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A PARADIGM FOR PREDICTING THE POSITION OF WOMEN:

POLICY IMPLICATIONS AND PROBLEMS

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I. INTRODUCTION

The female-created, media-assisted Women's Liberation Movement burst into brightness in the firmament of the contemporary scene around 1970. The United States provided much of the initial flashpoint, but soon similar luminosities had been sparked at many points around the planet. In recognition of the phenomenon, the United Nations declared 1975 to be International Women's Year. It is perhaps too soon to tell whether and to what extent the phenomenon will become a new star of major magnitude among the causes of our age. But is is not too soon to note that the increased light on the problem of sexual inequality has not always brought increased enlightenment as far as policy makers are concerned. The recent outbursts of facts and figures have resulted in large amounts of contradictory data. In fact, it is hard to tell which have been more numerous and non-concordant: the indicators of the position of women, or the remedies aimed at raising it.

How can policy makers assess the relative disadvantage and/or the relative progress of women from different countries, or from different classes and life conditions within our own country? How can they sort through the welter of well-intended plans and programs to see which are efficacious? How can they predict the impact of particular programs? It is my contention that policy makers cannot yet adequately resolve these dilemmas because two important prerequisites for a successful solution

hitherto have been lacking. Moreover, I suggest, both these prerequisites can best be provided by the social sciences.

First, we need a way to measure female status. Most importantly, I propose, the needed measure must permit comparisons of the relative equality of women vs. men; but it also should permit comparisons between women of different times, places, classes, conditions and/or countries.

Second, we need something more basic (and problematic) than merely measuring woman's relative position and progress in the sex stratification sweepstakes. This is a theory that proposes which are the crucial factors affecting her position - and consequently permits us to predict her progress given certain changes in these key variables. Ideally, such a theory would not only encompass the needed measures of woman's position, it would permit an ordering of the factors predicting it both in terms of importance and sequence. And because social science provides a logic for testing theory with real-world empirical data, the adequacy of the entire formulation can be assessed. Further, if supported by the data, even a partial theory can be useful to policy makers by providing a framework for evaluation studies of particular programs and policies.

A good illustration of why theory is needed involves the United States, and the difficulty in assessing how far women have traveled along the path to liberated equality in the country where the Women's Liberation Movement first skyrocketed into prominence. If we examine American women's recent progress,

it appears that there is good news, bad news, and what on closer inspection turns out to be no news.

The "good news/bad news" jokes always start with the good news, so let's follow suit. Here we are told of shining examples or growing numbers of women in some achievement. For example, federal "affirmative action" guidelines and changing conditions have led to a bevy of stories about "female firsts" - the handful of Jackie Robinsons of our day who have integrated selected male bastions from the Little League to West Point - and their somewhat more numerous sisters who are taking up carpentry, computers, credit cards, politics, law, medicine, and other macho mainstays. Much of this seems similar to the spirit of the cigarette slogan that tells its intended female audience just how far they've come - while characterizing them as "baby." On closer examination, much of the good news involves comparisons between the position of some group of women at two points in time or social space: e.g., in 1900, there were almost no women Xs; now look at Thelma Token and the hundreds of other tradition-breaking women who have become Xs since 1970 (substitute appropriate Xs and dates to suit).

In contrast, much of the bad news involves comparing the relative position of women vs. men over time.[1] One example which has received so little publicity that I think it deserves a somewhat detailed write-up here involves the steadily increasing economic disadvantage of U.S. women vis-a-vis men in recent years. Knudsen (1969) documented the trend from 1940-64; more

recent Census figures show it is continuing. For starters, let us examine what has been happening with full-time year-round workers. In 1955, women workers in this category earned $.64 for every $1.00 made by their male counterparts (i.e., the wages of these females were more than one-third less what the men earned). By 1970 this was down to $.59 for every $1.00. The latest government figures, for 1975, show that the ratio dipped again: full-time year-round women workers were down to $.57 for every $1.00 earned by their masculine counterparts. When we compare total money income for all men and women over 14 years of age, we find that the erosion of women's position is even steeper: in 1947, women's income stood at $.46 for every male $1.00. By 1970, Census figures show that it was down to a mere $.34 (Ehrlich, 1974:1). Of course, this last set of figures includes many more women than men who work part-time, receive Social Security, welfare or other transfer payments, or just aren't in the labor force at all, so of course we should expect female income to be a smaller proportion of male than for the full-time year-round workers compared above. But for both groups, why the growing gap in income in a time of supposedly increasing sexual equality? Clearly, the gap has been growing even as U.S. women have been entering the labor force in increasing numbers. Is this a paradox? Could the existence of the part-time, sometime, and non-working women somehow play a role? Let us tackle these questions in Part III following presentation of a preliminary theory of sex stratification.

What I term the "no news" comparisons often are written as though they indicate how emancipated women have become (for better or worse). Not only do more American women smoke and swear, but they are more likely to go in for non-marital sex, get divorced, approve of abortion, and smoke marijuana - without encountering massive guilt or condemnation. But is this progress for women or just evidence of a general loosening up of the codes of behavior in which both sexes share to greater or lesser extent according to their age and socioeconomic characteristics? Have casual sex and no-fault divorce, for example, brought greater relative benefits and status to women than men? Or is this merely another illustration of President Kennedy's dictum: a rising tide floats all the boats. In this case, the new permissiveness need not mean any reshuffling of the relative status of men vs. women, just as the rising tide of GNP growth and full employment to which Kennedy referred was expected to reduce poverty - especially among U.S. blacks - but turned out to have little impact on narrowing the basic gap between blacks and whites. In other words, a "no news" comparison is one in which women's apparently increased freedom or progress in some area turns out, on closer analysis, to be matched by a comparable change among the men of their group. Total net change in the women's relative position: zero.

We are faced with a similar problem in adding up the conflicting good news, bad news, and no news data: ascertaining the total net change experienced by women. In essence, part

of the difficulty in pinning down female status consists in deciding how to sift through and weigh the multiplicity of measures.

And when we turn to the long lists of proposed solutions to the problem of sexual inequality, we are faced by the identical dilemma of sifting, sorting and weighing. But since there is little agreement as to which are the most important determinants of less-than-equal female status in the first place, it is no surprise that the remedies proposed to raise it are confusingly numerous and inconsistent. Is it a climate of institutionalized sexism that must be attacked first? How? By educating people, or subjecting them to good will messages designed to change their attitudes about sexual equality? (Appropriately translated, the education and gentle propaganda approaches were long-time favorite remedies for the problems of blacks before they began to take matters into their own hands in the Civil Rights Movement.) Should the negative images of women in the media and/or children's textbooks require correcting before large-scale progress can be made? Or is it equal work at equal pay? Daycare? The Equal Rights Amendment? Will a socialist revolution be necessary before any fundamental change will occur - and, given the less than total sexual equality so manifest in contemporary socialist countries such as the U.S.S.R., what else might be required other than government ownership of the means of production? Or are the biological determinists correct in arguing that women are doomed to less

than full equality by their reproductive and endocrine systems, so that even when given a shot at full equality, as in the pioneer-era kibbutz, they soon end up in second place, minding the kids and doing the laundry as before. Which remedies treat root causes of sexual inequality and which treat mere symptoms? So many proposals cannot be sorted without a scorecard. And that is a synonym for theory.

In an effort to move toward a general theory of sex stratification, I have formulated a paradigm (beginning under a 1973-74 Ford Foundation Faculty Fellowship), for assessing and predicting relative female equality. It is hoped that the paradigm may provide a partial solution to policy makers' problems in measuring and fostering female progress. A summary of the paradigm and a synopsis of my attempts at a preliminary empirical test of it (utilizing a pilot sample of 61 preindustrial societies) consitute Part II of this article. In Part III, the paradigm's implications are explored for several policy-relevant contemporary cases and issues.

II. THE PARADIGM

One clear effect of the barrage of publicity surrounding the Women's Liberation Movement and the International Women's Year has been to heighten awareness of the diversity of women's position around the globe. The differences in relative sexual equality of Swedish women vs. their Saudi Arabian sisters are spectacularly evident. The differences in sexual position of

Swedish women vs. their Soviet Union sisters are more subtle. But we must not forget that it is not enough to compare women's positions with each other. Rather, the principal comparison must be between the women vs. the men of their group,[2] because this remains the heart of sexual stratification.

