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Encountering the Male Establishment: Sex-Status Limits on Women's Careers in the Professions¹

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Despite impressive extensions in the scope of women's social and political rights, there have been few extensions of sex-linked boundaries in the prestigious, male-dominated professions. This paper identifies the processes and structure of the professions in the United States which act to limit women's participation and achievement within them. Because their sex status is defined within the culture of professions as inappropriate, women find that the institutionalized channels of recruitment and advancement, such as the protégé system, are not available to them. Various modes of behavior on the part of women and their colleagues are described which are consequences of women's minority position and which reinforce it. Social changes affecting the traditional structures and opening careers in the professional hierarchy are discussed.

During the past half-century women have entered many upper-level occupations and positions from which they were once excluded, and their general level of involvement in the labor force has risen. But their participation in the occupations of highest rank—among them the professions of law, medicine, teaching in higher education, and the sciences—has not kept pace with these developments nor has their access to the elite levels of the professions been greatly improved. Further, despite pressures to implement the equalitarian values in American culture and impressive extensions of women's social and political rights, there have been no accompanying extensions of the sex-linked boundaries existing in the occupations of high prestige in this society.

The processes which undermine women's motivations for professional careers and work against their completion of the necessary education,

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their entry into practice after training, and their aiming at the highest levels of performance in professional practice have been described in various works. (Rossi 1965; Bernard 1964; Friedan 1963; Komarovsky 1953; Epstein 1970). Here I wish to focus on one set of these processes; those anchored in the structures of the professions and having the consequence of causing women's sex status to become salient² in the professional role, equal to or above the occupational status. We will also draw attention to the consequences of "sex-typing"³ and of "status-set typing"⁴ in the professions which have made the professions almost exclusively male. The important processes which underlie these questions are: (1) the colleague system of the professions, especially at the upper levels; (2) the sponsor-protégé relationship, which determines access to the highest levels of most levels of most professions; (3) the demands of the specific professions' "inner" structure and its attendant patterns of social interaction which are, under most circumstances, incompatible with the sex-role expectation repertory of even those women engaged in professional careers; and (4) the sex-typing of occupations, which reinforces these processes in linking occupational roles and sex roles.

This analysis applies not alone to women, but to others who possess statuses (such as age or race) which are culturally defined as "inappropriate" when held in conjunction with certain occupational statuses. That is, those persons whose status-sets do not conform to the expected and preferred configuration cause discordant impressions on members of the occupational network and the society at large: the black physician, the Jewish Wall Street lawyer, and the football-hero philosophy professor all generate such discordance.

SEX-TYPING OF OCCUPATIONS

One element of "status-set typing" is the sex-typing of occupations. The typing of certain occupations as male or female has consequences for entry to them and performance within them by persons who possess the

² Part of the analysis which follows draws on Robert K. Merton's conceptualization of the dynamics of status-sets, presented in lectures at Columbia University over the past years, but as yet unpublished. According to Merton, the "salient" status is the one that is focused upon—made salient—in the interaction under analysis. The salient status may be the one that is most germane to the interaction but it may be one that is inappropriate to the situation. The black teacher who is invited to join a faculty because he is black, not because his professional status merits the offer, has had his racial status made salient.

³ According to Merton, "occupations can be described as 'sex-typed' when a very large majority of those in them are of one sex and when there is an associated normative expectation that this is as it should be."

⁴ Thus I have labeled it "status-set typing" when a class of persons who share a key status (e.g., lawyer) also share other matching statuses (e.g., white, Protestant) and when it is considered appropriate that this be so.

“wrong sex.” Those occupations defined as male provide a social context uncomfortable for women. Those who seek entry to them are regarded as deviants and are subjected to social sanctions. As a result, few women attempt to enter such fields, and those who do often are blocked from the opportunity structure.⁵

As table 1 shows, women lawyers have increased from 1 percent of the profession in 1910 to 3.5 percent in 1950, but there has been no change in this percentage for the past ten years. Women now form 6.8 percent of the medical profession, an all-time high, but not a striking increase over the 6.1 percent of ten years before or since 1910, when women constituted 6

TABLE 1
WOMEN AS PERCENTAGE OF ALL WORKERS IN SELECTED PROFESSIONAL
OCCUPATIONS (USA, 1900-1960)

Occupation	1960	1950	1940	1930	1920	1910	1900
College professors, president, instruction...	19.0	23.0	27.0	32.0	30.0	19.0	...
Doctors	6.8	6.1	4.6	4.0	5.0	6.0	...
Lawyers ^a	3.5	3.5	2.4	2.1	1.4	1.0	...
Engineers	0.8	1.2	0.3	...	...	...	...
Dentists	2.1	2.7	1.5	1.8	3.2	3.1	...
Scientists	9.9	11.4	...	...	...	...	...
Biologists	28.0	27.0	...	...	...	...	...
Chemists	8.6	10.0	...	...	...	...	...
Mathematicians	26.4	38.0	...	...	...	...	...
Physicists	4.2	6.5	...	...	...	...	...
Nurses	97.0	98.0	98.0	98.0	96.0	93.0	94.0
Social workers	57.0	66.0	67.0	68.0	62.0	52.0	...
Librarians	85.0	89.0	89.0	91.0	88.0	79.0	...
Clergy	5.8	8.5	2.2	4.3	2.6	1.0	4.4

SOURCE.—U.S. Bureau of the Census of 1963, vol. 1, table 202, pp. 528-33. 1900-50 statistics from U.S. Department of Labor 1954, p. 57.

