportive, service, and routine activities ((3)). The education of women results in less aspiration for careers and fewer marketable skills than that of men. Thus, for example, though more than half of the graduates from U.S. high schools are girls, they are considerably less than half of the graduates from college. Similarly: most women with higher education are either not trained for any occupation or trained for one of three major sex-typed occupations: grade-school teaching office work, or nursing. There are few women in apprenticeships and vocational programs except domestic and secretarial subjects. Parents, counselors, and teachers have long neglected and discouraged the intensive and prolonged preparation of girls for highly skilled occupations and professions on the assumption that (1) these occupations and professions are unsuitable to feminine nature, and (2) the investment and effort are not worthwhile because of the expected short work-lives of women. Employers have denied women training for positions of higher skill and responsibility using (1) the femininity argument, (2) the short work-life argument, and (3) the argument that men resent working for a woman. As a result, women are relatively less skilled, especially for positions of responsibility in technical and executive occupations, and in the professions.

Stages in Women's Life Cycle: Marriage

In several Western countries, even until quite recently, public and private employers used to dismiss female employees on marriage ((4)). But, even without such drastic action, marriage very often seriously disrupts the

work-life of women. Consequently, marriage for women has often meant a comedown from more skilled to less skilled work; it has tended to lessen women's aspirations and commitment to work as a career.

Birth of Children

In Western countries, in recent decades, the birth of the first child marked the stage in most women s life cycle when they left the labor market for a long period or even permanently. At this point, additional strong norms about the proper feminine role come into play, which condemn any desire of the young mother to work outside her home as both unnatural and callous.

In many Western countries a paid maternity leave of several weeks' duration, covering the period when the mother is physically unable to work, is part of accepted health and labor regulations. In the United States this progressive measure, has not yet been established by law.

Thus, under present typical conditions in the West, of the nuclear family in its one-family dwelling, the mother of an infant either has to stay at home until the child can attend nursery school, if one is available-when she will barely be able to go out to part-time work or study-or has to find substitute day care by finding somebody to care for her infant in her own home or somebody else's home or an institutional group setting. A publicly supported or subsidized network of créches (day care centers for infants) is found only in those societies or during those periods where and when the norm condemning the employment of mothers of infants has been breached. The same is true in regard to development and support of nursery school, kindergarten classes, school lunches, afternoon supervision for grade-school children, and even summer day camps.

Reentry

The pressure of the norms against mothers of young children working and the dearth of suitable child care arrangements have been counteracted by the following trends: (1) a reduction of the domestic role, (2) the rising education and expectations of women, and (3) the availability of many more jobs in the service sector. The result is the reentry of women at middle age (40-45 years) into employment or refresher study for employment. Since the 1950s labor statistics in many Western countries have pointed to this phenomenon and its growth. However, more and more younger married women, from age 30 upward, are now reentering the labor market, utilizing the gradually expanding child-care services as well as family and paid arrangements. Many of these younger reentrants work part time, at least at the beginning.

According to recent evidence, it may be that a growing number of young mothers in the United States have work-lives with hardly any interruption; for their the pattern of an early period of work followed by several years of an exclusively domestic role and subsequent reentry into the labor market does not apply at all. The proportion of working married women in the 20 to 24 age group (husband present) with preschool children increased from 13 percent in 1951 to 33 percent in 1970 ((5)).

Different Groups of Women and Length of Their Work Life

As a result of the pressures of accepted norms, the most numerous group of women, the typical group, those getting married and bearing children with a husband present, tend on the average to have a considerably shorter work-life than men. Other groups have longer and more intensive work-lives: women with children who have no husband to support them

(divorced, deserted, unmarried, or with a handicapped husband) tend to work longer years, in spite of their heavy domestic and child-rearing responsibilities, because they have a strong economic motive and because society's norms are not opposed to their working- or even demand it to prevent their dependence on welfare. Women who are married, remain married, but are childless have even longer work-lives, nearly as long as those of men. Finally, the work-lives of single and childless women are even longer than those of men. While this group is also heavily concentrated in women's occupations, it nevertheless contains a larger percentage of women in positions of responsibility, authority, and higher incomes than do working-women in general ((6)). In the past a good number of women with a strong commitment to work-for example, professionals-remained single for the express purpose of pursuing their careers. As long as the norm prescribed firing women teachers and civil servants when they got married, only single women had a chance to advance to positions of authority in these occupations. And, lastly, men considered the confirmed spinster a woman somewhat outside the conventional norm of femininity and, therefore, more suitable for positions of responsibility.

