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## Article

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## Introduction:

### The Changing Status of Women

One of the most dramatic changes in economically advanced countries during the second half of the twentieth century was the rapid increase in women's labor force participation. The proportion of women who were employed increased substantially in all European and North American countries. By 2002, the percentage among those between ages 15 and 64 reached 75.6% in Denmark and Sweden and 76.8% in Norway while even in the 3 European countries where women were least likely to be employed the proportion was no less than 52.9% in Spain, 50.4% in Greece, and 48.4% in Italy. During the same period the labor force participation of men declined in virtually all these countries<sup>1</sup> to 72.1% in Belgium, 75.0% in Greece, and 75.8% in Italy<sup>2</sup> (Blau/Ferber/Winkler 2006: 376). The main reason for the decline in male labor force participation has been the increase in the age when young men leave school and this is at least equally true for women. In fact, there has been a more rapid increase among women going on to post-secondary education than among men. This suggests that the increase in their labor force participation during their "prime years" has been even greater than the above data indicate. At the same time, however, women have made only slow progress entering most male dominated occupations and even less in reaching the top ranks of the hierarchies within occupations, notably including the professions.

In *Beyond Economic Man* Nobel Laureate Robert Solow (1993: 153), after noting that occupational segregation by gender has been changing only slowly and specifically commenting on the fact that women's slow progress in economics is often ascribed to gender differences in intellectual style, said "I am not sure about that, because I have doubts about those cognitive differences and their basis. What is true, I think, is that

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<sup>1</sup> One exception is Portugal, where male labor force participation rose from 83.8 in 1982 to 84.8 in 2002.

<sup>2</sup> It is even lower in some of the Central and Eastern European (CEE) countries, 66.1% in Hungary and 71.3% in Poland, but these "transition" countries are generally not included among the "economically advanced."

until very recently, and may be even now, there has been a tendency for male economists to patronize women, and that is just as damaging as keeping them out of the club.<sup>3</sup> The attitude Solow describes is not, of course, unique to economics but rather permeates the other professions as well<sup>4</sup> and helps to explain why in addition to the well-documented high degree of occupational segregation there is also substantial vertical segregation within occupations, with men occupying the top positions and women clustered in the lowest ranks.

In their introduction to a volume devoted to women in management published more than a decade ago Burke and Davidson (1994: 1) painted a rather more rosy picture, reporting that “there has been a dramatic increase in the number of women who are pursuing managerial and professional careers” and that “they have prepared themselves for careers by undertaking university education where they now comprise almost half of professional schools.” Further, they reported that the “graduates enter the workforce at levels comparable to their male colleagues.” They too, however, go on to quote Morrison et al. (1987) that women’s and men’s corporate experience and career paths begin to diverge soon after this point. Further, in the second volume they published about half a decade later (Davidson/Burke 2000) they conclude that although more women have entered managerial positions, progress has been slow, that job segregation by gender within management persists, with women dominating such areas as human resources, public affairs, communications and the law, routes that rarely reach the executive level, and that male cultures continue to dominate, particularly in the industrial sector (Davidson/Burke 2000: 5-6).

This issue of *Management Review* examines to what extent women have made progress in management and in academia, focusing specifically on the EU countries and North America. These traditionally male occupations are of considerable interest because they are among the most prestigious and well rewarded. Beyond that, they invite study because they tend to have well-established hierarchies, for the most part associated with generally recognized titles. This is generally true in the case of management, where presidents outrank vice presidents, who in turn outrank directors, and so forth. It is even clearer in academia, with a cluster of “non tenure track” positions such as research and teaching assistants, instructors, and lecturers at the bottom, while assis-

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<sup>3</sup> Not all eminent economists are, however as enlightened as that. More than 10 years after Robert Solow made these comments another eminent economist, Lawrence R. Summers, President of Harvard, suggested that innate differences between men and women rather than discrimination might be an important reason why so few women succeed in the sciences (presumably including economics) and math.

<sup>4</sup> There is some disagreement whether the professions are worse than other occupations. For instance, Ira Gang, John S. Landon-Lane, and Myeong-Su Yun (2003) say that in Germany the “glass ceiling” for women is particularly serious in the professions, while Juan Jose Dolado, Florentino Felgueroso, and Juan Francisco Jimeno-Serrano (2002) conclude that segregation has been changing even less in occupations other than the professions.

tant, associate, and particularly full professors are at the top of the pyramid.<sup>5</sup> Beyond that, it is more prestigious to be employed at a large and very profitable corporation or a nonprofit organization that raises large amounts of money and/or is very highly regarded because of the work it does, or to attain any given rank at a highly selective educational institution, and above all, a highly ranked research university.

### **The world is changing – but slowly: Women managers**

While women have clearly been making progress as managers and administrators, it is equally clear that this progress continues to be disappointingly slow in spite of the best efforts of many women and their supporters. The first paper in this volume, by *Markus Gmür*, provides one possible explanation why this is the case: societal expectations of the ‘good manager’ continue to be related to traditional masculine sex role stereotypes, even though some recent studies show at least a weak trend towards a more androgynous profile. His conclusion is based on a review of the mainly U.S. literature on the subject, but he provides evidence that the situation is not very different in Germany.