^a The lack of change in the percentage of women lawyers is even more striking if one uses the adjusted figures of Hankin and Krohnke (1965):

1963	1960	1957	1954	1951	1948
2.7	2.6	2.7	2.3	2.5	1.8

percent of the profession. The percentage of women college teachers has gone down steadily since 1930 from 32 percent to 19 percent today. Although the U.S. census figures are now almost ten years old, and there are certain indicators of increasing participation by women in some fields such as law,⁶ it is doubtful that a really new trend is emerging.

⁵ In fields which are not sex-typed or have not yet become sex-typed, or where there are few expectations concerning what would constitute an appropriate status-set to complement the occupational status, opportunities for women are great. As far as I know, computer programming is an occupation which has not become typed and many bright women and minority group members have been drawn to the field.

⁶ The enrollment of women in some law schools has increased in recent years. The University of Notre Dame Law School admitted women for the first time in the fall of 1969. The 20 women comprised 12 percent of the entering class, an unusually high proportion for law school classes (*New York Times*, September 14, 1969).

Some occupations which have remained predominantly male in the United States are, in other countries (most notably the Communist-bloc nations), regarded as female occupations. In the Soviet Union, women constitute 75 percent of the medical profession, 30–40 percent of the judges, and 28 percent of the engineers; in Denmark, they make up 70 percent of the dental profession.

Yet even in these countries women's share of the leading positions in the professions is meager. While social definitions regarding the "proper" sex of a practitioner are important in determining the sex-composition of an occupation, the sex-ranking of occupations provides an added inhibitor of women's advancement. High-ranking occupations in all societies are typically male (Goode 1964, p. 70). Medicine does not rank low in the Soviet Union, but it does not rank nearly as high as in the United States. For all occupations in all societies, as one approaches the top, the proportion of men increases and the proportion of women decreases. In the Soviet Union, for example, only the tiniest proportion of professors of surgery within the great teaching universities and research institutes are women (Dodge 1966); in the United States, although women constitute close to 20 percent of the academic ranks of higher education, few women attain the rank of full professor in the institutions of highest prestige.

It is evident that the dynamics of recruitment and involvement at the higher echelons of professions are different than they are at the lower levels and that they militate against the participation of women. Further, these processes are integral to the "culture" of the professions as we know them and may not be intentionally exclusionary. Of course, cultural attitudes tied to women's roles and women's biologically linked characteristics interweave with these processes in making the woman professional's sex-status salient in the course of her career.

CHARACTERISTICS OF PROFESSIONS

Professions share many characteristics of communities (Goode 1957; Merton, Reader, and Kendall 1957). They tend toward homogeneity and are characterized by shared norms and attitudes. The work of the professions depends greatly on mutual understanding between practitioners and common standards of behavior which permit them control of their share without much intervention from the state or lay public.

Interaction in professions, especially in their top echelons, is characterized by a high degree of informality, much of it within an exclusive, club-like context. As Hughes (1962) describes these qualities, professionalism "indicates a strong solidarity of those in an occupation. . . . The very word 'profession' implies a certain social and moral solidarity, a strong dependence of one colleague upon the opinions and judgments of others" (Hughes 1962, pp. 124–25).

Thus, it is difficult for someone not equipped with a status-set of appropriate statuses to enter the exclusive society, to participate in its informal interactions, to understand the unstated norms,⁷ and to be included in the casual exchanges.

The Protégé System

Entry to the upper echelons of many professions is commonly gained through the protégé system. This system, linked to the colleague system, operates both to train personnel for certain specialties (special areas of surgery or corporate law, for example), and to assure continuity of leadership. These fields are marked by the interplay between the formal and informal relationships of the practitioners. At certain levels one must be "in" to learn the job. Becker and Strauss (1956) point out that "until a newcomer is accepted [in these fields] he will not be taught crucial trade secrets," much less advance in the field.⁸

The sponsor-protégé (or master-apprentice) relationship may inhibit feminine advancement. The sponsor is apt to be a man and will tend to have mixed feelings about accepting a woman as protégé. Although the professional man might not object to a female assistant—and might even prefer her—he cannot easily identify her (as he might a male assistant) as someone who will eventually be his successor. He may therefore prefer a male candidate to a female in the belief that she has less commitment to the profession. When the woman is accepted as a protégé, her other role-partners—husband, father, child, etc.—may be jealous and suspicious of her loyalty to the sponsor and her dependence on him. The sponsor's wife may also resent the intimacy of the relationship between the sponsor and his female protégé and object to it.⁹

If the sponsor wants to minimize his risks in adopting recruits, the collegial group will not favor an unsuitable member likely to weaken its intimacy and solidarity and it may exert pressure on the sponsor to pick the protégé with whom it will be comfortable (see Etzioni 1961, p. 260).