The Female Role, Commitment, and Motivation to Work

As we have seen, the effect of the pressure of accepted norms about the female role as wife and mother has been and still is weakening women's commitment to work careers. It is, of course, not only the pressure of the norms, which weakens women's commitment to work; it is also the pressures of inequality and low quality of jobs. A number of societal trends are weakening these norms, such as the rise of the women's movement, the ecology movement's denouncement of population growth, the establishment

of effective methods of birth control, the liberalization of sex mores, and the severe criticism of shortcomings of the contemporary nuclear family. As to the inequality and low quality of women's jobs, these aspects are still rather underrated as factors reducing women's commitment to work.

As to motivation, most working women, as most working men, declare income as the major motive for work ((7)). Working women's income is of considerable economic importance, even when it is additional to the husband's. In many families, it is a woman's income, which makes the difference between poverty and sufficiency or between lower and middle-class living standards. Moreover, many working women are heads of families, and often sex discrimination is the major cause of their poverty. Indeed, the major difference between men and women as far as motivation to work is concerned is not their wish to earn money, but the obstacles that society places in the way of women working at all, working full time, and earning a "living wage."

It would be very useful to know more about the factors, which influence women's commitment as well as expectations and attitudes toward work. Yet, to this end it would be necessary to (1) examine meticulously women's family situations, their own and their husbands' views about women's work outside the home, their own work history, and the characteristics of their present jobs; (2) relate all this to women's perception and evaluation of the characteristics of their jobs, both "hygiene" and task characteristics; and finally (3) compare results with those of a male control group.

Present Content and Quality of Women's Work

Many have extolled the virtues of the homemaker's" work role: the relevance of her work to the well-being of those nearest and dearest to her; the pleasant work conditions; the freedom to organize her own work and take breaks, and the variety of her tasks as cook, maid, baby nurse, educator, chauffeur, gardener, and often also bookkeeper. Yet critics from the women's movement condemn this work outright as subordinate, of low skill, limited and limiting, dirty, and unpaid ((8)). Being housebound, women feel lonely and out of the mainstream of modern life. The repetitiveness and non-cumulativeness of the housewife's work and the non-permanence of her product, permit her little sense of achievement. In addition, the modern housewife is frustrated because it is hard for her to evaluate her own work performance and because society rewards her work with neither suitable recognition nor pay.

The Unequal Distribution of Women over the Occupations

Women are not equally distributed in the economy ((9)). In the United States, official labor statistics divide all occupational groups into eleven categories: for men the two most populous categories (nearly equal in size) are craftsmen and foremen, and operatives, together occupying about 40 percent of all working men. Yet for women, by far the largest category, over 34 percent, is that of clerical workers (only 6.3 percent of men and the seventh category), followed by service workers except in private households, about 18 percent. The most striking difference between men and women here is that the category of craftsmen and foremen ranks ninth for women, comprising only 1.5 percent of all employed women. For men the category of managers, officials, and proprietors is the third largest, accounting for

about 13 percent of the male "productive" population; for women this category ranks sixth, not quite 5 percent. Professional and technical occupations constitute the third category for women, 15.1 percent, and the fourth for men, 14.3 percent; this is the fastest growing among all categories. The fourth category for women is operatives, a category which declined slightly in importance during the sixties but has recently increased again. The fifth category for women comprises sales occupations- eighth for men- employing about 7 percent of working women who make up about 40 percent of this entire group. The seventh occupational category for women, about 4 percent, is that of private household workers, a nearly exclusively female occupation where women account for about 96 percent of the total. Significantly, it is the third - 17 percent-for black women; it is also the category with the lowest pay, where work tends to be intermittent, and where workers are neither covered by minimum wage and hour laws nor benefit from unemployment and workmen's compensation.

Which other occupational categories are predominantly female? Women hold 73 percent of all clerical jobs, and 57 percent of all service jobs (except private household). Among professional and technical workers and among sales workers, women exceed s1ightly the average for all occupations.

