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Stop the Presses:
Representations of Women's Progress in Corporate America
Reported through Popular News Media

A Thesis
Presented to
the Faculty of the Department of Liberal Studies
East Tennessee State University

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Arts in Liberal Studies

By
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December 2005

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Keywords: Woman, Executive Titles, Corporate America

ABSTRACT

Stop the Presses:

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by

Suzanne M. Cloyd

This study investigated the following key areas: women in the public sphere, women in the private sphere, and how media portrayals in these areas portray women's progress in obtaining executive positions in corporate America.

Topics of interest include wage differences between genders, executive placement, and attainment in board positions throughout Corporate America.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Stop the Presses emerged as I became interested in comparing women's actual progress in corporate America with women's progress as proclaimed in popular newspaper headlines, suspecting that there still is a disparity between men and women in gender roles, salary, and advancement in the work place regardless of what is printed in the headlines proclaiming women have advanced to positions of power and influence. Perhaps the media headlines do not accurately depict woman's progress in corporate America when it comes to the number of women securing executive and board positions in the workforce. It is the uncertainty of media portrayal that provided a basis for this study.

I investigated through literature examined relating to women's roles in corporate America and media portrayal of career advancements for women, which helped create a basis of comparison between women's placement or lack thereof in the workforce with the media's own sense of portrayal for career women. Among the popular mass media, the sources used will help build on a foundation of research to reveal what is happening with gender placement in the workforce, with a focus on women's progress in corporate America.

The main purpose of this thesis is to compare men and women in executive positions and how the status of either gender is reported in the headlines. Sources used to accomplish this were labor related search firms such as Catalyst, a New York-based, non-profit research group that helps companies find qualified female director candidates; the Financial Women's Association of New York (FWA), and the United State Department of Labor and Statistics; along with the published works of Susan Faludi, well-known feminist author; writings of Susan Brown-Miller, writer/activist for gender equality; work of Matt Huffman, an expert in examining organizational patterns of race and gender inequality; Patricia Sellers, Fortune 500 journalist; published works of Scott Coltrane, researcher of gender equity and family function. Media and news sources, such as Knight Ridder, the second-largest news wire publisher in the United States; PR Newswire, the world's most comprehensive news and information distribution network, high-profile news magazines, New York Times News, HR Magazine, Fortune 500 Magazine, including a variety of newspaper authorities such as The Washington Post, The Wall Street Journal, The Los Angeles Times, The Contra Costa Times, as well as headlines from local newspapers that added substantial data for this thesis.

Research will help answer questions about women's advancement in corporate America and if women experience any particular struggles or feel pressured to prove themselves in order to secure high-level positions that directly correspond to professional achievements, experience, and education. Additional research will address the actual gains (if any) women are making in corporate America despite popular newspaper media headlines that report about women on the rise in the executive realm of corporate America. This thesis also examines women's private lives in regards to domestic and social obligations in order to establish the importance their private roles play in their success and/or failure in corporate America.

As an executive and vice-president of a small business, I have witnessed how someone other than myself is in charge of interpreting my success. Promotions granted by a higher authority easily can be removed by the same authority. Corporate officers and board members quickly forget a successful record of accomplishment and career path when executive appointments are being made. I have seen first-hand how quickly a person's position in an organization can change as his or her career takes a different direction because of a decision made by other individuals. Clearly, those individuals with the power to

promote within an organization are the same individuals who can demote and revoke decisions. Based on personal experience, when promotions and advancements take place without a formal process allowing or encouraging input from the employee, there is the possibility that the process appears to be tainted or flawed, leaving an insecure feeling that lingers throughout an organization. Because the informality of the process has historically been based on a patriarchal tradition¹, women are particularly at risk in the business world, and advancement depends less on qualifications than keeping the status quo. Women who invest time, commitment, educational resources, and human capital in a profession should receive a return on their investment, complete with a sense of accomplishment based on personal success and not on what an executive awarded them out of a sense of obligation and power.

The basis for this thesis was to review the actual story associated with the headline of women's success to see if there was an argument, one way or the other, of women's progress in corporate positions. To find if the headline was essentially the measuring stick and if the

¹ Lisa Belkin. "The Opt-Out Revolution," *The New York Times Magazine*, October 2003.

corresponding story supported what the headline was claiming.

Women are attempting to secure executive positions while continuing to balance personal lives consisting of social and domestic commitments. Women in corporate America want to feel their contribution to the organization's success has meaning, is valued, and is necessary in order for the corporation to succeed. Some women may never get the chance to see the work-family equation work out with an answer that is satisfactory for them. Others will be able to work out the complexities of work-family, but with many sacrifices that may or may not pay off for them personally in the end. Many women must decide between a career or a family; more times than not, it is the career that suffers, along with achieved status and seniority, when women opt to stay home with family.² For women who must make the difficult and seemingly unfair choice between career and family, it is insulting that the media insist on the myth that women can have it all.³

This thesis does not compare equity between females as it relates to race or age and while it involves the overall progress of women in the workforce, it will not compare

² Lisa Belkin. *The New York Times Magazine*, October 2003.

³ Genaro C. Armas, "Census Finds College-Educated White Women Earn Less Than Others," *Associated Press*, March 20, 2005.

progress of women who occupy blue-collar jobs to women who occupy white-collar, executive jobs. That is not the intent of this study.⁴

4

CHAPTER 2

BACKGROUND OF WOMEN IN THE BUSINESS WORLD AND THE POWER OF THE MEDIA

World War II is largely credited with the introduction of women into the American workforce in significant numbers. Between 1942 and 1945, the government instituted a massive campaign to attract women to jobs left vacant by men called to war.¹ While women had for some time been employed in various "approved" professions, for the first time they moved into formerly male-only occupations, specifically into industrial factory jobs.² Professor Joyce Kornbluh of The National Labor College and history professor Priscilla Murolo of Sarah Lawrence College report that not only did married women outnumber single women in the workplace for the first time, but that "married women over thirty-five entered the work force in unprecedented numbers."³ At the war's end, a government that had offered fair wages, health benefits, and free child-care to its women workers withdrew these benefits, actively pushing women out of the workplace in order to hire returning

¹ Janet H. Cho, *(Cleveland) Plain Dealer*, "The Home front 60 Years After V-E Day," May 9, 2005, business section, p E1.

² Ibid.

³ Ibid.

servicemen.⁴ However, many women continued in their jobs, laying the foundation for the women's movement of the 1960s.⁵ In many ways, this struggle for equality in the workplace continues today, complete with its success stories and its setbacks. The career path women travel remains challenging and often filled with obstacles as they try to gain recognition and acceptance in executive roles. Men continue to dominate and fill executive positions in the workplace even at a time when the number of workingwomen is equivalent to that of men. Even with significant advances, the number of women in executive roles is still less than acceptable. Men occupy the majority of top executive positions and most of the board positions in corporate America.⁶ The term Corporate America is referred to as American owned and operated firms in the United States that operate by accepted business practices and standards, as defined by Ellen Wilson-Offutt, senior stock analyst for Sanford Bernstein.⁷ Corporate America is

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ United States Department of Labor, Press Release, "Women in the Labor Force: A Databook" USDL 05-849, May 13 2005. p 28.

⁷Ellen Wilson-Offutt, says, "Corporate America refers to American-owned and operated, large established firms in the United States that operate by the accepted business practices and standards most corporations implement in their business plan and operations for a successful corporate structure that includes net profit, with growth

an informal phrase describing the business world of the United States.⁸

Controversy exists relating to the success of recruitment and retention women have achieved in positions traditionally associated with men;⁹ for example, the number of women on corporate boards has increased, whereas the number of female CEOs has declined, reported in research by Leslie and David Novak in the mid eighties as opposed to more recent information from Catalyst Research Firm¹⁰ reported in January 2002 "Seventy percent of married women are part of the U.S. workforce, which is more than twice what it was in 1964. Currently, of the 50 percent female workforce, women hold positions of management, professional, and related occupations."¹¹ Four decades ago

potential." Email communications January 2005. Bernstein traces its roots back to 1967, when the firm was founded to manage investments for private families and individuals. Our mission soon grew to include investment research and institutional asset management, but private clients remained a central focus for our firm. As a unit of Alliance Capital Management, we manage some \$64 billion (as of December 31, 2004) for a private clientele that includes some of the nation's most prominent families and individuals.

⁸Corporate America, <http://www.answers/corporate20%america.com>. (accessed March 18, 2005, June 5, 2005, June 21, 2005, and September 11, 2005).

⁹Lesley Lazin Novack, David R. Novack, "Being Female in the Eighties and Nineties: Conflicts Between New Opportunities and Traditional Expectations Among White, Middle Class, Heterosexual College Women." A Journal of Research, 35(July 1996) 3.

¹⁰Catalyst Research Firm is a nonprofit research and advisory organization working to advance women in business and Professions.

¹¹ United States Department of Labor, Press Release, "Women in the Labor Force: A Databook" USDL 05-849, May 13 2005.

there were no women CEOs at the helm of Fortune 500 companies, whereas today (January 2002) there were six.¹² It would be difficult to make a case about progress of any kind if facts about the current standings were not presented. The following figures categorize women's progress in the business world by representation in these areas: executive level positions, board positions, and education.

