

WOMEN IN TRANSPORT

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ABSTRACT: Our society is currently experiencing a period of significant change in the concept of women's role. This change is reflected in the increasing numbers of women who are planning their lives around careers in the work world.

In Transport, observable changes are occurring as women move into jobs traditionally regarded as male preserves. Women are also slowly moving into supervisory and management positions.

This paper will look at the forces operating for and against women reaching higher levels in organisations. It will examine myths and stereotypes about women at work and identify some patterns of difference which do appear to exist between the sexes.

These factors have implications for employees, managers and users of transport systems, which cannot be ignored in the planning process.

Strategies will be outlined to assist in making the changes which are occurring in the employment status of women become opportunities rather than area of tension and inefficiency in the industry.

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THE CURRENT SITUATION

Today, more than 35 per cent of the Australian workforce is composed of women - a marked increase from the figure of 25 per cent fifteen years ago. A principal factor in this change has been the increased participation rate of married women. It is further possible that more married women would seek jobs if suitable child-care facilities were available.

Over this period however, there has been little change in the tradition of women's employment in low-paid, low-skilled jobs, usually in the clerical, sales and service areas. This can be seen from the statistics in Table 1 for the Australian labour force in 1976.

TABLE 1.
Employed Persons by Occupational Groups 1976

Classification	Female %	Male %
Administrative, executive, managerial	2.0	8.5
Tradespeople	12.6	42.6
Professional and technical	15.7	11.2
Service, sport and recreation	17.3	5.2
Transport and communication	2.2	7.8
Mines	0	0.8
Farmers etc.	3.3	9.2
Sales	12.3	6.1
Clerical	34.6	8.6
TOTAL	100.0	100.0

Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics, Feb. 1976

It should be noted that although 16 per cent of women are classified as professional and technical, over 70 per cent of this group are in teaching and nursing.

Only 2.0 per cent of the female workforce is classified as administrative, executive and managerial, compared

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to 8.5 per cent of men. Even in occupations which are female-dominated, such as teaching, nursing, social work and librarian, women occupy few of the top managerial positions.

In industry, most women executives are found in personnel, office management, consumer relations and other areas outside the mainstream of male corporate activities.

WOMAN'S 'PLACE'

In our society, there is a belief that a woman's place is at home rather than in the wider world of business and politics.

This notion, that women's natural ability lies in the areas of family and labour-intensive work, is reflected in the training women receive and in the type of work women find themselves doing when they do enter paid employment.

Although women can now expect to work for a significant part of their adult lives, marriage is still equated with success for most women.

From childhood, women are not only trained towards vocational areas which are in keeping with their presumed life role of wife and mother, they are encouraged to be passive, non-competitive towards and supportive of males, in order to 'be chosen' for marriage.

Hence the 'sex object and servant' stereotype of women that is current in our society.

In 1974, Dr. Coombs said that Australian society is not only male-dominated, but male values of power, status, force and greed are the most influential. These are values which have generally not been developed and approved in females. As well, Australians generally have a hostile attitude to women who step out of an essentially domestic role.

These factors may contribute to an understanding of the relatively low profile of women in the workforce in Australia today.

FORCES FOR CHANGE

Although women are primarily employed in low-paying low-skilled jobs, various forces are making it possible for women to acquire business positions entailing management responsibility.

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These forces include:

- .. Increased incidence of women in the workforce.
- .. Recent Anti-Discrimination legislation.
- .. Increased education and training opportunities for women.
- .. Changed/changing cultural values concerning the role of women in society.
- .. Declining birthrates and control of fertility.
- .. Feminist movement.
- .. Activism on the part of female employees to attain job equality.
- .. Increase in the need for managerial talent to combat competition.
- .. Public image, especially if customers are women.

But while things are beginning to change, it should be noted that there are currently very few women in management positions. Those that are in management tend to be in traditionally 'female' industries, such as health, retailing, advertising and other service areas, and most women executives tend to be in staff positions, as discussed above.

THE TRANSPORT INDUSTRY

Statistics on the status of women in the transport industry are not readily available. It is believed that a study on women-in-transport was carried out in 1977-78 by the federal Department of Transport and that a decision was taken not to publish the report.

The Public Transport Commission of N.S.W. has made certain statistics available and these form the basis of the report in the section below.

