Research for Action
Women in Co-operatives

Leona Theis
Lou Hammond Ketilson

Women

Co-ops

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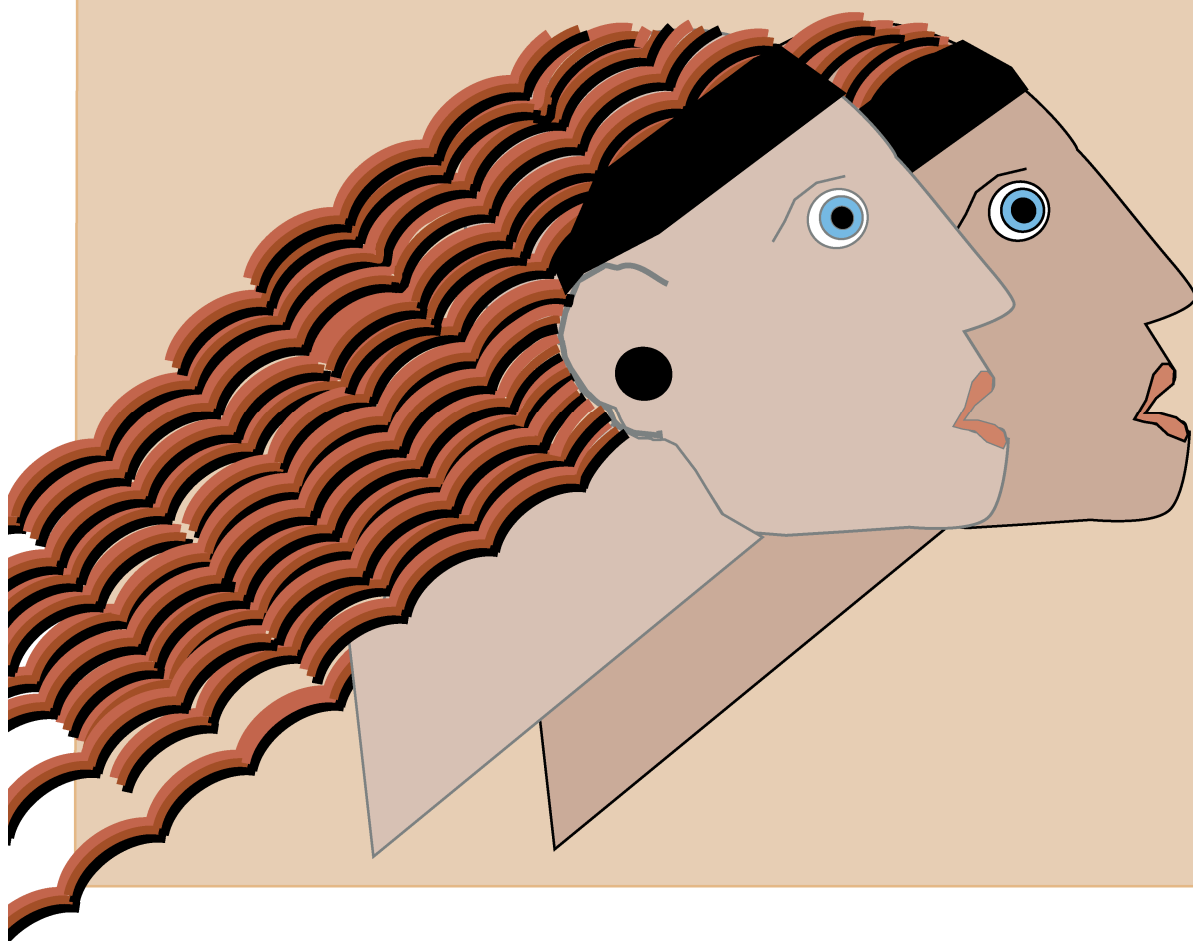## Women in Co-operatives

LEONA THEIS

AND

LOU HAMMOND KETILSON

Centre for the Study of
CO-OPERATIVES

UNIVERSITY OF
SASKATCHEWAN

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Centre for the Study of Co-operatives

CONTENTS

CONTENTS

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Aims of the project

This research was conducted under the auspices of the Centre for the Study of Co-operatives, University of Saskatchewan. The broad aim of the project was to uncover and document helps and hindrances women have encountered in their experience as elected officials and as employees in decision making positions in co-operatives.

To address equitable representation in democratic and staff structures is right and proper in itself. It is also more than that. When co-operatives deal with issues that cluster around equity, they address questions that have to do with how co-operative organizations "do democracy", and how they do business. A study that addresses the status of women in co-operatives does not arrive at just a set of "women's issues" but rather at ways to think about a range of issues vital to co-operatives and their placement in the economy and the community. In other words, thinking about equity in democratic and management structures is one of a number of "ways in" to thinking about the relevance and effectiveness of co-operatives in general. It is also a way to begin considering barriers that affect all under-represented groups.

Case studies

Individuals in staff and elected positions in five co-operatives located in various regions of Canada participated in this research. The co-operatives include first tier or primary co-operatives as well as federations, associations or centrals. They are: Co-op Atlantic, Co-operative Housing Association of Ontario, Saskatchewan Wheat Pool, Calgary Co-operative Association, and VanCity Savings and Credit Union.

Survey

A survey of all members of the Canadian Co-operative Association, the CCA itself, and each case study co-operative, was conducted to develop baseline data on women's participation as elected officials and employees. The return rate for the survey was 50%. Results of the survey appear in Appendix 2.

Findings and recommendations

The recommendations presented here are drawn from information gathered through the Research for Action project, which focused on uncovering helps and hindrances to women in decision making positions. Since the recommendations do not, for the most part, draw on a review of theoretical literature and other research, they are not exhaustive. They suggest ways organizations can build on the successes and address the barriers the Research for Action project identified. To illustrate the link between recommendations and the context from which they are drawn, recommendations are incorporated within the relevant sections of this summary.

The summary of findings below follows the flow of the full report. The first two parts summarize findings from interviews with elected officials and the next two sections summarize findings from interviews with female staff in decision-making positions. These are followed by a sampling of initiatives case study organizations have taken to address barriers. Finally, findings from the baseline data survey are summarized.

1. ELECTED GROUP: BUILD ON POSITIVE EXPERIENCES

Base of experience

Various training grounds exist from which people later move to positions as delegates or board members. Participants emphasized several ways in which early experience, in organizations and in other aspects of their lives, equipped them for their positions. It allowed them to: develop a profile among the membership; see how others fulfill their leadership roles, and to envision themselves in the same positions; prepare for the politics of elected bodies; and, become familiar with the organization, thus reducing the intimidation factor associated with holding an elected office.

Recommendations

1.1 Communicate, through public documents and personal behavior, recognition of the value and relevance of previous experience, including experience traditionally associated with women's lives, which candidates bring to elected roles.

1.2 Actively recruit members of under-represented groups to committees and to the board. Encourage preparation for elected roles through committee membership.

1.3 Identify avenues for members to develop a visible profile, and encourage candidates from under-represented groups to take advantage of these. Examples are: committee positions; community projects and other special projects; member relations initiatives which link the organization more closely with under-represented groups.

1.4 Support committee members in their roles by establishing terms of reference and by having past chairs orient new chairs to the job.

1.5 Offer self-development workshops to help people prepare to take on public roles. Recognize at the same time that relevance to people's needs and a climate of support for diversity in an organization will do more to establish equity than will personal development for individuals from under-represented groups.

Philosophical fit

Elected officials draw support from knowing they are involved with an organization that works toward, or has the potential to work toward, goals that are consistent with their own.

Recommendations

1.6 Through member orientation and communication, work to address members' perceptions of the organization overall. Be clear about the co-operative's profile—its services, its relevance.

1.7 Publicize elected positions as avenues through which people can contribute to their community.

1.8 Identify and publicize ways in which co-operatives do or can make a difference in people's lives.

Learning as a benefit of the role

The learning, both formal and informal, which accompanies the responsibility of elected office is not only a necessity which enables people to serve properly; it is also a personal benefit. This learning ranges from financial management to leadership, confidence, and group dynamics.

Recommendations

1.9 Publicize the opportunities an elected position presents for people to learn new skills and to broaden their networks.

1.10 Offer training which deals not only with the specific organization, but which also places the organization within the larger co-operative and credit union movement as a whole.

1.11 Have senior staff sit down with the board and "walk" board members through their functional areas.

1.12 Clarify board and management roles through training, clear communication processes and terms of reference.

Sources of support: organizational climate, key people, family, employers

There were many instances where women were not optimistic about the climate of support for women in their organizations as a whole, but most could identify key individuals on staff and on the board who recruit women and/or help to create a climate that supports women. Important support comes from personal contact with committed women and men who are active locally, regionally, and nationally in the co-operative movement, and from other women who introduce new board members to how things are done. Family members and employers are essential sources of support. Those who have less flexible work or family lives feel additional pressure.

Recommendations

1.13 Show leadership at the senior level to create a climate of support for women in leadership positions. Recognize that the more women employees who are in decision-making positions, the more there will be a climate that encourages women to seek election.

1.14 Establish avenues for members and elected officials to communicate with committed, supportive individuals in co-operatives beyond the local level. This can happen through sector-specific meetings, through attendance at co-operative forums, and through cross-sector regional and national co-operative training events, committees and task forces.

1.15 When child care or elder care is necessary in order for a board member to attend meetings or training events, cover expenses.

2. ELECTED GROUP: ADDRESS EXISTING BARRIERS

Political process concerns

Anxiety surrounds running for and holding office. Elections can be grueling political contests, and the information members have on which to base their choice in large co-operatives is thin. Elections tend to favour incumbents. Once a board member is elected, there can be a negative change in the way people treat her or him. A "we/they" division often develops between board and membership.

Recommendations

2.1 Improve the democratic climate of the organization through meaningful consultation processes which allow all members to bring their views to the board and membership for consideration.

2.2 Institute regular reviews (interviews with members and elected officials, hearings, avenues for anonymous registration of concern) to continually monitor and evaluate the organization's political climate in light of the following questions:

Are elections characterized by negativity more than by a climate of opportunity for candidates to offer their skills to the membership?

Do members have adequate, appropriate information on which to base their choices among candidates?

Do the actions of the board and staff, and do member orientation programs, work to eliminate division between the board and members?

Does the board, and do committees reflect the constituency the board hopes to serve? Does the organization define its constituency as one that reflects the diversity of the Canadian population?

Negative climate

Co-operative leaders need to ask whether their board and delegate body create a climate that turns away women or members of other under-represented groups. Signs of a negative climate experienced by women in this study include: exclusion of women from more prestigious committees or offices on the board; perception among board members that the recording role is appropriately filled by a woman; resistance to gender neutral language; the assumption that the lone woman at the table represents "all women."

Recommendations

2.3   Establish a clear policy to deal with instances of sexual harassment in the democratic structure. Communicate the policy clearly to all elected officials and staff.

2.4   Incorporate discussion of climate issues and material about differential treatment of women into board training programs. Include discussion of the importance to the board of people with varied backgrounds and leadership styles.

2.5   Adopt a communications policy which includes guidelines on the use of inclusive language and non-sexist communication.

2.6   Institute regular reviews (interviews with members and elected officials, hearings, avenues for anonymous registration of concern) to continually monitor and evaluate the climate for elected officials in light of the following questions:

Are women, by design, tradition, or perception of their level of capability, excluded from certain offices on the board? Are they expected to fill gender-stereotyped roles on the board?

Do women on the board need to work harder to establish their credibility than men do?