Are women invariably the second sex? Among known societies of recent date, women seem to be completely equal with men only among the gentle, communal Tasaday of the Philippines.[3] When this group was discovered in 1971, hunting was not practiced, but both sexes gathered, and shared collectively in control of the means of production and decision-making (see, e.g., Fernandez and Lynch, 1972). Other groups with virtually complete sexual equality, such as Zaire's Mbuti Pygmies of the Ituri Forest and Namibia's !Kung Bushmen of the Kalahari Desert, also have shared communal control of the means of production and a foraging economy. But other paths to equality exist: among the Iroquois of the Colonial-era United states, for example, the means and fruits of production were controlled solely by the women, who owned the land, raised most of the food, allocated the surplus - and influenced in the political and war decisions of the men as well (see, e.g., Brown, 1975). In comparison to the above groups, those Swedish and Soviet women seem second class citizens in many respects. How can we account for the great differences in relative sexual equality among the world's peoples?

Let me present a summary of my paradigm of sex stratification, in which I attempt to tackle this question (see also Blumberg, 1974; 1978; forthcoming). The paradigm is intended to apply cross-culturally, under diverse historical conditions, and although its basic focus is on how equal women are to the men of their group, it permits us to compare the position of various groups of women across time, classes and countries as well. It is conceived as a paradigm of sex stratification, and hence, although female reproductive functions are taken into account, its principal explanatory variables are those of theories of stratification, not those of biological sex differences. After all, women bear and nurse babies - and tend to be physically smaller than males - everywhere, but everywhere their degree of relative equality is not the same.

Theories of stratification are couched in terms of relative power and relative privilege (see, e.g., Lenski, 1966). Differential power begets differential privilege, i.e., possession of the former can be translated into the latter. Although there are a multiplicity of manifestations of privilege - involving differences in status, prestige and deference, as well as in possessions,prerequisites,prerogatives and freedom - there seem to be only a few sources of power relevant for a group's inequality systems. It is as though the sources of power were mighty rivers flowing into a swampy delta, whereupon they split into a labyrinthe of channels of privilege, more of which are blind or meandering than direct.

So it is differential power which underlies inequality. Given Max Weber's definition of power as "the probability of persons or groups carrying out their will even when opposed by others" (Gerth and Mills, 1946:180), the connection is explicit. Concerning the "rivers" of power, Lenski, for example, distinguishes only three: the power stemming from control over property, that derived from position in a society's politico-administrative hierarchies, and that based on force or coercion. In short, economic power, political power, and the power of force. How do women fit into all this?

In the Marxian view, economic power is the mainstream, with the other sources of power acting as tributaries. According to this view, a society's economic arrangements exert the most important influence on its other institutions, such as the political, legal, familial, and ideological systems. And people's degree of relative control over the society's means of production constitutes both their main power resource and the greatest shaper of their life chances and privileges. Whether economic power is this important for a society's inequality system is a subject of raging controversy in the social sciences. But I propose, there seems to be less doubt with respect to its women.

A. Woman's Most Important Form of Power: Relative Economic Control

Consider the matter comparatively. There is no known society where women achieve even a fifty percent share of

political power. With respect to the power of force, the situation is worse: women rarely exercise it and are frequently its victims, i.e., wifebeating is widely distributed around the world. Only for economic power does the empirical evidence run the gamut. Thus, there are societies where women have virtually no control over the means and fruits of productive, relative to the men of their class or society (e.g., the Rwala Bedouin). Contrast this with the situation of the Iroquois, where women's relative economic power apparently approached totality. In fact, there are ethnographic accounts of a fair number of widely scattered preindustrial societies (in most of which women are hoe horticulturalists and/or market traders) where women exercise more economic power than their menfolk. In short, the extant expirical evidence shows economic control to be the most achievable power source for women.

Theoretically, I also consider it the most important vis-a-vis female status. Let us hark back to the problem of measurement that I suggest has plagued efforts to assess the position of women. I already have outlined what I view as the central determinant of overall female position, namely the degree of female economic power relative to the males of her class or group. Let us now return to that "swamp" of differential privilege, and choose the most relevant way of measuring the extent to which females approach equal treatment and opportunities vs. their menfolk.

B. Woman's Most Meaningful Privilege: Relative Control of One's Life

Two broad classes of privilege include status or prestige on the one hand, and autonomy in one's own life on the other. I argue that the latter involves a more direct translation of power and is more relevant as a measure of relative sexual equality. The former may lead one to quite misleading conclusions. Take, for example, one aspect of the status-prestige complex, deference. Victorian "ladies" were placed on a pedestal and treated with ritualized deference. But how much of a life can one lead from a pedestal? And how high a pedestal is it if its occupant cannot vote, divorce without disgrace, or administer her own property after marriage? Similarly, are we to accept that U.S. women are equal in status to U.S. men just because their average "occupational prestige" score is about the same as that of U.S. men (Treiman and Terrell, 1975)? That result seems due to the fact that women are concentrated in a narrow range of clerical and sales jobs which are considered "white collar" in terms of prestige. But women's equal "occupational prestige" score does not translate into equal wages, let alone equal overall status (recall that the latest figures show women employed full-time year-round earning not much more than half their male counterparts).

The measurement approach I have chosen involves assessing females' relative freedom and control over their own lives. It consists of examining a series of life events and opportunities

that occur in all known human societies, and then assessing the relative equality of women vs. the men of their class or group with respect to each of them. I term these events and opportunities "life options," and find them useful not only as macro measures of women's position in a group, but also as indicators of equality at the micro level of a woman's interaction with her intimates.

Life Options. To emphasize, what is of interest here is not just the absolute level of female freedom with respect to these situations, but how that freedom compares to that accorded to the males of her class or group. A very partial list of life options that potentially exist for both sexes in all societies include one's relative freedom to: (1) decide whether, when, and whom to marry; (2) dissolve a marriage; (3) engage in premarital sex; (4) engage in extramarital sex; (5) regulate reproduction to the extent biologically feasible (including not just family size, but also timing of first birth, spacing, sex ratio, and the type of "intervention" (see Davis and Blake schema, 1956) used to accomplish these, such as contraception, abstinence, abortion, infanticide, etc.); (6) move about spatially without restriction; (7) exercise household authority; and (8) take advantage of educational opportunities.[4]

Since I am proposing that the relative equality of a woman's life options is affected principally by her degree of power from all sources (which boils down to economically-derived power for the most part, I further argue), I do not

wish to include any life options which relate directly to economics, politics or force. This is to avoid tautology (e.g., women's economic power gives her greater freedom to take advantage of occupational opportunities). Of course, such an approach does not preclude our examining say, female occupational distributions, relative wages, unemployment, etc., in terms of the paradigm. Rather, it precludes including them in any index of life options that might be tested as a dependent variable of relative female economic power.

C. The Road to Female Economic Power

My definition of female economic power involves women's degree of control, relative to the males of their class or group, of the means of production and allocation of surplus. How do women gain such power? The means of production include, of course, land, capital, and labor. For women to gain control of a sizeable proportion of the first two, I suggest, they presumably must have begun with a strategic contribution to the third. I shall not propose that work alone normally leads to economic power; if that were the case, peasants, slaves and workers long ago would have inherited the earth. But women's role in economically productive activities, i.e., the extent to which they "bring home the bacon," does seem to be a first step down the road to economic power. In the jargon of the social sciences, it seems to be necessary but it is clearly insufficient. In other words, it seems to be a precondition to further progress down the road to economic power - rather like the toll at the first gate.

A long list of theorists have viewed female productive labor as a first stepping stone toward equality.[5] Is it? Sanday (1973) examined a small sample of 12 preindustrial societies and found no case where women contributed little to production yet enjoyed a high position (by her criteria). Conversely, she found that high status could not be predicted from high productivity: in some groups where women played a major productive role, their overall status was low, whereas in others, it was high. Clearly, other factors intervene between women working and their acquiring a significant degree of relative economic power. But we cannot consider these until we have tackled the prior problem: under what circumstances do women participate in the main productive activities of their society?

1. Female Participation in Production

Actually, before turning to this problem, still another step backwards is necessary. This one takes us all the way back through human evolutionary history, in fact. There is a common misconception that women in most times and places were little more than economic parasites. Their domestic and childcare activities were not seen as productive, and in this view women contributed little else but love (also nonproductive) to the household economy. (As Parsons and Bales (1955:151) put it, men are the principal providers, "whereas the wife is primarily the giver of love...") Historically, it's dead wrong.