From statistical evidence regarding these eleven major occupational categories one cannot learn much about the content, characteristics, and quality of women's jobs. One can see, however, that women are nearly excluded from those manual jobs in manufacturing industry that demand higher skill and training, and from industrial jobs that carry some authority and responsibility. One can see also that women in the United States are severely underrepresented in the category of managers, officials, and

proprietors, and in that of farmers and farm managers, whose work role is characterized by a considerable degree of authority and responsibility and often also of initiative and autonomy. In the category which increasingly provides the largest number of jobs demanding considerable specific skills and constant use of knowledge, judgment, and initiative-professional and technical jobs-women now seem to keep pace with men.

In offiical labor statistics the eleven categories are grouped into four large categories: "manual," "white collar," "service," and "farm work." As over 48 percent of all working men (and only 16 percent of women) do "manual" work, as the largest group of working women (nearly 60 percent) perform "white collar" jobs, and as nearly 22 percent of the rest perform "service" jobs, the erroneous impression has been created that most women's jobs are somehow better than men's: less difficult, less dirty, more refined, involving more formal education, and more service to human beings. Yet an examination of the 36 occupations, in each of which more than 100,000 women worked in 1960 ((10)), reveals that manual jobs amounted to well over 6 million and brainwork jobs to over 4 million, while about 3? million jobs involved a mixture of both, with the manual part usually predominant. Obviously, all clerical jobs were officially counted as white-collar jobs, whereas in reality some clerical occupations of women are largely manual (typist, file clerk, keypunch operator); most of the female "service" jobs are either semiskilled operatives' jobs-for example, in laundries- or outright unskilled cleaning jobs. Most of the lower-near exclusively female-jobs in education and health services, such as teacher's aide, nurse's aide, and practical nurse, are largely manual. The confusion is enhanced by the fact that the largest male occupational group of "craftsmen and foremen" is traditionally classified as manual, yet nowadays their work often includes a

considerable amount of paperwork and even of brain work. In conclusion, there exists absolutely no evidence for tile assumption that the totality of women's jobs is comparatively more stimulating mentally than those of men.

Sex Typing of Occupations and the Dual Labor Market

Women are concentrated in a rather narrow range of occupations; or, in other words, a very large number of workingwomen are employed in occupations stereotyped as female occupations. If we consider not the four or eleven large statistical categories of jobs, but more specific occupations, we shall see that nearly two thirds of working women are concentrated in only 36 out of hundreds of occupations, and one third in only 7 occupations: secretary, saleswoman in retail trade, private household worker, grade-school teacher, book-keeper, waitress, professional nurse. The first three occupations- secretary, saleswoman, and private household worker-are large groups, each with well over a million workers ((11)); the next three, grade-school teacher, bookkeeper, waitress, with over 700,000; the seventh, eighth, and ninth occupations- professional nurse, sewer and stitcher in industry, and typist-each have more than a half million workers. In addition, nearly all the 36 occupations which employ more than 100,000 women are also typical "women's occupations," where women make up over 50 percent of the membership; only 4 have less than 50 percent, and all have more than the 40 percent that would be proportional to the rate of women in the labor force. The sex typing of occupations is extreme: in 19 occupations, women make up 90 percent or more; in 8, from 80-89 percent; and in another 7, from 75-79 percent of the total employed. In 1960 at least 59 percent of the female labor force was in occupations where women comprised 70 percent or more of the workers ((12)).

How does an activity or occupation become a female enclave? Much of this development is lost in history, yet we can look at more recent examples whose history we can still trace. A few occupations became women's occupations in times when male labor was short, and female labor was cheaper and sometimes also better qualified. Thus, at the time of the American Civil War, male schoolteachers were in short supply and young women took their jobs at a cheaper rate. At the turn of the century when the typewriter appeared on the scene in America, young men who could spell English were scarce; young women who could spell moved into the new occupations of typist and secretary. Once an occupation is sex typed as "women's work," men tend to shy away from it and the differentiation becomes even more pronounced.