Overall, it appears that female participation in the transport industry is significantly lower than in the total workforce. In the P.T.C. for example, women comprise less than 9 per cent of those employed compared to the national average of 35 per cent.

The main reason for this appears to be the sex-typing of occupations. In transport, women are primarily employed in a very narrow range of occupations in the service and support areas. Most occupations are male dominated and there are many areas where women are not employed at all.

Since the introduction of Equal Employment Opportunity legislation in 1973 and the N.S.W. Anti-Discrimination Act in 1977, women have gained entry to certain occupations for

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the first time. We now have female jockeys, apprentices, ambulance drivers, firemen, railway carriage corridor attendants and so on. This trend can be expected to continue.

Occupations which have not been desegregated and which are currently under review are airline pilot and air hostess: the former being currently closed to women and the latter to men.

Women in transport are not only segregated on an occupational basis but also on the basis of hierarchy and earnings. There are very few, if any, women in positions of real power in management in the industry.

It should be noted that the unions have not been noticeably active on behalf of women in the area of equal employment opportunity. But recent reports indicate that the ACTU has begun a study on women in business and industry.

PUBLIC TRANSPORT COMMISSION OF N.S.W.

In the PTC only 9 per cent of the workforce is female. As can be seen from Table 2 the majority of these women are engaged in the clerical and wages categories. However, only in the clerical category is the rate of female participation

TABLE 2.

Participation of Women and Men in the Workforce of the Public Transport Commission.

Classification	Participation		Total %	Category Detail	
	Female %	Male %		Female %	Male %
Senior Officer	0.02	0.4	0.4	0.6	99.4
Professional	0.4	2.5	2.3	1.5	98.5
Clerical/Salaried	34.5	19.2	20.5	13.6	86.4
Wages	64.8	73.6	72.8	7.2	92.8
Apprentices	0.3	4.3	4.0	0.6	99.4
	<u>100.0</u>	<u>100.0</u>	<u>100.0</u>	<u>8.1</u>	<u>91.9</u>

Source: Personnel Administration Section of the P.T.C. of N.S.W. Feb. 1979

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more than minimal. The senior officer, professional and wages occupations are overwhelmingly male-dominated.

The one woman amongst the 177 Senior Officers is a Senior Systems Analyst - a position usually regarded as specialist and not leading to general management responsibilities. Included in the 987 Professional Officers are 15 Industrial Nurses, the only females in the entire occupational category.

a. Occupational Distribution

Most females in the PIC are engaged in female-dominated occupations i.e. in occupations where more than 90 per cent of the employees are female, and compared to men, women are employed in a very narrow choice of occupations.

The sex-typing of occupations into 'female-dominated' and 'male-dominated' is one reason for the low percentage of women in the PTC workforce.

Before women can have equal access to employment opportunities in the PTC it will be necessary to reduce the sex-typing of occupations. Some changes are becoming evident in this regard, but the rate of change is very gradual. For instance, the PTC now employs 10 female and 1719 male apprentices, and recently the N.S.W. counsellor for equal opportunity intervened to secure the appointment of a female railway carriage corridor attendant. However, there are still no females amongst the approximately 500 young people on cadetships and many other occupational classifications.

b. Salary Levels

In general, women with the PTC have lower-paying jobs than men. 98 per cent of women working for the PIC earn less than \$11,000 per annum. Only 6 women earn over \$15,000.

c. Women in Executive Positions

The incidence of women in executive positions is illustrated in Table 3. There is only one female Senior Officer. The only Professional Officers are Industrial Nurses earning less than \$11,000 per annum with no promotional prospects.

Since equal pay was introduced to the PIC in 1974, women have been on the same seniority lists as men and the way is now clear for them to progress to the higher classifications. But in fact, women are rarely found in supervisory positions other than in female-dominated occupations. These are usually lowly graded compared to supervisory positions in other areas and because they are rarely part of the clerical career stream offer little possibility of further advancement.

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Within the Clerical classification, it can be seen from Table 4 that while 35 per cent of clerical staff is female, there are no women in the top three categories, and 84 per cent of females are in the lowest two categories, compared to 44 per cent of males.

The 'other' classification includes EDP people, librarians, analysts, training, planning and so on. Women comprise only 1.7 per cent of this category although the work could be done by persons of either sex.