The mainline of human evolutionary history is characterized by only a handful of techno-economic bases (see, e.g., Lenski and Lenski, 1974): foraging (hunting and gathering) which for several million years apparently characterized all human groups; horticultural (which first emerged in the Middle East some 10,000 or so years ago); agrarian (also of Middle Eastern origin perhaps 5,000-6,000 years ago); and industrial (dating to roughly 1800 A.D. in England and parts of Northwest Europe). Horticulture is done with digging stick or hoe on small, garden-size plots; agriculture, most typically, involves plow cultivation on large, cleared fields. These historical facts give us the background for the following information on contemporary preindustrial societies.

Foraging societies: in virtually all but Arctic groups, the major part of the food supply (typically, 60-80 percent, per Lee and DeVore, 1968) is gathered, not hunted. And women are the principal gathers in the overwhelming majority of such groups, according to my calculations with Murdock's Enthnographic Atlas (1967) computer tape (a collection of data on some 1170 preindustrial societies).[6] In short, women tend to be the primary providers of the food supply.

Horticultural societies: the Ethnographic Atlas contains sex division of labor data on 376 societies in which shifting hoe cultivation is the main economic activity. In only about one-fifth of these, my calculations show, is the labor force predominantly male. Moreover, the accepted archeological

view (see, e.g., Childe, 1964:65-66) is that early horticultural cultivation and its development emerged as the work of women.[7]

Already we have accounted for all but the last fraction of one percent of some perhaps four million years of human habitation on Earth, and find that women apparently were the primary producers in most of the societies involved.

Agrarian societies: here history makes a dramatic reversal. Women play only a minor productive role in the overwhelming majority of agrarian societies. (As it happens, most such groups use non-irrigated cultivation. In the minority where the main crop is irrigated paddy rice, women play a larger productive role.) Since female subjugation is nearly universal in such societies (see, e.g., Michaelson and Goldschmidt's comparative study of 46 peasant groups, 1971), it is interesting to note that every one of today's presently industrialized societies - both capitalist and socialist - sprang from an agrarian base. If that is one's recent past (and one hasn't studied anthropology), a "woman as parasite" interpretation of history is not surprising.

Industrial societies: women are typically one-fourth to one-half the labor force in these societies, with the higher percentages found more frequently in the socialist ones. Historically, this seems the first time that female participation in production has taken place under conditions of almost total separation from children.

For a last death blow to the "woman as parasite" myth, let us return to the Ethnographic Atlas (which also includes sex division of labor of data on two other techno-economic bases, fishing and herding). Aronoff and Crano (1975) have used the Atlas to calculate that as a worldwide average, women contribute 44 percent of the food supply. Fine. Now back to the problem of the conditions under which women are economically productive. How can we account for the enormous cross-societal variation in female participation?[8]

Specifically, I suggest, two principal factors are involved: (a) the extent to which the economic activity in question is compatible with a woman's childcare responsibilities, especially breastfeeding; and (b) the state of the available labor supply relative to demand.

(a) Compatibility with childcare, especially breastfeeding. Considering that the baby bottle is a 19th Century invention and that ethnographic data show that in the majority of human societies children are not weaned from the breast until at least two years of age, the paradigm must consider a biological constraint on a woman's labor. During many of her prime working years, she has to be in proximity to her youngest child several times a day. Brown (1970), Whiting (1972) and I all have proposed rather similar lists of the characteristics of tasks that are compatible with such childcare obligations. In general, those activities which are done close to home or do not require hard, fast travel; which are not dangerous to any

small children in the vicinity; and which may be easily picked up, interrupted, and then restarted are less likely to inconvenience the mother and/or harm the child. Brown makes a persuasive case that physical strength seems much less involved as a factor. Interestingly enough, by these criteria, both gathering and hoe horticulture emerge as compatible activities par excellence. And, as we have seen, the empirical evidence shows them to have predominantly female labor forces. (Conversely, incompatible activities, such as hunting or herding large animals, have overwhelmingly male labor forces, according to additional calculations using the Ethnographic Atlas.)

(b) The dynamics of labor demand vs. sex-specific supply. But compatibility is not the whole story. Even in preindustrial societies where women must breastfeed each child, there are cases of women in modally male activities and vice versa (Murdock and Provost, 1973). Moreover, if only compatibility were involved, we could not explain high female employment in industrial societies, both capitalist and socialist. For many of these women are working mothers, and there is no question that most of them experience considerable extra hassle arranging childcare while working in these "incompatible" industrial-economy jobs. The presence of large numbers of mothers of young children working in an "incompatible" activity is a good tip-off of high labor demand that cannot easily be filled by the available, less child-burdened supply (see, e.g., Oppenheimer, 1973). Perhaps non-child-burdened females are

already in short supply - and males are not in sufficient surplus at the normally better-paying jobs open to them to be pushed into the activity. For even in socialist industrial societies, women fall far enough short of equality for their labor to be concentrated in lower-paid job categories.

To generalize, compatibility of an activity with child-care responsibilities may be a facilitating factor and its converse an inhibiting factor for female participation. But demand seems to outweigh "compatibility" considerations. In societies of less than complete sexual equality, we may predict that when females in large numbers are pulled into modally male, and/or "incompatible" activities, (1) the activity is important for group survival; and (2) there is a shortage of available males. Conversely, when males in large numbers enter modally female, and/or "compatible" activities, we may predict that <u>either</u> (1) the activity is both crucial for group survival and plagued by a severe shortage of available females, <u>or</u> (2) there is a severe glut of available males relative to the demand for labor in modally male activities. This second situation - glut pushing the unemployed sex into the other's activities - does not occur under conditions of sexual inequality when it is <u>females</u> who are in oversupply, I suggest.

2. <u>From Work to Economic Power</u>

Economic productivity provides females with the entry fee, so to speak, to the yellow brick road leading to the

Emerald City of economic power. What are the way stations along the road? My paradigm delineates three. First, women's work may be somewhat translatable to economic power, provided that both the work and the workers are of sufficient "strategic indispensability." Strategic indispensability factors bear strong relation to the variables labor economics might consider to weigh the bargaining power of a given labor force. Second, women may be speeded along the road if the kinship arrangements of their society favor residence and descent patterns that make it more probable for females to have strategic access to kin group property. Third, the social relations of production of the larger society may advance or retard women's progress toward economic power, with - all other things being equal - highly class-stratified societies providing an additional barrier to women's achieving relatively high economic power as compared to their menfolk.

Strategic indispensability factors. What makes for strategic indispensability for a group which is working in production but initially has no separate claim on the means or fruits of what production? Let us consider the matter for women.

First, the women's economic activities should be important to the group - providing a significant proportion of total output (or diet), and/or having high "short-run substitution costs." This means that replacing the activity on short notice would be a difficult and costly process. For example, if females were to be barred from filling secretarial jobs staring tomorrow, one can imagine that the transition would be costly-and chaotic.

Second, the women producers themselves must be valuable to the group, once again because they produce an important proportion of total output, and/or could not be replaced quickly without tough and expensive hassle. It should be stressed that mere "substitutability at the margin" is enough to weaken women's position. In general, it appears that if even 5-15 percent of a labor force can be easily substituted, then this is enough to undermine the group's bargaining position regardless of the importance to the society of its produce.

However, it seems that women, like peasants, are frequently victims of a situation where they are substitutable at the margin: underutilized people like themselves are available locally, or can be brought in, to their detriment. Concerning peasants, I invoke Lenski's (1966:281-284) assertion that in traditional agrarian (plow-agriculture based) societies, 5-15 percent of the population was composed of a class he terms the "expendables." These were the excess sons and daughters of the peasant population which the dominant classes were unwilling to employ on the land, even at bare survival level. Frequently, they migrated to the cities where their life conditions as beggars, coolies, prostitutes, petty thieves, and the like, were generally so miserable that they rarely reproduced their numbers. But each generation their ranks were replenished by more migrants from the land.[9] I suggest that it is precisely the existence of this surplus labor population that is a principal cause of why peasants almost everywhere have so little economic power in

comparison with their economic contribution. The existence of the expendables (let alone the additional landless peasants who attempt to survive on the margins of the village economy) guarantees "substitutability of the margin" - i.e., any individual peasant is replaceable, and by people who had been trained as peasants prior to being pushed off the land.

So too for women, I suggest. In preindustrial societies where women are important but powerless producers, I suggest that we will find substitutability at the margin built into the system, with the extra women coming from trading, slaving, raiding or polygyny. In industrial capitalist societies, the reserve army of housewives is eminently tappable. In short, if even a small reserve of potential replacements exists, women's chances for parlaying production into power are eclipsed, unless the women can come up with some other sources of strategic indispensability that will prevent these extra bodies from being used against them.