Is the burden of advocating for women employees and members, and for inclusive language carried solely by female board members?

Weight of role

The stresses of elected office include divisive issues, legal responsibility, unclear roles, physical fatigue and time pressure. Co-operatives can help both women and men who are elected officials meet responsibilities to their families and communities with policies that make commitment to the co-operative possible.

For women, the stress of an elected position can be compounded by the loneliness of being the only woman or one of few women in that position, and by the sense of being marked as different because they sound different, look different and dress differently from their male counterparts. To be seen as different is to be more closely watched. Some research participants were keenly aware of having to prove their credibility to an extent that was not required of their male colleagues.

Recommendations

2.7   Conduct exit interviews with female board members to learn of barriers they encountered or supports that were particularly helpful to them.

2.8   Ensure elected roles are characterized by reasonable work loads and flexibility, such that people who have family responsibilities and people who work in jobs with low flexibility can participate.

3. EMPLOYEE GROUP: BUILD ON POSITIVE EXPERIENCES

Positive climate

Attitudes of co-workers and management affect both the daily experience and the long-term success of female employees. A climate that accepts women in decision making positions comes about only with commitment from senior management. Research participants gave examples of how acceptance, encouragement, a sense of belonging, and flexibility in hours create a supportive climate.

Recommendations

3.1   Senior management must demonstrate a clear and articulate commitment to addressing barriers to all under-represented groups through practice and policy.

3.3   Senior management must address negative peer group attitudes through leadership, example, and commitment to appropriate training programs.

3.4   Allow flexibility in determining hours of work.

Encouragement and recognition

Research participants recognized the role that supportive managers and supervisors played, either through direct encouragement or through seeing their potential and giving them the opportunity to take on challenges and show initiative.

Recommendations

3.5   Encouragement and recognition is a responsibility of management and supervisory staff, who should:

demonstrate confidence in women employees;

assist employees to identify opportunities to take on new challenges and expand the scope of their positions; and,

support employees in meeting these new challenges with appropriate training, release time, teamwork and resources.

Models and mentors

It is important for women to see other women in senior roles from an early stage in their careers. Mentorship often occurs informally. A formal mentorship program creates opportunities for a greater number of female employees to take advantage of mentor relationships.

Recommendations

3.6   Facilitate mentor relationships in one or more of the following ways:

establish, or provide access to, training which helps employees to choose mentors and to be effective mentors;

establish panels of senior employees with whom other employees can meet and from whom they can learn as a group;

match new women employees with senior women employees in mentor pairs;

establish procedures for employees who wish to terminate participation or switch to a new mentor.

Opportunity

Clear promotion procedures should be coupled with enough flexibility that employees with initiative have room to expand their jobs. A visible path to promotion lowers the chance that informal mechanisms that disadvantage some groups will continue to operate. Flexibility is important, since some jobs evolve during a person's tenure as the organization grows, affording the incumbent the opportunity to grow with the job.

Recommendations

3.7 Where appropriate, accommodate employees' initiatives to expand the scope of their positions. Support employees in meeting these new challenges with appropriate training, release time, teamwork and resources.

3.8 Ensure open recruitment channels for women to pursue non-traditional jobs. Establish appropriate guidelines for advertising jobs and conducting interviews.

3.9 Establish training across functional areas to de-segregate primarily male and primarily female career paths.

Training

Research participants emphasized that employees need information about opportunity and eligibility for training. People cannot self-identify for development programs if they are not aware of the possibilities. Opportunities for cross-training on the job in a variety of work areas, with release time to take advantage of such training, have been crucial for some research participants. Decisions about training should not be in the hands of supervisors alone.

Recommendations

3.10 Publicize training possibilities to all staff so they can self-identify for opportunities.

3.11 Go beyond granting the opportunity to self-identify for training. Encouragement is important.

3.12 Establish training opportunities for part-time staff.

3.13 Facilitate access to training events outside the organization, such as "Women in Management" seminars, where women can share concerns and approaches with other women.

3.14 Recognize the limitations of a women-only approach in training by developing training programs that address equity issues with all staff.

4. EMPLOYEE GROUP: ADDRESS EXISTING BARRIERS

Negative climate

One woman noted that, especially in her field , which is a non-traditional area for women, a woman has to be especially tenacious in establishing her credibility. By virtue of being part of

what is still a relatively new phenomenon, a woman in senior management is inevitably visible in a way her male peers are not.

Some women feel strong resistance when they raise questions about sexism, sexual harassment, and gender neutral language. This resistance pressures them to curb the extent to which they speak out. Others find their work styles do not fit with hierarchical, bureaucratic structures and adversarial approaches to labour relations.

Recommendations

4.1 Establish a clear policy to deal with instances of sexual harassment. Communicate the policy clearly to all elected officials and staff.

4.2 Institute regular reviews (interviews with employees, hearings, avenues for anonymous registration of concern) to continually monitor and evaluate the organizational climate in light of the following questions:

Do employee groups at all levels reflect the constituency the organization hopes to serve? Does the organization define its constituency as one that reflects the diversity among the Canadian population? Is it normal, not exceptional, to see women in leadership positions?

Are provisions such as flexible hours and cross-training available consistently throughout the organization, or only in areas where supervisors support change?

Are newly promoted women watched more closely than newly promoted men by their peers and by management?

Are work methods and corporate structure styled after adversarial or collaborative models?

Unclear career paths

Since experience across a variety of work areas is increasingly seen as a prerequisite for promotion, opportunity to train across functional areas is crucial. At the same time, inherited assumptions about the set of skills required for promotion to a particular position should be examined. When criteria are re-thought to ensure that the appropriate set of skills, properly weighted, are the basis for assessment, the result may be an expanded or different pool of candidates for promotion.

Recommendations

4.3 Monitor differences in wages between areas where women achieve management positions and areas where they do not, to determine if management positions held by women are less valued.

4.4 Establish avenues for cross-training and for advancement from the functional areas where the greatest number of female employees begin their careers, for example, clerical or cashier positions.

4.5 Assess prerequisites for promotion to specific positions to determine areas where the organization is limiting itself to a male-only pool of candidates for promotion.

Health, stress, workload and family

The increased stress and work load that accompany promotion lead to a two-dimensional struggle for balance. One challenge is to juggle the commitments within the job; the other is to balance the job with life outside the office. Given heavy work loads and the still-strong societal pattern that leaves women bearing the greater share of domestic work and child and elder care, senior positions can become unmanageable for some. As responsibilities in the home come to be shared more equally, policies which accommodate workers' multiple responsibilities will aid both women and men. At the same time, such policies can increase the likelihood that men will take on a larger share of the domestic load.

Recommendations

4.6   Audit the organization's effect on health, family and community:

Are work loads such that all employees can achieve a reasonable balance between work, personal life, and responsibilities to family and community?

Does policy grant flexibility for women and men to take family sick leave, and to rearrange hours of work to meet family responsibilities?

5. THE ROLE OF LARGER CO-OPERATIVES

It would be naive to assume that change across the co-operative system will occur without leadership from the system's largest and most influential organizations. Larger organizations, particularly second and third tier co-operatives, have the opportunity to encourage and support meaningful, sustainable equity initiatives.

Part Four of the full report includes profiles of case study organizations and equity initiatives they have taken. Here are some examples:

Saskatchewan Wheat Pool

In 1990 the task force on the Involvement of Women in Saskatchewan Wheat Pool began to assess barriers and look at methods to encourage involvement. The task force recommended strategies and actions including: being clear about the relevance of the Pool, and about opportunities for and rewards of involvement; using appropriate language and visual images in all communication; gathering information about women's needs; and, providing for discussion of women in all centrally developed programs. All these programs are intended to encourage women to take an interest in the Pool and to meet their need for information about the organization and about farm policy. The Pool credits these strategies and related events with contributing to a sharp increase in the number of women serving on committees.

VanCity Savings Credit Union

VanCity hired an equity co-ordinator to research available resources and possible strategies, to develop an equity policy, and to put together an educational program which supports the equity policy. Many initiatives have resulted, including day long "Working With Diversity" educational sessions for people at the supervisory level and up. The training allows a person to step back and assess her or his own identity, prejudices and assumptions. The Credit Union intends to offer similar courses below the supervisory level in the future.

Calgary Co-operative Association

Three of the nine board members of Calgary Co-op are women. The member relations committee has been a source of early experience for a number of board members. This committee traditionally has good representation of women and men among its members. No formal initiatives are in place to work toward equity in the democratic structure, but individual board members have historically made efforts to encourage and recruit female candidates to the board and to committees.

Co-operative Housing Association of Ontario (CHAO)

CHAO brings together non-profit organizations working in the co-operative housing sector in Ontario. Women have always had a high profile in the co-operative housing sector in Canada. The president and immediate Past President of CHAO are both women. Still, there are many

housing co-operatives and federations where women do not experience the equity that is characteristic of CHAO. Part of CHAO's current work plan is to examine the face of leadership within the movement with its member organizations. Staff of the organization see a role for second and third tier co-operatives to take the lead in establishing the type of education about equity that is available, in developing policy models, and in addressing systemic barriers such as those which assign voting rights to one person per household rather than to every adult household member.

Co-op Atlantic

Co-op Atlantic is in the process of developing an employment equity policy. The Manager of Personnel, Planning and Development developed a consultation process to gather employee input to help the organization make decisions about policy. Her goal is to articulate policy choices so that employees can see and understand them. As part of the employee equity initiative, she works to identify and highlight for employees the value-based decisions that need to be made. For example, employees address such questions as: Do we want work-family policies? This depends on how Co-op Atlantic defines "employees". Does Co-op Atlantic define employees as people who are likely to have central family responsibilities or not? Family responsibilities include not only parenting, but elder care as well.

Leadership among larger organizations implies a commitment to change. As Marie Claire Malo noted in a presentation to the Canadian Association for Studies in Co-operatives, co-operatives are exposed to "the current prevailing rules of thought and operations" in the business and social environment. She went on to say that, "They are, however, at the same time agents, agents of ... economic and social transformation ....."[1] Malo referred specifically to the role women played in the development of Quebec's consumer co-operatives, but her point is relevant to the role co-operatives have taken historically in creating change.

Recommendations

In order to encourage co-operatives that may be unwilling or unable to undertake equity initiatives in isolation, second and third tier co-operatives should:

5.1 Show leadership in initiating efforts and in encouraging and supporting efforts made by co-operatives to address equity for under-represented groups in management, staff and democratic bodies. Examples are: provide staff and/or speakers; sponsor workshops; train workshop facilitators; ensure that issues related to equity for under-represented groups appear on agendas at conferences where co-operative representatives meet.

5.2 Establish a clearinghouse to collect, develop and disseminate material that will support equity initiatives. Examples are: model family-friendly policies; model communications policies that use inclusive language, and are sensitive to gender and race bias; step-by-step guides for establishing equity programs; workshop resource material.

6. BASELINE DATA SURVEY

The findings from the baseline data survey represent roughly half of the major co-operatives that make up the membership of CCA. For the co-operatives that reported, women make up just over 30% of management, but they are concentrated at the junior level, and under-represented in

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[1] Marie Claire Malo, "Customers or activists?" in Bold, June and Hammond-Ketilson, Lou, editors, *Empowerment Through Co-operatives: Selected Papers from the 1990 Meetings of the CASC.* Saskatoon: Centre for the Study of Co-operatives, 1991, p. 79.

senior management. Positions that tend to be held by women only are concentrated in the lower half of the salary grid, while the opposite is true for positions held by men only. This distribution is reflected in the finding that, overall, women's salary as a percentage of men's is 77% among survey respondents.