Executive-Level Positions

In a recent census reported by Catalyst, one hundred ninety-one women held high-ranking, corporate-office positions, which are 7.9 percent of the 2,412 individuals with titles of Chairman, Chief Executive Officer (CEO), President, Chief Operations Officer (COO), Senior Executive Vice President (SEVP), and Executive Vice President (EVP).¹³ "Although companies are seeing progress, the growth for women in leadership positions is slow. Therefore, executive positions such as CEO, CFO, and COO continue to be filled by men."¹⁴ In fact, in the Fortune 500

¹²"Catalyst Celebrates 40th Anniversary and Releases Latest Measure of Women on Corporate Boards." *Perspectus*, January 2002.

¹³Catalyst 2002, Catalyst Census of Women Corporate Officers and Top Earners.

¹⁴Jessica Guynn, "Count These Women in the Executive Suite," *Contra Costa Times*, December 12, 2004.

corporations, ninety-five percent of the top earning corporate officers are men, compared to five percent of female top earners.¹⁵

On the other hand, more than half of all Fortune 500 companies have more than one woman in their top executive ranks. Women also hold a small but growing percentage of "line" positions, those with profit-and-loss responsibilities and with a direct shot at the chief executive's chair. Still, the highest-paid female corporate officers make only 68 cents for every dollar their male counterparts earn, while women in the labor force overall make about 77 cents on the male-earned dollar. Those statistics, both disheartening and grim, come from the third annual survey of the nation's top corporate female talent released by Catalyst. The report shows women progressing but at glacial speed, particularly when it comes to pay. Whether in staff jobs such as marketing and human resources or more lucrative line positions, male executives out-earn their female counterparts.¹⁶

¹⁵ "The Fortune 500 is a ranking of the top 500 United States corporations as measured by gross revenue. The list is compiled and published annually by *Fortune* magazine." <http://www.answers.com/fortune>. (accessed July 8, 2005).

¹⁶Catalyst 2002, Catalyst Census of Women Corporate Officers and Top Earners.

Among corporate officers overall, however, women are gaining ground -- from 10.6 to 11.2 percent in a year's time. "Holding managers accountable for attracting, developing, and retaining female talent is one key to improving the numbers", says Gayle Holmes, President and CEO of Mentttium Cos. and according to Sheila Wellington, President of Catalyst Research Firm, "there has to be a comprehensive initiative sustained over time. There isn't any quick fix."¹⁷

According to a study by Matt Huffman, titled *Gender Inequality Across Local Wage Hierarchies*,¹⁸ "the power` is male dominated in higher paying jobs." That does not necessarily mean male domination determines what will happen in a corporation, but it does mean male domination is present in high-paying jobs.¹⁹ The reality is that only eight percent top executive jobs are held by women in Fortune 500 Corporations.

¹⁷Amy Gage. "Corporate Survey Finds, At All Levels, Men Out-Earn Women," Knight Ridder/Tribune Business News, Nov 9, 1998.

¹⁸Matt L. Huffman, "Gender Inequality Across Local Wages Hierarchies," *Work and Occupations*. 31 (August 2004); 325.

¹⁹Ibid.

Board Positions

Women hold 13.6 percent of board seats in the Fortune 500 in 2003, up slightly from 9.6 percent in 1995.²⁰ Women's ability to direct the workforce while creating a comfortable environment for employees is a sought-after skill that corporate leaders are using to help balance the boardroom.²¹ However, in 1962 less than fifty women served on Fortune 500 corporate boards. In 2002, 833 women (12.4 percent) served on Fortune 500 corporate boards, and as recently as 2003, corporate boards contained 13.6 percent women.²² Although the percentage has increased, "Women have not made much of a dent into the virtually all-male corporate boardroom," said Julie Hembrock Daum, executive director of Corporate Board Resource, a service of Catalyst. "The significant increase in the numbers of women in the pipelines for senior leadership positions over the last decade leads us to expect a larger representation of women on boards. However, the fact remains that nothing much has changed at the top."²³

²⁰Catalyst 2002, Catalyst Census of Women Board Directors.

²¹Ibid.

²²"Catalyst Celebrates 40th Anniversary and Releases Latest Measure of Women on Corporate Boards," *Perspectus*, January 2002 1.

²³Stephen Lilly. "Lonely at The Top," *Business First-Columbus*, November 8, 1993 10 6.

On the other hand, inequality seems to be less pronounced. There have been more women leaders, and, at work, women have more of a chance to move up the corporate ladder. Perhaps one of the lingering problems that still exists for women in executive positions is people's perception of successful women brought on by misleading headlines.²⁴ "Women can Shatter Job "Barriers", was a headline in USA Today Magazine. The article reveals men make up more than half the workforce that continues to impose barriers and organizational bias keeping women from approaching or entering top positions.²⁵ "Women Make Progress," but the article clearly states, "it is a man's world out there."²⁶ Because of confusing data, some believe there is no more work to be done on executive placement for women in corporate America.²⁷

Education

By 2012, women are projected to earn 57.6% of all advanced degrees in the United States.²⁸ Educational

²⁴Anthea De Lima and Sofianni Subki, "Seeking a Sexual Equation," *New Straits Times*, June 2003.

²⁵Terri Scandura, "Women can Shatter Job Barriers," *USA Today Magazine*, May 1994, 1.

²⁶Ibid.

²⁷Ibid. 3-4.

²⁸Catalyst. Facts About Working Women. NCES, 2002, Advanced degrees refers to Master's First-Professional, and Doctoral degrees.

attainment for females of all races has risen dramatically. Women constitute the majority of individuals who earn bachelors and master's degrees in the United States and many other countries as well. However, an area of concern for corporate leaders is that the number of female students enrolling in post-doctorate studies is declining.²⁹ Because of this decline, corporations may be limited in their ability to hire women for management and executive positions when recruiting the best talent. Improvements and progress do not come without some difficulties; business schools are taking the plunge and struggling to attract more females, where women make up 36 percent of the MBA students, versus 47 percent medical students and 49 percent law students.³⁰ According to Judy Rodin, President of the University of Pennsylvania, "students see how hard young women work, which creates an uncertainty for them in that they do not want the stress and everything that comes with being 'strung out.'" ³¹ Female graduates now roughly parallel their male counterparts in disciplines such as biology and mathematics (with the exception of applied

²⁹Patricia Sellers. "Power: Do Women Really Want It?", *Fortune Magazine*, October 13, 2003, 96.

³⁰Ibid.

³¹Ibid.

mathematics) and mathematical statistics.³² Academics and education have become very competitive, forcing women to work harder and to make more sacrifices than most are not willing to make, according to Shirley Tilgham, President of Princeton University.³³

The Media

One should not underestimate the power of the media, particularly the press. Researchers have found that newspapers have more influence on both sexes than do television and radio.³⁴ Headlines determine what is read and headlines set the tone for how the reader may react to a story. Four major daily newspapers define what we call news: "*The New York Times, The Washington Post, The Wall Street Journal* and the *Los Angeles Times* all come to terms with setting the headlines referred to as agenda setting."³⁵ "Agenda setting describes a powerful influence of the media, with the ability to tell us what issues are important. For example, the media can take any topic and determine its relevance regardless of the level of

³²Ibid.

³³Ibid.

³⁴ Barbara Bate and Judy Bowker. *Communication and the Sexes*. (Prospect Heights, Ill.), Waveland Press., (1997), p 327.

³⁵Michael Krantz, *MEDIAWEEK*, April 25, 1994 p22(8) *Still Setting America's Agenda*.

importance the reader places on it prior to reading the article."³⁶

Bold, selectively optimistic headlines assure readers that women are progressing at the executive level with few significant obstacles. Media in general help determine an individual's feelings and opinions about certain topics, but researchers show that newspapers have a more direct effect on people than does television because printed material reveals details about topics that over time create a loyal, dedicated audience.³⁷ Progress for women in the workforce exists, and women are making advancements, but it is undeniable that women are treated differently both at work and in the home than are men. Newspaper headlines reporting women's progress in executive roles should not suggest parity between gender roles in corporate America.

The following historical "headlines" about career women made history due to reasons other than corporate industry or accepted business practices. Family fortunes and inheritance, combined with difficult financial times forcing hard and fast decisions, or the fortunate luck of

³⁶ Dominic A. Infante and Andrew S. Rancer and Deanna F. Womack. *Building Communication Theory*. (Prospect Height, Ill.) , Waveland Press, Inc., (2003). 271.