Clearly, the position of a work force is strengthened to the extent its members can gain control of the labor process. The next three strategic indispensability factors are relevant in this regard.

Third, then, is <u>female control of the technical expertise</u> involved in their production. Stinchcombe (1966) makes a parallel argument for peasants share-cropping for absentee landlords - and suggests that such peasants, recognizing the landlord's lack of contribution to production, may be able to

take advantage of a period of political instability to gain control of their land.

Such a situation is more probable in the presence of the fourth variable, that women work autonomously from direct male supervision. Oboler (1973) emphasizes this factor in writing about African market women. Their menfolk cannot supervise their trading (and thence take the profits) because the men are not up on the latest price movements and trends of the market.

The fifth variable is that labor movement classic, "Organize!" In other words, their position can be improved where women producers can organize in their own behalf. Here the characteristics of the work situation seem greatly to influence the possibilities of successfully banding together. For example, do the women work in or belong to units which can benefit from economies of scale and can be used as a base for collective organization? Historically, this seems to have been relatively infrequent.

There are also external factors which influence a producer group's strategic indispensability, and constrain or facilitate its potential for economic power. As a sixth factor, I propose the existence of groups competing for the women producers. Or to phrase it negatively, a producer group is unlikely to advance if they are stuck in the only game in town with no escape in sight. Let us speculate about an example from history - what happened following the Black Death in

England vs. East Prussia (based on Reinhardt, 1974). In both places, heavy peasant deaths created a labor shortage, which one might presume should benefit the survivors. In England, this occurred; in fact, a free yeoman class arose that became the ancestors of today's "county class" (Ziegler, 1969). But in the frontier zone of East Prussia, a previously free yeoman group became serfs tied to the land. The difference? In England, the crown already was in competition with the nobility for power, and the peasants benefitted from the conflict and competition. Conversely, there was no crown-noble power struggle in East Prussia; the nobles were the only game in town, and operated as feudal warlords. Peasants don't often live, if I may offer a generalization, to see their harvest burned two years in a row. The nobility was able to secure its now-scarce labor supply by coercion. In short, the absence of countervailing power groups may reduce the advantages producers may otherwise derive from economic importance, even in the presence of severe labor shortage. And vice versa.

Kinship arrangements. The next element to be considered above and beyond the strategic indispensability factors is the society's kinship system. Harking back to the discussion of countervailing groups, women producers' position clearly is not helped if all kinship institutions are lined up on one side: the males.' While it is possible for women to gain strategic indispensability points in a patrilineal-patrilocal group (one which reckons descent only through the male line,

and in which the young couple live with the groom's paternal male kin), it would be like swimming upstream against the current. Similarly, even in a society whose kinship institutions are organized around maternal kin, it is possible for women to be under the thumb of males (most often, their brothers; see Schlegal, 1972). But it is less likely, and in general, the average position of women is better in matri-centered groups than in those emphasizing paternal kin (Leavitt, 1971; Gough, 1971). In particular, where the wife can continue to live with or near her female relatives while the husband is separated from his kin, women's degree of autonomous control over the family or group's productive resources is facilitated. Also, kinship systems emphasizing maternal kin are much more likely to permit women full inheritance rights than the patri-centered system. (And, as discussed below, females' relative inheritance rights turns out to be one of my operational measures of their economic power relative to their menfolk.) In fact, in their provision of a possible organized cohort of female kin, and in their link to control over property via inheritance, kinship institutions provide women with the potential to get a direct share in economic power without necessarily having to work for it. If the kinship institutions are sufficiently favorable to females, women could theoretically reap the benefits even without a significant contribution to production. But in practice, such a situation - where women are the idle "coupon clippers" of kinship - seems empirically rare.

Social relations of production. Mention of "coupon clippers" is a good lead-in to the third element designated as an independent influence on women's relative economic power: the society's social relations of production, i.e., who controls its means of production, and allocates its surplus production. Simple foraging (hunting-gathering) societies that produce little or no surplus tend to have communal relations of production: the means of production are available to all members of the group and any surplus windfall that may come along is shared widely. Those simple horticultural groups which seem deliberately to avoid producing and accumulating much surplus (e:g., the Kuikuru of the Amazon basin) also tend to follow this pattern. The Israeli kibbutz (collective settlement) does strive to produce surplus, but because it also is deliberately socialist by design, members own everything collectively. Does communal ownership always mean communal control in which females carry equal clout in economic decision-making? In a word, no. Resources "owned" by the community may in fact be controlled by a subgroup not representative of the total community - especially with respect to sex composition. This has occurred in the kibbutz, where in the course of a generation, women gradually were edged out of the important agricultural production jobs and into the low-ranked kitchens and laundries from which they supposedly had been liberated (see, e.g., Spiro, 1963). As a result, they have retained very few representatives in the kibbutz' economic committees, the main locus

of economic power and decision-making (see Part III below for further discussion).

But although sex differences in economic control occur more than occasionally in classless communal societies, they tend to be considerably more pronounced in societies with class stratification. These are groups where one class has disproportionate control over the means of production - and any surplus generated. In such societies, a woman's economic control is influenced by: (a) the nature of the larger stratification system and her class position within it; as well as (b) her contribution to production and its strategic indispensability vs. those of the men of her own class; and (c) the resources she derives from her kinship connections vs. those accruing to males of her class (de facto kinship rules and resource allocation patterns may vary by social class in complex societies; see, e.g., Stack, 1974). Suppose a society is set up in a very inegalitarian manner, and we are interested in the position of the women belonging to a class comprising, say, 50 percent of the population which controls only 5 percent of the wealth. This information does not tell us how that 5 percent is allocated between males and females of the class. Here, the relative economic position of a woman (vs. that of the men of her class) may be expected to vary according to the power points accruing to her from her productivity, strategic indispensability and kinship connections. To propose a broad generalization, it seems that in societies where the overall

position of women is relatively unfavorable (e.g., agrarian ones) the lower down in the class system we go, the less of a gap we find between the relative economic position of men and women. Their lot may be misery, but it is shared in a sexually more egalitarian manner than among the affluent.

D. Woman's "Poker Chips of Power"

To recapitulate, I first suggested that economic power is both the biggest and most achievable "poker chip of power" women have been able to command in the high stakes game of sexual stratification, where the prize is greater control over one's life. Then I went on to delineate the road to economic power.[10]

But economic power is not the whole story. What else can be seen as poker chips of power affecting the outcome of sexual equality? Force and political position, the other two dimensions mentioned by Lenski, clearly are of some importance. As noted, however, they are invariably male-dominated, and can be used to oppress and restrict women.

The situation is perhaps clearer with force, which Randall Collins (1971) invokes as the major explanation of sexual inequality in his theory: to him, males' greater size and sexual aggressiveness are what keep females down. But the empirical evidence to date makes this problematic. For example, among our nearest primate kin, the apes, male sexual dimorphism (their greater size and strength) is unrelated to male dominance (see, e.g., Leibowitz, 1975). And among the simplest foraging

groups, the gentle, egalitarian Tasaday, Mbuti and !Kung, women apparently are rarely or never subject to male use of physical or sexual force.

Political power I view as a less important determinant of how much control women are able to achieve over their own lives. But I confess that I have not tackled the principal puzzle concerning political power: why, from its first emergence as a separate dimension among simple preindustrial societies, women typically have such a small formal role. This is evident in a number of groups where women remain full economic partners and may have informal political influence, but take little if any official role in the emerging formal political structure (e.g., of headman and council).

Be that as it may, I propose that where women have economic clout, they can use it to win substantial physical and normative immunity from males' direct use of force against them (after all, the European feudal lords desisted from bullying the rising bourgeoisie after a certain point, lest they kill the goose that had begun to lay such nice gold eggs). And women's economic clout should win them some political influence, and ultimately, perhaps, <u>some</u> share in political power.

A variety of other factors have been mentioned in the sex stratification literature as influences on women's status but only two more will be mentioned here. These are (1) the ideology of general male superiority, and (2) men's participation in childrearing and domestic tasks. An ideology of male

supremacy is alleged to have a negative influence on women's status. Conversely, male participation in the stereotypically female childcare and household activities is asserted as being conducive to sexual egalitarianism (see, e.g., Rosaldo and Lamphere, 1974). These factors may correlate with women's status, but I don't see them as substantially influencing it. At best, they may intervene between the main poker chips of power and my proposed main measure of female status, relative equality of life options. But the two factors themselves, I propose, are shaped by women's position with respect to the principal chips.