These data supply a baseline against which Canadian co-operatives can track future improvements in the status of women in their organizations. The findings of the quantitative study complement the qualitative findings from the case study component of the Research for Action project.

7. CONCLUDING REMARKS

This report presents recommendations based on primary research with a group of case studies in various regions of Canada. With the exception of Co-op Atlantic, the cases represent primarily English-speaking Canada. The Conseil Canadien de la Cooperation recently released two reference guides which resulted from an action research project concerned with women in co-operatives.[2] There is much to be learned by reviewing initiatives and recommendations other organizations and research studies have proposed. Canadian co-operatives are now in a position to benefit from a synthesis of their own research with guidelines developed by various human rights bodies, and research by large employers, including universities across Canada.[3]

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[2] See "Lancement des guides de référence" in *CASC Newsletter* (Canadian Association for Studies in Co-operatives, December 1993), for more information.

[3] See, for example, *Reinventing Our Legacy.* Saskatoon: University of Saskatchewan, 1993.

PART ONE: INTRODUCTION

Organizations in North America have reached a stage where it is no longer surprising to see women in decision making positions, but it is still unusual. Annual reports distributed in recent years by major Canadian co-operatives reflect efforts to show women, visible minorities and disabled people in their roles as members and employees. Photographs of senior management and boards in the same reports show that white males hold the overwhelming majority of leadership positions.

Members of the Canadian Co-operative Association (CCA), the national association of English-speaking co-operative organizations, recently identified gender equity among staff and elected officials as a priority. The 1991 Triennial Congress organized by the Canadian Co-operative Association (CCA) named the status of women as one of four key areas to receive special attention. A task force on women in co-operatives was subsequently formed by the CCA. The 1994 Triennial Congress will address, among other themes, "The Changing Face of Canada."

As organizations with both democratic and staff structures, co-operatives have the opportunity to address balance not only among employee groups, but also among elected officials who serve on committees and boards of directors. Potentially, co-operatives can serve as models for other organizations which depend on democratic structures.

To the extent that gender balance is successfully addressed, co-operatives offer women avenues to influence in a host of areas which define our lives. As active owner-members and as staff in decision making positions, women can help shape corporate policies, trade and commerce, levels and types of service, and employment practices in a variety of sectors including finance, health care, food and hardware, insurance, housing, child care and agriculture.

When co-operatives deal with issues that cluster around equity, they address questions that have to do with how co-operative organizations "do democracy," and how they do business.

To address equitable representation in democratic and staff structures is right and proper in itself. It is also more than that. When co-operatives deal with issues that cluster around equity, they address questions that have to do with how co-operative organizations "do democracy", and how they do business. There is—and there ought to be—an expectation among members of co-operatives that, as democratic organizations, they will strive to achieve equity for members and employees.

A study that addresses the status of women in co-operatives does not arrive at just a set of "women's issues" but rather at ways to think about a range of issues vital to co-operatives and their placement in the economy and the community. In other words, thinking about equity for women in democratic and management structures is one of a number of "ways in" to thinking about the relevance and effectiveness of co-operatives in general. It is also a way to begin considering barriers that affect all under-represented groups, although more research is necessary to uncover barriers specific to other groups.

Equality of access is one criterion by which to judge equity in co-operatives. Equality of impact is more important. An organization may have the former, but not the latter. A recent article in a newsletter from the World Council of Credit Unions furnishes an example from credit unions in developing countries. The focus is on answering the question: Given that a credit

union's policies do not overtly discriminate against women, why is it that their comparative impact (who gets the loans, who is hired, who is elected) is unfavourable to women?[4] The findings and recommendations in this report should be interpreted in a framework that considers equality of impact.

1.1 Aims of the research project

This report presents findings and analysis of exploratory research into the status of women in co-operatives. The research was conducted under the auspices of the Centre for the Study of Co-operatives, University of Saskatchewan, from December 1992 to June 1993.

The broad aim of the research project was to uncover and document helps and hindrances women have encountered in their experience as employees in decision making positions and as elected officials in co-operatives. We collected information about factors women in these roles feel have contributed to their being where they are, as well as what co-operative organizations can or should do to assist women to move into positions with decision-making authority. Originally, we hoped to track women's experiences with equity initiatives co-operatives have undertaken. However, aside from reporting requirements under the Federal Employment Equity Act, or the Federal Contractors Program, equity initiatives are either in their infancy or do not yet take the form of formal policy or programs. It is far too soon to track systematically their results. Since this research project dealt with women's experiences over the course of their careers, and since their careers spanned over a decade in most cases, findings reflect women's experiences in co-operatives for the pre-program stage for the most part.

This report is written with two audiences in mind. One audience includes all those in co-operatives who plan, or make recommendations concerning, equity policies and programs. As co-operatives move to put in place programs that address equity for women, the experiences reported here can provide a basis for discussion about what has helped in the past and what has stood in the way. To the extent that some of the barriers are common, the information here will provide insight for broad policies which address equity for other under-represented groups such as disabled people, visible minorities and Aboriginal people.

Second, this report is written for women members and employees who are concerned about equity and career advancement, or who are simply trying to make sense of their experience. Members of this group sometimes find it difficult to connect with other women who have similar concerns; in many co-operative organizations there are few women in management or elected positions. This report will help reduce this isolation, and allow women to place themselves into a larger picture. This is not to say that the experiences of the women who participated in this study are universal, only that readers will be able to place their own experiences within a broader set of situations, and to compare these with their own situations.

1.2 Limitations of the study

This study does not bring together information from the vast majority of women who, for a number reasons, have not achieved decision-making positions. Among this group are women who do not wish to advance in hierarchical organizations as they are presently structured, as well as those who do aspire to, but have not achieved, promotion for a wide range of reasons. These reasons include, but are not limited to: roles assigned to women by society; women's perceptions of these roles; role conflict; lack of opportunity for education; and, choices families make based

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[4] Scoggins, Anthony. "Coady trainers avoid using a women-only approach," in *Beyond Barriers*, (World Council of Credit Unions) Issue 3, May 1993, p. 3.

on men's greater earning power. To complement the present study, co-operatives need to both review and initiate research that deals with structural and societal hindrances women face.

The research this report includes on the experience of women in democratic structures is exploratory. Although a body of research exists which addresses women's participation as elected officials in co-operatives, political parties, and other associations, this research has not had the wide exposure that research into the status of women as employees has had. There is both less of it, and it is less reported in the daily papers and in business and academic journals. This means that analysis of the democratic component of this study occurs within a framework that is less developed and certainly less familiar than it might be.

1.3 Research participants

The people who participated in this research hold staff and elected positions in five co-operatives located in various regions of Canada. The co-operatives include first tier or primary co-operatives as well as federations, associations or centrals. They are: Co-op Atlantic, Co-operative Housing Association of Ontario, Saskatchewan Wheat Pool, Calgary Co-operative Association, and VanCity Savings and Credit Union. These organizations operate in retail, financial, housing and agricultural sectors. Please see *Part Four: Approaches to Equity in Five Co-operative Organizations* for more information about these five co-operatives. In each of the co-operatives two interviewees were female employees who hold decision making positions and two were female elected officials. At least one person responsible for personnel management and/or equity programs also participated in each organization.

Research participants reflected a broad variety of experience, politics, attitudes, and approach. Some were strongly committed to co-operative philosophy and principles; to others these were less important. Some believed working evenings and week-ends is a responsibility of their positions; some did not. Their work and life experiences were deep, or broad, and sometimes both. Some referred to themselves as feminists; some did not.

1.4 Research approach

This research study takes a qualitative research approach. The strength of the qualitative approach lies in its ability to illuminate in depth, rather than to typify or represent "universal laws". The aim is not to be comprehensive or statistically representative, but rather to increase understanding. Cases are not randomly selected. We chose the five in this study to allow for a variety of experience relevant to the questions the study addresses. Application of qualitative research rests in part on the end user asking: In what ways do my experience and my organization resemble or differ from the cases described here? Interpretation of qualitative research illuminates and frames areas of debate. For more information about case selection, research approach and procedures, see *Appendix 1*.

1.5 Presentation of findings

Part Two of this report brings together information gathered from interviews with women in elected positions. Part Three does the same for interviews with employees in decision making positions. Each subsection in Parts Two and Three begins with excerpts from interview notes. These excerpts are not the exact words of the people who were interviewed; however, they are taken from research notes which participants reviewed and approved. Discussion, expansion and analysis follow these excerpts. The excerpts which are reproduced at the head of each section are not meant to illustrate the entire discussion relevant to that section. They are chosen for their ability to illustrate select points, and to give readers a taste of original material.

Part Four brings together background information for the five organizations that participated in the research project, and reviews steps each organization is taking to address equity among employees and elected officials. Part Five summarizes the information the research project gathered, and links it to recommendations.

1.6 Acknowledgments

In order to respect confidentiality, we cannot name all the research participants. We thank the twenty-six individuals who participated thoughtfully and energetically in interviews for this project. We also thank the five organizations which participated, and those individuals in the case study organizations who helped with appointments and arrangements. The CCA Task Force on the Status of Women made suggestions at the proposal stage, and individual members of the Task Force provided further suggestions and support at later stages as well. Without Myrna Barclay's contribution of a survey questionnaire and background research which supported its development, we would not have been able to conduct the baseline data component of this research.

PART TWO: WOMEN IN ELECTED POSITIONS

The elected officials who participated in this study are committed women who work hard for their co-operatives, and who appreciate what their co-operatives do for them and for their communities. They draw support from several sources—key people within their organizations; their families; and, previous experience from all areas of their lives. They are concerned about barriers, including inadequacies in the democratic process, and a climate that is inhospitable to women. The heavy time commitment required of board members and delegates compounds other stresses.

The following sections present information according to the broad themes addressed in interviews with women in elected positions:

- What did they say has helped them?
- What further actions do they suggest organizations could take to work toward equity?
- What did they say has hindered them or made their elected positions difficult?
- What specific actions have they taken to cope with difficulties?

The separation of the first three themes does not result in a clear "good news, bad news" format. The issues connected to the encouragements and hindrances are too inter-related. The separation does, however, show that there are some successes. Organizations and members should consider ways to build on these at the same time they address approaches to obstacles the research participants identified.

2.1 What did they say has helped them?

Base of experience

Excerpts from interview notes:

> There were people involved in The Y, especially women, that she modeled herself after.
>
> [The member relations committee] is a training ground for future directors to learn about the co-op and about working in the democratic structure.
>
> She had a profile in the co-op sector before she ran: she had presented and spoken on resolutions, had spoken on issues at annual meetings.
>
> Of these experiences, she said it is not just what a person learns in a meeting that is important, but also getting to know the people, and discussing philosophy at two in the morning.
>
> Over my years with 4-H, I learned a lot more than I learned in school.

Women come to elected roles with skill bundles they have collected from other volunteer and community roles, from paid work, and from family life. Some spoke of the confidence and ability they had built through their professional and managerial careers. One woman said her experience in traditionally assigned women's roles in the home means she brings to the board table a broad view based in areas where men usually do not have experience. Others speculated on differences in approach women can bring to the board table, differences associated with the biological fact of childbearing and with traditionally assigned responsibilities for the care of families. For one participant, the nature of women's family responsibilities means women can more easily take a medium to long-term view of the future; for another, it means women have less stake than men have in traditional patterns of authority.