For a sponsor, a protégé (1) eases the transition to retirement (Hall 1948; Hughes 1945); (2) gives him a sense of continuity of his work, and (3) gives some assurance that his intellectual offspring will build on his work. It is considered unwise to depend on a woman for these.

⁷ Goffman (1963, p. 129) points out that "more is involved than norms regarding somewhat static status attributes . . . that failure to sustain the many minor norms important in the etiquette of face-to-face communication can have a very pervasive effect upon the defaulter's acceptability in social situations."

⁸ The work of Hall (1948) illustrates this for medicine. See also Smigel (1964, pp. 100–102).

⁹ A number of placement officers in law schools report that it is difficult to place female graduates with solo practitioners. The reason offered, evidently considered as legitimate, is that the men complain that their wives would object.

Even if she serves an apprenticeship, the female professional may not get the sponsor's support in gaining entry to the inner circles of the profession—support which a male neophyte would expect as a matter of course. The sponsor may exert less effort in promoting a female student for career-line jobs. First, he may believe that she is financially less dependent on a career position than a man might be.¹⁰ Second, because of her presumably highly contingent commitment and drive (she might forego all for marriage, after all), he might only reluctantly introduce her or recommend her to colleagues.

However, it is often true that a protégé relationship may be more important to the woman than a man, and that a male sponsor may make an extra effort to promote a female protégé because he is aware of the difficulties she faces. In fact, she may only be able to rise or gain notice in a

TABLE 2
 PERCENTAGE OF PROFESSIONAL
 WORKERS IN SELECTED OCCU-
 PATIONS IN GOVERNMENT SER-
 VICE BY SEX (1960)

Occupation	Male	Female
Dentists	0.03	10.0
Lawyers	14.0	27.0
Doctors	14.0	30.0
Engineers	17.0	32.0

SOURCE.—U.S. Bureau of the Census 1963,
 p. 277.

field because she is a protégé, although this form of entry is not as important for others. I have suggested elsewhere (Epstein, in press) that women in professional life seem to find jobs and feel most comfortable in situations which are highly particularistic and are considered a unique exception to the general rule excluding women (e.g., because a particular woman is brilliant, or is in partnership with her husband), or in highly bureaucratized situations, such as government service, where strictly universalistic criteria, such as standing on competitive examinations, are applied. In fact, as table 2 shows, women professionals go into government service in far

¹⁰ A dramatic example of this is the Ruth Benedict-Franz Boas relationship in the Columbia University Anthropology Department. Boas regarded Ruth Benedict, as the wife of Stanley Benedict, "amply supported and with the obligation of a wife, someone for whose talents he must find work and a little money, someone on whom he could not make extreme demands and for whom he need not be responsible" (Mead 1959 pp. 342-43). Later, when Ruth Benedict separated from her husband and pressed for professional standing, Boas got her an assistant professorship. (The illustration is cited in Bernard [1964, pp. 105-6].)

greater proportions to their number than do men. In this respect, they are much like other minority groups, such as Negroes.¹¹

This pattern tends to be self-perpetuating. Women tend to select these two kinds of work situations because they know they will meet least opposition. Placement offices in professional schools often fit women students to government work and counsel them to avoid high-prestige firms or research centers. This means that many women never even enter environments where contacts are made for protégé relationships essential to entering the elite corps of their professions. Even within these environments, it is often true that women are guided into peripheral or low-ranking specialties where their work is not likely to draw the elite's attention.¹²

Later progress in a woman's career may be inhibited by similarly limited access to fellow practitioners and peers and their clubs and associations—the circle in which job opportunities are made known and informal recommendations are made. Hall (1948) illustrates the interdependence of career advancement and sponsorship by specifying the channels through which younger doctors of proper class and acceptable ethnic origins are absorbed into the inner fraternity of the medical profession. He notes that perpetuation of this fraternity depends on a steady flow of suitable recruits.