How much did physiological differences contribute initially to this occupational differentiation? With the rise of modem industry, new traditions evolved. Those branches of industry, which originally demanded much muscle power became male preserves, and have remained so even after further mechanization made such power redundant. In addition, a tradition evolved according to which women (and little girls) should be assigned to those industries where smaller and more delicate fingers seemed more useful, as, for example, in the spinning mills. Thus this part of the textile industry became women's work. Yet the hypothesis that female sex-typed occupations are simply extensions of the domestic role-that is, the processing of food and the manufacture of clothes- is false: the entire "apparel" or "needle-trades" industry including shirt making and men's suits became a women's industry only after the old craft skills had become less important and the work had turned into low-skilled, routine production, The few remaining skilled jobs in these industries-namely, maintenance, setting

up, pattern making, and cutting-remain reserved for men. Likewise, the technologically-advanced production of flour, bread, beer, and sugar are male enclaves ((13).

The following is an important characteristic of sex-typed jobs, yet one systematically overlooked in industry today: women are concentrated in those branches where the characteristics of the material-such as limp cloth and foodstuffs, or the extreme smallness of the parts to be processed and assembled, as in electric bulbs or electronic circuits-pose considerable difficulties for automation. Women in industry are now performing the most fragmented, accurate, and straining jobs. This has been explained by the contention that women have natural qualities of passivity, like routine and repetition, have a penchant for accuracy, a dislike of initiative and responsibility, and also fear mathematics and mechanics. In fact, these are not "natural" qualities; rather, women are still ready to take low quality and dead-end jobs because their commitment to work as a career is weaker than men's. They are ready to work in the poorly paid jobs of declining industries because frequently their income supplements the larger one of a husband. The common characteristic of typical female occupations (and of women's specializations in otherwise male occupations and professions) is that of low prestige. Whenever a previously high-prestige occupation becomes female sex-typed- for example, medicine in the U.S.S.R.-it declines in prestige as well as in pay, conditions of work, and quality of task characteristics ((14)). Even in those professions which have become women's work (e.g., teaching and social work), the higher, more prestigious positions remain reserved for men.

Sex typing in nearly all cases is unjustifiable-at least, no longer justifiable. Yet, the sex typing of jobs divides the labor market, creating a

"dual labor market." Women do not compete in an open labor market; most are shunted into "women's work" and there compete with other women. This dual labor market facilitates inequality and discrimination.

Inequality and Discrimination

Until quite recently, outright and open discrimination against working women was widespread and legal. Women were excluded from entire occupations, from branches of industries, and from the higher reaches of other occupations simply by not hiring them or accepting them for training. Separate job advertising was the rule. The assumption, of course, was that these occupations were unsuitable for women. Likewise, open pay differentials for equal work (e.g., for identical positions in the Civil Service) were the practice; here the official justification was that women "needed" less money.

During the last two decades, however, one Western country after another has signed international and national nondiscrimination laws. Gradually, these laws have led to some practical results. Practices such as open exclusion from hiring and training, separate posting, and open pay differentials are gradually disappearing when challenged in the courts. But de facto discrimination and de facto pay differentials are still rampant. Women's income in the United States is only 62 percent of men's after adjustments have been made for level of education, occupational status, and part-time employment-according to the latest study of income differences ((15)). Official figures for those Western countries that publish them range from 60 percent in Great Britain to 79 percent in Sweden, and are usually lower than the national average for women operatives in industry and somewhat higher in clerical and professional and technical jobs.

In Great Britain, even recently, many unions still concluded lower pay agreements for their women members ((16)). Some cantons in Switzerland still officially maintain lower salaries for their women employees ((17)). Yet today the main devices for paying women less are the hiring and segregation of women into special (all female) wage groups or separate all-female job classifications, so as to avoid the situation where women do "equal work" with men in the same firm; starting all male entrants automatically two or three wage levels above that of female entrants; not giving women chances at training and promotion; not appointing women to supervisory or administrative positions-all these devices, together with the social sex typing of occupations, keep women in a separate and inferior labor market.

What Is Needed to Enhance the Quality of Women's Working Life?