The last several paragraphs have presented, in an off-hand manner, predictions about the relative strength of economic clout vs. other poker chips of power in influencing the favorableness of female life options as compared to those of their male counterparts. Let me now review and make explicit the major predictions of the theory.

E. Predictions from the Paradigm

I have proposed a paradigm to account for the position of women relative to the men of their group or class. Among the assertions this theory is intended to test are the following: (1) a woman's position is most affected by her relative degree of control over the means of production and the surplus generated by that production; (2) a precondition for such relative economic power is not just participation in production, but

strategic indispensability as a producer; (3) women's relative economic power also may be facilitated by kinship arrangements (e.g., those governing marital residence and descent) that take females into account and thus help them to gain access to kin property; (4) women are more likely to be oppressed physically and politically where they do not have any appreciable economic power; and (5) women can translate power into greater control over their own lives, i.e., greater equality relative to the males of their group with respect to basic life options.

F. A Preliminary Test of the Paradigm: Synopsis of Results

I have begun to test parts of this theory with data from a pilot sample of 61 preindustrial societies. Using the Human Relations Area Files (a collection of ethnographic information on several hundred largely preindustrial societies), it was possible to code these 61 societies in terms of most of the variables mentioned above.[11] Among the variables that have not yet been coded are the "strategic indispensability" factors. Thus I cannot ascertain whether there is empirical support for my speculations concerning how women get an observed degree of relative economic power in the first place.

But females' relative economic power is measured as discussed above: the proportion of the means of production controlled by women; the proportion of surplus (if any) allocated by them; and, in addition, the extent to which women could accumulate wealth without restriction, and the extent to which they share in inheritance.

Force was measured by the circumstances under which men beat their wives (ranging from apparently never to "at will"). Political power was measured in terms of relative female clout in local level governance, i.e., their degree of representation in the council or equivalent as well as their relative political weight overall.

Life options, the dependent variable, was measured by an index combining four factors. They included women's relative freedom with respect to: (1) initiating a marriage; (2) ending a marriage; (3) premarital virginity, and (4) exercising household authority.

Among the other variables measured were: sexual division of labor in the main productive activities, system of marital residence, system of descent, ideology of male supremacy, and male participation in childcare and domestic tasks.

Some Preliminary Results. Most spectacular was the support for the hypothesis that women's relative degree of economic control over the group's productive resources and surplus would prove the strongest influence on relative female equality in life options. Also as predicted, mere participation in production made no difference on life options. There was no effect even when women were the main labor force in the society's most important productive activity (recall that slaves have often been in this position - and remained slaves). In the preliminary computer analysis, after a series of statistical operations which social scientists term "multivariate analysis,"

three things came out clearly: (1) the independent variables (economic power, force, political power, marital residence, ideology of male supremacy, male domestic/childcare participation, etc.) were able to account for most of the variation in the index measuring the dependent variable, life options (R^2 = 0.56 in the preliminary runs); (2) women's degree of economic power proved by far the most important predictor of their life options (in the same runs, R^2 = 0.47 - well over 4/5 the explained variance); (3) of the remaining factors in the regressions, only force had any significant net impact on female life options over and above that produced by women's economic power - i.e., all the other variables "washed out" when subjected to multivariate analysis. Yet force explained only some 9 percent of the variance in life options. Moreover, other multivariate analyses showed that the higher women's relative economic power, the less likely they were to be beaten. In other words, force did show some independent explanatory power, but clearly took a back seat to the economic control variables in the present analysis. Since this analysis also shows that economic power tends to win the "weaker sex" relative protection from male use of force against them, doubt is cast on Collins' postulation of male size and aggressive strength as the primary underlying cause of lower female status.

The results seem to cast even more doubt on explanations of female status that come closer to straight biological determinism than Collins' sophisticated arguments (e.g., that of

Firestone, 1970). But the results do not support an equally monocausal explanation based on economic determinism either. The paradigm considers economic power as the most important factor affecting sex stratification, but not to the exclusion of other variables. And built into the paradigm is an appreciation of a biological difference that precludes sex stratification from being considered as just another illustration of some more general stratification theory: only females bear children and lactate. Sex division of labor and life options are correspondingly affected even though other non-biological factors may mediate how, as well as prove more important in determining women's overall status.

Yet despite the pattern of findings, it is impossible to say that this preliminary test "proves" any of the hypotheses to be correct. After all, the results are preliminary, the pilot sample was fairly small and contained significant departures from randomness, and a number of variables from the paradigm remain unmeasured to date.[12] Still, clear empirical support for the paradigm has emerged - especially concerning the proposed importance of female economic power as a determinant of female life options. So even at this stage of the game, the paradigm may produce a partial answer to two questions I suggested had to be answered before policy makers would be able to formulate relevant and effective programs aimed at enhancing female status. These were the questions of how the position of women is to be measured most meaningfully, and what are the most

important factors influencing that position. I suggested that these questions could best be answered in the context of a predictive theory of sex stratification. Strictly speaking, this paradigm is not yet a rigorous theory. But it's a start, and a seemingly promising one at that if predictive power is used as the criterion. In the next section, I hope to show that the paradigm also may provide a useful framework for "armchair analysis" - preliminary explanations for a number of the recent puzzles about woman's place and progress in selected societies around the planet.

III. POLICY IMPLICATIONS AND PROBLEMS

To begin such paradigm-guided speculation, let us consider the matter of the growing earnings disadvantage of U.S. women discussed in the Introduction. We are faced with an apparent paradox containing two contradictory elements. On the one hand, women are working in ever-increasing numbers, yet their relative earnings keep falling farther behind men, i.e., the sex gap in wages has been steadily widening. On the other hand, all this is happening at a time when sexual equality in other areas (e.g., sexuality, marriage, personal autonomy) is widely believed to be increasing. Providing jobs for women tends to be a keystone program for policy makers committed to raising female status. Does the growing sex gap in earnings forbode a built-in boomerang effect?

Let us tackle each half of the paradox in turn. First, then, how might the paradigm account for the increasing earnings gap between the sexes? Recall that I suggested that women's working might be translatable into increased relative economic power only given favorable configurations in three groups of factors: (a) the "strategic indispensability" of the female producers; (b) the broader kinship system; and (c) the over-arching social relations of production. I am proposing that the main outlines of the latter two factors have changed little in the U.S. in the last generation, and that it is to changes in the strategic indispensability factors that we must look for the key to the puzzle.

Concerning kinship, the system, while certainly in flux, has remained stable in the two areas discussed above: descent remains bilateral, and marital residence remains neolocal (i.e., descent is reckoned through both father's and mother's kin, and newly married couples overwhelmingly reside on their own, rather than with either spouse's parents). Concerning the social relations of production, the U.S. corporate capitalist economy has gotten somewhat more concentrated (e.g., the share of GNP accounted for by the Top 500 Corporations continues to rise), but Census figures show that the income distribution of U.S. families has remained virtually unchanged since World War II (U.S. Bureau of the Census,1971). Nor has property undergone any radical redistribution. What then about women's "strategic indispensability"? For one thing, I suggest, the

increase in female workers has made women more "substitutable at the margin," and hence weakened their strategic position with respect to wage bargaining.

It is not well known that the sex gap in earnings has been widening. Nor is it well known that the sex gap in earnings is considerably larger than the race gap (see, e.g., Bernard, 1973, for documentation). Examining what has been happening to women's substitutability at the margin should provide insight into both phenomena. First, for both women and black males, there exist those desperate enough for work to accept a lower wage just to get a job. But in addition for women, there are those other than the desperate whose presence also tends to put a lid on wages. Specifically, these include women who are not the primary earner in their household, women who work part-time, and the "reserve army" of housewives. Women who work for "extras," or the privilege of getting out of the house, are a minority. (Most women, like most men, work for reasons of economic necessity; see, e.g., Sokoloff, 1974, for data.) Yet if they are less concerned about making the best wage bargain, their presence could undercut their hungrier sisters. I don't mean to blame the victim, though, either in this instance or in that of part-time workers. Many women are pushed toward part-time employment by their child-care obligations. It is unlikely that many employers find this a drawback, however: part-time jobs almost always provide proportionately much lower fringe benefits and often lower wage

rates than full-time employment. Moreover, if a labor pool includes a significant number of part-timers, earnings for the full-time majority in the pool would seem likely to be negatively affected. The existence of all those housewives further weakens working women's wage-earning power, since they can be pulled into (and out of) the labor force as economic demand dictates. Women workers are especially vulnerable to the existence of these groups, I propose, since they are concentrated in a very narrow range of often overcrowded jobs (e.g., secretaries, teachers, beauticians).[13] And many housewives have prior training and experience in these skills. In short, women's substitutability is higher than men's, and the problem seems exacerbated by the growing numbers of female workers.[14]

Two other aspects of working women's strategic indispensability seem less sensitive to the recent increase in their numbers. These are the extent to which women work autonomously of male supervision, and the often related factor of the degree to which they monopolize the technical expertise involved in their work. Nevertheless, it appears that the position of most employed U.S. women with respect to these two factors was not very strategic even when fewer females held jobs. Take teaching and typing, for example. Most women do it for male bosses, who can call in temporary replacements away from housewifely chores on literally same-day notice (via substitute teacher and temporary office worker registries or agencies; many more women have these skills than can be found employed full-time).