³⁷ Barbara Bate and Judy Bowker. *Communication and the Sexes*. (Prospect Heights, Ill.), Waveland Press., (1997), p 327.

being next-of-kin are documented reason that gave these women their jump-start in their careers rather than the decisions made at the executive level in corporate America. Looking back through time, some of women's successes that made the "headlines" and captured our attention were life-defining moments for women and America in general:

1740: "Eliza Lucas Pinckney Begins Managing Her Father's Plantation." This revolutionary idea that a father had the confidence in his daughter to manage five thousand acres and run the family business showed documented progress for women.³⁸

1879: "The First Woman Practices before the US Supreme Court." Belva Lockwood did not take no for an answer when first denied permission to plead a case, which was turned around by a congressional decisions that allowed women to practice law before the highest courts in the land.³⁹

1929: "Women Inspectors in an Elizabethton Tennessee Textile Factory Go on Strike." A story in Appalachia that changed women's lives for the good because they banded together to protest low wages and formed a local union of the United Textile Workers.⁴⁰

1984: "Geraldine Ferraro Accepts the Nomination as the Democratic Party's Vice-Presidential Candidate." Despite a myth⁴¹ that woman can have it all, by Ms. Ferraro rose to the top and lived what most women will only dream of... a chance at the presidency of the United States.⁴²

³⁸Christine Lunardini, *What Every American Should Know About Women's History*, (Holbrook Mass.), Adams Media Corp. (1997), 8.

³⁹Ibid. 107.

⁴⁰Ibid. 220.

⁴¹Lisa Belkin. *The New York Times Magazine*, October 2003.

⁴²Ibid. 354.

The success of these women and most of the women mentioned in Lunardini's book are based on personal accomplishments and opportunistic timing rather than career opportunities for corporate women. The good news is that their historical accomplishments helped build a strong foundation for future businesswomen.

Chapter Summary

A study released in November 2002 by Catalyst found that women holding "clout" titles (titles having influence and authority in a corporation) increased from 7.3 percent in 2000 to 9.9 percent this year".⁴³ According to Catalyst's "2002 Census of Women, Corporate Officers and Top Earners," women currently represent 15.7 percent of corporate officers in corporate America's 500 largest companies, up from 12.5 percent in 2000 and 8.7 percent in 1995, when Catalyst began counting.⁴⁴ From the most recent study disclosed in the Catalyst 2003 Census of Women Board Directors, Corporate Officers, and Top Earners, 8 percent of the CEOs are women, 5.2 percent are top earners, 7.9

⁴³PR Newswire, "Catalyst Census Marks Gains in Numbers of Women Corporate Officers in America's Largest 500 Companies," 19 November, 2002

⁴⁴Ibid.

percent hold highest title positions, and 13.6 percent fill board positions.⁴⁵

Women are advancing to the top in executive positions even though there are areas that pose a challenge, such as job security and salaries. Women are progressing, but men still dominate the earnings race, which makes women easy targets during downsizing and corporate restructure. "In down economies women have generally been hit harder than their male counterparts in the workplace, but in the Catalyst Census, we find the numbers of women at the top are slowly increasing," said Sheila Wellington, President of Catalyst.

Although women are moving up, men still dominate the earnings race. Almost 95 percent of the top earning corporate officers are men compared to only 5.2 percent of women top earners in the Fortune 500.⁴⁶

When referring to placement of women in board and executive positions within the Fortune 500 Companies, Sheila Wellington, President of Catalyst, has this to say about women's progress, "I am always impressed by the sixty companies where 25% or more of their corporate officers are women and am pleased with the 429 companies who have at

⁴⁵Catalyst 2002, Catalyst Census of Women Corporate Officers and Top Earners.

⁴⁶PR Newswire, "Catalyst Census Marks Gains in Numbers of Women Corporate Officers in America's Largest 500 Companies," 19 November 2002.

least one woman corporate officer and the 333 who have more than two along with the companies who have recognized the value and competitive advantage to having women as part of the executive team. . . . But what continues to amaze me are the seventy-one companies, who in the 21st century still have no women in their corporate officer ranks."⁴⁷

Furthermore, for every corporation that promotes equal opportunity, recognizes qualifications, and rewards leadership talent and skill in compensation, many corporations still refuse to change and appoint female leaders over males.⁴⁸

Factors that inhibit parity in the workplace include the male corporate culture of employers, a collective lack of line management experience, and stereotypes about the perceived level of women's career commitment. Financial Women's Association (FWA) President Lenore Albom said, "These results make it clear there's still work to be done. We can take pride in the fact today there are more female chief financial officers than ever before."⁴⁹ But in other

⁴⁷Ibid.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ Financial Women's Association of New York, <http://www.fwa.org>. FWA was created for women not accepted into the workingman's sector, and forced to create their own association. The FWA was created when the Young Men's Investment Club on Wall Street did not see the need for women to join their organization in 1956. Eight eager, power-hungry

areas, like equal representation on corporate boards, we still have far to go."⁵⁰ This statement provides encouragement that business is taking steps in the right direction for women in corporate America while still acknowledging inherent problems in the system.

Male-defined systems are not only operative in the boardroom but in the home and social arena as well. As long as the male-defined systems are dominant and accepted, it will be an upward challenge to make a paradigm shift for women in both the office and the home.⁵¹ Marie Wilson, director of the Ms. Foundation for Woman and President of the White House Project, claims, "the woman's movement was largely about grabbing a fair share of power, making equal money, standing at the helm in the macho realms of business and government and law. It was about 'running the world.' We thought there would be a woman president by now. . . . We expected women would be leading half the companies in this country, there would be parity on boards."⁵² Instead,

women created a league of their own and called it the Financial Women's Association. (accessed Jan 14, 2005).

⁵⁰ Bernice Kanner. Knight Ridder Tribune News Service. "U.S. Corporate Women Say Glass Ceiling Still in Place." 26 March 1999.

⁵¹ Lisa Belkin, "The Opt-Out Revolution," *The New York Times Magazine*. 26 October 2003, 47.

⁵²Ibid. 44.

Wilson comments the reality shows "how far women have not come."⁵³

There is an abundance of educated, intelligent, career-oriented females eagerly waiting to fill executive positions. By 2010, the number of women in the United States labor force will have increased by almost 10 million, a growth rate almost one-third higher than that for men. However, despite the growth of women in the workforce, women continue to hold a very small portion of the leadership positions in business.⁵⁴ Women have saturated the labor force in both white-collar and blue-collar jobs, women in general are strong in the labor market, and women are well educated and able to take on leadership roles in organizations. However, the truth is not enough women are in leadership, executive roles. Women do the work, put in the hours, and commit themselves to their career with little or no realization of their goals in terms of executive positions. Women are convinced there is no goal is too small, no challenge too great to keep them from achieving corporate success, raising a family, and balancing life with a strong conviction they can "have

⁵³Ibid.

⁵⁴Catalyst. Facts About Working Women. NCES, 2002 (advanced degrees refers to Master's First- Professional, and Doctoral degrees.)

it all." "Having it all," suggests women are successfully balancing relationships, families, careers, community status, and professional achievements. Women can "have it all" as long as they realize they may not be able to *have it all* on a consistent basis throughout their lives, and that at any time one of the goals may take priority over another, and so on. Unlike the media headlines that suggest the notion women are making progress, clearly noted throughout this these, not only owe women, but the public in general, a more accurate picture of women's struggle for balance and equality in the business world relating to executive positions.

CHAPTER 3

BARRIERS FOR WOMEN IN THE PRIVATE, DOMESTIC SPHERE

Women are not "running the world" and do not "have it all" for a variety of reasons, some of which are out of their control, such as politically, male-driven societal "norms." However, women also have opted out of potentially lucrative careers because of reasons that are within their control and power, among them choosing motherhood, personal interests, and self-identified goals over work in the corporate world. Women should understand, though, that they risk losing ground in the corporate arena when they opt out because they more than likely will find it difficult to re-enter the work force in the same position or status they were in when they left. Women re-entering the workforce are forced to hang on with both hands for fear of falling back to the bottom, regardless of their education, background, and experience. Quitting can mean women give up not only current salary but also the increased income that would have come with promotions and raises.¹ They may even sacrifice retirement benefits,

¹ Rachel l. Jones. Working at Motherhood : "Many Women Choosing to Stay Home With Kids". *Los Angeles Daily News* (Los Angeles, ca), Knight/Ridder Tribune News Wire, 12 May 1996.

otherwise referred to as the "Mommy Tax."² The "Mommy Tax" is what women pay to attempt to have it all.....a career, a family, and a social life that should balance out, but in most cases does not. The Mommy Tax is another way of penalizing women for striving to do better. Nevertheless, it is hard work with incremental rewards, both monetary and self-indulging that most women all too often quit or opt out.³ Jane Waldfoel, with Columbia University found:

"the wage gap for women without children is small, earning 90 percent of what men earn per hour. Mothers earn only 73 percent of what men earn, even controlling for occupation, experience, and education. A first child lowers a women's earnings by 7.5 percent while a second child lowers her earnings by another 8 percent."⁴

With such a tenuous hold on a successful career, women especially are affected by the following barriers, all of which originate in the home and private sphere: the demands of family life, including the often disproportionate burden of childcare and household duties; guilt over leaving the private sphere for the public; the struggle against traditional societal expectations for women; and early self-identification that discourages

² Jennifer C. Braceras, "Oh, Mom, Poor Mom," *New York Times News, Women's Quarterly*, 22 June 2001.