The Problem of Enhancement or Reduction of the Domestic Work Role

Is reduction or compensation for the domestic work role necessary for all women? It is quite likely that a certain number of women with strong domestic and especially strong maternal leanings can be largely satisfied and psychologically well adjusted to a prolonged or even a lifetime domestic work role. It is wrong to denigrate these women and press them into career work roles, which do not suit them. Women should be neither pressured nor confined into an exclusive domestic or a full-time lifetime labor market role, but should have the choice between them. It is to be assumed that for the foreseeable future most women will aim at some combination of the two roles; day care centers will greatly facilitate this.

Most women today and in the foreseeable future will still have to fill a considerable domestic work role, and most are no longer satisfied by this

role alone. Women, like men, seek work for satisfaction of the psychological needs of self-actualization, achievement, recognition, and social contact, in addition to pay; for many, these needs are no longer met by the exclusive domestic work role. Yet most women's jobs, just like most men's jobs, also fail to satisfy these needs and therefore should be redesigned ((16)). Many women's jobs have certain characteristics that are especially harmful because they compound the same characteristics existing in the domestic work role: the domestic role demands very little intellectual exercise, so do most women's jobs; domestic work requires a lot of routine and repetition, women's jobs are the most repetitious in the labor market; the housewife's products arc without permanence, women are concentrated in the production of non-durables; domestic work consists largely of personal cleaning and feeding services, women are concentrated in cleaning and feeding jobs; housewives suffer from lack of achievement and recognition, most women's jobs lead nowhere, In order to compensate for the domestic work role, women's jobs should be intellectually challenging: women should design, produce, and maintain more durable artifacts; deliver personal services other than just cleaning and feeding; have built-in chances for achievement, advancement, responsibility, and recognition.

What Is Needed to Eliminate Present Inferior Work Roles?

The low quality of so many women's jobs is a direct outcome of the segregation of women into a separate labor market of separate occupations, branches, and departments. A conscious effort should be made to break the sex typing of occupations; male entrants should be welcomed to the female occupations; women should gain training and entrance into previously closed or restricted occupations, especially those technologically advanced

and expanding, into government, business, finance, and the professions. It should become illegal to hire women into separate job groups and pay female entrants less than male entrants. Women should demand open posting of jobs within the firm and information about qualifications needed for all jobs. They should not be excluded from any job because of obligatory overtime or night work. Women in part-time work should not be paid less per hour than in full-time work; they should have the right to proportionate fringe benefits, including pension rights. Paid maternity leave should be incorporated into labor laws of all nations, Women workers should have a right to additional optional unpaid maternity leave with job security. They should also be given the right to a period of optional part-time work without loss of pension, training, and seniority rights.

There are those who claim that as long as most women adhere to the pattern of withdrawal and reentry and/ or periods of part-time work, they will not be able to overcome their relatively inferior position. In the light of recent changes in male work patterns, this seems no longer inevitable; the rigid, full-time plus overtime, year-round, uninterrupted work-life in one and the same occupation is no longer sacrosanct. Flexible work time, four-day-work weeks, optional overtime, training leaves, sabbaticals, mid-career changes, all these are breaking up the conventional male work pattern. Therefore, it should not be too difficult to gain full legitimation for the female work pattern; discrimination justified by the difference between male and female work patterns should not be tolerated.

Viable Career ladders for women

Until now, careers for women were not the norm. That women should acquire more experience and skill and progress gradually to positions of

greater challenge, responsibility, status, and pay was not considered necessary.

Women's jobs were considered as simply "jobs", not as steps in a career ladder. A young woman is hired for a sales job as a salesclerk, a young man as a "management trainee"; most young women enter business as typists, file clerks, receptionists, switchboard and telephone operators, keypunch operators, cashiers, bookkeepers, and secretaries with little prospect that their work role will ever become much more challenging and responsible. Reform of women's clerical jobs demands the breaking down of the barrier separating them from management or administrative skills.

The rapidly expanding health and education sectors are rigidly stratified, with women occupying the lowest menial and the middle semiprofessional levels while the top professional, administrative, and research positions are, nearly exclusively, taken by men. Each level is rigidly separated from the other with no chance to rise upward. In the West, until recently, this was considered perfectly in accord with "nature"- as men should be doctors and women, nurses. Men teach in schools of education, draw up curricula, are school principals, and inspect schools; women carry out their plans and follow their instructions as teachers; women from the working classes act as nurses' aides, teachers' aides, practical nurses, and do the cleaning, laundry, and kitchen chores in schools and hospitals.

