

Women & Men in Management

Second Edition

Gary N. Powell

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Foreword

Gary Powell's decision to revise this book is an important one because it is one more indicator that the issues of women and men in management have not yet been resolved and, to a large extent, are still not understood.

We are being asked by a number of authors, politicians, and those in the media to accept the idea that sexism and women's issues are passe, that other business and diversity issues are more compelling in the 1990s because women have already carved out a place for themselves.

Is sexism a thing of the past? It seems that, as I read newspapers, magazines, and journals, there are signs of progress side-by-side with warnings that women are still trapped in yesterday's stereotype-driven standards. I was struck recently by two articles on the same page of *USA Today*¹. One article extolled the fact that for the first time in history fully half of the newly-named Rhodes Scholars are women. The other article noted that a woman is beaten every 18 seconds.

The same sort of schizophrenia exists in the realm of management. On the one hand, President Clinton appointed Donna Shalala and other women to cabinet-level posts. On the other hand, women still comprise only about 5% of the executive ranks in major U.S. companies. And as Gary Powell points out in Chapter 6, fewer than half of the male executives surveyed in 1985 by *Harvard Business Review* "would feel comfortable working for a woman." John Fernandez, who has written several books based on extensive research concerning diversity in corporations, recently concluded that sexism is still socially acceptable.

Gary Powell's book examines this premise and the converse. He adds current evidence to that presented in his original 1988 version to show

how women are doing in management and the reasons behind their gains and limits. In doing so, he helps us combat assumptions that, even when well-intentioned, keep women—and many men—at a disadvantage.

A shocking finding from a nationwide research project I directed was that the biggest barrier to advancement for white women and women and men of color continues to be prejudice. Prejudice involves equating differences with deficiencies when evaluating recruits, subordinates, candidates for promotion, and so on. Assumptions form the basis for much of the prejudice that continues to hold women back. Assumptions prevail unless other information takes their place, the kind of information provided by Gary Powell.

If women have made progress since 1988 it isn't because of the passage of time. Exposure and accountability have encouraged scores of individuals to change traditional practices. Education prompts and shapes these changes. This book is an important contribution to our education.

—Ann M. Morrison

Author of *The New Leaders* and lead author of *Breaking the Glass Ceiling*
President of the New Leaders Institute in San Diego, CA

Note

1. *USA Today*, 7 December 1992, p. 12A.

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Introduction

Women & Men in Management, Second Edition, chronicles and examines the transition that is taking place in female/male work relationships in American organizations. Significant changes have occurred in the status of and interactions between women and men at work in recent years. In fact, some believe that all the changes that needed to take place have already happened and that a person's sex no longer has any effect on what happens to him or her at work. According to many people now entering the work force or anticipating entry, the days when women had trouble getting into jobs compared to men are long past. However, gender issues have not entirely disappeared from the workplace.

For example, consider the statistics regarding the proportions of men and women in management. The proportion of women who hold management, executive, or administrative positions in organizations has been rising consistently since 1970 and is currently 42%. However, the proportion of women who hold *top* management positions continues to be very small, no more than 5% according to most surveys. What has changed is that more women are in management. What hasn't changed is that women are concentrated in the lower levels of management and hold positions with less authority overall than men. Is it just a matter of time before the proportions of women in upper, middle, and lower management positions become approximately the same? As we shall see, maybe and maybe not.

Early Reactions to This Book

When I first told colleagues that I was planning to write a book on women and men in management, I heard a variety of reactions:

1. A male colleague smugly said, "Well, that seems to include everyone unless they are excluded by child labor laws." I could not quarrel with the accuracy of his observation, but clearly he was poking fun at the writing project.
2. Some nodded sagely and said, "Sounds great!" although it was obvious by the puzzled expressions on their faces that they had no idea what the book would be about.
3. A female colleague who is a prominent researcher in the field of women in management concluded that I must be trying to shift the focus of the field from women's issues to interactions between the sexes. However, she felt unsure about why "women" comes first in the title. She thought that this may reflect my uncertainty about whether I wish to reach a large audience with the book. As an afterthought, she wondered whether I am making a point about men usually coming first in such a title.
4. Another male colleague simply asked, "Why 'women and men' in that order, rather than 'men and women' like everyone is used to saying?" Before I could reply, someone within earshot answered, "If you need to ask a question like that, you need to read the book!"

Let's consider the issues that these reactions raise, in order.