³ Karen Kornbluh, "The Mommy Tax," *The Washington Post*, printed in *New America Foundation*. 5 January 2001.

⁴ Ibid.

competition.

The barriers that not only keep women from entering the workplace but also from obtaining key executive positions most often originate in the domestic arena. Unfortunately, women cannot move ahead as freely as they would like because of barriers such as childcare duties, parental care, and other related domestic obligations.^{5 6} These barriers not only may keep women from ever entering the executive world but also perhaps will slow them down or force them out all together because of the difficulty of having a career and raising a family. Mary Lyon, a former radio and television reporter, tells Carol Bidwell in *News Bylines*, "Mothers have to be almost an air traffic controller. There are no sick days, no paid overtime, no days off, no vacation. Even when you're asleep, you're on duty."⁷ This statement sends a strong message about barriers that are keeping mothers from being able to look for work outside the home. "The talk of this new decade is less about the obstacles faced by women than it is about the obstacles faced by mothers," writes Joan C. Williams in the

⁵ Emily W. Kane, and Laura Sanchez, "Family Status and Criticism of Gender Equality at Home and at Work." *Social Forces*, June 1994.

⁶ Patricia Sellers. *Fortune Magazine*, October 13, 2003, 88.

⁷ Carol Bidwell, "Working, Motherhood Can Co-Exist," *Daily News* (Los Angeles), 10 May 1998.

Harvard Women's Law Journal. "Many women never get to the workplace let alone near the glass ceiling because they are stopped long before by the maternal wall."⁸

According to Lesley and David Novack in their article *Being Female in the Eighties and Nineties: Conflicts Between New Opportunities and Traditional Expectations Among White, Middle Class, Heterosexual College Women*, "we are seeing increasingly more mothers of young children entering the labor force and the number of working mothers whose children have not yet reached their first birthday is virtually surging."⁹ The Novacks cite S.A. Basow, author of *Gender Stereotypes and Roles*, who predicts nine out of ten women will be employed in paying jobs at some point in their lives.¹⁰ Possibly even more revealing of the vast differences, historically, between the American families from the early 1900s to the present is the finding that even by 1989 the traditional family unit recognizing the wage-earning as the father and the mother as homemaker, existed in less than seven percent of

⁸ Belkin, "The Opt-Out Revolution," October 26, 2003, 6.

⁹ Lesley Lazin Novack, and David R. Novack, "Being Female in the Eighties and Nineties: Conflicts Between New Opportunities and Traditional Expectations Among White, Middle Class, Heterosexual College Women." *Sex Roles A Journal of Research*, 35 (July 1996); 3.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

American families.¹¹ How ironic then that the workplace is designed primarily for individuals without home-related responsibilities.¹²

In the *New York Times News* article "Oh, Mom, Poor Mom," Jennifer Braceras relies heavily on the work of Ann Crittenden, an author and former reporter for the *New York Times* who attempts to quantify the costs of child rearing. In her book *The Price of Motherhood: Why the Most Important Job in the World Is Still the Least Valued*, Crittenden argues, "the decision to become a mother is not only a career-buster, but is also the worst possible economic choice for a woman."¹³ Braceras quotes Crittenden: "'Mothers, particularly well-educated women with high earning capacities, pay the 'Mommy Tax' in the form of slowed career advancement and lost earnings.'" According to Crittenden's calculations, the typical female college graduate forfeits one million dollars in lifetime earnings if she has a child."¹⁴ The decision for women to work or not to work is more than a personal decision: it becomes a personal challenge that some women simply cannot meet.

¹¹ Ibid

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Braceras, "Oh, Mom, Poor Mom," 22 June 2001.

¹⁴ Ibid.

According to, "So Where Are the Corporate Husbands," executive moms "generally do not get the support it takes"¹⁵ to be a corporate leader and mother too. The article "Oh Mom, Poor Mom" represents media's attempt to report on how hard it is to work and raise a family, but the article gives few answers as to how women can accept the many sacrifices they are asked to make for their families and still get ahead in corporate America.

Another barrier encountered by women seeking to enter the workforce is the lack of practical household and childrearing help from a spouse. The responsibilities of motherhood, together with family and domestic duties, are considered equivalent to a fulltime job that requires a decisive and ongoing commitment. Scott Coltrane, author of *Family Man*, claims, "our culture holds unrealistically high expectations that mothers will sacrifice their own needs for their children. To speak of mothering implies ongoing care and nurturing for children. Fathering, on the other hand, has typically implied an initial sex act and the financial obligation to pay."¹⁶

While the burden of caretaking in the twentieth

¹⁵ Mary Williams Walsh, "So Where Are the Corporate Husbands?" *New York Times*, June 24, 2001, Sec 3.

¹⁶ Scott Coltrane, *Family Man* (New York: Oxford Press, 1996.), 4.

century often rests mainly on the mother, decision-making in families has changed over time from a predominantly male function to a predominantly female one because of a changing economy that forces many families to maintain a two-income household. With that change, men privileged themselves to take on a different role by differentiating between manly duties and domestic duties.¹⁷ Crittendon claims, "Although women are encouraged to go to college and pursue their careers as never before, they are still held accountable for what was once called 'women's work.'" ¹⁸ Susan Faludi, author of *Backlash; The Undeclared War Against American Women*, reinforces this claim: "women complain about a lack of economic, not marital, opportunities; they protest that working men, not working women, fail to spend time in the nursery and the kitchen."¹⁹ Furthermore, according to The Roper Center for Public Opinion Research, survey analysts find that men's opposition to equality is "a major cause of resentment and stress" and "a major irritant for most women today."²⁰ In

¹⁷ Ibid., 23.

¹⁸ Braceras, "Oh, Mom, Poor Mom," 22 June 2001.

¹⁹ Susan Faludi, *Backlash: The Undeclared War Against American Women* (New York: Double Day 1991), xv-xvi.

²⁰ The Roper Center for Public Opinion Research located at the University of Connecticut, Storrs. The Roper Center does not conduct surveys, it is an archive that preserves the data from polls conducted

further support, Faludi cites the 1990 Virginia Slims Poll that reveals the refusal of their men to shoulder childcare and domestic duties was one of women's most important concerns, second only to lack of money.²¹ According to Faludi, "Many consider it appropriate for women to enter the workforce as long as they continue to provide domestic labor as well. As long as women continue to carry the burden of housework and childrearing, and as long as men are not forced to abandon their role as the 'bread winner,' men approve of women working outside the home."²² Men support and tolerate women's presence in the workforce. Men enjoy the additional income of a two-paycheck family as long as work outside the home does not require men to assist with domestic chores and allows them to carry on with their career. Until a paradigm shift takes place and the burden of family rests equally on both parents' shoulders, women will continue to sacrifice career for

by many leading survey research organizations for the use of researchers, students, and journalists. The Roper Center is sometimes confused with Roper Public Affairs, a major commercial polling firm, and with the Center for Survey Research and Analysis at the University of Connecticut. These organizations have historical connections to the Roper Center through Elmo Roper, who founded the Center, and Everett Ladd, who brought the Center to UConn and directed it for many years, but they are completely independent of the Roper Center. <http://www.ropercenter.uconn.edu/> (Accessed August 2, 2005).

²¹ Faludi, *Backlash: The Undeclared War Against American Women*, xv-xvi.

²² Emily W. Kane., and Laura Sanchez, "Family Status and Criticism of Gender Equality at Home and at Work." *Social Forces*, June 1994.

family. In order for parity to take place in the boardroom, parity must take place in the home.²³

Kane and Sanchez claim in their 1994 article in *Social Forces*, "men do accept women's labor-force participation more readily than domestic equality and women are more willing to criticize gender inequality at work. The complex and reciprocal links between these sites of gender inequality in the home and at work mean that real equality cannot occur in only one sphere."²⁴ This is where the "rubber meets the road"; until this way of thinking changes or at most improves, women's challenges as executives in the workplace will remain formidable because of the preconceived notion that women's work in the workplace should mirror women's work at home. Women cannot expect to gain access and opportunity to the gateways of executive power if their domestic responsibilities overshadow their executive qualifications.

Domestic inequality plays an important role in maintaining gender stratification in the domestic area of labor and threatens men's gender interests in the workplace. Because of the complex interconnection of gender

²³ Belkin, "The Opt-Out Revolution," October 26, 2003, 6.

²⁴ Kane, Sanchez. *Social Forces*, June 1994.

equality in the home and workplace, discouragement and criticism of gender equality create tension between men and women. Changing roles in the workplace seem more palatable to both women and men than do changing roles in the home.²⁵ In the home, women continue to provide the bulk of the childcare and other domestic related chores. Fuchs states, "I can't believe so little has changed when so much has."²⁶ A common theme in both public and private spheres.

