

# Murray Hill Institute

## *Women Transforming Culture*

### Newsletter

March 2004

Volume 1, Number 1

---

### Feature Article

#### ***News Panorama***

For some time, professional women have been making significant strides in the workplace and their enhanced presence is producing a positive difference. The attributes, assets and abilities of women wherever they work in their chosen fields contribute immensely to the benefit of society. Moreover, women's values, standards and judgments are increasingly being recognized and appreciated. This Newsletter will present evidence of women's singular contributions gathered from the results of studies, reports, surveys, analyses, and data that appear from time to time that draw attention to women's positive role and performance in the world at large.

**Heightened Presence of Women in the World's Parliaments** – A recent compilation by the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU), an organization founded in 1889 and now part of the United Nations network, showed that of 181 countries observed, at least 167 have legislatures with seats held by women. Globally, as of October 2003, the percentage of women parliamentarians in the lower or single chamber (some countries have a unicameral legislature) was a record 15.2%. The highest percentage

was scored by Rwanda where, following recent elections, women won 48.8% of seats in the House and 30% in the Senate. Sweden and Denmark were next in line: Women there occupied 45.3% and 38% of seats in their respective one-chamber parliaments. The top ten rankings included seven European countries, two Latin American and one from Africa.

In the United States, women accounted for 14.3% of House of Representative seats and tied with Andorra for 60th place in ranking. There are now 62 women members in the U.S. House and 13 in the Senate. Given its vast population, China had the largest number of women in its single chamber: 650 women out of 2,984. Nine countries had more than one hundred women in their legislature. It should be noted that in some countries a share or quota of seats, by law, is allocated to women.

But presence is not the only significant factor. A study several years ago by the Berlin-based organization Transparency International found that countries with a higher share of women parliamentarians tended to be more honest and less corrupt. Countries with a minimal number of women in parliament are generally among the most

corrupt and least developed. As more women compete for and gain legislative seats around the globe, their growing presence should help make the world a better place.

**Source:** [Inter-Parliamentary Union, "Women in National Parliaments - Situation as of 20 October 2003."](#)

**The Importance of Educating Women Wherever They Are** – With the Middle East so much in the news, a lot of attention has been focused on the rebuilding and transformation of that region. One short article underscored the key role that women ought to play in this process. The author pointed out that there is a strong correlation between women's education and development. He quotes an old proverb: "When you educate a man you educate a man. When you educate a woman, you educate two generations."

Countries with the highest percentage of educated women enjoy the best standard of living, have the highest level of human development and comprise the wealthiest economies. These educated women are not only in a better position to improve their own status and well being but to educate their children and pass on a richer intellectual inheritance.

The article includes references to the economic advances made by so-called "Asian Tigers" such as Singapore, Hong Kong and Taiwan. Those countries are highly literate and the level of women's education is very high. In contrast, most Middle East

countries restrict educational opportunities for women and are among the world's least developed and most corrupt. For example, the Inter-Parliamentary Union's compilation of women parliamentarians mentioned earlier in this Newsletter showed that of eight Middle East countries covered, half had no women in parliament and women's presence in others was less than five percent. In that list, the contrast between Singapore and Saudi Arabia could not be more striking.

**Source:** ["Rebuilding the Mideast: Women Are the Key," Jean-Pierre Lehman, www.theglobalist.com, April 3, 2003.](#)

**Women MBA Students Place More Emphasis on Values and Ethics** – In light of numerous cases of corporate and financial scandals, particularly in the United States, it is worth pondering what the future might bring. Based on a recent study of MBA students, some amelioration may be on the horizon. Twelve top graduate business schools, eight in the United States, three in Canada and one in the United Kingdom, participated in this survey, conducted by The Aspen Institute, a highly regarded think tank.

Its Deputy Director of the Business and Society Program, upon presenting the results of this survey, noted that "...the definition of business success is changing. Within this trend, women are a major force in rethinking the business landscape and holding corporate decision making to a high standard."

Women MBA candidates identified a well-run company as one which adheres to a strong code of ethics and has a well defined mission. Women stressed the importance of work/life balance, favored responsibility to the community in which a company operates and recognized the need to place clients first in conducting business – even ahead of shareholders. Market realities may have sunk in: If clients and customers are not satisfied with a company’s services or products that company does not do well. And neither do stockholders or employees.

Women in the survey also indicated that they were not so satisfied with their business preparation. In response to the question: “To what extent is your business education preparing you to manage values conflicts?” 25% of women responded “Not at all” versus 19% of the men.