TABLE 3

Senior Officers Classification	Females	Total	Salary Range
Class 15+	0	3	\$38,500 +
Class 13-15	0	5	\$33,000 - 38,500
Class 9-12	0	28	\$27,500 - 33,250
Class 5-8	0	23	\$23,000 - 27,000
Class 1-4	1	121	\$17,500 - 22,500
	<u>1</u>	<u>177</u>	

TABLE 4

Clerical and Salaried Classification	Females	Total	%	Salary Range
Special	0	117	0	\$15,000 - 17,000
Class 1	0	176	0	\$14,000 - 15,000
Class 2	0	254	0	\$13,000 - 14,000
Class 3	3	466	0.6	\$12,000 - 13,000
Class 4	17	691	2.5	\$11,000 - 12,000
Class 5	160	715	22.4	\$10,800 - 11,000
Class 6	389	877	44.4	\$ 8,800 - 10,800
General Scale	556	1016	54.7	\$ 4,665 - 10,135
Other	75	4518	1.7	\$ 4,665 - 17,000
	<u>1200</u>	<u>8830</u>	<u>13.6</u>	

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FORCES OPERATING AGAINST WOMEN REACHING SENIOR MANAGEMENT POSITIONS

a. Myths and Stereotypes

The effects of belief in sex-role stereotypes in our society has been discussed above. In the section below, evidence for these stereotypes is examined.

(i) Biological - Psychological Stereotypes

The major physical differences between men and women are well known and generally accepted.

However, data on behaviour are less clear. There is research to show that boys have slightly higher visual-spatial ability, while girls have some advantages over boys in verbal ability.

However, no significant differences have been found between men and women on such parameters as:

- . intelligence
- . learning ability
- . concern for people
- . self-esteem needs
- . achievement motivation

One difference observed is that men are more aggressive than women. However, aggression has not been found to correlate with management ability.

The difference between individuals on factors such as

- . high achievement
- . aggression
- . nurturant behaviour, etc.

is so great, that whether a person is male or female should not be relevant in job selection.

(ii) Emotions

That women are more emotional than men, especially at certain times of the month, is a widely held belief. However Jacklin and Maccoby report that both men and women can be emotional and that both have mood swings associated with hormonal cycles.

(iii) Reliability

Despite beliefs to the contrary, research has shown that where age and type of job are held constant, male and female turnover rates are about the same, despite the interrupted career pattern of many women.

b. Gatekeepers

As discussed, women are not psychologically handicapped for positions in management. Rather, some handicaps develop from recruiting, hiring and promotional policies and practices.

As we have seen, those influential in making recruitment, training and promotion decisions can be committed to stereotypes, and hence can act as gatekeepers - incapable of seeing talent or emerging competence because the package is unexpected.

Women may not even be considered when executives are thinking about 'the best man for the job'.

Men at present tend to be uncomfortable with women in positions of power. But even at lower levels of the organisation, male superiors may be afraid to evaluate women and provide them with the feedback, particularly negative feedback, that they require to improve their performance in organisational terms.

Also, male peers may tend to ignore women managers rather than deal with the issue of how men and women can relate to each other as friends on an equal footing.

Until this issue is brought into the open and faced up to honestly by men and women, business organisations will continue to reflect male perceptions and women will be relatively alien in the environment.

c. Inhospitable Informal Structures.

It has been suggested that male sexuality is enhanced, not only by executive power and status, but also by the all-male exclusivity of the executive world.

Most women managers view entry into informal groups simply in terms of work enhancement. However, the likelihood that matters of sexuality are involved for men makes inequality for women in this area one of the toughest to remedy.

Closely related to the issue of informal structures is the extremely small number of women now in management.

Problems here can be overcome by creating a critical mass of women in management - a large enough proportion of women to make their presence a matter of course rather than a phenomenon.

When women in management are few in number, they feel

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excluded and often become estranged:

- interlopers in a male sphere
- no peer group
- no referent for behaviour
- clients and colleagues may react with surprise and disbelief
- at business meetings, she may be assumed to be a secretary

Some consequences of inhospitable informal structures in organisations are as follows:

- Women can be left out of informal social interaction
- Women may not be let in on the rules of the game
- Women may not have the same contacts as men (the old-boy network)
- Women tend to be excluded from the protege system
- Also, only certain people are seen as appropriate partners in normal interaction. Women are not generally admissible to this inner circle and this perpetuates their exclusion from top posts.

d. Perceived Incompatibility between Career and Family Goals

Many women today are committed to twin goals: career and marriage, and some are making a triple commitment, to career, marriage and children. If the husband also has a career, complexities do arise in what becomes a dual-career family.