Feelings of guilt can also act as a barrier to entering the workforce. Betty Walter, a mother of two, says women of her generation are feeling less and less defensive about their choice to be moms: "Having it all means making trade-offs, and I really don't think there's been a lot of honesty about that," says Walter, who quit her job as a project manager for the Environmental Protection Agency when son John was born in 1991.²⁷ The headline that introduces her story, "Working at Motherhood: Many Women Choosing to Stay Home with Kids," says it all.²⁸ While the media may attempt to report on women's progress

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Victor R. Fuchs. *Women's Quest for Economic Equality*. Cambridge, Massachusetts, London, England: Harvard University Press 1988. 2.

²⁷ Rachel I. Jones, "Working at Motherhood: Many Women Choosing to Stay Home With Kids," Knight-Ridder/Tribune News Service, *Daily News* (Los Angeles, CA), 12 May 1996.

²⁸ Ibid.

both in the home and at work, Betty reveals that what is really happening may not be reported as accurately as it needs to be. Walter says, "'realistically, you can't have it all.' . . . 'I think you can have a little bit of a lot of things in life, but if somebody else is taking care of your child, they're having part of what you should be experiencing.'"²⁹ Thus, headlines that claim, "More Women Are Filling Executive Positions,"³⁰ fail to address the mitigating factors or tell the whole story.

Another significant barrier for women entering the work world is societal insistence on women's adhering to traditional roles. According to David and Lesley Novak, co-authors of *Being Female in the Eighties and Nineties: Conflicts Between New Opportunities and Traditional Expectations Among White, Middle Class, Heterosexual College Women*,

There are indications that females are presented with conflicting images that nurture new career-related expectations while simultaneously stressing traditional expressions of femininity, especially marriage and motherhood. 'Home is woman's world, as well as her empire.' Man lives more in society. The busy marts of trade, the bustling exchange, the

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ John Holusha, "More Women are Filling Executive Positions," *The New York Times*, February 16, 1997.

activity of artisan life, are his spheres. They call forth his energies, and occupy his thoughts.³¹

"The sphere of women is the home, and the social circle, with a mission to mould character, fashion herself and others after the model character of Christ."³² While this thesis is not examining the spiritual resemblance between Christ and women, it does attempt to point out that some may see women as nurturing, compassionate, and perhaps too soft for the corporate arena as suggested in the study previously mentioned by the Novaks.

A recent study examining work attitudes of boys and girls in middle and high schools in the United States suggests that traditional societal gender roles have not drastically changed. Ninety-seven percent of girls surveyed expect to work to help support their families, but only ten percent plan a business career. Two-thirds of the girls ranked helping others in their career as "extremely or very important," and only half-ranked making money as a top priority, which could relate to the drop in women getting MBAs and shying away from the stress of hard work in the

³¹ Lesley Lazin Novack, and David R. Novack, "Being Female in the Eighties and Nineties: Conflicts Between New Opportunities and Traditional Expectations Among White, Middle Class, Heterosexual College Women." *Sex Roles A Journal of Research*, 35 (July 1996) 3.

³² Ibid.

business world.³³ The study suggests and supports the notion that women are nurturing, whereas results for boys in the same study indicated the reverse. These findings intimate that the girls in the study, and their peers in general, have a perception that they cannot help others as much in business as they can with family and domestic chores. "When motherhood, child-tending, and household chores become a socioeconomic and cultural ideal that excludes the performance of income-producing work, it in turn becomes a male concern that reflects male interests. The choice to be a mother or not and the hope that a girl child will have the same promise and success as a boy are determined by considerations that are male defined."³⁴

The gradual changes in the role of women in society, indicate underlying attitudes are being modified.³⁵ For instance, in a study conducted by Mott in 1968, one-third of women in their twenties believed that mothers of pre-school children should stay home; a comparable study in 1978 revealed that only 6% held this view.³⁶ Thus, the option of whether a female works outside the home may be a

³³ Lisa Belkin, *The New York Times Magazine*.

³⁴ Susan Brown-Miller, *Femininity*, (New York), Linden Press, (1984), 223.

³⁵ Novack, Novack, *Sex Roles A Journal of Research*, 35 (July 1996) 3.

³⁶ *Ibid.* 3.

luxury that most families can ill afford. However, it may also be that many working women come to realize that employment often serves non-monetary functions such as the role of buffer against psychological stressors and as a means of satisfaction through work-related accomplishments, when motherhood fails to offer such rewards.³⁷

Men, however, cannot take the entire burden of blame for the lack of female representation at the top. Just as men are more comfortable conducting business with one another, so are women. Astrid Pieron, the first female partner with Arthur Andersen and Co. says, "Women have to network more with men than with women, and they have to get into the networks of men or they are not going to get into the networks of power."³⁸ Most women leave firms because of their own perceptions of barriers, not because there are "barriers."³⁹ Thinking back to "having it all," "running the world," and "taking control," for many women these statements will remain unspoken words because sadly enough women may be guilty of fabricating their own "boogie man" when it comes to advancing and excelling in executive

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ Bodil Jones. "It's a (Wo)Man's World." *Management Review* (July 1996):52.

³⁹ Ibid.

roles. Women may be their own worst enemies, keeping themselves from excelling and achieving the next level in an organization. Lack of self-identification and self-confidence could be just as harmful to women as their male counterparts are.

Women proactively can tear down barriers by encouraging men and women to learn more about each other. "There are areas of 'culture clash' between men and women at work. Understanding these makes it easier for us to cooperate and to manage the other gender. Neither way is better than another, each one is simply different," according to Masreliez-Steen, founder and president of the Kontura Group, a Stockholm-based consulting organization and a regular speaker at Management Centre Europe.⁴⁰ Self-identification may go hand-in-hand with the self-confidence and the extra work on women's behalf to move ahead in a patriarchal environment. "Some reasons for low self-esteem are race, economics, social class, and gender is also only very modestly related to self-esteem. Females on average have slightly lower self-esteem than males, the gap being widest in the late teens. The many explanations that have been advanced for females' lower self-esteem therefore seem

⁴⁰ Ibid.

to over-explain the difference."⁴¹

Studies show that competition levels in men and women are different. Success in business is much like success in athletics and other competitive arenas in life. A good illustration from the *American Society for Training and Development*, cited by Eva Kaplan-Leiserson, is based on just one of many economic studies that illustrate competition between genders:

A study at the University of Chicago where boys and girls run races alone and together. When the children ran alone, they had similar speeds. But when a boy was paired together with a girl, he ran significantly faster than when he ran alone. However, the girl showed no increase in speed.⁴²

Another study conducted by an economist at the University of Minnesota paid Israeli students money for completing mazes. When the students were all paid per maze, men and women did equally well. But when only the top performer was paid, male performance increased by 50 percent, while female performance remained the same.⁴³

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² Eva Kaplan-Leiserson, "Why Women Don't Rule: Men Still Far Outnumber Women in Corporate Management and Executive Positions," *American Society for Training and Development*, 57 (April 2003): 2.

⁴³ Ibid.

These studies concluded that because women are much less responsive to competition than are men, women might suffer in competing for jobs and securing promotions in competitive job markets.⁴⁴ In the defense of corporate America, there are times when the job market is willing to advance females, but they (females) do not make good self-identifiers; therefore, women might be their own worst enemies. Women holding women back is a realistic barrier for women advancing in the corporate world. This is mentioned for the mere fact that it is a barrier, not one this paper will focus on, but worth mentioning as a contributing factor to women's success in corporate America.

Well into the twentieth century of high-tech, fast-paced, lifestyles, one would think that the work/life equation already would have been solved. But it has not, which is why choices are being made in the home and at work to help husbands and wives justify their decisions to have a two-income family, while sharing the domestic load and supporting each other's careers. Straight from the headline, *What Women Want: Smart Companies Know That Helping Employees Balance Homelife and Work life Pays*

⁴⁴ Ibid.

Handsome Dividends,⁴⁵ provides some very realistic solutions for families trying to adapt to the changing job market in hopes of keeping skilled, educated women not only in the work force, but in the executive positions they worked so hard to achieve. According to Betty Spence, President of National Association of Female Executives (NAFE), "just having high-ranking women is not enough. Titles with revenue generating responsibility are what top companies are looking for."⁴⁶

Trying to separate the private, public sphere equation is far more difficult than most mathematical equations. All too often women may find themselves balancing the private and public spheres of her life until the scales tip and the balancing act between career and home knock her from the pivotal point, forcing her to make a decision between private or public, which proves to be no easy task.

⁴⁵ Kenna Simmons, "What Women Want: Smart Companies Know That Helping Employees Balance Homelife and Worklife Pays Handsome Dividends," *Best Companies for Women* (December 2002): 16.

⁴⁶ Ibid.

CHAPTER 4

BARRIERS FOR WOMEN IN THE PUBLIC SPHERE

Women are making a difference in the business world in which they are recognized for their many talents. Women are capable of adapting to challenging situations that allow them to be flexible yet effective in their jobs.¹ It goes without saying that women are succeeding side-by-side with their male counterparts in the business world but yet continue to struggle with important issues in order to maintain the balance required to keep life somewhat orderly.² This chapter examines some of the barriers in the private sector. Barriers such as corporate culture of employers, stereotypes about the perceived level of women's career commitment, male domination in the workforce, the glass ceiling, horizontal advancement,³ and lack of self-identity remain significant ones for women in the corporate sphere. Regardless of how many "feel good" headlines

¹ Bickley Townsend, "Room at the Top for Women," *American Demographics*, 18 (July 1996).