Performance Criteria

The collegial relationship is also important in the assessment of the performance of professionals. Although adequacy of performance may be simple to judge at lower levels of a profession, the fine distinctions between good and superior performance require subtle judgments. Members of professions affirm that only peers can adequately judge performance at these levels (as opposed to the lay public or outside agencies); they know the standards, they know the men, and they can maintain control. And the professions typically close ranks to maintain control when their autonomy is threatened. At higher levels, high stakes are often involved: legal decisions can affect people's lives or huge sums of money; medical decisions can assure a patient's life or death. Although there are gross guidelines for the behavior of professionals at these levels, formal scrutiny is minimal and the social controls exercised by peers act most effectively

¹¹ A larger proportion of nonwhites than whites are employed by the government in practically every occupational category in the professional and technical group in the census. For example, 20.1 percent of Negro lawyers and judges go into government work as contrasted with 14 percent of whites; 24.7 percent of Negro physicians contrasted with 14.8 percent of whites (U.S. Bureau of the Census 1963, p. 284).

¹² A disproportionate number of women lawyers specialize in the low-ranking speciality of matrimonial law and a disproportionate percentage of women doctors practice psychiatry, a relatively low-ranking medical speciality. For a further analysis see Epstein (1970, chap. 4).

to prevent deviance. The professions depend on intense socialization of their members, much of it by immersion in the norms of professional culture even before entry; and later by the professional's sensitivity to his peers. These controls depend on a strong network cemented by bonds of common background, continual association, and affinity of interests.

Not only do contacts with professional colleagues act as a control system, they also provide the wherewithal by which the professional may become equipped to meet the highest standards of professional behavior. As we know, the learning of a profession is not completed with graduation from the professional school. Techniques and experience must still be acquired in interaction with established practitioners. This is true also for acquiring new knowledge.¹³

Evidence suggests that women professionals are not involved in the collegial networks to the extent that men are.¹⁴ Thus they are excluded from the situations in which they can learn and are also excluded from the social control system which lets them know how well they perform (Epstein 1969).

The judgment of whether a professional is "top" rank is contingent on a number of elements linked to the collegial system:

Contributions.—Definitions of "contributions" vary from field to field but each profession has norms regarding quality and quantity of contributions deemed adequate for consideration as high-level performance. Women probably do make proportionately fewer contributions to their professions than do men (in male-dominated professions) although there is some evidence to the contrary (Simon, Clark, and Galway 1967). Few women have achieved fame for discoveries in science, designing great architectural structures, devising new surgical techniques, or the triumphant argument of cases before the Supreme Court. If publication in the academic professions is used as a criterion, it is probably true that women are responsible for proportionately fewer books and articles considered important to their fields. Even if one does not use standards of "greatness," it is not commonly believed that women do very much publishing at all.¹⁵ The colleague and

¹³ Sir Alfred Egerton has noted, in fast-moving sciences, "of the total information extant, only part is in the literature. Much of it is stored in the many brains of scientists and technologists. We are as dependent on biological storage as on mechanical or library storage." It is to this source of unpublished information that access may be more limited for women than for men (cited by Bernard 1964, p. 303).

¹⁴ Bernard's (1964, p. 152) study of women zoologists showed that women faculty members at colleges had less contact with fellow scientists than did the men there. They were less likely than other scientists to attend meetings of professional societies. They were also less likely than male scientists to be on regular mailing lists for reprints of researchers. Women on the staffs of universities seemed to do better in becoming part of the communications network.

¹⁵ For a review of some surveys on women's productivity see Epstein (1970, p. 171).

network systems are probably important in assessing these "facts." These are some of the dynamics involved:

a) Contributions must be visible to be noted; work from the larger and more prestigious institutions probably has a greater chance of being noticed than work performed at lesser-known institutions.¹⁶ Women are less likely to be affiliated with large and prestigious institutions.¹⁷

b) Contributions are also made visible by the activity of senior men in the field to promote them or by joint publications with those in eminent positions.¹⁸ I tentatively suppose that women's contributions are not promoted as much as men's and that they less often collaborate with those in eminent positions.

On the other hand, women professionals in male-dominated professions have greater visibility than men simply because they are a small minority. At professional meetings they are physically more visible (as are Negroes), and their written work identifies their sex by name. When their work is good, it may get even greater notice than that of men who perform at the same level of competence.

Performance.—Not only are written or material works assessed in considering a person for a place at the top, but also the quality of his general performance. Colleagues "get to know" a man by their exposure to his work in the courtroom, at the operating table, in the laboratory. Performances bearing the labels of well-known institutions are more apt to attract public notice; further, the great men who will make the judgments are at the great institutions and are likely to be in a better position to judge the potential of the young who are already in their midst.

The relative invisibility of the woman professional's performance stems directly from women's disadvantageous position in the structure of the professions. They are not only routed into less visible positions, such as library research, but the specialties in which they predominate are typically regarded as the less important and less demanding ones, and their skills in them count for less.

Incomes are lower in the professional specialties in which women pre-

¹⁶ This is an example of the "halo" effect of the institution on the author of a piece of work where his identity is not commonly known. Cole and Cole (1968) have found that the visibility of physicists, for example, is highly correlated with the rank of department in which they work.