The *first reaction* reflects the fact that my colleague did not take the project seriously. This attitude is not surprising. Until recently, men and women were assumed to be very different from one another in psychological as well as physiological attributes. The differences didn't need to be discussed, and any book or article that pertained to one sex was assumed to be irrelevant to the other. Many people still have beliefs about what women and men are "really like," how they should interact in the workplace, and the contributions that members of each sex can best make. The following statements serve as examples: Men should clean up their language when women are present. Women should be expected to act as representatives of their sex and be able to speak for "what women think" on an issue. Female subordinates should be managed differently than male subordinates. He is careful about details—she is picky. He loses his temper because he is so involved in his job—she is

bitchy. Flirting, sexual innuendos, and teasing are acceptable in the workplace as long they don't have an adverse effect on productivity. Men are better at some jobs than women and vice versa, but men make the better managers.

The purposes of *Women & Men in Management* are (a) to bring to light such beliefs, (b) to critically examine their relevance to the world of work today, and (c) to recommend ways for individuals and organizations to successfully respond to them. In so doing, it will increase our understanding of the interactions between women and men in work settings. These interactions are having ever greater impact as the proportion of women in the workplace, especially in management positions, steadily increases. Although many employees are bringing new attitudes about male/female roles to their jobs, considerable resistance to the shifting of economic roles between the sexes remains. Hence problems that arise in male/female work relationships, the sources of these problems—individual, organizational, and societal—and possible solutions to them deserve our close attention.

The *second reaction*, as well as the first to some extent, reflects the fact that the term *women and men in management* is unfamiliar to many people. Until the early 1970s, the prevailing trend in the management literature was to write as if all managers were men. More recently, books in this field were devoted primarily to issues related to women in management and secondarily to issues related to male/female interactions and men in management. Reflecting the fact that women were entering the management profession in greater numbers than ever before, they advocated that women could be effective managers and highlighted the special problems that women faced in entering the management profession. The message of these books has been heard. The proportion of women in managerial positions continues to rise, and writers on the topic of management now talk about managers in terms that include both sexes.

However, this is not to say that women have been totally assimilated into the management profession and are indistinguishable from men. A successful middle manager in a Hartford, Connecticut insurance company has the mock nameplate "Boss Lady" on her desk and says that she is still called that by most of her peers (affectionately or derisively so, she does not say!). The psychologist Sandra Bem asked an audience whether they had ever known anyone personally and had not thought to notice whether the person was male or female. Few could answer the question yes. A person's sex remains an important characteristic to most

of us in forming an impression of the person, and people often react to others at least in part according to their sex.

Now that women are in managerial ranks to stay, it is appropriate to focus attention on how women and men interact in the workplace rather than on whether women belong in management positions and how to get them there. Moreover, it also makes sense to recognize that men have problems related to male/female interactions too. For example, they have to cope with the fact that some men get ahead in organizations while most do not. As women have to adjust to holding positions with high status, men have to adjust to working with women who hold such positions, sometimes as their managers, often as peers, and ever more frequently as their subordinates. In discussing the issues that arise between women and men in organizations today, it is helpful to consider both female and male perspectives. In simple terms, if men have been part of the problem, they can also be part of the solution. To provide the complete background necessary for understanding these issues, we need to examine the work and prework experiences of both men and women.

The *third and fourth reactions* to the book's title reflect the fact that "women and men" is an unusual order for these two terms in writing and in speech. I have chosen "women and men" in the title simply to call attention to the typical and unconscious order ("men and women") usually used. You may have already noticed that I have been using the two orders interchangeably. If "women and men" makes you feel uncomfortable, try a little exercise: Repeat "women and men in management" aloud 25 times. Then repeat "men and women in management" aloud 25 times. Next, alternate phrases for 25 rounds: "women and men in management," "men and women in management," "women and men in management," and so on. Which phrase sounds more natural now? If it's still "men and women in management," go through the whole exercise again (and again if necessary, and again . . .). After a while, you will find that it really doesn't matter which phrase you use. That's the *real* point to be made.

However, I am not uncertain about the audience I am trying to reach with this book. Its potential audience includes *all* men and women (or women and men) who presently work in organizations, expect to work in them, or are interested in how work is conducted within them. Moreover, the colleagues who wondered why the terms appear in the order they do will probably gain from reading this book, as will many others.