This integration of career and family may prove the most challenging to individuals and to organisations.

But in the meantime, this perceived incompatibility can work against a woman. From 'good' motives she may be excluded from extra work, from travel, from promotions requiring a shift of residence. From the very things which may give her visibility and a chance to get on in the organisation. The woman may be denied the right to decide independently, and her career may suffer as a result of these 'good intentions'.

PATTERNS OF DIFFERENCE

In the preceding paragraphs, some mechanisms of exclusion have been discussed. To quote from Hennig and Jardim:

'Business organisations are closely tied to the male experience. Women lack that experience, which puts them at a critical disadvantage.'

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If this is so, it would seem that identifying some patterns of difference which currently exist between male and female managers, and using these differences as a basis for an educational programme could be a first step in increasing women's chances of success in business organisations.

It has been found that women tend to underestimate the importance of the political systems in organisations, and to lack knowledge of how they work. If women do tend to be naive in this way, then forces in the organisation certainly operate to perpetuate the situation.

Training programmes are one way of assisting women to see the forces operating in the real situation and to develop strategies for increasing their chances for success.

Briefly, some of the patterns of difference which have been observed are:

(i) Career Concept

In general, it has been found that women lack an image of the future or a life plan to enable reasonable choices to be made. The individual woman has not evaluated the needs of her adult life and the means by which she can satisfy those needs.

Hence woman's definition of a job tend to lack a sense of movement, of a beginning and an end. She defines a career in terms of personal growth rather than growth in status and influence, recognition and reward.

Women tend to believe in the effectiveness of the formal structure and this underlies her perceived disregard for the informal systems in the organisation.

She does not always understand that if she is not seen by others as the kind of person who should have a particular job, all the competence in the world will not get it for her.

(ii) Intergration of Personal Goals

Men find it difficult to separate personal and career goals. They negotiate and trade off.

Women strive to separate them and the resulting ambivalence is reflected in attitudes of the organisation.

(iii) Personal Strategy

Men define this as winning, as achieving a goal or reaching an objective.

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Women on the other hand, tend to see strategy in terms of process, planning and finding the best possible solution to a problem. But the definition does tend to be in terms of resolving a problem in the present without considering the effects of the resolution on her future career.

(iv) Risk

Men tend to see risk as loss or gain, danger or opportunity. It affects the future and one's potential. Women however, see risk as a negative, loss, danger, injury and one avoids it as best one can. To women, risk affects the present and all that they have so far managed to achieve.

(v) Personal Style

Women seem to lack the flexibility of developing a style that makes it simpler to get what they want. They tend to say and act: 'This is the who I am, take it or leave it.'

(vi) Distancing

Hence distancing can be more difficult for a woman. She has less sense of a game being played, or of a temporary adoption of a different style for reasons of self-interest. More than a man, she feels it is all for real.

STRATEGIES FOR CHANGE

The introduction of women into positions of power in organisations will occur gradually, but will be accompanied by significant changes in the climate of the organisation and the business world, and in the attitudes of men and women to each other.

At all levels of the organisation, people will be affected and many will feel threatened. In the interests of all concerned, there should be open and frank discussion so that change can be planned and resistance minimised.

The following strategy is suggested:

1. Determine and publish the organisation policy on the employment of women.
2. Appoint someone with power to implement the policy.
3. Use experts.
4. Obtain visible commitment of top management.
5. Involve line management.
6. Specify objectives for different parts of the organisation.

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7. Focus attention on changing behaviours: recruitment, job advertisements, assignment of jobs, involvement in training programmes, receipt of benefits, etc.
8. Provide support systems: meetings, lectures, training.
9. Evaluate performance against objectives.
10. Administer rewards and punishments.

Such a strategy implies that the organisation is serious about providing opportunities for women employees. It would persuade women within and outside the organisation that they have a chance of advancement on merit.

This is essential in order to move beyond the present situation of:

- . tokenism
- . allowing the merit principle less than full effect.

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