¹⁷ In 1963, 82 percent of women faculty members, contrasted with 74 percent of the men, worked in colleges and technical institutions with a faculty numbering under 200; 18 percent of the women as contrasted with 26 percent of the men teaching in colleges were in institutions with more than 200 faculty.

Women faculty members were also affiliated with smaller universities to a greater extent than were men (Dunham, Wright, and Chandler 1966, pp. 64-65).

¹⁸ Zuckerman (1967, p. 393) finds, for example, that Nobel laureates who themselves had laureate "masters" received the prize, on the average, nine years earlier than scientists who had not studied with a prize winner.

dominate. Women lawyers in a relatively unlucrative field, such as matrimonial law, are less apt to gain distinction and advance in a firm because they are unable to contribute substantially to the firm's total profits. Women are also seldom given the accounts of important clients; their comparatively unimportant clients cannot effectively press for their promotion.¹⁹

Women also tend less than men to be in positions where they can exercise the greatest autonomy. Figure 1 indicates that women who work in the male-dominated professions are self-employed to a far lesser degree than are men. They are also less likely to be in high-ranking, decision-making positions if they are on the staffs of institutions, or in professional or business firms.

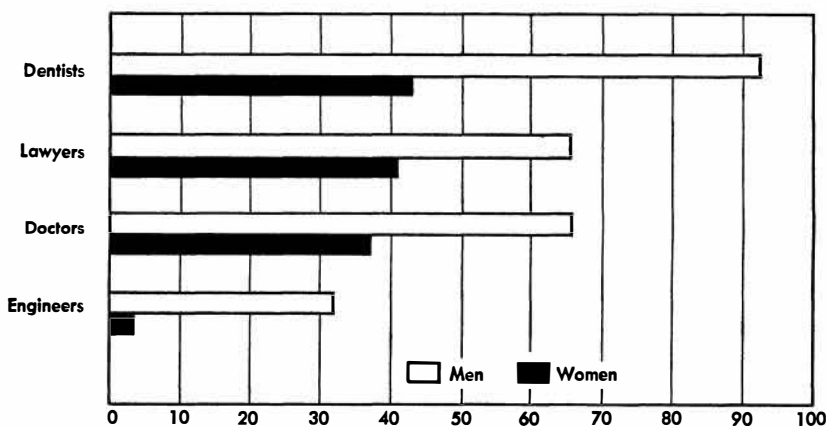


FIG. 1.—Proportion of males and females in selected professions who are self-employed. Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census 1963, table 21, p. 277.

Associations.—Membership and participation in professional associations characterizes the active professional and reinforces his ties to colleagues and work. At professional meetings information is traded about new techniques and theories, and informal judgments are exchanged about the profession's rising "stars." Professional friendships develop into personal relationships at the cocktail hours, and at committee and dinner meetings. The appointment of members to special committees may publicize their achievements to their colleagues.

Women are less active in professional organizations than are men, particularly at the decision-making levels. It is generally believed, but not generally proven, that proportionately fewer women than men join professional organizations (see Fava 1960, pp. 171-72; Bernard 1964, p. 152;

¹⁹ See Smigel's evaluation of client sponsorship as a path to partnership in a large firm (1964, pp. 100-102).

Simon et al. 1967, p. 234; Epstein 1970, p. 185 ff.). Certainly, however, women's past participation and performance in professional organizations has been limited.

Women's reticence to participate in these associations is due in part to past discrimination against women in some cases in the recent past, although no professional organization today excludes women from membership. In cases where there were no legal barriers based on sex (or where they were removed), women were nevertheless made to feel unwelcome. Women have been barred particularly from full participation at decision-making levels. They are seldom elected to prestigious committees or to executive posts. In the field of sociology, out of a total of 57 presidents, only one woman has been elected to serve as president of the American Sociological Association. In the American Psychological Association too, they have been continuously underrepresented in posts of distinction.²⁰ In law, they tend to serve disproportionately on bar association committees concerned with family law²¹ (reflecting their high representation in the specialties of matrimonial law, custody, adoption, etc.) and not on the committees of high rank.

To some extent the establishment of women's professional organizations has served to deflect women's participation in the general professional groups. Some women's organizations were formed because the general organizations had formal or informal bans on female membership.²² Following the removal of these barriers, they have generally managed to keep their inner sanctums free of women.²³

²⁰ Mitchell (1951, p. 200) reported that women had not become fellows, officers, committee chairmen, committee members, editors, representatives to other organizations, members of the Council of Representatives, members-at-large, on the Executive Committee, or division presidents of the American Psychological Association in proportion to their numbers and qualifications. Only as secretaries have they served in proportion to their numbers. In 1968 no women held major offices.