Various training grounds exist from which people later move to positions as delegates or board members. All of the women who participated in the study had other volunteer leadership experience, and for most it was extensive. Some took on a position with a co-operative to fill a void as their involvement in another organization tapered off. The range of groups they had experience with was wide—4-H, the YWCA, churches, high schools, unions, and partisan politics. One participant said that through early leadership roles she learned that she was of value. Others said volunteer positions had increased their confidence levels, taught them about democratic structures and public roles, and given them practical experience and opportunities to attend training courses.

Participants referred to the value of previous experience in the co-operative organization at the committee level or as a local elected official before taking on responsibility at a regional or federation level. In some cases certain committees have acted as traditional training and orientation grounds for future directors. Where this is the case it is important for co-operatives to assess equity on those committees. Committee experience develops a person's profile among the membership; it offers a woman opportunity to see how others fulfill their leadership positions; it gives her a chance to think, "I can do that job." Getting to know the organization and some of the people connected with it reduces the intimidation factor associated with holding an elected office for the first time. It also prepares new people for the politics of elected bodies and helps "clue them in" to the level of support, or lack of it, for women in elected roles.

Philosophical fit

Excerpts from interview notes:

> One of the benefits of being a board member is being able to work with people who are co-op minded, but also with people who are willing to give their time to a cause.

> When she became highly involved, it was partly as a consequence of looking at the types of things that were high priority for the organization and realizing that they were high priority for herself as well.

> She is delighted to see the ease with which ethical governance can be accomplished by a strong board of directors. This characteristic, she says, takes on a life of its own; it becomes like a rolling stone.

> Partly because she is the only woman on the board, She feels she has a responsibility to women in the co-op movement, both members and staff.

> She recognizes that not all women have the opportunity she has, so she does what she can to make changes and break down those barriers. "Considering the philosophy of co-operatives, we should be leaders in equity, and somehow we got behind."

Some elected officials draw support from knowing they are involved with an organization that works toward, or has the potential to work toward, goals that are consistent with their own. One board member said she is very impressed with the resolutions that come before the annual meeting. She sees that her organization has the potential to make a difference in "so many areas of our lives."

Research participants spoke about specific goals that their involvement allowed them to work toward. For one it was a community development initiative. She saw her co-operative as an organization which had both the will and the ability to expand the range of services available in her community.

Another woman was motivated by a need to bring a grass roots perspective to the administration of her organization. Ideally, the democratic structure of a co-operative allows

input from the average member. Others highlighted the responsibility they feel toward other women, and the opportunity an elected official has to raise awareness of equity issues. They see co-operatives as organizations with both the responsibility and the resources to work toward equity for women as members and as employees. While in practice, co-operatives do not always live up to this ideal, they have democratic structures members can put to good use.

Learning

Excerpts from interview notes:

> *It has been like taking a masters degree in board relations.*

> *She also has learned a lot, for example about accounting, balance sheets, budgets and cash flow statements—things that are very useful in her personal life and her work.*

> *She has learned how to function as a board member, how to manage an organization of this size, how to motivate employees. These things are all of value to her in her daily work.*

> *Education is so important in terms of building confidence too. I can't emphasize that enough. The co-op systems have excellent training that builds confidence. And the experience makes people more confident too, women and men.*

Research participants said they learned through experience and through formal training programs how to better handle their roles. Good orientation training, one woman said, helped her to talk intelligently about the co-op movement to the members of her organization. It also helped her become familiar with services offered by central organizations so that she could better serve her home constituency. Some spoke of helpful experiences where senior management walked the board through details about a particular functional area. One board member said a new manager sat down with the directors and they reviewed their roles together, discussing the appropriate division of responsibilities among board and management.

Research participants said the formal and informal learning they have access to as elected officials applies to other areas of their lives; it is one of the benefits of the role they recognized and appreciated. Several mentioned the value they attach to personal development they undergo in terms of increased confidence, and experience in group dynamics (both positive and negative) that their roles had given them.

Sources of support: organization, key people, family, employers

Excerpts from interview notes:

> *She said she is not aware of any specific initiatives [the organization] has taken to have more women participate in the governance structure, but she has always known that it is very supportive of women. Also, from the respect she gets, she knows there is a role there for women. Although most delegates are men, there are a lot of women delegates.*

> *One of the slate's goals is to ensure there is ethnic representation and women's representation on the board. . . . The slate originated with concerned members feeling the board did not represent adequately the co-op principle of equity.*

> *It is nice when there are two women present because she doesn't have to be the one to bring something up every time.*

> *The most important person in her support group is her husband, who encourages her, helps her get elected and picks up the slack at home with the children.*

> *She . . . is in the fortunate position that she can take leaves of absence without pay [in order to meet her responsibilities as an elected official]. So far, this has not been a problem.*

One research participant was quick to note the supportive environment in her organization for women elected officials; she named an individual staff member who exemplifies this support. Another woman was less specific, but she senses general support from her organization as well. One commended the management team as a whole for being very facilitative. Other research participants are less optimistic about the climate of their organizations as a whole, but they could point to instances when their own contributions were publicly recognized. Some women had been encouraged, even recruited, to run for office in the first place by other board members or employees. For some, important support comes from other women who introduced them to how things are done when they were new to their elected roles, and who supported them over time. Personal contact with committed men and women who are active locally, regionally, and nationally in the co-operative movement inspires some women, and serves to keep others going in the face of barriers.

Research participants also emphasized specific, practical ways in which their co-operatives support them. One of the most important is access to board or delegate training, sometimes at advanced levels. Another is recovery of child care expenses when they are necessary for board work and related educational activities. Occasionally, there are opportunities for board members and delegates to bring their families or spouses along to extended meetings. This works well when the organization offers appropriate programs and/or hotel facilities. This type of organizational support can reduce the amount of time that board and delegate work drains away from family activity.

A group among the membership in one organization created an action slate which has been active in elections for about ten years now. Although there has always been a number of committed, qualified people who run for the board, historically they have been predominantly white males. The action slate seeks to ensure ethnic representation and women's representation on the board; the slate recruits people with appropriate knowledge and experience from among these groups.

Family members and employers were key supporters for most research participants. In light of the time demands of an elected role, this support is very important. Those who worked for less supportive employers, or who had less flexible work felt additional pressure.

2.2 What further actions could organizations take to work toward equity?

Excerpts from interview notes:

> *If women are introduced to committee work in such a way that they feel supported in learning the role, then they will learn to feel capable. We can't put women in positions where we are setting them up to fail.*

> *From her perspective as a board member, there is the possibility to recruit other women, and although this is a slow process, it seems to work.*

> *You learn how the co-op works, what it does for the community. If more women were aware of this community aspect of the co-op they might be more interested.*

> *Assertiveness training and workshops in public speaking for women would encourage women to take on governance roles. She said she does not always find these things easy, and she has discussed this with other women who have similar unease.*
>
> *Many people are not familiar with co-ops, or even with Canadian culture, and if they are not personally that way oriented themselves, they will not understand what co-ops are about.*

If a board or a delegate body is to reflect the make-up of the overall membership, the organization has to work to show its relevance to that membership. A co-operative must attend to members' perceptions of the organization. A feeling of ownership and relevance is a prerequisite to involvement. One participant stressed the importance of good member orientation from the outset. This, she said, will help to diminish the sense that there is a "we/they" division between the membership and elected officials. People need to sense from the beginning that the co-operative is their own organization. Those who do are more likely to be active members.

Some of the research participants were recruited to run for an elected position by people who were concerned that women were not represented in governance structures. Some of these now actively encourage other women to participate. One woman suggested that local co-ops start at their own level to make sure women are represented on every committee.

Since committee work and local board involvement are common feeder routes to more influential elected positions, it is important that women be supported in these roles. One member of a local board was anxious the first time she was asked to chair a committee because there was no definition of the role. She asked the previous committee chair to attend the first meeting to help her learn the role. Her local board now has terms of reference in place for all committees. This supports new chairpersons in their roles.

It is inaccurate to say that women as a group lack the confidence or the type of experience that makes good elected officials. However, efforts to involve women in elected roles need to allow for the fact that, because of the traditional assignment of roles in home and community, some women have learned not to recognize their experience as relevant. Although a public role is not uncomfortable for some, many women and men who take on elected roles are uneasy with public speaking and with pressing their points in meetings. Workshops especially geared to helping people with self-development in these areas can be especially important to women, some research participants said, because of the different social reinforcements males and females experience from infancy on.

While assertiveness training and self-esteem development workshops have a place, ease in a public role cannot be achieved in a day or a week. At their best, workshops are steps toward empowerment for individual women. Assertiveness and confidence do not guarantee a say in decisions. It is more important for organizations is to work toward a climate of support for women over time. One research participant suggested co-operatives should hold workshops at annual meetings to discuss women's issues. These would allow women to expand the agenda beyond self-development to discussion of other issues, such as whether the co-operative meets their needs and whether it does so in such a way that women can feel they are part of the organization.

2.3 What did they say has hindered them or made their elected positions difficult?

Democratic process

Excerpts from interview notes:

> *For board elections, it is daunting when you see a good candidate go down to defeat. A person needs either to really want to be on the board, or they need to decide that they won't feel really badly if they are not elected.*

> *There was a lot of politics involved with the election when she ran, and she had not anticipated this.*

> *She felt a change in the way people treated her. "When you are elected, you leave the 'we' and become the 'them'. You are one of 'the Board' that makes the decisions."*

While research participants recognize that elections are a fact of life for board members and delegates, several spoke of the anxiety that surrounds running for office and being an elected official. One woman was taken aback by the very political nature of the election when she ran for the board. She wanted to represent people, to make a contribution; she ended up winning a grueling political contest.

One woman marked a negative change in the way people treated her once she was elected to a local board. She said being a board member meant she got to know who her friends were. People treat board members in different ways. Some "play up" to them; to others they are the people making unpopular decisions. A co-operative where this is typical will have difficulty recruiting competent members to run for the board unless those members feel equal to addressing the poor member relations climate.

Another research participant was frustrated that the information members have on which to base their choice is very thin. Elections are biased in favour of the familiar names of incumbents. People are left to guess who are the best candidates. There is no way to weed for competence, so it is possible for someone with no real depth, but with support of others in the organization, to be elected. Thus, the system favours the status quo. She concluded a person needs to develop a network of supporters, and may have to run more than once in order to be elected.

Climate: You'll do the minutes, won't you?

Excerpts from interview notes:

> *Occasionally, when she wants to fight for a woman's issue, she says she goes through a battle in her head about whether to say something and incur their wrath or to keep her mouth shut and let them think she is one of the guys. She also goes through guilt about not doing something when she can, so that things will change for other women.*

> *The term "girls" in particular gets to her. If you regard cashiers or secretaries as girls, you do not look at them as people with the potential to lead.*

> *For women on the board, sometimes the men think you are coming from a "women's lib" position, even if it is a gender-neutral issue. But they have already labeled a person as a women's libber and they sometimes see what you say as associated with that label.*

> *On a board like theirs, the main obstacle is the "old boys" versus the new board members. It is easier by a long way for a man to move into the old boys' network.*

> *When she first joined the board, on occasions when the secretary was not present, other board members would say something like, "You'll do the minutes, won't you?" There is the perception that it is a female role.*

Internal dynamics on the board or among the delegate body can create a chilly climate for women. Signs of this climate are various. Research participants noted the perception among some board members that the recording role is appropriately filled by a woman. Some also noted the exclusion of women from more prestigious committees or offices on the board. One participant said that in her experience, men on the board would tell her they supported her, either on a particular issue or for an office, but their support evaporated later. "When it comes down to the crunch, they support the old boys' network. They will say they support you, then back off at the last minute."