² Ibid.

³ Glass Ceiling. An unacknowledged discriminatory barrier that prevents women and minorities from rising to positions of power or responsibility, as within a corporation. *The American Heritage® Dictionary of the English Language*, by Houghton Mifflin, 2000. Glass Ceiling based on attitudinal or organizational bias in the work force that prevents minorities and women from advancing to leadership positions. WordNet ® 2.0, Princeton University, 2003. <http://www.Answers/glassceiling.com>. (accessed August 3, 2005).

proclaim progress, nonetheless women still face barriers for placement in executive roles. Headlines like, "Room at the Top for Women,"⁴ and "Build Sales and Boost Share by Tapping Into Women's Buying Power,"⁵ are headlines that tout progress for women, with an emphasis on attaining power and top executive positions. (only to read further in both articles that, "women are becoming visible at the top of corporate ladders, but remain few and far between in executive roles and positions of power like CEO."⁶) Pointing out the challenges that lie ahead and the societal factors that impact women's roles in the organizational hierarchy in corporations, together with identifying the media's promulgation of stereotypes and myths, should also help identify strategies for overcoming barriers in the executive workplace.

Corporate Culture and Stereotyping

Corporate America sets the standard by which corporations define programs for sales, finances, human resources, operations, and executive order. Corporate

⁴ Bickley Townsend, *American Demographics*, 18 (July 1996).

⁵ Martha Barletta, " Build Sales and Boost Share by Tapping Into Women's Buying Power," *Sales and Marketing Excellence*, February 2003, 1.

⁶ Townsend, *American Demographics*, 18 (July 1996):28.

America helps set the definition of success for business.⁷ To be employed by Corporate America is a goal that career-seeking executives strive for in terms of wages, power, and influence. Although the business community has an abundance of candidates to choose from in the talent pool, white males continue to fill positions at a much higher rate than do females overall. According to Bickley Townsend, "conditions have never been favorable for women to ascend leadership in all sectors of the U.S. economy."⁸ Businesses and institutions are heavily dominated by white males and a relatively small number of women of all races.⁹ Even though women make up nearly half the workforce, and even though women make 85 percent of consumer decisions, they still have little say in how corporations operate.¹⁰ Victor Fuchs, author of *Women's Quest for Economic Equality*, writes about various areas of inequality between women and men in business. He notes that in the labor market occupational segregation is still widespread, women are much more likely than men to work part time, and women

⁷ Offutt, *Corporate America*.

⁸ Townsend, "Room at the Top for Women," 28.

⁹ Robert J. Grossman, "Blind Investment," *HR Magazine*, (January 2005):40.

¹⁰ Knight Ridder Tribune News Service, "Walked-off Street: Time for More Women on Corporate Boards," *Philadelphia Inquirer*, December 31, 2003.

still earn much less than men for each hour of work.¹¹

A study conducted in January 2002 by Catalyst Research Firm reported that men in 1962 dominated the white-collar workforce while women stayed home.¹² According to the study, the picture looks different today: women of all types of employment - white-collar executives as well as blue-collar and industrial managers make up almost 47 percent of the United States labor force, up from 34 percent when Catalyst originally published its research. Looking at these figures, headlines like, "More Women are Filling Executive Positions,"¹³ provides encouragement to a somewhat frustrating situation. The article itself tells about the struggles for women and the belief that men in the industry think women will go away.¹⁴ So although the study previously mentioned reflects a positive note on the increase of women in the work force, it does not reflect an increase for women in executive roles in corporate America. The actual number of executive women in comparison to the trends of male dominance are difficult to correlate to the headline. The Financial Women's Association (FWA), one of

¹¹ Fuchs, *Women's Quest for Economic Equality*, 2.

¹² Catalyst Research Firm.

¹³ Holusha, *The New York Times*, February 16, 1997.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

the nation's largest organizations of senior women in business, cites an increase in programs designed to help employees manage and balance their personal and professional lives.¹⁵ Yet on key issues like career advancement, FWA saw little improvement reported in a survey where more than one thousand senior executives including men and women from the brokerage, investment, banking, and consulting businesses claimed that several factors hold women back. Bernice Kanner of Knight Ridder recognizes that:

Three out of five executives felt that simply being a woman had been a key career determinant for them. An even higher percentage felt that gender has held back other women in their business. Almost two-thirds considered the glass ceiling as firmly secure as it was three to five years ago. Although one-third of those surveyed earn more than \$200,000 annually, 12 percent said that in the last few years women have actually lost ground on equal pay for equal work, and 54 percent felt the situation had remained about the same. The pay discrepancy was felt to be most obvious in bonus and stock options, an increasingly significant part of compensation. Four out of five executives felt women are paid less in performance or incentive bonuses and stock options than are men in comparable jobs. Fifty-six percent felt that despite all the talk about gender-neutral corporate boards, invitations for women to join remained at a mere trickle.¹⁶

¹⁵ <http://www.fwa.org>. Financial Women's Association of New York, accessed Jan 14, 2005. FWA was created in 1956 for women not accepted into the Young Men's Investment Club. Eight eager, over-hungry women created a *league of their own* and called it the Financial Women's Association. (Accessed April 19, 2005).

¹⁶ Kanner, *Knight Ridder Tribune News Service*, March 26, 1999.

Kanner's article confirms the glass ceiling is firmly in place, "Goldman Sachs, the New York investment bank, makes plans to offer shares to the public. Company employees, both women and men, are oiling up their wheelbarrows in anticipation of carting off personal windfalls from the stock offering."¹⁷ Articles like this receive a lot of attention due to the slight suggestion of overall advancement in corporate positions by drawing the reader's attention to the obvious – that there is more than enough money to go around. The article acknowledges the fact that there is plenty of money to go around but fails to reveal that it is unlikely that female executives will end up with as much as their male counterparts.

According to Susan Brown-Miller, "When it comes to women's success, it has never been becoming for a woman to try hard. Sweat under the arms, a clenched jaw, an unladylike grunt, these are, the unavoidable signs of straining effort. A man may keep his nose to the grindstone, but a woman had better stop now and then to powder hers."¹⁸ Privately-owned businesses have a tendency

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Brown-Miller, *Femininity* 228.

to be behind in the wage market so that a patriarchal, male-driven culture causes corporations to fall behind in achieving wage equity for women. Many corporations have dated views of how the organizational chart is drawn, that historically did not place women in charge of corporate structure. A significant association between gender composition of executives who decide on promotions, raises in salary, and the reward levels has been cited as evidence of bias against jobs performed by woman.¹⁹ A job's worth in privately-held corporations is determined by the "powers that be," which can be rewarding for some but is no guarantee that equal positions receive equal rewards such as equal salary and benefits. The distribution of equality determined by corporate leaders allows gender bias rather than market research and the economic factors of the local job market to set equitable compensation levels for the same jobs. Privately-owned corporations are influenced by their male leaders rather than by local job markets and competitive wages.

Male Dominance

¹⁹ Matt L. Huffman, "Gender Inequality Across Local Wage Hierarchies," *Work and Occupations*. (31 August 2004):323-344.

Male domination and employer culture are barriers for women who struggle to succeed in executive roles, but these are not the only barriers for women in the work place. Research shows women are disadvantaged by their limited social networks with respect to securing employment in male-dominated jobs. Women's lack of access to male networking, both internal and external ones, inexperience, lack of time or being disadvantaged hampers upward mobility for women. Although work-related contacts may disadvantage women's attainment of job parity across the board, the effect of networking on the wage gap is likely to be strongest in high-paying jobs.²⁰ In the article, *Barriers to Women's Small-Business Success in the United States*, authors Karyn Lascocco and Joy Robinson state, "not only are women unlikely to be privy to the appropriate information networks, which tend to be segregated by gender, but they may face subtle or overt discrimination as well."²¹ Networking is an area that is difficult for women to conquer:

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Karyn A. Loscocco and Joy Robinson, "Barriers to Women's Small-Business Success in the United States," *Gender and Society* 5 (December 1991): 515.

Many professions still have a boy's club mentality and it is difficult for women to be accepted by the boys.²²

"Another reason women are behind is they're always in support of those managing the money," said Gayle Holmes, president and chief executive of the Mentttium Consulting in Bloomington, which offers mentoring and coaching services to female executives. "Until women learn to jump from staff to line jobs, they can rationalize paying us less." Catalyst president Sheila Wellington says no "single, simple" answer can explain the disparity. Women have spent less time in the executive pipeline, and they may lack men's shrewd negotiating skills, the Catalyst report suggests. "There's a belief that women don't value themselves highly enough," Wellington said.

Executive success is based on the male definition of money and power. Paul Milgrom and Sharon Oster co-authors of *Job Discrimination, Market Forces, and the Invisibility Hypothesis*,²³ write about "The Invisibility Theory", that reflects the observation that talent is not inevitably and universally recognized and that those with advantaged

²² Anthea De Lima and Sofianni Subki, "Seeking a Sexual Equation," *New Straits Times*, June 2003.