²¹ For example, in a listing of the principal committees and members of the New York County Lawyers' Association for 1967-68, women served on fourteen of thirty-seven committees, and some appeared on more than one (*New York Times*, August 6, 1967, p. 37). Of a total of 1,103 members of the State Bar of California serving on committees, only eighteen are women (letter from Karl E. Zellman, Assistant Secretary, State Bar of California, March 21, 1967).

²² For example, the National Council of Women Psychologists was established in 1942, after it became clear that the Emergency Committee in Psychology of the National Research Council was continuing to omit women from its plans for the wartime use of psychologists (Mitchell 1951, p. 193). The National Association of Women Lawyers and other women's bar associations were also formed in response to exclusion by the men. There are also separate professional associations for women in the fields of medicine (founded 1915), dentistry (founded 1921), engineering (founded 1950), geography (founded 1925), and certified public accounting (founded 1933). It is interesting to note that in professions typed as female, there are no separate men's organizations, nor have men been legally excluded from membership at any time.

²³ New York attorney Doris Sassower, former president of the New York Women's Bar Association, tells of the experience of Florence Allen, Chief Judge of the U.S. Court

Male clubs which recruit members cross-occupationally and which are also centers of informal contacts between those at the top, by their very definition exclude women. Prestigious clubs, such as the Harvard and Princeton Clubs, permit women entry only on ludicrously limited bases, and their resistance to full integration is dramatized to the women by certain symbolic devices; among them are separate women's entrances and restaurants limited to male patronage during lunch hours. Of course, there is no shortage of places for male and female colleagues to lunch together but many men seem to favor the club setting, and when women go along, they must use "the back entrance" (the Harvard Club), if they are admitted at all.

Dedication to the profession.—The ideal professional is one whose work dominates the other parts of his life. As his professional associations blend into personal friendships, so his working and leisure hours may merge. Although styles of work differ, the professional's involvement with his craft is generally expressed by the long hours he puts in. Because women professionals do not or cannot work the same number of hours as their male colleagues (table 3), their commitment is suspect and they are not deemed colleagues in the full sense of the word.

Exclusivity of the elite.—The collegial system has the further consequence of creating an image of exclusivity which reinforces professional boundaries. Even if inner circles do not act to explicitly exclude "inappropriate" members, outsiders are loath to place themselves in a situation which they anticipate would be embarrassing or uncomfortable. Women, as members of an inappropriate category often practice self-exclusion and limit their professional interactions. Although they might or might not be rebuffed if they initiated contact, the situation is often never put to the test.²⁴ The woman's self-imposed limits on professional interaction often complete the self-fulfilling prophecy of her ineptitude. To a large extent, this behavior results in her acceptance of the prevailing image of professions as societies of men.

Women often not only exclude themselves, but favor exclusion of other women. They accept the image and definitions of this behavior as ap-

of Appeals, Sixth Circuit, who, when appointed as a federal judge, found the resistance of fellow judges so great that they refused to look at her or speak to her, except when forced to by the business at hand (speech delivered at the Waldorf Astoria Hotel, May 13, 1967, on the occasion of the first Florence E. Allen Award).

²⁴ Some of the women lawyers I interviewed, for example, avoided joining colleagues at lunch. One commented, "Sometimes when the natural thing to do would be to join an associate and a client at lunch if you were a man, you feel, well, maybe I'd better not. It might be awkward for them. They might want to talk about something and might feel constrained."

Encountering the Male Establishment

propriate. The more informal the professional context, the more willing women seem to concede the “rightness” of their exclusion.²⁵

THE INTERACTIONAL SETTING

Because women don’t “fit” well in the professional structure just described, their appearance in the collegial networks as legitimate coprofessionals often causes a considerable amount of role-confusion. Male colleagues typically are unable to engage in the normal collegial relationship with

TABLE 3
WEEKLY HOURS WORKED BY EMPLOYED ENGINEERS, SCIENTISTS,
AND TECHNICIANS, BY SEX, 1960

OCCUPATION	MEAN No. HOURS		No. HOURS WORKED (%)					
			Men			Women		
	Men	Women	1-34	35-40	41+	1-34	35-40	41+
Engineers.....	42.8	38.6	1	67	32	9	82	9
Scientists.....	42.1	38.6	5	68	27	11	75	14
Biologists.....	43.0	39.1	6	58	36	12	66	21
Chemists.....	41.6	38.8	4	72	24	9	80	11
Mathematicians.....	41.4	38.6	3	74	23	6	87	7
Physicists.....	41.6	*	5	72	23	18	59	23
Professors-instructors:								
Biological sciences.....	43.6	33.8	17	28	54	37	28	35
Chemistry.....	40.8	*	25	25	50	41	26	33
Engineering.....	42.5	*	15	32	53	60	20	20
Mathematics.....	36.4	35.4	34	30	36	37	31	32
Physics.....	40.5	*	26	26	48	54	...	46
Technicians:								
Medical and dental....	42.2	38.5	10	51	39	15	61	24
Electrical and electronic	42.2	39.8	3	70	27	5	81	14
Other engineering and phys- ical science technicians..	41.5	38.7	4	71	25	8	80	12
Lawyers and judges.....	46.7	38.9	6	33	59	22	47	28

SOURCE.—U.S. Bureau of the Census 1963, table 13. Statistics (except for lawyers) cited in Rossi (1965).
* Mean not shown when the case base is less than 1,000.

them and instead fall back on the traditional norms governing male-female interaction.