In recent years, however, teachers have gained greater control over the work process than typists in one important way: the majority of the former are now organized, the majority of the latter are not. And in this regard, more women are like the typists than the teachers. For the fact is that females long have been in a weak position with respect to still another strategic indispensability factor - organizing. More women continue to work in non-unionized sectors of the economy, and thus lack the wage and work advantages of group bargaining agreements (see, e.g., Reich, 1972). Still, unions have begun to grow rapidly among white-collar public employees such as teachers - and in these unions, the membership (although not the leadership) tends to be heavily female. Strong unions tend to secure members' turf (i.e., win rules reducing substitutability at the margin) as well as raise their wages, so it may be hypothesized that such unionized women should be less likely to find their wages falling relatively farther behind males.' But halting the widening of the sexual wage gap is a very different thing than gaining increased relative economic control.

Does women's worsening wage situation indicate that they are in fact declining in economic power relative to men? In one aspect of economic power, I don't believe this is so. Although this is an open empirical question, it appears to me that the relative increase in the female labor force has been larger than the relative decline in women's earnings vs. men's.

Overall, I hypothesize, there has been a net increase in aggregate assets going to females. As discussed below, this is not to say that women have increased their relative control at the commanding heights of the U.S. political economy, but it does seem that women as a group are reducing the extent to which generation of assets is a male prerogative. Thus, as more women work for wages, their dependence on male support is reduced. A wage of one's own may be the bottom rung on the ladder of relative economic power, but it has opened up for women life options that were precluded with no independent economic assets. This is evident, I suggest, at both the macro and the micro level.

Thus far, I have proposed that the heavy influx of women into the labor market under conditions of high substitutability and generally weak strategic indispensability has been an important reason for the concomitant widening of the sexual earnings gap. But, since women work for money, they automatically share in a definite (if usually low level) form of economic power: "paycheck power." More women working has meant not only more assets accruing to women as a group, but also an increase relative to men - the proportion of total "paycheck power" earned by men has decreased. To this small extent, women's relative economic power at the macro level has increased, growing gap notwithstanding.

Given the above, it should not seem strange that at least some of the indicators of female status are rising. After all,

that is what the paradigm predicts as a consequence of greater female economic power. And so we turn to the second half of the apparent paradox: the fact that U.S. women seem to be catching up with males in various areas of personal autonomy decided at the micro level, while their progress at the macro level ranges from retrograde (e.g., the wage gap) to relatively slight (e.g., aggregate economic power).

And even though the micro level drama is being played out against a broader background of a general loosening of traditional restrictions, it seems that there is less of a gap in the restrictions imposed on men's vs. women's conduct. For example, survey evidence shows an increasing proportion of adolescents to be sexually active as well as their decreasing adherence to the double standard. (To be sure, some say that females are losing the right to say "no," and thus merely the manifestation of male dominance has changed.) A few years farther down the road, the fact that never before has paid (albeit not very well-paid) employment been so available to so high a proportion of young women seems to have put them on a more equal footing in deciding on whether, when and whom to marry. With marriage no longer the only meal ticket around, there is less need for a child to cement the union, and indeed more reason for a young woman to seize total control of contraception or fertility. Logistically, the most prevalent methods (e.g., the Pill) may be resorted to or abandoned without the male partner's knowledge or consent. Not only is U.S. fertility

at record low levels, but first births seem increasingly delayed. The option of even "57 cents on the dollar" paycheck power seems to produce greater equalization of the sexes' life opportunities when the woman has only herself to support. A childless young working woman may feel equally free as her husband to get a divorce, and may not be disadvantaged by "no fault" divorce laws. But the sex gap in earnings seems to mean a continued sex gap in life options once children are present. And the "no fault" divorce laws would seem to deprive such women of leverage (i.e., the threat to withhold consent unless an acceptable child support and property settlement were reached) where they were the reluctant party in the dissolution. All this goes to show that even a limited increase in women's relative economic power can facilitate women achieving greater equality in various other areas. There frequently seems to be a "threshold effect": a certain amount of economic autonomy is needed for a woman to exercise the option in question (e.g., fertility control) but it is not crucial that the sexes' economic power be substantially equal.

The preceding discussion made it appear that the U.S. was a homogeneous entity that could be treated as an undifferentiated whole in any discussion of relative sexual equality. That is not the case: the parameter values for the sexual stratification equation differ significantly by <u>social class</u>. To give a brief overview, it appears that the narrowest gap between the relative economic power of the sexes is near the <u>bottom</u>. At

this level, where neither sex is able to command much more than the minimum wage, working women have long had, de facto, fairly equal freedom with respect to sex, marriage, divorce, household power, etc. - but exercised in a milieu of a strong (compensatory?) ideology of male superiority and sometime wife-beating. Yet the most visible evidence of renegotiation of the sexual status quo seems to be taking place not here, but rather in the middle class. Here most women did not work until recent years, and lacking inherited wealth, they were totally dependent economically on their husbands. It appears that even though the prevailing sexual ideology was more egalitarian than among the underclass, double standard behavior was more prevalent. The jobs achieved by women in this class tend to be considerably less remunerative than their husbands', but to go from nothing to half a loaf may make a woman considerably more assertive about her husband helping with the laundry or not keeping a mistress. Among the upper class, both sexes tend to own wealth, but the men have been much more likely to control it. And of course, men of this class often work as controllers of others' wealth as well (e.g., in high managerial or financial advisory positions). Should women of this class attempt to manage their own wealth or enter the boardrooms of their men-folk, it is an open question as to whether they would merely join the existing system (i.e., act mainly in terms of their class interests) or facilitate the incorporation of additional, non-elite, women into the control levels of the larger political

economy. At the moment, however, the question is premature: women are virtually absent at this level, meaning that the proportion of the means of production of the macro-level economy actually controlled by women is zilch.

Such a state of affairs is not peculiar to capitalist countries such as the U.S. Women tend to be equally scarce among controllers of the means of production in societies calling themselves socialist. The Soviet Union may have more women doctors (almost three-fourths are female, vs. 7 percent in the U.S.) and more women engineers (about three-tenths are female, vs. 1 percent in the U.S.) than the rest of the world put together (Mandel, 1975:128-30) - and numerically, there are two and a half times more women engineers than M.D.s). But only one woman has ever been a member of the ruling Politburo, and although their proportion is at an all-time high, females make up only about 4 percent of the Central Committee. It appears that the Soviet Union leads all other countries both with respect to women's degree of participation in the labor force (it is half female) and their status in the labor force. Yet even there women tend to earn less than men, and thin out drastically as one approaches the top jobs. As things stand now, women are greatly needed in the Soviet labor force, given the millions of men killed in World War II and the attempts at accelerated economic development. But given the near-absence of women at the top of the economic control structure, their not-too-far-from-equal position in the labor force

seems vulnerable to a downturn in demand and unfavorable decisions by those at the top. Goldberg (1973) describes how the proportion of women admitted to the universities dropped from over half to over 43 percent by 1964 following the 1958 addition to the admissions committees of representatives from the overwhelmingly male Young Communist (Komsomol) and trade union ranks. Previously students had been chosen by test scores alone. As it happened, the late 1960s were years of strong economic expansion and high demand for college educated workers; the proportion of women in the universities concomitantly edged back toward the fifty percent mark. But it seems that without a voice at the top - i.e., in the economic control structure - women cannot protect even a near-equal relative position in the labor force.