²³ Paul Milgrom and Sharon Oster, "Job Discrimination, Market Forces, and the Invisibility Hypothesis", *The Quarterly Journal of Economics*, 102 (August 1987):456.

backgrounds, men, are more likely to be recognized for their abilities than are women?. Disadvantages such as prejudice relating to misperception rather than antipathy, failure to "toot your own horn," reluctance to join clubs, and shyness that stems from culture taboos, along with limits to club memberships, all contribute to a segregation that makes some workers, mainly women, less visible to potential employers. Lack of "self identification" is one reason why women are not making gains in government. Nancy Pelosi, House Democratic leader, says women will not self-identify themselves for key positions as will their male counterparts.²⁴

"Why aren't women running the world?" The simple truth is that the access to success is not as sure and opportunities for advancement are not as lucrative for women. The challenge lies in access and the opportunity for women, going back to disadvantaged and poor networking, not in the lack of ability and desire that women want to succeed and move up to executive levels.

²⁴ Ibid.

The Glass Ceiling

The "Glass Ceiling,"²⁵ is a barrier that remains a very real obstacle for women workers in general but mainly for those who are seeking executive positions. After controlling for education, experience, abilities, motivation, and other job-relevant characteristics, there remains²⁶ a glass ceiling inequality stemming from gender or racial differences that are greater at higher levels of an outcome than at lower levels of an outcome.²⁷ In a survey of one thousand senior executives, three out of five felt that being a woman was a key career detriment and that the glass ceiling was as firmly in place as it was three to five years ago.²⁸

Some female executives insist that time and numbers will help to remove the glass ceiling. "If you're a CEO or a president, it's not an issue of not negotiating," said

²⁵ Reeve Vanneman . *Social Forces* 12/1/01 The Glass Ceiling Effect. Glass Ceiling - A specific type of gender or racial inequality that can be distinguished from other types of inequality. According to the Federal Glass Ceiling Commission (1995a;iii), the concept glass ceiling refers to "artificial barriers to the advancement of women and minorities, these barriers reflect discrimination... a deep line of demarcation between those who prosper and those left behind. The Glass Ceiling is the 'unseen, yet unreachable barrier that keeps minorities and women from rising to the upper rungs of the corporate ladder, regardless of their qualifications or achievement.'

²⁶ Reeve Vanneman, "The Glass Ceiling Effect," *Social Forces* 1 (December 2001):2.

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Kanner, Knight Ridder Tribune News Service, March 26, 1999: 2.

Kathy Gibson, vice president and corporate secretary at Honeywell. "It's going to take time and women who want to get there."²⁹ The research firm Catalyst found that twenty-six percent of women at the cusp of the most recent senior levels of management did not want the promotion. The good news is that women make up almost half of the workforce, as stated earlier. The bad news is that women still remain behind in the high-powered positions. In the United States, the number of women holding corporate officer positions at large public companies has almost doubled since 1995 up to 15.7 percent from 8.7 percent; however, women make up only five percent of all top-earning U.S. executives.³⁰ Yet despite these steady gains, women are still vastly underrepresented in upper management. Women make up 46 percent of the U.S. labor force, yet as recent studies by the research firm Catalyst show, they are only approximately 11 percent of Fortune 500 corporate officers, occupy only 671 of 6,064 Fortune 500 corporate board seats, are just 3.3 percent of corporate top earners, and receive on average 75 percent of men's salaries in

²⁹ Amy Gage. "Corporate Survey Finds, At All Levels, Men Out-Earn Women," Knight Ridder/Tribune Business News, (Nov 9, 1998).

³⁰ "The Number of Women in Corporate "Clout" Positions is up Sharply," *Corporate Board*, 22 (January 2001): 26.

upper management.³¹

Women are attaining corporate status that can make them eligible to serve on executive boards, but the supply of educated and qualified females for elite positions far outnumbers the demand. Firms that wish to demonstrate their commitment to having women directors may have to find ways to expand the supply by getting around the constraints and traditional excuses in order to accept women as solid contributors to the overall corporate goal of success.³² Women study side by side with men to achieve an education, eager to secure top positions and give one hundred and ten percent effort at work only to find that ambition and hard work does not guarantee the best positions. What starts out as work-life issues ends up becoming the deciding factor for women to stay behind or give up all together - what Pooja Kothari refers to as the "Cinderella Complex",³³ which is an unconscious desire to be taken care of by others, based primarily on a fear of being independent.

In her book, *The Cinderella Complex: Women's Hidden Fear of Independency*, Ms. Colette Dowling states her belief in a condition which she names "the

³¹ Jennifer Pozner, "One Giant Step for a Women, One Small Step for Womankind", *Investor's Business Daily*, 29 July 1999.

³² Julie Daum, "Women on Board, Women Corporate Directors," *US Chief Executive* 138 (Oct 1998):40-44.

³³ Pooja Kothari, "Why Women Can't Make it to The Top," *Financial Times* (10 September 2004): 2.

Cinderella Complex", being an intricate system of beliefs put upon women which make them feel as if they must be submissive to the wills of others, seemingly less intelligent than they truly are.³⁴

"Stop the Presses" is as much about the barriers for women as it is about the misrepresentation of how the media can easily distort the progress of women's success in Corporate America. "Women Invade Man's World,"³⁵ while a sea of women dressed for success on Wall Street, law firms, and corporate suites, others joined the military forces and blue-collar factories, which lead to a headline better suited for the occasion that should have read, " More and More Women Stuck in Secretarial Pool."³⁶ A long list of female jobs became more female-dominated, including sales clerking, cleaning services, food preparation, secretarial, administrative, and reception work. Bookkeepers who were women rose from eighty-eight to ninety-three percent between 1979 and 1986.³⁷ In few cases where working women did make substantial inroads into male enclaves, they were only admitted by default. According to a job-integration

³⁴Colette Dowling, *The Cinderella Complex: Women's Hidden Fear of Independency*. Orangville, Ontario: Summit Books. (May, 1981). Quoted by Jonathan Stopek, *The Cinderella Complex? A Response*. (accessed October 25, 2005), <http://homepages.luc.edu/~jstopek/cinder1.html>.

³⁵ Faludi, *Backlash; The Undeclared War Against American Women*, 365.

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ Ibid.

study by sociologist Barbara Reskin the dozen or so occupations where women had made the most progress entering "male" jobs, ranging from typesetting to insurance adjusters to pharmaceuticals, women succeeded only because men were bailing out. Pay, power, and prestige declined from positions like these as well as in banking; therefore, men were no longer interested and allowed women to inherit these positions.³⁸ In the higher-paying white-collar occupations, where women's successes have been most heavily publicized, the rate of progress slowed to a trickle or stopped altogether by the end of the eighties. But the droves of reports and headlines of females "careerists" crashing into medical, legal, and other elite professions were inflated between 1972 and 1988, where women increased their share of such professional jobs by only five percent.³⁹ Little progress occurred in the upper echelons of corporations.

Stop the presses with "Discrimination on the Job - Fading Fast." Corporations began to welcome women and reported a decline of sexual harassment on the job. What the readers did not see was the rise in inequality and

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ Ibid. 366.

intimidation in the workplace.⁴⁰ If newspapers, magazines, and television stations had managements that more nearly reflected the proportion of women in the general population, maybe they would have reported all the backlash trends and maybe they would have told a different story. Maybe they would have told the truth instead of selling papers and media coverage with high-profile headlines.⁴¹

So while corporate America creates hope for women with a dream and desire to advance in the careers of their dreams, the media have a different agenda altogether and that is to write about a less than truthful belief that women are gaining in executive positions. Articles by Bernice Kanner, Patricia Sellers, and Lisa Belkin clearly define the struggles women face to advance in their chosen careers, while at the same time this thesis exposes prominent news media headlines proclaiming a different story. Although private enterprise presents opportunity with and without challenges for eager, career-seeking individuals, those working to secure executive positions may not find it as easy in the private sector as in other areas such as government and academic positions.⁴² This

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ Ibid. 370.

⁴² Sellers, *Fortune Magazine*, 13 October 2003.

might indicate that it is easier for women to advance in government and education than in business. But, according to Shirley Tilgham, President of Princeton University, "slight progress for woman has taken place in positions in government, business, and academia."⁴³ "Twenty-one percent of college presidents are female, but even those gains are slowing in addition to a drop-off in the percentage of female Ph.D. candidates applying for academic positions." In the government sector, the numbers are not even that good. Women account for 14 percent of the U.S. Senate and 14 percent of the House of Representatives.⁴⁴

In 1997, female staff members in the Senate were paid 88 cents for every dollar made by their male counterparts according to the Congressional Management Foundation. The rate in 1991, 78 percent, was the lowest of the decade.⁴⁵ The private, nongovernmental sector was paying 63 cents on the dollar. For women to achieve parity, men's attitudes about power will have to change according to Judy Olian, Dean of Penn State's Smeal College of Business. "We have a long way to go before we reach parity in leadership,"

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ Cassandra Burrell, "Pay Parity Declines in Senate Staff," *AP online*, 15 November 1999.