The status of women employees in an organization is a telling indicator for some women who are elected officials. Photos of senior management and boards show how few women are represented in decision making positions. One woman talked about an annual meeting where she had been a delegate. It was frustrating for her to see that most of the senior management were males. When she spoke to a senior staff member about this, she "met a blank wall." She senses a damaging lack of support and encouragement for women within the organization.

Since there are few women who hold senior elected positions in co-operatives, some women feel closely watched. They are keenly aware they have to prove their credibility to an extent that is not required of their male counterparts. Women can feel—and with good reason—that people are watching for them to make mistakes. By virtue of being part of what is still a relatively new phenomenon, especially in very senior positions or on boards of organizations where women have not been represented historically, a woman is inevitably visible in a way her male peers are not. Her actions can become exaggerated in much the same way that movement seen through a magnifying glass is larger than life.

To be the only woman or one of only a few women on the board is to find yourself in situations where you are expected from time to time to represent all women. Particularly if the issue of women in co-ops comes up, the women at the table are expected to address it. This is an awkward position for several reasons. For one thing, there is no such thing as a single "women's viewpoint." If a woman is new to the board, her position is even more complicated, since it takes time to establish credibility with other board members. One woman said even though she finds herself toning down what she says about women, some of the men indicate through their behavior that they interpret what she says as radical.

Some elected officials discussed how difficult it is to press for gender neutral language. This theme emerged in interviews with the employee group as well. Some research participants said they were unconcerned with inclusive language, and impatient with people who make an issue of it. Others choose not to raise questions about language, even if they think it is important. One woman said her response in a particular instance depends on her mood and the depth of the problem. There are some things she does not address because she does not wish to "turn the other board members off"— she may need them later. It is unfortunate that the burden of maintaining good working relationships so often lies with women where this issue is concerned.

Weight of role

Excerpts from interview notes:

> *Women generally are looking after family, home, and job, and perhaps taking the odd course, and then the preparation time required to get ready for a volunteer job is added to that.*

> *It is important to have a work environment that is supportive of community activities as well, rather than her present one, where those activities are considered "her" things rather than a broader responsibility to the community.*

> *She is not a person who likes a really high stress load. If she had tried to do this role when she had small children, her life would have become unbalanced. She believes in balance.*
>
> *There is a minimum of time a board member can spend, and the maximum time a person could spend would be unlimited.*

Elected positions in co-operatives are characterized by heavy loads in time, responsibility and stress. Some take vacation time from their jobs in order to attend meetings. The responsibilities of an elected position can bleed into work time, especially if people have demanding jobs. Employers can have what a research participant called "a certain insularity" regarding any other involvement when their own organization is in trouble, even if the employer is a co-operative or an organization closely linked to co-operatives.

In addition to the disruption to family and work life, the responsibility of a board role itself is not to be taken lightly. One research participant said she had no idea how much was involved in the job when she ran for election. It is also complicated, since the line between board and management is not always clear. Ultimately, one woman pointed out, board members can't forget that legally they are responsible, and that is frightening. It is the nature of elected work that there are always difficult issues to be addressed and there is not always time to do the kind of job a person wants to do.

Added to these stresses are two that research participants mentioned as particular to women—the loneliness of being the only woman or one of few women in that position, and the sense of being marked as different because they sound different, look different and dress differently from their male counterparts. This was also the experience of women staff members and is discussed in more detail in Part Three of this report.

2.4 What specific actions have they taken to cope with difficulties?

Excerpts from interview notes:

> *It is important never to go to a meeting unprepared. A lot of the fellows come in having never opened their envelopes. The women are usually prepared "because we have to try so hard and do so well."*
>
> *There are things she said she has let slide because she has to choose her priorities. Sometimes she addresses slip-ups in a joking way, sometimes in a serious way, and she likes to be able to choose which way she will address them.*
>
> *At the moment she is not involved in [other] volunteer activity and will be looking again as her involvement with [the organization] winds down.*
>
> *When she became president she made a conscious effort to say that she could not put in the same amount of time that the preceding president had put in.*

The ways the women in the study coped with their elected roles are better described as overall approaches rather than as specific coping strategies. They named specific things that helped them in their roles, such as reading current business and management books, or never going to a meeting unprepared, but more often they coped well with the role because of their approaches. Some emphasized how important it is to develop good relationships with their constituencies; some said how much they enjoy the work; others appreciate the benefits the co-operative brings to themselves and to their communities.

To meet the time commitment required of an elected official, women said they reorganize their priorities, pull back on other volunteer activities, and give their families quality time when they can. One woman said she has had to make a conscious effort to limit the time she gives her elected role to a reasonable amount.

Another woman finds it helpful to balance the time she spends in the male-dominated board room with time spent with women who have concerns similar to hers. Some research participants found that women who have previously held elected positions are helpful sources of support and advice. Political astuteness and ability to read board dynamics are important as well. For example, one board member said women need to assess the attitudes men on the board have toward women. In her experience, men have voiced support for women in private but refrained in public.

2.5 Concluding remarks

While all of the elected officials who participated in the study manage well with the demands of the job, they came to their positions well equipped, often after receiving valuable training and experience in other volunteer positions and in their professional lives. They use their reserves of energy and commitment as individuals to deal with the difficulties their roles present. They draw on the support of extended families; learn new ways to manage their priorities; garner support from other women; and, find ways to negotiate balance in their lives in spite of heavy time commitments.

The fact that certain women have learned to cope admirably with the difficulties they encounter as elected officials does not mean co-operatives can afford to ignore those difficulties.

Their creative approaches do not diminish the need for organizations to address the causes of the stress they experience. The fact that certain women have learned to cope admirably with the difficulties they encounter as elected officials does not mean co-operatives can afford to ignore those difficulties. This is particularly true in light of the fact that some of the research participants have at times found it necessary to use silence about certain issues as a way of coping. As well, the fact that on some co-operative boards women have less access to influential board and committee positions is unacceptable. Co-operatives need to consider the part all the identified barriers play in excluding candidates from under-represented groups.

PART THREE: WOMEN EMPLOYEES IN DECISION-MAKING POSITIONS

The employees who participated in this project all hold decision-making positions—although at varying levels—within co-operatives. It is not surprising, given their positions, that most had been in the work force for at least ten years. For most, the bulk of their work experience was with the organization where they presently work. Almost all, then, had been promoted from within.

Women employees face some conditions similar to those women in elected positions face. Their concern with unclear promotional paths parallels the first group's concerns with electoral processes. Women in both groups stressed the importance of organizational climate, and of support from families and from key people in the organization.

The following sections present information according to broad themes established in Part Two:

- What did they say has helped them?
- What further actions do they suggest organizations could take to work toward equity?
- What did they say has hindered them or made their work lives difficult?
- What specific actions have they taken to cope with difficulties?

3.1 What did they say has helped them?

The factors that women who participated in the study identified as helpful were not limited to policy aspects of the organization, although these were important. Personal situations, and encouragement and recognition from co-workers, interact with organizational factors to influence a woman's experience in the workplace.

Climate

Excerpts from interview notes:

> *Over the years, things have changed. Different CEOs mean changes within an organization. Depending on who is running the ship, there are changes in attitudes toward women.*

> *This organization recognizes that women have a place as leaders.*

> *The workaholics [here] are quite tolerant of those who are not.*

> *Upper level management is saying, "We will do these things; we will stick to this plan."*

> *The company has been open to having people from different backgrounds in different positions.*

Attitudes of co-workers and management affect both the daily experience and the long-term success of female employees. Research participants referred to particularly helpful approaches from senior management, or to actions of co-workers, which contributed to a supportive climate. One organization was willing to have a woman in a particular position well before other companies in the same industry. The same organization had a CEO who "would never make a decision based on gender," according to a research participant. The workplace is "like home and family" to another woman. People in her workplace are well-treated, she said; they are also highly motivated, by business and by social concerns. Her comments were echoed by another, who said that people in her workplace know each other; they like each other. Networking is easy in her organization and "there is an eagerness to train, help, encourage."

A woman acquires a new peer group, often a largely male one, with promotion. Acceptance among this group is crucial for women in management, as it is for women who are elected officials. Some (but by no means all) research participants said that, after an initial period of having to prove themselves, they now feel accepted by most of their male peers in management.

One woman noted that her employer seems more open to having women in decision making positions than other organizations in her professional field are. She has a strong sense of belonging, partly because she is personally drawn to co-operative philosophy and partly because women are visible as leaders in her sector. Her employer is also willing to address barriers to other groups, she said—people of colour, disabled people, natives, lesbians and gays—as well as barriers to women. A woman in another organization pointed out that her employer is making efforts to encourage women in non-traditional jobs. There is commitment to making sure people know about the initiatives. Guidelines for advertising jobs and conducting interviews are in place.

With promotion to a management position come increased stress and work load. While this higher level of commitment makes it difficult to balance work and other activities, some women noted there is often flexibility for people who put in a lot of extra time. This does not mean their hours are reduced—the norm is to work more than a standard work week—but the specific hours during which this work is done can be negotiated.

While research participants could often give examples of how a positive climate, or at least a climate of acceptance has encouraged and assisted them in the workplace, they also spoke of inhospitable climates. These comments are considered in a later section.

Encouragement and recognition

Excerpts from interview notes:

> *She has had informal sponsors who gave advice, put in a good word for her, may have helped pave the way. That came about because she was willing to put herself forward.*

> *An organization needs to identify people who are capable and then support them, help them to prepare, so that when they do move up they have the credibility and the capability to do the job.*

> *The manager she worked for felt strongly that she could do the job.*

Linked to the climate of the organization as a whole are the person-to-person relationships among close co-workers and between supervisors and subordinates. Research participants recognized the role that supportive people had played, either through direct encouragement or through seeing their potential and giving them the opportunity to take on challenges and show initiative. Supervisors and managers who encouraged, recognized good work, and were confident in the research participants' abilities were often mentioned. One woman said that her first boss appreciated her initiative; if she could demonstrate the benefit of one of her ideas to the organization, he was interested in listening. In other cases, managers encouraged people to take on new projects. The managers were there to give advice and guidance, but also allowed subordinates to make their own decisions about particular projects. These expressions of faith both served to build confidence and afforded opportunities for important management experience.

One woman, who had regarded her work as little more than a steady job, found herself looking at it more as a career path once her supervisors increased her responsibilities and she gained experience. Because her organization showed confidence in her, she thought in a more confident way and began to recognize she had something to offer. At the same time, she saw women in supervisory positions for the first time. A career path began to appear possible.

Performance reviews have more to do with career planning now than they used to, according to one of the participants. For her, it had been helpful that, years ago, her supervisor took an interest in her aspirations. Another woman had a similar experience with a supervisor who was looking to help her develop her potential and showed an interest in her development and capabilities. According to the research participant, her supervisor was the kind of supervisor who wanted to make sure her staff had room to grow.

Models and mentors

Excerpts from interview notes:

> *Mentoring has been important to her. In her experience, people who were senior to her saw potential and helped her to explore it. Now, she tries to keep her eyes open at least for development opportunities for people.*

> *The fact that women are in senior positions in the sector means both that they are role models and is proof of the sector's ability to promote and accept women.*

It is important for women to see other women in senior roles from an early stage in their careers. As one research participant said, the more she saw women in senior roles, the more she considered promotion possible. Early on, when she didn't see women promoted, she didn't think about promotion herself. She is concerned that when women do not consider themselves promotable, they do not prepare themselves. When the opportunity does come, they will not be ready.