[Source: The Aspen Institute, Business and Society Program, “Where Will They Lead? - 2003 MBA Student Attitudes About Business and Society,” May 2003.](#)

**Understanding the Challenges of Women in Corporate Leadership** – A lengthier, more detailed survey examining men and women in high-level positions in large multinational corporations also brought out positive characteristics about women. Three nonprofit research organizations concerned with workplace issues collaborated on a study juxtaposing “common wisdom” with actual findings in eight key areas. Twelve major multinational companies headquartered in the United States operating in a range of industries in

manufacturing and services participated in the study that was conducted over a three-year period.

Nearly 1,200 executives took part, 52 percent were women and 48 percent men, all of whom were senior-level executives located across the globe. They all reported to their CEOs or the next level down. About 22 percent of the executives were responsible for 500 or more people and 57 percent were in “line” positions (responsible for contributing directly to company earnings). Their global presence was divided as follows: 62% United States and Canada, 16% in Western Europe, 11% Asia-Pacific (excluding Australia and New Zealand), 7% Latin America, and 4% rest of the world.

Not surprisingly, the study concluded “that men senior executives have higher status jobs than women senior executives, as measured by reporting level, number of direct and indirect reports, and total compensation.” The study went on to “investigate why this is so by looking at differences in men’s and women’s demographics, work experiences, family lives, ambitions, and the obstacles they face in advancing. None of these factors can fully explain why men have higher status jobs than women.” Then the study goes on to challenge common wisdom.

Personal life decisions underlie the whole workplace spectrum. A key finding was that women executives have had to make more critical decisions in managing both careers and personal lives. In particular, “Executive

men and women have lives at home that are very different from one another: 74 percent of women surveyed have a spouse/partner who is employed full-time while 75 percent of men surveyed have a spouse/partner who is not employed.” In addition, “35 percent of women versus 12 percent of men have delayed having children and 12 percent of women versus 1 percent of men have decided not to have children. Currently 90 percent of men executives have children compared with 65 percent of women executives.” Interestingly, the study also found that “...women at the reporting levels closer to the CEO are more likely to have children and less likely to have decided not to have children....”

Some executives in the study placed equal importance on family and work and were labeled “dual centric.” The results here showed that “Women who are dual-centric have advanced to higher reporting levels and also feel more successful in their home lives.” Somehow these women managed to find a workable balance in their lives.

Women and men at times see different strategies needed for advancement but often each group is offered different types of opportunities. Nonetheless, stepping stones to success were more similar than different with two notable differences: “women are more likely than men to say that having very high personal standards for their work and being able to navigate the politics of their organizations have been very important to their success.”

Another common wisdom is that

organizations have different barriers to moving ahead and women are more disadvantaged. True enough, as women pointed out “...being excluded from important networks, having a limited number of role models, having limited opportunities for experiences in line or in general management positions, facing gender stereotypes, and being in dual-career families” were all obstacles that hindered advancement.

Given that many more women today are in high-level positions, the responses to who helped them succeed are interesting indeed! Both men (87%) and women (81%) responded that the person who most helped them advance was a man. But women mentors’ role in developing leaders must not be minimized: “...women who have had a woman as the most helpful person are more likely than other women to have reached reporting levels 1 or 2” – the very top.

Since it is costly to develop top talent, companies are concerned about retaining their key executives. While promotion and compensation are key elements, respondents to this study ranked high other factors including “respect, acceptance of individual differences, support in the workplace, job quality, and flexibility.”

More similarities than differences emerged in challenging common wisdom. In the final analysis, the report concluded: “Both men and women need to feel recognized for their performance and perceive the performance evaluation system as fair, both need to feel

included in important networks, both need to see opportunities for growth and advancement, and both need sponsors and role models.” All of these issues need to be addressed effectively, “regardless of gender.”

Regardless of retention strategies, the study discovered that almost 30 percent of all executives planned to leave their posts within five years – but not to retire. Indeed, 56 percent “plan to pursue a different career. There are no differences between men and women in what they plan to do when they leave their companies.” No doubt some will be inspired to go into business for themselves. Here too, women are no strangers.

**Source:** “Leaders in a Global Economy – A Study of Executive Women and Men,” co-sponsored by The Families and Work Institute, Catalyst and The Center for Work and Family (Boston College Carroll School of Management), June 2003.

Prepared by Vincenzina Santoro,  
International Economist and former Vice  
President of JPMorgan & Co., Inc., from  
sources deemed reliable.