In order to improve the quality of the numerous women's jobs in the fields of health and education, it is essential to open up career ladders. First attempts in this field resulted from the realization that recruiting welfare mothers into low-status, low-pay health jobs without any prospects was futile. Therefore, attempts were made through teamwork, on-the-job training, and special training to let low-level workers acquire paramedical

and social relations skills and thus enhance their jobs; to open up avenues of advancement to nurses through the acquisition of preventive health and administrative skills and take on responsibility for the organization and administration of entire community health teams ((19)). Another attempt was to open up a new avenue reaching into the sacred precincts of the physician through the physician-assistant program. Men and especially women with practical health care experience and a minimum of undergraduate-level science courses can, through an IS-month course, become assistant medical practitioners ((20)).

Such breaking down of barriers and establishing of career ladders should also be attempted in the fields of education, social work, and librarianship. Even private household work can be improved through the establishment of a skill ladder; the skills needed for it are at-present undefined and it is treated as unskilled work. A Belgian experiment has shown that by training and accreditation for such domestic activities as laundry work, cooking and serving meals, baby care, and so on, and assuring the trainees of placement and wage rates in accordance with the number of skills acquired, even these jobs can be greatly improved in competence, dignity, and pay ((21)).

The Improvement of the Mass of Existing Women's Jobs

The large majority of women's jobs in manufacturing, laundries, restaurants, typing pools, keypunching, and billing are fragmented, repetitive regimented, and mindless, without room for initiative and judgment. Women have a disproportionate share in assembly work, eye-straining work, basic work cycles of a few seconds only, and pay by piece rate. Their knowledge and skills are greatly underutilized. Factory operatives with a high school

diploma are treated as if they could neither read nor write, much less think. Clerks with a B.A. degree are not permitted to compose a letter or sign it. Telephone operators are made to use set phrases.

Job enrichment experiments of clerical positions in industry, banks, and telephone companies have shown that without major technical changes many clerical service jobs can be greatly improved by letting the Individual employee take over a meaningful portion of the service process, such as comprehensive relations with a number of customers, stockholders, or subscribers, and granting her maximum autonomy within this area. Other clerical jobs have been improved by the autonomous or semiautonomous work group method-encouragement of multiple skill acquisition, rotation of activities, scheduling and responsibility for product or service quality within the group-again without major changes in the physical layout of the office ((22)).

A much more comprehensive and exciting model of the improvement of clerical jobs is the office team of the General Foods plant in Topeka, Kansas ((23)). Here a team of ten persons (seven women and three men) work according to the autonomous work group method: moreover, they have entirely done away with the traditional status barriers between (1) lower-skill office work, such as switchboard, typing, filing, and keypunching; (2) mid-level secretarial work for management, specialized clerical work such as payroll, materials ordering, or billing; and (3) the semiprofessional work involving corporation law and state labor law problems, usually considered managerial. Everybody performs the low-level chores for herself or himself, takes turns at the switchboard, and is encouraged to train even for managerial skills to the limit of her or his wish and capability.

Experience of the redesign of women's industrial and manual service jobs is still very scanty. Even in progressive firms such as Texas Instruments in the United States ((24)), Olivetti in Italy ((25)), or Philips in the Netherlands, where considerable efforts have been made to enhance the quality of men's jobs, little or nothing has as yet changed in the women's departments, where tiny, often microscopic components are being spot-welded, assembled, and checked. An interesting exception is the Philips experiment, which let groups of women devise a new group method of assembling tiny electrical bulbs ((28)). In assembly of larger components, there is the Norwegian electrical heater experiment in which women of rural background successfully cooperated with men in the operation of autonomous work groups, gradually attempting technically more demanding activities as well as approaching positions of responsibility ((27)). In the United States there is the experiment of the Coming Glass plant in Medfield, Massachusetts, where women operatives assemble individually entire hot plates and medical instruments or, in the case of large and more complicated instruments, work in semiautonomous groups-in both cases doing away with the traditional fragmentation and lack of initiative of typical women's industrial jobs ((28)).