Encouragement, recognition and opportunity establish a base from which a person can advance. Special relationships in which one person helps another to learn over time take encouragement a step further. Research participants not only learned from key people more about how to do their specific jobs; they also learned about approaches to work and work relationships. One woman described her first manager as a mentor; he was fair, candid and open with her. Through the way they handled disagreement together she learned to be objective about conflict; she learned not to take disagreement personally.

According to one research participant, a mentor is anyone you learn from, whether you recognize that person's approach as positive or as negative. She had what she called "unconscious mentors". She watched how others worked and learned what to do and, just as importantly, what not to do, from their examples. Her mentors did not necessarily know they were acting in that capacity for her.

Mentor relationships occur spontaneously in some work situations. It is worth exploring what women could gain from programs which would formalize mentoring, but with caution. One research participant explained her reservations: A friendship can be broken off by one or the other of the parties; a mentorship is more compromising. Rather than create formal pairs, she suggested organizations educate people about the role of mentor so that if they find themselves in that role, they will be aware of how to perform it. Also, people could be educated about how to choose and use a mentor. A variation on the one-to-one model would be for organizations to arrange opportunities for groups of employees to talk with senior employees about career advancement and workplace culture.

Opportunity

Excerpts from interview notes:

> *It is important that there be a path, and that people can see the path working.*

The organization as a culture has never had a strong focus on training. They are beginning to turn the corner with this, seeing that these are not just jobs but career paths that people are on, and that a career changes daily. At the moment a person may not have all the skills they will need for the job in the future, but that does not mean they can't do the job.

[Performance and planning interviews] give employees a chance to identify . . . parts of their job they would like to focus on and develop. Some departments don't do this very well; others do.

A clear path between junior, middle and senior management is important. People need to be able to see that there are logical steps they can follow for promotion, one woman said, especially to the senior levels where it is still rare for women to gain promotion. In this vein, one organization created four new positions which are logical stepping stones on the route to more senior positions; two women and two men were appointed to the new positions.

Another organization is incorporating succession planning into its current strategic planning initiative. Employees hope this formalization of procedures will ensure that promotion paths are more clear to all employees than they have been in the past. Increased visibility of paths to promotion lowers the chance that informal mechanisms that disadvantage some groups will continue to operate.

While formalized promotion procedures can ensure a degree of fairness, they need to remain flexible if they are to allow some useful patterns of career progression to continue. Some jobs evolve during a person's tenure as the organization grows, and give the incumbent the opportunity to grow with the job. This sort of job growth was the case, in one way or another, for at least four of the women in this study. In some cases, supervisors allowed incumbents with initiative to expand their jobs. For example, one woman developed ideas for new services and greatly enhanced the visibility of herself and her division in the process. As she took on more responsibility she became both more visible and more promotable. In other cases the requirements of the job, or the opportunities for other positions expanded as the company expanded over the years.

Profile within an organization is a factor in career progression. One woman appreciated that her workplace has given her a chance to make herself known and visible, and to apply to new positions as they come open. Visibility has come through various opportunities for research participants. One capitalized on chances to volunteer in community projects her employer initiated; others represented their organization or their work group on internal and external committees. For another woman, opportunity took the form of her supervisors making sure her current job was covered off while she took a cross-training opportunity.

For some research participants, the ability to advance in their careers is only one aspect of opportunity. Those who embrace the social change and empowerment philosophy of co-operatives say their organization gives them an opportunity to work toward things they believe in: "Co-operatives are not as impoverished as some social change organizations. This makes it possible for sole support women to stay in the sector."

Research participants identified roadblocks as well as opportunities for career progression. Section 3.3 considers these barriers.

Training

Excerpts from interview notes:

> *The training has been in product knowledge, interpersonal relations and academic areas, and has made her admire the training department and its holistic approach. She can even think of specific courses that have changed her whole perspective on life.*

> *She pointed out that she has experienced more support than obstacles from the organization, especially training support.*

Employees access formal training programs in different ways. Participants' opinions varied about whether training beyond basics is a right, a privilege, or a responsibility for employees at various levels in the organization. Information about opportunity and eligibility is important. People cannot self-identify for development programs if they are not aware of the possibilities. One organization has recently begun to list training opportunities in the employee newsletter so that all employees know about in-house programs on offer. Previously, supervisors made all decisions about who would train in which areas. This worked well for people who were being assertive about their ambitions, but could be applied unfairly by supervisors (whether they were aware of the grounds on which they made their decisions or not).

Each organization has a range of mandatory and voluntary training opportunities, and research participants spoke well of all of them. Part-time staff are sometimes eligible for training and tuition support as well. With the large number of women in part-time positions, this opportunity will be important not only for advancement but also for moving from part-time to full-time status for those who want or need to do so.

While training was not always available at the times they needed it most, research participants named a variety of training opportunities they had found helpful, including in-house courses, tuition assistance for outside classes, on-the-job experience, and a seminar designed for women in management. For one woman, important training took the form of learning financial aspects of management from a treasurer who spent time going through financial statements with her.

One woman appreciated a seminar she attended with other women managers from different organizations. The event gave her the opportunity to put herself into a larger picture by talking to other women who are experiencing some of the same problems she experiences in her job.

The opportunity for cross-training in a variety of work areas on the job has been crucial for some. One woman said her supervisor made sure the job she had been doing was covered off completely so that she could learn a new set of skills and concentrate on that area alone.

The most serious difficulty research participants identified in the training area was limited access to cross-training. This problem is considered further in a later section, *Unclear Career Paths*.

3.2 What further actions could organizations take to work toward equity?

Excerpts from interview notes:

> *Equity is not measured just by numbers of people; it is not just having half of the managers women. She would also have to see that systems had changed, for example, things that make it easier for parents to work and have time for their other lives.*

> *In terms of encouragement, the organization needs to let some of its female fast-trackers know that their work is being noticed. In the present atmosphere these women can tend to push too hard. No one pats them on the back and tells them they are doing well.*

What does happen is people take the opportunity to put them in their place. Small errors are noticed.

*The approach needs to be two-fold. On the one hand, the organization has to be really strong in treating people equally. This support needs to be present throughout the organization. People should be encouraged to advance **as long as** they have the capability. ... The other important thing is that sometimes women have held themselves back. ... Related to this is the fact that if the doors are open, more women will see themselves in senior roles.*

In response to questions about what their organizations should do to work further toward equity for women, participants named, but also went beyond, often-mentioned provisions such as on-site child care and a degree of flexibility for employees who have family and elder care responsibilities. While there is a range of specific initiatives employers could take, participants stressed the importance of organizational culture. Changes need to occur throughout a workplace, not just in some departments where the managers think it is a good idea, one woman said. She illustrated by saying that, for example, flexible work hours, would have to be present across the workplace before they would be a real factor in organizational culture.

One person stressed that as a co-operative, her organization has to look at who it is representing and who it deals with; it then must commit to actually doing something about reflecting that constituency. In her words, "Organizations have to act on it fiercely, unwaveringly, and in spite of dissension." Research participants were often inclusive in the way they spoke about equity. They were concerned not only with the status of women, but also about representation of ethnic minorities, about problems particular to immigrant groups and Aboriginal people; and about harassment of gay men and lesbians.

The training an organization provides has to be more than technical and financial, according to one woman. It also has to be about equity issues, and followed up with encouragement. We have to have forums where men and women can talk about the things they feel threatened by. She stressed that culture has to start from management. The CEO has to say a certain attitude is not acceptable; they have to lead by example. And employees who find certain behaviours unacceptable need to start to take responsibility to say so.

Another woman pointed out that central organizations and federations have the opportunity to show leadership to their members and to other organizations in their sector. They should do this by addressing equity themselves and by creating forums where people from member organizations can talk about equity issues.

3.3. What did they say has hindered them or made their work lives difficult?

Climate

Excerpts from interview notes:

His response was, "Are you crazy—we'd never consider a woman [for that position]."

Listen. Do your homework. Then when you talk about something, people will see you know what you are talking about.

One member of the executive started pursuing her. ... She remembers being grabbed under the table at meetings.

Climate is influenced by factors that range from unexamined assumptions to overt sexism and sexual harassment. Women often found it took time—years in some cases—to build credibility and gain acceptance among their new, largely male, peer groups when they were promoted. Two women noted that not only staff, but also co-op members tend to think they are not dealing with a person who carries authority if they deal with a woman.

Women employees in senior positions have the same sense of being closely watched, both by men and by other women, that elected women identified. One research participant, who has long been accustomed to speaking in public, suffered almost debilitating performance anxiety on several occasions after promotion when she had to speak in front of a group in the course of her job. According to another research participant, her promotion represented the organization trying something new and management wanted to monitor how it was going. She felt fairly treated but closely watched. Another woman noted that especially in her field, which is a non-traditional area for women, a woman does have to be twice as good as a man. Women need to be especially tenacious in establishing credibility, she said. Laws and policies are coming into place, but in real terms, change does not happen that simply. In the meantime, she said, it's a matter of one woman at a time paying a price.

Other study participants talked about the preconceptions people have that women in decision-making positions are involved in "softer" areas and will not have technical or financial backgrounds. The irony of this preconception is that it can persist even as women move into areas which once were traditionally male-dominated. The more women succeed, for example, in corporate communications, member relations and human resource development fields, the "softer" and less technical these fields are perceived to be. One woman in senior management said she is paid less than her male peers who are in parallel positions. Aside from the obvious difference in her economic status, this has implications for her feelings of self-worth. Although she feels her male colleagues have begun to accept her, she sees one of her challenges as changing their perception of her job in relation to theirs.

Some women feel pressured to curb the extent to which they speak out about sexism and sexual harassment, and careful about their approach when they do speak out. Three of the women in the study recounted personal experiences of sexual harassment. Two addressed the harassment on a personal level and were successful in stopping it. Another avoided physical proximity and used various other indirect tactics. She was afraid to be too direct because she did not want to alienate the perpetrator, who was a much-needed ally in her job. One woman said that for a number of years sexual harassment complaints were not taken seriously in her organization. She felt that any woman who spoke out about it would have been type cast as a complainer, as "one of those women who makes issues out of things."

Some research participants talked about the resistance they run into when they suggest gender-neutral language. As was the case with the elected officials who participated in this study, some choose not to address this issue, even if they think it is important. To do so would be to risk "tuning out" people with whom good work relationships are important.

One research participant was told point-blank several years ago when she applied for a senior position that her employer would never consider a woman for the job. Although she felt confident about her ability to perform in a senior position, she did not feel comfortable about the prospect of working in such a negative climate even if she had succeeded in being appointed to the job. Blatant sexism has at least lessened in recent years in the immediate work environments at the level and in the fields where most of the research participants work, but some women noted areas within their organizations where overt sexism and inappropriate humour remain problems.

Again, response to complaints can be explosive, and women stressed the need to address sexism in an extremely careful manner in order to have the issue taken seriously.

Climate is determined by more than the degree of discrimination against or acceptance of women in senior positions; it has to do also with the ways in which work is carried out. One woman said she would like to see organizations make efforts to work more co-operatively. For example, presently relationships between union and non-union work groups are set up according to an adversarial model. This does not fit with her preferred work style, which is to collaborate with co-workers to achieve a goal. There can be a war mentality at times, she said, which works against the consensual, consultative way in which she likes to work. While she feels it is sometimes still possible to react and interact at work in the flexible way she normally would choose, this is harder to do when a person first moves into a new position. It is easy in a new position to fall back on old styles, on the way other people have done things, or just on "the way the system is set."