As even stronger illustration of this assertion can be found in the history of decreasing sexual equality in the Israeli kibbutz. In contrast to the very speculative preliminary paradigm-guided analysis of the earnings gap paradox attempted here. I have undertaken a more systematic analysis of the case of the kibbutz (Blumberg, 1974, 1976a, 1976b). Specifically, I strove to apply the paradigm to the question of why a highly sex-segregated division of labor emerged in less than a generation in the kibbutzim. After all, sexual equality was one of the founding tenets of these communal settlements. And in the pioneer days (during the 1920s and early 1930s) of the early kibbutzim, women did work side by side with the men in the

fields. Yet within a generation, some 90 percent of the women were back doing classic "women's work" - the childcare, cooking. cleaning and mending from which the socialist kibbutz ostensibly had liberated them. Other extant explanations of why women left the highly esteemed jobs in agricultural production to end up - often discontented - in the low-ranked "domestic drudgework" jobs had stressed a regrettable but inevitable biologically-determined destiny from which women could not escape. The paradigm provided a structural explanation. And basically it traced out the consequences of women being greatly underrepresented among the leadership from the start; demographically, only 20-35 percent of the pioneer era (1920s) settlers were women, and they were a much smaller proportion of the leaders (Talmon, 1972:19). The mode of production these founders chose was agrarian socialist, i.e., a techno-economic base emphasizing dry plow cultivation of cereal crops, and concomitantly, communal social relations of production. Once children began to arrive, the women working in agrarian production (and even at the start, only about half the women did so, according to Tiger and Shepher, 1976) felt themselves inconvenienced by the hot long hike in from the distant fields to nurse or check up on their babies during the work day. Their (almost always) male branch managers felt themselves inconvenienced also by the women's lost hours and heightened physical exhaustion.

There is evidence that as early as 1936 women in at least one of the three main kibbutz federations resorted to conferences on their problems. They complained that they should be permitted to specialize in the close-in horticultural crops rather tnan being pushed out of production by a growing emphasis on the agrarian crops at which they found themselves at a disadvantage (Viteles, 1967:331-336). But nobody listened. Throughout the period, there had been a slow but continuous stream of immigrants, who, like the pioneer founders themselves, tended to be young, childless, and predominantly male. For them, there was no childcare-induced inconvenience in tending the far-flung field crops, which the kibbutz' simplistic attempt at a socialist bookkeeping system (Barkai, 1971) made appear much more profitable. This was because their system measured only labor intensity of an activity (i.e.,it excluded its land and capital costs) and the least labor intensive looked the best on their books. Unfortunately for kibbutz women, however, agrarian production shows up as much less labor intensive than horticultural cultivation. By a slow process of attrition, women were gradually edged out of the fields into the kitchens and nurseries.[15] At the same time, they apparently lost whatever representation they had ever had on the economic committees that actually <u>control</u> the kibbutz' communally-<u>owned</u> means of production. Without an equal voice at the top, they ended up unable to allocate even their own labor to their liking. Today, although major areas of formal and ideological sexual

equality remain to kibbutz women, their occupational and socio-cultural roles are largely sex-differentiated - and largely accorded lower rank (Rosner, 1967).

Conclusions

Does this mean that women cannot expect full equality in today's world from anything short of a complete, revolutionary reorganization of society - one in which women would be equally represented among the leaders and cadre of the new system, and hence able to have equal voice from the very start in the designing of the new social structures designed to free them? Given the present state of knowledge (incomplete!) about the factors that affect sexual stratification, would women adequately know what kind of social structural designs to insist upon, should the appropriate opportunity (revolutionary or otherwise) arise? It is clear that opportunities to start from scratch are relatively rare in human history. Yet it is also clear that the recent intensification of interest in women's role and equality has generated projects, research, theory and statistics that, if properly codified, might even today provide a preliminary set of guidelines not only for that ultimate goal, complete sexual equality, but also for the more immediate concern of improving the lives of the world's women now.

Is there anything in the foregoing that might help policy makers toward that more limited goal? I think that perhaps the major message that may be culled from my work on the paradigm

to date is the seeming utility - for policy planners, social science research and the women themselves - of focusing on females' (vs. males') relative life opportunities for both the measures and the means to improve women's position.

Concerning the measures, the list of suggested life options could be extended and made more isomorphic with the types of indicators already being collected by many governments. The call for additional indicators to measure female status has been recurrent in recent years. I am suggesting that wherever possible, those indicators be assembled simultaneously for both males and females, so that ratios may be calculated. The ratio of something like, say, girls' vs. boys' primary school enrollments could be used to measure progress over time, between countries, and across the major lines of cleavage within a society: social class, rural-urban, ethnic. And if the results of these comparisons were made known in non-technical terms to the women themselves, the dry statistics might even become a consciousness-raising tool. For they make salient how well different groups of women are doing against not only each other, but also the men in their lives. Valuable information, one might expect, for women with a new visicn of expanding opportunities on their horizons.

For more important than the measures are the means to provide such expanding opportunities. And here, the paradigm has focused on economic opportunities. Given the increasing educational prerequisites for most paid employment, jobs

cannot be separated from schooling. Both types of programs must be provided before females can be expected to gain the "poker chips" to be cashed in for greater autonomy in their personal lifespace. But schools and job creation are expensive; they require commitment of scarce resources, and usually imply reallocation of existing revenues. Are there reasons other than justice or the good of the national soul (as if these should not be reason enough) for expanding educational and economic opportunities for a nation's females? Let us give merely one example. As it happens, in many of the countries where the dilemma of allocation of scarce resources is likely to be most cruel, the answer seems to be an emphatic "yes."

These are the countries suffering the consequences of rapid population growth. Most are poorer Third World nations where, often, each new mouth (as Enke, 1960, first discovered for India) means a net drain on national resources. In these countries, providing employment for males, let alone females, is often a losing race. New development is likely to be capital, not labor, intensive; typically, half the rapidly increasing population are dependents under age 15; and the migrants keep streaming to the cities at a rate ever faster than the jobs. In these countries also, female employment rates (especially in the modern sector) are often quite low.

Yet, as recent studies show, the weight of the evidence indicates a substantial and inverse correlation between female

status factors and fertility (see, e.g., Birdsall, 1974; Sipes, forthcoming; Dixon, 1974; Germain, 1974; Ware, 1975 and Chaney, 1973). Female employment in modern sector jobs outside the household seems generally well associated with lower fertility - and female education even more so. Moreover, Boserup (1974) makes the argument that even in the high unemployment Third World countries under discussion, getting women into the economic mainstream should increase the pace of development. At the extreme, it might be that every dollar spent on education and employment for boys not matched by a dollar spent for girls may ultimately be lost to such nations in the subsequently higher fertility of those girls. At the very least, however, getting females into schools and employment would seem to have clear utility beyond altruism. At stake are not only economic goals, but also the commitment to relieve human suffering and make a more equitable life available to all.[16]

But even if the policy planners were to provide the schooling and the jobs, the weight of the paradigm and the data on the U.S.'s growing wage gap make it appear that strategic indispensability and power are not automatic fringe benefits of work. In the final analysis, it may well be the degree of organization and consciousness of the women themselves that will determine just how far along the road to equality the provision of economic opportunity will lead.

FOOTNOTES

1. I do not wish to suggest that directly comparing U.S. women vs. men provides the only sort of bad news around from the standpoint of the women's movement (or that all recent women vs. men comparisons would lead to "bad news" results). After all, the Equal Rights Amendment has become an increasingly vulnerable target and is encountering rough sledding in picking up the last handful of states' ratifications prior to the 1979 deadline, despite hard lobbying by women's groups and liberal supporters. Similarly, counter-movements have succeeded in restricting the Supreme Court's 1973 decision upholding a woman's right to a timely abortion. While such "bad news" relates to the relative power of the organized women's movement vs. assorted backlash, conservative and reactionary groups, it is not a straightforward comparison of clout across sexes. Finally, I do not wish to suggest that U.S. women are in the forefront of sexual liberation and equality despite the disproportionate publicity given the ups and downs of the American women's movement. In fact, by many measures, the U.S. does not show up too favorably in international comparisons of female status (see, e.g., Safilios-Rothschild, 1971).

2. In simple, preclass societies, we can compare the women to the men of the total group, but for class societies we have to examine the position of women separately for each class, for it may vary greatly by stratum. To underscore this distinction, most subsequent references to male/female comparison are phrased something like this: the position of the women relative to the men of their <u>class or group</u>.