Caroline Jacobus of Douglas college said. Sue Cobble, an associate professor with the Institute of Management and Labor Relations at Rutgers, said, "There has to be recognition of the skill and value of women's jobs. Working women need equal pay and opportunity in the work force."⁴⁶

Cassandra Burrell said of Associated Press, discussing pay parity in government, "an area where the gap has narrowed between men and women are pension plans and benefits as well as safety and working conditions for women." ⁴⁷

In summary, there are obstacles women are faced with when attempting to jockey for executive positions. A combination of corporate culture, work place parity, stereotyping, and economic factors are hurdles for women. While some women are willing to make sacrifices to assist with their personal advancement, among them limited family involvement, delaying or not having children, limited social life (barriers discussed in chapter 3 regarding the personal sphere), women are not advancing fast enough or high enough on the corporate ladder to satisfy their

⁴⁶ Kevin G. Demarrais, "At Work, The Weaker Sex," *The Record*, 18 November 1993.

⁴⁷ "Contemporary Women's Issues Database, " *1993 Handbook on Women Workers-Trends and Issues* [Part 39 of 41], 01 January 1994.

professional goals.

CHAPTER 5

MEDIA PORTRAYAL OF WOMEN'S SUCCESS

This chapter discusses media representation of women's success as executives in corporate America. Effective marketing suggests that the headline is what lures the reader to decide if reading the entire article is time worthy. "It's the headlines that sell the publication, and keep the reader reading,¹" or what generates the interest for the remainder of most articles.² The meaning conveyed by headlines in this chapter are the main reason for the document. All too often individuals may find it easier to read the headline to gain limited information than to read the entire article to gain in-depth information. The headlines depicted in this chapter are no different. They look good on the front page, they sell newspapers, journals, and books, but in most cases they do not provide encouraging information about the progress of executive women in corporate America. The fact that the media continue to promulgate the myth of job parity and even of women pushing out men in some areas of business further

¹ Headlines, <http://guide.gospelcom.net/index.php>. (Accessed October 5 2005.)

² Louis E. Boone, and David L. Kurtz, *Contemporary Marketing* (The Dryden Press; Harcourt Brace College Publishers), eighth edition.

increases a sense of insecurity and unreality for women.³

*Powerful Women, Powerful Message.*⁴ A convincing headline on women who are "slowly ascending in small numbers," to executive roles to achieve pay equity and places on corporate boards. No real secrets to success are revealed in the article, but the headline does what it is suppose to do and that is to generate interest.

*A Glass Ceiling That Can't be Missed.*⁵ Maurice Greenberg claims the corporation he works for has its fair share of women executives as he recruits men rather than women to head up global operations of American International Group (AIG). Greenberg goes on to say, "I don't make the rules, I have a responsibility to do the best for the shareholders."⁶

*More Women Are Filling Executive Positions.*⁷ A story documenting isolated success for female executers also makes it very clear that women were seriously under-represented and it may take years before women rise to the

³ Jeff Madrick, "Economic Scene," *The New York Times*, 10 June 2004, C2.

⁴ Toddi Gutner, "Powerful Women, Powerful Message", *Business Week*, 3 June 2002, 92.

⁵ Joseph B. Treaster, "A Glass Ceiling That Can't be Missed", *Money and Business*, Financial, Sunday, 5 May 2002.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ John Holusha, "More Women are Filling Executive Positions," *The New York Times*, February 16, 1997.

top, mainly because women have to work harder to market themselves than men do. Men are the chosen ones for executive roles.

*Men and Women Both Have an Eye on Top Jobs.*⁸ It is really not new news that some women aspire to be executives just as men do. But the glass is yet to be shattered according to a new study by Catalyst.⁹ Achieving a balance in work lives is more difficult for women than for men, while at the same time women still endure cultural barriers such as gender-based exclusion from networks and inhospitable corporate culture.¹⁰

*Plenty of Power; Not a Man in Sight.*¹¹ "Women make up just 12 percent of corporate officers in the Fortune 500, and you can count the number of female CEOs in those companies on two hands. This is not heartening, but there are signs of hope."¹² Find a boss who empowers, who can

⁸ Stephen Taub, "Men and Women Both Have an Eye on Top Jobs", *CFO*, 6 July 2004.

⁹ Catalyst Research Firm

¹⁰ Stephen Taub, "Men and Women Both Have an Eye on Top Jobs", *CFO*, 6 July 2004.

¹¹ Vera Titunik, "Plenty of Power; Not a Man in Sight", *Fortune*, 1 April 2002, 40.

¹² *Ibid.*

take a joke, or who will give you a second chance, and you (women) have a chance at making it to the top.¹³

*Group Strives to Increase Number of Women on Corporate Boards.*¹⁴ Women hold 10 percent of the total board seats on Fortune 1000 companies, nationally and 27.1 percent of Fortune 1000 companies have no women on their boards.¹⁵

*One Giant Step for a Women, One Small Step for Womankind.*¹⁶ The reality is while one woman takes a giant step forward; all the others face reality to small incremental, baby steps to success. "When women are as likely to be chosen as CEOs for powerful firms as men are, when women finally achieve pay equity, and when economic stories about women are not hooked to their gender before their business savvy, then we'll know the glass ceiling that holds women back has been eradicated."¹⁷

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Cindy Krischer Goodman, "Group Strives to Increase Number of Women on Corporate Boards", *The Miami Herald* (Knight Ridder/Tribune Business News), 1 December 2001.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Jennifer Pozner, "One Giant Step for a Women, One Small Step for Womankind", *Feminista! Investor's Business Daily* 29 July 1999.

¹⁷ Ibid.

*Gaining Ground: Despite Many Obstacles, Women are Succeeding in Corporate America.*¹⁸ Chances are slim for a young woman entering the corporate world to fill positions with three letter words, CEO, COO, and CFO. Gender diversity is a missing component for long-term business strategies.¹⁹

These headlines along with others mentioned throughout the thesis all have commonalities to them. First, they all tout a headline that proclaims victory. Second, the articles highlight a success, not necessarily about women's progress in executive positions, but stories about woman's success in the workforce, and third, while they all admit women are doing better in terms of achieving executive success, they all admit that progress according to the media is slow, and disheartening, poor, and slim with no signs of hope. Unfortunately, it is the headline that generates the interest for the story, and in all of the documented cases the headline was the best part of the article in terms of proclaiming women's achievements.

Thanks, but no thanks to the media for their portrayal of what journalists think about women's success in executive

¹⁸ Adam Katz-Stone, "Gaining Ground: Despite Many Obstacles, Women are Succeeding in Corporate America", *Baltimore Business Journal*, 17 September 1999, 4.

¹⁹ Ibid.

roles. Media portrayals go far beyond the headlines, when readers today base so much of what they know on what they learn through media:

We depend on the media to describe important events we have not personally witnessed. The press may not be successful much of the time in telling people what to think, but it is stunningly successful in telling its readers what to think.²⁰

This chapter is the final chapter of how newspaper media report the ebb and flow of executive success and power by printing headlines to sell papers and stories that misrepresent issues such as women's success. The portrayals of media success become interesting when the headlines portray progress about a topic that remains a struggle for women, and that is women struggle to move ahead or side-by-side in executive positions.

Women's employment in the press and broadcasting is worth special attention because of the media's central role in propagating the myths of the backlash that surfaced out of the selected news rather than all of the news. Susan Faludi, author of *Backlash; The Undeclared War Against American Women* claimed the backlash on women's rights did more than impede women's opportunities for employment, promotions, and better pay. Not only did the backlash

²⁰ Dominic A. Infante and Andrew S. Rancer and Deanna F. Womack, *Building Communication Theory*. 271-272.

inflict grievous damage to corporate women, it did so in a devious way. The press did not seem to mind as the situation of executive women fell into increasing peril in the eighties, the media issued upbeat reports assuring readers women's only problem at work was that they would rather be home.²¹

The press wanted readers to believe "Pay Gap Between the Sexes Closing!" A trendy story about women's wages reported that the gap between the average man and woman's paycheck suddenly had narrowed. In fact the gap did not narrow but widened further in 1986, putting the wage gap back to that of 1955. The press gathered a one-time wage earning from the Census Bureau with artificially inflated women's earnings by using weekly wages, which exaggerated the gross regardless of how many hours were worked in a year's time.²²

"Stop the Presses" brings the barriers for women's success in corporate America to the forefront. Barriers revealed and discussed in the thesis are ones that are difficult to remove from the executive world. The barriers in existence have strong roots and a long history that

²¹ Susan Faludi. *Backlash: The Undeclared War Against American Women*. (New York, Double Day 1991.) introduction p 363.

²² Ibid. 364.

cannot seem to be lifted or removed from the present-day corporate world. While "Stop the Presses" is not charting new territory when it comes to parity in the work force and disparity regarding equal pay for equal work, this thesis revealed how far women still have to go to achieve power, influence, and control over their own destinies, both personal and corporate.

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