Unlike the previous author *Elke Holst* provides an international overview of the situation of women on boards and in other managerial positions. She points to the socialization of women as one of the main reasons for their underrepresentation in these positions. At the same time she notes the extent to which laws and directives of the European Union Commission as well as those of individual countries could be very useful in improving women’s opportunities in the labor market and especially as managers, if they were effectively implemented. She examines the situation in Germany in considerable detail (including the social and economic conditions confronting women and men in managerial positions, including the gender wage gap) and notes the steps this country has already taken to further women’s advancement. She then goes on, however, to emphasize the additional steps that will need to be implemented if there is to be more substantial progress.

Gmür and Holst, like most other researchers concerned with women in management and the professions tacitly assume that women would like to make more rapid progress than they have made so far and are prevented from doing so by a variety of obstacles they encounter. *Sandra G. L. Schrujfer*, on the other hand, raises the intriguing question whether women really want to break the glass ceiling. Based on responses to a survey of 621 female employees of an electronics firm in the Netherlands she concludes that women she terms “feminine” put more emphasis on balancing their career and their private life than on getting ahead. She also tests the hypothesis that those who give priority to balance do not perform as well on the job, but does not find that the evidence strongly supports this supposition. Nor does she find that there are consistent differences in terms of self-efficacy with respect to stereotypically masculine and feminine tasks.

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<sup>5</sup> There are some differences among countries in the precise titles used as well as the relative standing of these ranks, but for the most part the hierarchies are well established within countries. It is also worth noting that in recent decades named professorships, with substantial stipends in addition to the regular salary have tended to proliferate as well.

A relatively brief research note by *Michel E. Domsch, Désirée H. Ladwig, and Angela Pintsch* completes the section on women in management. It departs from the analysis of the current situation and its causes emphasized in the research papers, and instead introduces us to a new program intended to improve the situation. This program is termed 'genderdax', an information platform that is expected to speed the progress of qualified, career-oriented women. It is supported by the German Federal Ministry for Family, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth and will represent a group of innovative companies that actively work to further the careers of such women. Only time will tell how successful this innovative and ambitious program will be.

### **The world is changing – but slowly: Women in academia**

*Jane W. Loeb* offers an extensive literature review that provides information about the progress American women have made in academia during the almost forty years since affirmative action legislation was introduced in the United States. It is during those years that employment, pay, and promotion of female faculty members have been lively issues.<sup>6</sup> The studies on which she reports for the most part rely on large national databases. Their findings can best be summed up as showing that there has definitely been progress, but that more progress needs to be made before women will have equal opportunity at U.S. colleges and universities.

In contrast to Loeb, *Gertraude Krell, Renate Ortlieb, and Alexandra Rainer* report on an in depth multi-level survey on the careers of women faculty in business administration and economics at a single institution, the Freie Universität Berlin. They report that members of the faculty tend to ascribe the higher dropout rates of women to their personal characteristics, while students generally blame it mainly on lack of support from faculty. This is not unexpected in a system that is male dominated, and particularly so at the higher ranks (as is also true in all other countries).<sup>7</sup> On the other hand only minor incidents of actual discrimination were reported.

*Yana van der Meulen Rodgers and Dara L. Woerdeman*, utilizing data from the UK and the Netherlands for a variety of disciplines, present evidence that there are differences in the way men and women approach science, whether they are employed in academia or in industry. They then go on to make a convincing case that appropriately utilizing the contributions each can make would advance the research agenda, but also show that at present women's talents are not fully utilized because they are less likely than

<sup>6</sup> Anyone who doubts that these issues remain highly controversial may want to review some of the reports of the firestorm that followed when Lawrence H. Summers, an eminent economist and President of Harvard, suggested that innate differences between men and women rather than discrimination might be an important reason why so few women succeed in the sciences and math (Summers 2005).

<sup>7</sup> We do not have data on the precise proportion of women in this university. However, in a paper that provides information about women at universities in six countries, Margreiter, Kocher, and Matthias Sutter (2001) report that at German universities as a whole 25.2 of assistant professors, 19.2 percent of associate professors and only 8.1 percent of professors were women.

similarly qualified men to advance to high-level research and management positions and are also less likely to obtain adequate funding for their research projects. They conclude that the most important remedies for these problems would be reforms that would help women gain more confidence and that would make it easier for them to combine career and family.

### Book reviews

The last section of this volume consists of reviews of a number of books, each of which offers useful insights related to the concerns of this special issue. The first, reviewed by *Elisabeth Stiefel*, specifically evaluates how “personal politics” could advance the careers of professional women, whether in the world of business or in academia. Next, *Siri Terjesen* reviews three books dealing with various issues related to the progress of women entrepreneurs. This is followed by *Renate Ortlieb's* review which discusses a volume that deals with the career paths of women scientists and how they might become more successful. The fourth and final review by *Mary King* reports on an innovative microeconomics text that attempts to steer this field, where gender issues are generally ignored, in a new and more feminist direction. This should be of interest to the readers of this special issue because, unlike the usual economics text, it provides considerable insight into the problems women face when they enter the labor market and the loss to the economy when their talents are not fully utilized.

We want to dedicate this special issue “Women in Management, Academia, and other Professions: Stagnation or Progress” to our colleague Prof. Dr. Marianne Resch (Flensburg University). She was the one who proposed this topic to the editorial board of *Management Revue* and she has provided encouragement and useful suggestions throughout our efforts to bring her suggestion to fruition.

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