Areas in which there is still lack of or scant experience and which might pose considerable need of changing the technical system are (1) industrial jobs which involve the handling of microscopic components, such as in electric bulbs and electronic circuits, and accurate eye-hand coordination; and (2) jobs in technically backward and often declining industries such as large parts of the needle-trades and food-processing industries. Here women perform enormously fragmented and repetitive activities, which involve considerable manual dexterity and speed. In both

areas basic improvement may hinge on the automation of many processes now performed by hand, using electric hand tools, tending, connecting up, and correcting the work of isolated and often unsatisfactory semi-automated machinery ((29)). In both areas, too, competition is keen from Third World countries where both men and women arc still ready to perform these low-quality jobs for considerably lower wages than in the West. Therefore, many prosperous United States firms tend to transfer their electronic assembly departments to such countries and declining textile, needle-trades, or food industries rely on remaining rural, minority, or immigrant female labor, paying the lowest wages in industry; both groups are reluctant to invest sizeable sums in developing new automated machinery, in spite of the fact that prototypes do exist and that some are already in operation in Japan, Germany, and even Israel ((30)). Perhaps some government encouragement such as special tax concessions or, for small firms, the establishment of cooperative modernized facilities, would be necessary to induce management to embark on this needed technological modernization; at this point government tax concessions or other assistance could be made contingent on management's agreement to the redesign and radical improvement of the quality of women operatives' jobs.

Conclusion: Urgent Need for Research and Coordination of Reform Attempts

The reform of women's work life is still in its beginnings; most reformers have not treated it as a specific object with conditions and problems that are different from those of men's work life. Those fighting discrimination against women and struggling to erase women's inequality in the world of

work often have not considered sufficiently the wider goal, the enhancement of women's overall working life. Researchers concerned with women's jobs need exchange of experience and coordination among themselves. The efforts of quality of working life reformers need coordination and exchange of experience with fighters for women's rights.

Both groups are in dire need of more reliable information about a wide range of characteristics of women's jobs and women's reactions to them: what characteristics hurt them most; to what extent they are ready to press for changes and train for more responsible jobs; what part of the female population prefers the exclusive domestic role and what are their characteristics; more comparative individual, family, and detailed work histories, in order to better analyze trends of change in women's work behavior; how individual work experience, education, family conditions, national and ethnic background, husband's attitudes, and influence of the views propagated by the women's movement affect women's attitudes toward and expectations from work.

There is still an enormous amount of outright male resistance to the upgrading of women's position in the world of work; but there is also a large amount of simple ignorance and confusion about what different groups of women want and need. And this can and should be overcome.

NOTES

1. International Labor Organization, Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, country statistical yearbooks, and censuses. Compiled by Marjorie Galenson, *Women and Work* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1973), p, 18.

2. Based on "Labor-Force Participation Rates of Women by Age," in Galenson, *op. cit.*, pp. 17, 20.
3. A recent and comprehensive statement claiming that this stereotype is bused on the genetic inferiority of females in aggressiveness and in abstract thinking and that therefore girls should not be socialized to compete with males is in Steven Goldberg, *The Inevitability of Patriarchy* (New York: Morrow, 1973).
4. Thus in the Netherlands only "the legal requirement that women retire on marriage has been removed in government service and in public school teaching" has recently been abolished, "but there are still clauses ill private union agreements giving the employer the right to discharge a female employee if she marries. Teachers in Holland's many private schools are among those subject to such provisions. The maternity protection tax on employers, to finance compulsory maternity leaves, encourages employers to fire married women." In "Switzerland which ha... failed to ratify the ILO's Equal Remuneration Convention. . . marriage may constitute grounds for discharge from federal employment." Galenson, *op. cit*., pp. 77, 79. In the period of mass unemployment of the thirties, public opinion in most Western countries was in favor of dismissal of women on marriage.
5. Valerie Kincade Oppenheimer, "Demographic Influence on Female Employment and the Status of Women," in Joan Huber (ed.), *Changing Women in a Changing Society* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1973), p. 185.