Organization of the Book

The book begins its analysis of the transition in female/male work relationships by looking back in time. Chapter 1 provides a historical perspective on the economic roles of women and men. Most individuals have been exposed to "traditional" stereotypes about the traits that females and males possess and are supposed to display. To fully understand these gender stereotypes, as they shall be called, we need to understand the traditions on which they are based. The chapter traces the historical influences that have shaped these traditions and affected the distribution of work roles between women and men over the course of American history. By comparing the public norms with the economic realities at various points in time, we can better understand the present allocation of work roles.

Chapter 2 examines individual differences that affect the behavior of women and men at work and the origins of these differences. It compares gender stereotypes with the facts that have emerged from research studies about actual sex differences. It introduces the concept of androgyny as an ideal proposed by some people for how both males and females should behave. It investigates the influence of socialization experiences provided by parents, schools, and the mass media on the development of young girls and boys. It also investigates the consequences of these experiences on the health of adult women and men.

Chapter 3 explores how individuals and organizations make decisions about whether to establish an employment relationship with each other. For individuals, these decisions entail if, where, and when to work; for organizations, they entail which job applicants to hire. The chapter describes how such decisions are influenced by the sex segregation of occupations, which itself is the result of past employment decisions by individuals and organizations. Individuals' decisions are also influenced by their own personal characteristics and life situations, which may differ for males and females. Organizations' decisions to hire female or male applicants may be affected by the conscious or unconscious biases of their recruiters and by the steps they take to prevent these biases from determining hiring decisions.

Chapter 4 examines the effects of gender stereotypes on the work relationships between male and female peers. It explores whether actual differences exist between female and male peers that could serve as the basis for stereotypes. It then details the personal and situational factors that tend to promote or prevent gender stereotyping of employees by

their workplace peers. It particularly focuses on the effect of the sex ratio of a group on interactions between its male and female members, and on the effect of individuals' experience in working with members of the opposite sex.

Chapter 5 considers issues pertaining to the expression of sexuality in the workplace, which may consist of sexual harassment (unwelcome sexual attention directed toward others) as well as organizational romances (welcome sexual attention directed toward others). However, both types of attention, even the welcome type, may have negative consequences for the individuals involved and their coworkers. Actions that both organizations and individuals may take to deal with sexual harassment when it occurs and to minimize the disruptive influence of organizational romances on other employees are recommended.

Chapter 6 extends the analysis of the effects of gender stereotypes to the work relationships between managers and their subordinates. It compares gender stereotypes with stereotypes of managers and then with the actual characteristics of women and men managers. Sex differences in managerial traits, behavior, effectiveness, values, commitment, stress, and responses elicited from subordinates are examined. The few sex differences that exist do not support the traditional belief that men make better managers. The belief that better managers are masculine also is unfounded, particularly in today's work environment.

Chapter 7, co-authored with Lisa Mainiero, examines the career and life patterns typically followed by men and women. Sex differences in these patterns have been diminishing but still remain. Differences in theories of career development that emphasize men's versus women's careers are documented. The chapter proposes a new conceptual framework for understanding the complexities of women's as well as men's careers that explicitly acknowledges the intersection of work and family lives. It discusses how organizations may help their employees achieve career and life goals without sacrificing the achievement of organizational goals. It also discusses how employees may contribute through their own actions to their experiencing "success" in their careers and lives.

Chapter 8 investigates issues related to the promotion of equal opportunity and appreciation of cultural diversity in organizations. It details the relevant laws and guidelines that have been enacted to restrict sex discrimination by organizations. It analyzes the effect of organizational culture on whether middle-level and lower-level managers embrace or even take seriously their organizations' professed goals regarding equal

opportunity and cultural diversity. Recommendations for how organizations may best promote a proactive approach to equal opportunity and a multicultural approach to employee diversity are suggested.

Chapter 9 completes the book's analysis by looking ahead in time. It presents two alternative scenarios for the future. In one scenario, the experiences of women and men have become more similar at work and their interactions less influenced by sex-related issues. In the other scenario, traditional distinctions between the experiences of women and men at work remain or have grown larger, and an individual's biological sex is the primary influence on what his or her work life is like. The forces that seem most likely to determine which scenario, if either, will prevail in the future are identified and discussed.

In summary, *Women and Men in Management* covers a wide range of topics. It addresses pre-organizational and organizational entry issues for women and men as well as issues that arise in the workplace. It examines issues pertaining to individuals' work and personal lives and to society as a whole. It considers what it is like for men and women to work with others as peers, to manage others, and to be managed. It observes female/male relations in past eras, examines their present nature, and speculates about what they will be like in the future.