Unclear career paths

Excerpts from interview notes:

> *In terms of senior management, the organization still struggles to make the change. Previously there was no stepping stone, no way for women to prepare themselves to make the next move.*

> *There is probably no place for her to move now within the organization. She has been pigeonholed in [her current area].*

> *The way people advance here traditionally is almost biased for the traditional male. They are the ones with the type of experience that counts for promotion. But cross-functional training is beginning here.*

Some research participants pointed out that while succession and career planning are receiving more attention than they did in the past, this attention is not necessarily extensive; it does not apply to all areas and levels in the organization. One woman said that all those at the clerical level in workplace are women and some departments support women only in that role. Flexibility and promotion will continue to be difficult for women in lower management or in clerical positions.

Since experience across a broad variety of work areas within the organization is increasingly seen as a prerequisite for promotion, opportunity to train in different functional areas is crucial. The lack of opportunity for cross-training (despite the fact that she actively sought it) was a roadblock for at least one woman. Access to cross-training is limited by perceptions that people cannot or do not wish to move laterally, either to a different work stream, or from head office to a branch or vice versa. A person can become type-cast in a certain area and therefore face limited opportunities for promotion.

It is appropriate to emphasize cross-training if a broad base of experience is indeed necessary for a senior position. At the same time, it is important to assess prerequisites for promotion. What are the commonly held assumptions about the skills that are actually required to do a particular job? For example, if a plant maintenance or physical lifting requirement was integral to a job at some time in the past, but is no longer important because of technological changes or contracting out, have the skills required for the job been appropriately reassessed?

If an organization gives as much weight to, for example, people skills or initiative and approach, as it gives to a certain technical skill or a broad base of experience, it may be presented with a different pool of candidates from which to choose for promotion. If career paths depend

on training on the job, current promotion streams may be reinforced. Organizations ought to consider also whether certain training can be undertaken as part of a new job rather than before promotion. One person who had moved from a different company found her present organization was characterized by a more limiting view of lack of experience in particular areas for both men and women than was the case with her former employer.

Health, stress, workload and family

Excerpts from interview notes:

> *She has worked weekends and nights without complaining. . . . Her health is now deteriorating, and her body is warning her that it is under strain. She has no children and is not married yet, so it is easy to be married to her job.*

> *She is not a parent, so . . . not getting away when she expects to is more easily accommodated for her than it would be for a parent. It is an intense job.*

> *Home life has to change in order for women to achieve equality. We have to face the fact that things will never be completely equal, because women bear children. However, we can look at men's roles in taking care of the children.*

Some study participants identified a cost to health with the increased stress that comes with promotion. They work long hours and for some there is a lot of night work. There is a two-dimensional struggle for balance. One challenge is to juggle all the commitments within the job; the other is to balance the job with life outside the office. One woman who does not have children yet said she cannot imagine going home tired from the stress of her job to a family. Another said senior positions in general, given the way work is structured presently, would be impossible for women with small children. One supervisor said she cannot hire people in her department who cannot work overtime when it is called for.

Some women who do have families say it is hard for their male colleagues to understand their family responsibilities. In the cases where women mentioned this, most of their male peers who had families also had wives who did not work full-time.

It is the nature of management jobs that they carry heavy stress loads and demand increased time commitment. As one woman said, there is the expectation that someone in a senior position will work until the work is done: there are a lot more decisions to make. People understand that with the rewards and influence of decision-making positions come heightened levels of stress. It is reasonable for employers to expect a certain level of commitment. However, there is always a limit to what can be expected of employees.

Presently, there is a pool of people who are willing or at least able to meet extremely high expectations. One woman in a management position said that her male co-workers do not understand the difficult balance she maintains between work and family, since they do not bear as much responsibility at home as she does. The commitment threshold employers demand of employees may shift back under certain circumstances: if men take on increasing responsibility for home and family; if unemployment rates fall and people have more choice among employers; or, if employees as a group have the power to shift priorities. It is important to recognize that the current threshold is neither fixed nor inevitable; it does not result from the operation of "natural" laws.

Job size is determined by a complex set of factors, some of which have to do with value-based, political decisions made by both employees and organizations. As with other choices co-operatives and their employees make, choices about the work loads people carry are influenced by social and market environments. For example, the degree of actual discrimination in labour markets

fluctuates with the business cycle.[5] Currently, groups which have the least power to influence the size of management work loads are women, minorities, immigrant groups, disabled people, and others who, as a group, occupy disadvantaged positions in the labour market. Women's influence is further reduced by the position assigned by traditional family structure. As one research participant stressed, "Home life has to change in order for women to achieve equality."

One research participant identified loneliness as another stressor that came with her senior position. When she was promoted to her new position she found herself in a new peer group within the organization. She has difficulty finding people with whom she can discuss problems on the job. She can't talk about certain issues with her male colleagues for fear she will be seen as a woman, a bleeding heart, soft. She can't talk to the women who are not in senior positions, partly because there are things she knows by virtue of her position and which she cannot divulge, and partly because she cannot make herself vulnerable to employees who are more junior. Her female business friends do not have children, so they do not understand the difficulty of juggling the various aspects of her life. Even a sibling who has always been her champion questions her judgment in taking the job she now holds. The sort of loneliness this woman described is potentially debilitating, since women often use connection with others as a source of strength.

3.4 What specific actions have they taken to cope with difficulties?

> *She is fortunate, she said, to have a very supportive husband and children. They had a family meeting when she took on the job. She said that for the next six months she would have to go to work early and come home late to catch up in a man's world.*

> *Her approach is to give people the latitude to make decisions rather than to call on her for things they can handle on their own.*

> *She ... feels it is important to see one's self as part of a larger picture, to know that there are other people having similar experiences.*

> *Her opinion is that if a person feels all she has time for is work, then she will be totally consumed, and will not do a good job.*

Whether or not they have family responsibilities, research participants have had to find ways to deal with the heavy time commitment their jobs required. Most would rather be at the office making sure everything is getting done than worrying about what will fall through the cracks. This limited frame of choice between peace of mind about the job and time away from it characterizes a heavy workload. Coping strategies involve both taking personal initiative to define the job and limit the hours, and calling on other resources to distribute the load. One woman originally took her job with the understanding she would work a four-day week. While this limited work week lasted only a few months, the fact that she had stressed the importance of containing her hours from the beginning meant she was in a better position to say no to heavy overtime. Another woman says she does not believe in working every night and every week-end; she limits her hours.

Several research participants found that, with promotion, they had to learn to do things differently, or to distribute work according to a new pattern, both at home and at work. One woman resolved to try closing her office door more often. Others noted they had to learn to switch from being the ones who did the work to being the ones who made sure others did the work. They began to delegate more responsibility for tasks at home and in the office. At home,

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[5] Reitz, Jeffrey G. "Statistics on racial discrimination in Canada," *Policy Options,* March 1993, 32-36.

this demanded support and agreement from family members, and sometimes from extended family. At work, training helped some women to think about their new job roles and to learn to manage staff who worked according to styles they were not familiar with.

Since a person can never "get it all done," and since there will always be things that go wrong, a sense of perspective becomes very important. One woman depends on close friendships outside of work, including a strong one with her husband, and on the physical activity that she has built into her life to retain perspective. She reminds herself to look at the larger picture — others face challenges similar to the ones she faces. When she feels restricted by the ways work systems are "set" she tries to discern which rules she truly does have to follow and which are just traditions which she has the latitude to approach in a different way. She has found there are many places where she can retain her personal style, even though it may take a conscious effort to do so.

Take things one day at a time, is the advice from one woman. Another reminds herself that she has been in far tougher situations than anything her present job can hand her. She has gained confidence from sticking it out through tough situations in the past. You need to learn to roll with the punches, she said.

An earlier section on workplace climate touched on how people deal with unacceptable behaviour. Some say it is important to choose their battles, and often they choose not to address sexist jokes or language. Others say it is not that a woman can't say anything—but the way she says it is important. One woman points out inappropriate language immediately, but takes care to word her comment in such a way that it will be treated thoughtfully. As a supervisor who has responsibility to address harassment and sexism among workers, another woman judges that she has the best chance of "getting through" to the person responsible if she addresses the situation with that person in the privacy of her office.

3.5 Concluding remarks

The women who participated in this study have each developed a repertoire of coping approaches to deal with the difficulties of time pressure, job stress, and inhospitable workplace climates. This section has highlighted some of their approaches. While this group of women has found approaches which have served them well—they would not be in their positions if they had not—this does not diminish the responsibility of organizations to deal with the pressures to which these women are responding.

When she feels restricted by the ways work systems are "set" she tries to discern which rules she truly does have to follow and which are just traditions which she has the latitude to approach in a different way.

PART FOUR: APPROACHES TO EQUITY
IN FIVE CO-OPERATIVE ORGANIZATIONS

The information in this part of the report is based on interviews with managers and co-ordinators responsible for personnel and equity programs, and on corporate documents.

4.1 Saskatchewan Wheat Pool

The Organization

With 65,000 active members, Saskatchewan Wheat Pool is Canada's largest agricultural co-operative. It handles grain, farm supplies and livestock, and processes primary food products. The Pool also develops and promotes farm policies on behalf of members.

The democratic structure of a co-operative of this size is complicated. A network of local committees and delegates feed member input into the two-week annual meeting. The Pool estimates that more than one third of members participate in a Pool event in any given year, and more than one-tenth of members sit on Pool committees.

Thirty-five hundred employees work in the Saskatchewan Wheat Pool's thirteen divisions. The divisions are: terminal elevators; country services; food and flour services; livestock; Western Producer; human resources; financial resources; corporate development; information technology; corporate engineering; member relations; policy and economic research; and, communications.

Equity among employees

According to an employment equity pamphlet "Beyond the First Look" distributed by Saskatchewan Wheat Pool and the Grain Services Union, sixteen per cent of the Pool's 3,220 employees are women. Of these women, 70 per cent are in clerical occupations.

In accordance with the Federal Employment Equity Act, the Pool reports once a year to Canada Employment and Immigration, and every six months to the Canadian Human Rights Commission. When Saskatchewan Wheat Pool sets employment equity goals, it bases targets on provincial numbers of available employables.

During 1983-84 bargaining, Saskatchewan Wheat Pool and the Grain Services Union agreed to establish a joint management/union committee to develop and monitor an employment equity program. The committee includes six people from management and six people from union positions. The thirteen company divisions are asked to put forward names of people to serve on the committee. A full-time Employment Equity Co-ordinator position was created in 1987. The Co-ordinator is a member of the committee.

Each division within the organization is in the process of developing an employment equity plan. These plans cover both in-scope and out-of-scope positions. As each division makes its plan, it has access to the employment equity co-ordinator as a resource. They can consult with her, ask to see the plans of other divisions, and ask for help making decisions. The EE committee reviews each division's plans and makes recommendations.

According to Arlene Goulet, the Employment Equity Co-ordinator, to make the equity program really work, management needs to be held accountable to ensure that employment equity is put into place. Employment equity plans in some divisions have incorporated accountability as part of performance appraisal. If managers do not hire any people from among the designated groups, they will have to provide good reasons why they have not. The Pool has also held company-wide awareness sessions and conducted self-identification surveys to track the

numbers of employees in under-represented groups—women, Aboriginal people, disabled people and visible minorities.

Ms. Goulet sees a need for cross-cultural training sessions to ensure that once people are hired, awareness will be raised among other employees. This is necessary because some people are afraid of Aboriginals or of disabled people, or unsure of how they will interact with them once they are hired. It is one thing to be hired; it is another to have a good experience on the job and have reason to stay.