Performance of the professional task may be seriously inhibited, when not only colleagues but clients focus on the sex-status instead of the occupational status of women. This occurs, for example, when a patient responds to a woman physician first as a woman and only second as a doctor, instead of as a doctor primarily and perhaps exclusively—the

²⁵ A lawyer described her feelings in this way: “There was a camaraderie in the County (Law) Association—a terrific spirit. In other associations the members are very staid . . . but there everybody knows one another and they joke. They were prejudiced against admitting women but I think they were justified. It’s not the same with a woman around. They aren’t free to express themselves, to tell off-color stories—they should have that.”

appropriate response in a professional relationship. This kind of social response colors both the attitude and behavior of the woman practitioner and forces her to work out ways to counter violations of the norms of professional relationships by her role partners. The following consequences may occur:

1. Women in professional life feel self-conscious²⁶ about being women, with the result that they are unsure of how they will be received.²⁷ They may overreact to conceal or inhibit "womanly attributes," and overconform or overproduce in an attempt to make up for their situationally downgraded status.²⁸ Women lawyers may, as noted earlier, try to be unobtrusive and not create "trouble" or attract attention by holding back in conversation or by accepting work which keeps them in "invisible" positions where they do not have individual clients.²⁹ They thereby accept and reinforce the common definitions about the inappropriateness of their presence in the field in which they have chosen to work.

2. Similarly the role partner—colleague, supervisor, client—may try to compensate³⁰ by being overly solicitous, congenial, courtly, underdemanding,³¹ or overdemanding in the professional interaction.

3. Status discrepancies make continuous role definition necessary during interactions which should be routine. Thus, all group members are sensitized to problems of ambiguity and are forced to form new ground rules

²⁶ There is considerable congruence here between women professionals and other individuals who have some highly visible objectionable characteristic, trait, or status. Like them, during contacts with "normals" the woman may feel that she is "on," having to be self-conscious and calculating about the impressions she is making, to a degree and in areas of conduct which she assumes others are not (Goffman 1963, pp. 13-14, 33).

²⁷ This problem is identified by Barker (1948, p. 34) in pointing to the uncertainty of status for the disabled person over a wide range of social interactions, including employment. "The blind, the ill, the deaf, the cripples, can never be sure what the attitude of a new acquaintance will be, whether it will be rejective or accepting, until the contact has been made. This is exactly the position of the adolescent, the light-skinned Negro, the second generation immigrant, the socially mobile person and the woman who has entered a predominantly masculine occupation."

²⁸ These two types of behavior are, of course, examples of "compulsive" behavior or overconformity (identified by Merton 1957, pp. 131-60), whereby adherence to norm prescriptions in spite of the situational context may weaken role relationships and in addition impede the accomplishment of the goal.

²⁹ White's data showed that women see fewer clients than do men (1967, p. 1093).

³⁰ Compensation may be a consequence of the discomfort persons feel in interaction with a stigmatized person, or, in our case, the person with a deviant status. Since he doesn't know how to act, because he feels sorry for the person with the stigma, or because he resents him for causing an awkwardness, the role partner tries to assuage his guilt by being extra-nice (Goffman 1963).

³¹ As with the cripple, the woman professional's accomplishments are often judged by a different set of standards than the man's. Thus minor accomplishments may be assessed as signs of remarkable and noteworthy capacities "in the circumstances." This may well be interpreted as a "put down" on the part of whoever is judging the accomplishment.

(i.e., establish norms) for the situation. When the inappropriate status of the person's status set is activated in the professional context, refocusing of the interaction to the appropriate status must occur so that the professional task may be accomplished.

SITUATIONS WHERE FOCUSING ON SEX-STATUS
WILL BE MINIMIZED

In view of the difficulties which are apt to be encountered by the woman professional in the course of her working life, I interviewed successful women professionals at length about the factors that had helped them in their careers. They described situations and patterns of professional life which helped to avoid or minimize the problems commonly faced by professional women. These were of the following types:

Formality in the professional context.—Where the working environment was formal and the tasks well defined, role partners were not unsure about the norms governing the interactions. For example, where authority patterns and the division of labor were clearly laid out, men would not feel disturbed by a woman giving instructions.