3. Among the Tasaday, the evidence is still incomplete. My paradigm of sex stratification examines the degree of relative inequality of the males and females in a specific group but makes no assumptions about any potential upper limits on sexual equality, including the controversial topic of whether hormonal differences militate against it, as alleged by Goldberg, 1973/74.

4. Two other approaches to female status involving the notion of life alternatives or options, and including some of the variables on my list, may be found in Safilios-Rothschild, 1971; Boulding, 1972.

5. A partial selection from the list includes: Martin and Voorhies, 1975; Oboler, 1973; Leacock, 1972; Engels (Leacock edition, 1972); Sacks, 1975; Benston, 1969; and Lenin (in Benston, 1969).

6. George Peter Murdock's <u>Ethnographic Atlas</u> has been frequently - and often justifiably - criticized for a wide

variety of methodological problems. There are undoubted weaknesses in defining the sampling unit and in failing to "pinpoint" all variables to the same location and/or time, for example. The Atlas presents data on dozens of variables which Murdock and like-minded anthropological colleagues deemed most relevant for the study of the world's preindustrial societies; other social scientists find the variables included wanting. It is certain that there are a number of errors scattered among its codes on some 1200-odd societies. Nevertheless, over time, the Atlas has shown its worth in dozens of studies whose findings have stood up to other data sources. In general, its economically-linked variables have proven the most trustworthy - and seemingly the least likely to be affected by "Galton's problem" (where two variables seem to covary not because of any functional link but rather due to the happenstance of joint diffusion). Yet overall, it remains the largely-unimpeached, largest-scale data source for macro-societal comparative research.

7. According to the archeological record, horticultural cultivation apparently evolved slowly over millenia, rather than springing from some sudden discovery that seeds sprout into plants. All foragers ever studied already know this but rarely adopt the more arduous and regimented life of cultivation in the absence of strong pressure. Today the pressure is likely to come from governments eager to increase their control as well as "modernity" among the few remaining foraging groups on earth. But historically, population pressure seems to have been the most frequent and plausible stimulus to the emergence of cultivation (see, e.g., Binford, 1971; Flannery, 1971; Meyers, 1971). After all, cultivation provides the possibility of increasing the total group food supply.

8. Actually, the spread is quite great. My calculations with the Ethnographic Atlas revealed that it ranged from about two percent of societies where women contributed virtually nothing to the food supply to roughly the same percentage where they contributed two-thirds or more.

9. Why this excess fertility? In contrast to the standard Malthusian explanation (that peasants breed, primarily out of animal-like ignorance, up to the limits of the food supply), I suggest that the peasants continued to produce those extra sons and daughters for basically rational reasons of utility. There has been a recent convergence of studies suggesting that births tend to be limited or spaced in accordance with life conditions, and evidence has been mounting to support the proposition that people in the preindustrial societies exhibit high fertility under certain conditions that make large numbers of children economically useful (see, e.g., Polgar, 1972, 1975; Birdsell and related references in Lee and Devore, 1968;

Faris, 1973; Mamdani, 1972; Schnaiberg and Reed, 1974; Blumberg, 1978). Returning to the problem of the "expendables," I have suggested that just because these excess sons and daughters of the peasantry were barely even a surplus labor force as adults does not mean they were not useful to their parents as children: often the only one of the three factors of production (land, capital, labor) the peasant producers can control is labor costs - by growing their own labor force (see Blumberg and Garcia, 1977). In agrarian societies, children may become economically useful as young as age six, returning more to the parents in labor, babysitting, etc. than the costs of feeding and maintaining them. In such societies, the extra children may be what is needed to keep ahead of the landlord - surplus extraction in the form of "rent" always comes off the top of peasant output. Thus, peasants in societies where their surplus is skimmed off the top by the dominant classes are not (paraphrasing Mamdani, 1972) poor because they have many children; they have many children because they are poor, and the children represent a potential solution to the problem of their poverty. Hence the origin of the class of expendables seems to be found in the social relations of production.

10. It would appear that women may traverse the road to relatively equal (or better) economic power under a variety of circumstances, most of which seem to involve their capitalizing on their strategic importance in production in a period of larger economic flux. In most instances, this would probably involve an economy with sufficient sex division of labor in major economic activities to give women a sphere in which they controlled technical expertise and day-in, day-out work flow. For example, in a previously communal economy moving toward surplus accumulation and ownership on a non-communal basis, the women might gain control of the means and surplus of production involved in their contribution to the economy. In a non-communal economy, an unimportant sphere always controlled by women might suddenly mushroom in importance and demand; or conditions of political instability and strife might facilitate women taking over control of the means and surplus of production involved in their work from those (men) who had previously held it. But the example of the communal Tasaday gatherers should alert us to the possibility of equal economic power being exercised by women in the absence of either or both sex division of labor in production and non-communal economic control.

11. The HRAF were initiated by Murdock almost a generation before the Ethnographic Atlas, and have been subject to at least as much criticism. The HRAF organize ethnographies under a complex system of 888 separate categories. The categories are basically a multiple-reference filing system for the actual pages of the ethnographies (vs. the alphameric codes of the Atlas). The HRAF and the Atlas share many of the same methodological pitfalls (see note 6), and both contain many, although

apparently non-systematic, errors. But both have stood up fairly well to the tests of time and many studies. Overall, despite all the flaws, the HRAF remain the richest multi-society data source for comparative research. As with the Atlas, one seems on the most solidest ground with the techno-economic data. And a substantial amount of the variables I coded from the HRAF fall into this category. When used with appropriate caution, I feel, the HRAF can generate reliable and valid results.

12. A more detailed treatment of the paradigm, the sample, the coding, and the results to date is in preparation (Blumberg, forthcoming).

13. Elizabeth Almquist (1977) has written an excellent analysis of research concerning wage discrimination against women. Although she does not attempt to systematically enumerate the factors which weaken women's bargaining position, she treats some of the same variables I mention. These include women's segregation into a narrow range of subsequently overcrowded occupations ("which potentially depresses the wages because of oversupply" - 1977:10), and the lower wages and perhaps less than free choice involved in women's part-time work. Concerning women's occupational concentration, she scores both the extant sociological and economics research for failing to take this into account, and cites Oppenheimer's finding (1968) that just 10 occupations encompass more than half the female labor force, whereas for men, the 20 largest occupations are needed to encompass half the labor force. Other relevant sociological references on wage discrimination include Almquist, 1975; Sorkin, 1973; and Suter and Miller, 1973. Status attainment model studies of the problem (e.g., Featherman and Hauser, 1976; Treiman and Terrell, 1975) are criticized by Almquist for their narrow focus and lack of process. (Almquist also covers the economics literature; recent studies of note include Blinder, 1973; Malkiel and Malkiel, 1973; Oaxaca, 1973, and Sawhill, 1973.)

14. The notion of substitutability of a labor force affecting its vulnerability to lower bargaining power has been carried one step further by Szymanski, 1976. He compared the size of the earnings gap between males and females with that between whites and blacks and found the relationships to be inverse. Accordingly, he argues that sexism and racism constitute "functional substitutes in the labor market."

15. According to Padan-Eisenstark (1973), many women saw their job choice as a "lesser of two evils" dilemma, since they had to opt for either disliked field crops or disesteemed "domestic drudgework." As women left the fields for child-birth or other jobs, their places were filled by men (Spiro, 1963:225). In other cases, women's horticultural activities were phased out as seemingly "uneconomic" for the kibbutz. So

the process proceeded by attrition. For the last generation, women have averaged perhaps 10 percent of the agricultural production workers; most others work at training children, cooking, sewing, laundry, kitchen chores, etc. And for the last generation, flare-ups of female discontent at this state of affairs have fueled what Spiro terms the "problem of the woman."

16. As Tinker (1976), Boserup (1970) and many others increasingly point out, development planning that does not take women explicitly into account may often leave them in a worse position than before. In a number of countries with a tradition of high female economic autonomy (via food crop cultivation and trading, or market trading in general), the independence and economic well-being of the women often are undermined by the economic changes and dislocations accompanying "development," and the incorporation of previously less-affected areas into the world economy. Food crops are replaced by export crops - often to the disadvantage of the female cultivators of the former; handmade goods sold at local markets are replaced by cheap mass-production imports sold through foreign-originated new distribution networks - again, often to the disadvantage of the female petty traders and merchants. And development assistance provided to women has focused more around family planning, nutrition and childcare than restoring or enhancing their economic opportunities.

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