In so doing, this book offers two types of useful information to people who currently work or anticipate working in organizations. First, it gives them insight into themselves in relation to the managerial role—how they conduct or might conduct themselves as managers, and how they respond or might respond to managerial actions by others. Second, it provides insight into how other people in organizations relate to and conduct themselves in their own work roles, whether managerial or nonmanagerial. You do not need to be a manager or intend to become one to benefit from reading this book. All that you need is an interest in the world of work and how the sexes interact within it.

Changes From the First Edition

Research on the topic of women and men in management, or women in management, was first published in the mid-1970s. Thus, the first edition of this book, published in 1988, summarized and drew conclusions from about 15 years of research. Now, five years later, one-third more years have passed in which there has been an explosion of research on this topic, calling for the updating and rewriting of virtually

every section of the book. Of the approximately 550 references listed in the "Notes" sections at the end of chapters, over 330 (60%) are new to this edition.

Several major changes also have been incorporated into this edition. First, the earlier Chapter 4 has been divided into two chapters—Chapter 4, "Working with People," and Chapter 5, "Dealing with Sexuality in the Workplace"—with expanded coverage of topics appearing in both chapters. Second, Chapter 7, "Getting Ahead—In Career and Life," now co-authored with Lisa Mainiero, more explicitly addresses the trade-offs between work and family concerns that most working people face. It presents a conceptual framework for examining women's and men's careers that we recently developed. Third, Chapter 8, "Promoting Equal Opportunity and Valuing Cultural Diversity," which was formerly devoted solely to issues related to promoting equal opportunity, has been expanded to give equal coverage to issues related to valuing cultural diversity in organizations. Finally, the implications sections of several chapters have been expanded.

1

Looking Back

A Silent Revolution

As a boy I lived for some time in the family of a pioneer uncle from Iowa. His log cabin was a perfect fairyland for a child because of the fascinating industries carried on in it. . . . Nearly all that was eaten and worn in the family had been manufactured by the hands of its women-folk. In those days nothing was heard as to the "economic dependence" of the wife, of her being "supported." My aunt, busy in and about the house, was as strong a prop of the family's prosperity as my uncle afield with his team. Uncle knew it, and, what is more, *she knew* he knew it.

Gradually, however, a silent revolution has taken place in the lot of the home-staying woman. The machine in the factory has been slipping invisible tentacles into the home and picking out, unobserved by us, this, that, and the other industrial process. . . . So, one by one, the operations shift from home to factory until the only parts of the housewife's work which remain unaffected are cooking, washing, cleaning, and the care of children. . . .

With the industrial decay of the home, it is more and more often the case that the husband "supports" the wife. In the well-to-do homes—and it is chiefly here that the status of women is determined—the wife has lost her economic footing. Apart from motherhood, her role is chiefly ornamental. He is the one who counts, whose strength must be conserved, who cannot afford to be sick. . . . She is tempted to pay for

support with subservience, to mold her manner and her personality to his liking, to make up to him by her grace and charm for her exemption from work. This "being agreeable" means often that she must subordinate her individuality, hide her divergent wishes and opinions, or adopt his.

Edward A. Ross¹

Traditional sex roles, as the term is commonly used, emphasize the differences rather than the similarities between women and men. These differences are typically assumed to be innate. Traditional sex roles also suggest that women should behave in a "feminine" manner, in accordance with their presumed feminine attributes, and that men should behave in a "masculine" manner, in accordance with their presumed masculine attributes. To deviate from these prescriptions, according to traditional thinking, is to engage in abnormal behavior. These sex roles have had a profound impact on relations between women and men in our society in all spheres of life—in the family, the educational system, and the workplace, and in both management and nonmanagement ranks within the workplace.

This perspective on sex roles, although true as far as it goes, raises more questions than it answers. Does the adjective *traditional* mean that sex roles have been handed down unchanged, from generation to generation, since the beginning of civilization, or have sex roles differed over time or among cultures? If sex roles have not been constant, isn't the label of *traditional* misleading? To which traditions are we then referring? Why are we choosing these traditions over others to be called "traditional"? How were these traditions developed? How well have they reflected the actual distribution of economic roles between the sexes?

In this chapter, I will address such questions. First, the development of the traditions on which "traditional" sex roles are based will be examined, and the impact of diverse historical forces such as the rise of industrialization, the occurrence of major world wars, and the development and growth of the women's movement will be traced. Second, the compatibility of these traditions with the utilization of men and women in the labor force and management ranks over time will be explored. Finally, the implications of the difference between expressed traditions and economic realities on the work relationships that exist between men and women today will be assessed.