Defined standards of performance.—If there was no indecision about how to rate performance because the outcome could be measured and lead to a specific result, relationships with role partners were easier. For example, although it is difficult to evaluate the enduring quality of philosophical ideas, it is less difficult to evaluate the efficiency of a newly designed motor for a given piece of equipment. In cases where ability had been clearly demonstrated, other criteria for inclusion in the team become less important. Women in professional life counsel neophytes to make an effort to become experts in some speciality, because their special talents will then be sought out regardless of attitudes concerning women "in general."

Correlatively, where role partners in the professional encounter have a high stake in the task at hand and are dependent on each other for performance and information, women experience little difficulty. For example, an industrial engineer will show respect for the female patent lawyer who is charging him \$60 an hour for consultation services, and she, in turn, is motivated to keep the relationship professional if she wishes to keep him as a client.

Flexibility of role-playing.—Where the woman wins acceptance of her sex status as natural and unobtrusive, she has fewer professional difficulties. Collegial relationships demand that role partners shift easily from formal roles to informal ones, from professional colleague to "one of the boys." Women must perform the functional equivalent of this flexibility in role-switching, but not imitate it. Women who act "professional" but not especially formal or aggressive, who try to be gracious as women and not to be one of the boys, are said to be able to make the best impression

on men and gain their acceptance. Often sex status intrudes less when it is permitted expression in normal sex-role behavior. For example, women who work in top law firms or hospitals report that male colleagues are used to treating women in a courtly manner and can work best with women who respond graciously. Women who tell off-color jokes or demand always to be treated just like the men cause their colleagues discomfort. Attempts to suppress sex-role behavior in such contexts only succeed in making it obtrusive.

Supervision of the professional interaction.—It was easier for professional women where third parties supported the professional interaction. The professor of medicine instructing a male and a female medical student in a laboratory, for example, ensures that the relationship is task directed (see Goode 1960).

Length of career and length of professional relationships.—In time, men and women in professional relationships usually establish ground rules to govern behavior and eliminate awkwardness which flows from being unsure of whether to focus on the norms governing interaction between men and women or those which govern the relationship between colleagues. For example, women lawyers who had worked in a firm for a number of years and who had early set a precedent of paying their own way, were not reticent in inviting colleagues to lunch. Of course, age itself gives the woman a certain amount of authority and if she has gained eminence, problems are further reduced. Not only do many of the feminine role components attached to the female sex status become less intrusive in professional interactions as the woman grows older (it is probably safe to say that in most cases as the woman ages, her sexual appeal becomes less an object of focus), but her position is bolstered by the rank derived from her experience and her age.

High rank of institution.—When the firm or organization is of high rank and good reputation, it is probably more likely that a woman can expect fair and open treatment than if she were at an institution of lower rank. One encounters more adherence to norms at the top and, once a member of an elite group, the woman professional may count on being treated by the universalistic criteria appropriate to the situation. In low-ranking institutions, practitioners tend to be relatively insecure about their own abilities and financial security, and the woman may become a scapegoat. Perhaps this is simply a case where once the woman is "in," she is truly "in."

Women, like others with statuses which do not conform to cultural preferences, must learn the dynamics of handling inappropriate responses to them as well as the skills of their trade. Some are protected by social structure more than others; some have greater personal skill in handling people and ambiguities. The more a woman can depend on the environ-

ment filtering out responses to her sex status which intrude on accomplishing the professional task, and the more she has perfected techniques for handling responses, the more likely she is to continue at her work and proceed along a "normal" career sequence. American women may leave professional careers at almost any point, no matter how high the investment in it or the amount of talent shown for it, with a high degree of cultural approval (Epstein 1969). We suspect that those who enter professional life and who remain within it are from environments in which obstacles are minimal, or they have, for idiosyncratic reasons, been able to define the obstacles as minimal.

CHANGES IN THE STRUCTURE OF PROFESSIONS

I have examined some of the causes of the woman professional's failure to fulfill her career potential. I have also noted some of the factors which can, depending on the case, mitigate this failure. It would be well to close by drawing attention to some of the changes in American society and in the professions, which may have consequence for women's career patterns.

At this time, the most important change seems to be the loss of prestige of traditional elite centers to new foci of professional interest, notably those in the spheres of public welfare and service. Whether or not it proves to be temporary, many of today's gifted young professionals are no longer eager to enter the traditional inner corps of the professions, and are instead being drawn to the new fields of professional opportunity. This seems to be particularly so in law and medicine, where there are signs of a breakdown in the collegial structure and an increasing challenge to the traditional insistence on recruits of particular types.

This disruption of traditional processes, coupled with the recently renewed movement toward women's occupational equality, should bring some important changes in the direction of women's greater participation in the professions. But probably far more radical changes than these, both in the institutions of the economy and the family, will be necessary to eliminate the peculiar problems of professional women, along with the cultural and occupational views of them as deviants.

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