6. Elizabeth M. Havens, “Women, Work, and Wedlock: A Note on Female Marital patterns in the United States," in Huber, *op. cit.*, pp. 213-218.
7. Women's Bureau, U.S. Department of Labor, *Handbook* for 1969, p, 8, reports the economic reason as crucial; also, Canada Department of Labor, *Occupational Histories of Married Women*, 1960, p. 64, comes to the same conclusion.
8. An early yet trenchant analysis of the work of the housewife can be found in Charlotte Perkins Gilman, *Women and Economics* (Boston: Small Maynard, 6th ed. 1913), pp. 67-75, 157 (1st ed., 1898).
9. Subsequent statistics are compiled from *Employment and Earnings,* 20, no. 1 (July 1973).
10. Unfortunately, this detailed statistic has not yet been updated; it appears in U.S. Department of Labor, *op. cit.*, p. 96.
11. These are 1960 figures; the absolute number of private household workers has since declined, but it is still among the six largest.
12. Valerie Kincade Oppenheimer, *The Female Labor Force in the United States. Demographic and Economic Factors Governing Its Growth and Changing Composition*, Population Monograph Series No.5 (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1970), p. 75; according to Oppenheimer, *op. cit.*, 1973, p. 187, there has been no decline in the concentration of women in the traditional female occupations and it may even be greater.

13. For the unequal distribution of women over the food industry and its relation to the state of technological development, see Employment and Earnings, 20, no. 2 (August 1973), 63.
14. Excellent illustrations of this process can be found in Alexander Solzhenitsyn, *Cancer Ward.*
15. Larry E. Suter and HerInan P. Miller, "Incomes of Men and Career Women," in Huber, *op. cit.*, p. 208.
16. Galenson, *op. cit.*, p. 41.
17. *Ibid.*, p. 77.
18. Until recently it has been claimed that, notwithstanding the low quality of most women's jobs, surveys demonstrated that women were mostly satisfied with their jobs; it was implied that women were satisfied with jobs that men were not. See Galenson; *op. cit.*, p. 42, quoting a 1967 British Ministry of Labour survey of working mothers, 92 percent stating they were either very or fairly satisfied with their jobs; p. 68, quoting a 1966 Helsinki interview study of married couples: although the wives' earnings were only 60 percent of their husbands', they were nevertheless more satisfied with their work. Yet the recent Michigan University Survey Center's national sample work satisfaction survey, reported in Harold L. Sheppard and Neal Q. Herrick, *Where Havc All the RoLots Gone?*, found higher rates of job dissatisfaction for women than for men in all age groups. Apparently, there exists as yet no survey of work satisfaction/dissatisfaction of women and men in jobs as similar as possible.

19. See Suzzanne B. Greenberg, "Curriculum Development and Training for Community Health Workers," *Comprehensive Health Services, Career Development, Technical Assistance Bulletin*, 1, no. 7 (May 1970), 1-8.
20. See *Bulletin*, Northeastern University, Physician Assistant Program.
21. Personal observation, in Brussels during the 1950s.
22. Frederick Herzberg, "One More Time: How Do You Motivate Employees," *Harvard Business Review*, January-February 1968, pp. 59-60; see also W. J. Paul and K. B. Robertson, *Job Enrichment and Employee Motivation* (London: Gower press, 1970).
23. Personal observation, August 1973.
24. Personal observation, 1969.
25. Personal observation, March 1972.
26. Described by its initiator, H. P. Vossen, "Experiment in the Miniature Bulb Department of the Terneuzen Works of Philips in the Netherlands," unpublished paper, April 1972.
27. Described by L. A. Ødegaard, "Summary of third Field Experiment," Industrial Democracy Project, Phase B, unpublished paper.
28. See Michael Beer and Edgar F. Huse, "A Systems Approach to Organization Development," *Journal of Applied Behavioral Science*, 8, no. 1 (1972).
29. These kinds of typical women's industrial jobs are described by Judith Buber Agassi, "Women Who Work in Factories," *Dissent*, Winter 1972, pp. 233-236. See also Ulrike Marie

Meinhof, "Frauen sind billiger," *Frankfurter Heft*, June 6, 1967, and Jean Tepperman, Two Jobs: Women Who Work m Factories in Robin Morgan (ed.), *Sisterhood Is Powerful* (New York: Random House, 1910), pp. 115- 124.

30. The introduction of much more advanced textile and needletrades machinery than that used currently in most U.S. plants has been reported from these countries.