The employees' union at Saskatchewan Wheat Pool recently voted in favour of an initiative that will allocate a formula-based amount of seniority to members of designated groups. As of January 1, 1993, each employee who meets the qualifications and experience for a position and is a member of a designated group—aboriginal, disabled, visible minority, or a woman in a non-traditional role—will be allocated 6.2 years of seniority once she or he acquires a permanent position. The formula was arrived at as follows: The average seniority of an employee in the company is over twelve years. That figure was divided by two and the resulting amount of seniority was allocated to each of the designated groups. The reasoning is that members of designated groups generally are the last people to have been hired and therefore are the first to go when there are lay-offs.

The Western Producer division has a "job shadowing" program, where unemployed individuals from designated groups come in and "shadow" people in non-traditional jobs as they do their work. People who come in on this basis are not paid; they are there to learn, and do not actually work. People in the jobs that are being "shadowed" take time to show those who come in how they do their jobs.

In the case of women and equity, the large percentage of Pool employees who work in non-traditional areas for women means that it will take some time to achieve equity. There are some women working in non-traditional areas now. From post-interviews with women who leave their jobs, the Pool has found that there is still "some discouragement operating for women in the non-traditional fields like warehouse work."

Equity in the democratic/membership structure

Traditionally, women have been under-represented in the leadership of agricultural organizations. Farm groups and independent researchers have made this under-representation a subject of study and debate in recent years.

The democratic structure of Saskatchewan Wheat Pool has always been dominated by males. There has never been a woman on the board of directors. The first female delegate was elected in 1981. Presently, there are four female delegates out of a total of 142 or three per cent of the total. About 3.5 per cent of committee members are female. The number of women on committees increased from 133 to 229 during the period 1990 to 1993. Information is not available on the proportion of members that are women.

In 1990 the task force on the Involvement of Women in Saskatchewan Wheat Pool surveyed members, women in member households, male committee members, female committee members, rural staff, delegates and directors, and district representatives to assess barriers to involvement of women and methods to encourage involvement. Of the women in member households who responded to the survey, 21 per cent said they were interested in getting more involved in the Pool. Survey respondents suggested methods to encourage involvement that included workshops to inform women about the Pool, personal encouragement and invitations to be involved, and making clear the criteria for membership and committee membership.

Informed by the results of the survey, Pool staff undertook efforts to increase women's involvement. The task force developed a vision and a five-year directional plan for 1991-96. The vision the task force submitted is as follows: "Women's participation in all levels of Saskatchewan Wheat Pool's democratic control and communications systems is representative of their involvement in agricultural activities on the farm and of their interest in the policies affecting them."

The plan the task force submitted described the current situation and the willed future under the following categories: women's interest in participation; structure; image; organizational support; vision and leadership; and, external support. The task force offered fourteen recommendations to close the gap between the current situation and the willed future. One recommendation is concerned with communication, including raising awareness of the Saskatchewan Wheat Pool, its role, the opportunities for and rewards of involvement, and attention to language and/or images in print and audio-visual materials and advertising. The task force recommended that the organization continue to monitor women's involvement, gather and distribute information about women's needs and involvement, and incorporate goals to do with women's involvement into plans. Other recommendations provide for including discussion of involvement of women in centrally developed programs, and maintaining contact with and support for other farm group initiatives to increase the involvement of women in decision-making roles.

All these programs are intended to encourage women to take an interest in the Pool, to meet their need for information about the Pool and about farm policy.

The report was presented to and discussed with the Board of Directors and senior management to solicit their support for implementation of these recommendations. The Task Force's work raised awareness among both those women who are not now involved and those who are, and with staff who work with members, of issues surrounding women's involvement. The most visible result has been the organization of many events for women. These include workshops, tours of Pool facilities, and "Ladies Nights Out" which combine fun with Pool information. The organization has also added information to the New Member Orientation Kits with the message "The Saskatchewan Wheat Pool is for men and women." All these programs are intended to encourage women to take an interest in the Pool, to meet their need for information about the Pool and about farm policy. The Pool credits these events with contributing to a sharp increase in the number of women serving on committees.

4.2 VanCity Savings Credit Union

The Organization

VanCity provides financial products and services to 194,000 members throughout the Vancouver Lower Mainland. There are 25 branches, and three new ones are slated to open in 1993. The Credit Union is financially healthy and has a tradition of innovative community programming. The VanCity Community Foundation, established in 1989, operates at arms' length from VanCity and supports community economic development. VanCity Enterprises, a development arm of the organization, develops community-based housing projects.

The Credit Union created a Women's Advisory Council in 1992, to examine issues of concern to women in the organization, membership, and the community and to make recommendations for future policies and programs. According to the 1992 annual report. the

Council was designed to: examine the current advancement status of women in VanCity; encourage women's advancement into senior management positions; foster a workplace that enables women and men to develop to their potential; assist in the development of recruitment, hiring, training, promotion and service practices that are free of gender bias; and, foster the recognition and acceptance of women as valuable members of VanCity's work force, member base, and communities.

Equity among employees

VanCity Credit Union employs approximately 900 people: 719 of these are full-time and 178 are part-time. Sixty per cent of the managers at Head Office are women; 53 per cent of branch managers are women. Of the eighteen senior executives, three are women.

According Sylvia Roscoe, Manager of Personnel Operations, internal promotion has helped the Credit Union achieve the high percentage of women in management they now have. Since approximately 80 per cent of the employees are women, women have been developed for promotion.

One of the most fruitful initiatives VanCity has taken to encourage women's fuller participation in the Credit Union has been the recently created Women's Advisory Council. The Council arose out of discussions among the board and senior management. It has looked at the status of female employees as well as at practices of lending to women. The Board of Directors has also given strong support to equity initiatives.

Some personnel policies at VanCity are aimed at helping people balance work with their other commitments. Flex-time arrangements mean some employees can start work earlier and leave earlier if they need to. One person has arranged to telecommute two days a week from her home.

The "Return to Work" program allows employees to take leave of up to three years and be guaranteed a position (though not necessarily the one they left) when they return. Employees can use this leave for time with their families, eldercare, sabbatical, travel or education. They are required to come back twice a year for two weeks each time, to stay in touch. Their seniority is protected while they are on leave.

Although not many employees have asked to job share, there are two situations where people are presently sharing positions, and the Credit Union is open to making other, similar arrangements.

For parents, the Child Care Resources and Referral Centre produces a monthly newsletter and holds parenting skills workshops. Under a one-year pilot project, the Corporate Share Care Society funds the creation of daycare spaces in existing and new child care centres, rather than building on-site facilities.

Employees are encouraged to consider cross-training to be part of the process of advancement. Cross-training is in place in the branch system between member services and lending areas, and works well, according to Ms. Roscoe. In Head Office, employees tend to specialize more, and that will be a block to implementing cross-training at Head Office. It will be necessary, therefore, to look at the possibility of training cross-functionally, and not just within divisions.

The organization is in the process of formalizing existing equity initiatives. VanCity employs an Equity Co-ordinator whose role has been to research available resources and possible strategies, and then to develop an equity policy and put together an educational program which supports the equity policy. This process furnishes an opportunity to take another look at what the organization has been doing and to ask for whom things have been working and for whom they have not. It also furnishes the opportunity to expand programs and to fill in gaps.

VanCity's equity policy is printed in its annual report. It includes a clause that identifies individual merit, ability and experience as the sole criteria of candidacy for recruitment, hiring, employment and promotion. It also contains a clause which states the Credit Union will undertake reasonable accommodations and special initiatives in order to recruit and employ a work force that is representative and productive. Another clause commits VanCity to ensuring that all employees receive equal pay for work of equal value.

The thrust the organization is adopting is to address diversity at the level of the individual rather than only in terms of the target categories the federal government has identified.

VanCity has introduced a staff development program called "Working With Diversity". According to Frances Kirson, the Equity Co-ordinator, VanCity has a lot of diversity already, and strong links between members, employees and community. However, there are also still gaps. The thrust the organization is adopting is to address diversity at the level of the individual rather than in terms of the target categories the federal government has identified. The individual approach allows VanCity to address, for example, ageism, or the fact that some members of visible minorities are immigrants with a different set of needs. The organization can also address the degree of inclusion of low-income people who are not identified as members of target groups.

Day-long "Working With Diversity" training sessions began in March 1993 for people at the supervisory level and up. The training allows a participant to step back and assess his or her own identity, prejudices and assumptions. The core course will be followed by others with the same philosophical approach. The organization intends to offer similar courses below the supervisory level. As well, the Equity Co-ordinator is working with others in the organization to develop a series of informal discussion opportunities for all staff who wish to participate. These will cover a broad range of topics, including work/family/community balance and gender differences in communications.

VanCity is also investigating programs that deal with working with people with disabilities, as well as programs that address personal harassment issues. The programs will probably be based on purchased "outside" resources which will be customized to be appropriate to VanCity. Ms. Kirson is also looking at educational programs that address awareness of First Nations issues. In this case, the organization will probably go to First Nations communities that have developed courses compatible with VanCity's approach and needs.

Equity in the democratic/membership structure

Each year, three positions on VanCity's nine-member board are contested. Directors are elected at large and serve three-year terms. At the time of this study, four of the board members are female and five are male. The board has six standing committees: Administration; Audit; Corporate Donations; Conduct Review; Election; and, Financial Policy. The 1992 annual report show four of the committees are chaired by women and two by men. The Board Chair is a man.

The Equity Co-ordinator has the mandate to consider equity both internally and among the membership. Although her focus this year is on internal equity, she is involved in community events on behalf of the credit union, and brings awareness of equity issues to community activities. She is there to ask whether any community or group is excluded from events or from marketing efforts.

All initiatives for equity in the staff and democratic structures start from a holistic approach, based on the recognition that there is no single path that leads to equity. Rather, it touches

everything the organization does. The Equity Co-ordinator feels very strongly that people need educational opportunities first and that people's attitudes need to be addressed. If people are to talk about attitudes, it has to be safe for them to discuss equity issues with colleagues. The organization needs to ensure there is positive reinforcement for people to stay open to diversity and reward positive changes. It would be a mistake, she said, to concentrate on the numbers aspects of equity at the expense of addressing attitudes.

In addition to the corporate initiatives VanCity is taking, a group among the membership has acted on its concerns about equity. An "action slate" first fielded candidates for the board approximately ten years ago. The slate originated with members who were concerned that the board did not represent adequately the diverse membership of the Credit Union. A number of slate candidates have achieved board positions over the years.

4.3 Calgary Co-operative Association

The Organization

Calgary Co-op operates sixteen retail centres in the Calgary area. The retails offer food, fuel, home building materials, hardware, fashions, bakery and deli items, and cafeteria and travel services.

The Co-op serves over 313,000 members, and membership grew at an average rate of 1,600 new members per month in 1992. The board sets aside one per cent of net profits before tax for community donations annually. Board members are a presence at various community events, and make direct contact with Co-op members through "Meet the Director" nights at the retail centres. The Member Relations Committee, appointed by the board, oversees community recycling projects.

Equity among employees

The history of promotion in the retailing sector is through the "school of hard knocks." One question being addressed as the Co-op looks at re-organization is: Will the current approach to developing people from within help the organization meet the future? There are certain areas in the store where women are likely to be managers. They include pharmacies, cafeterias (which are all managed by women) and family fashions. Right now, about 38 per cent of the management complement is female, although the organization has some distance to go until that figure is reflected in senior management. Promotion to senior management usually occurs from within.

The Co-op has approximately 3,700 employees, many of whom are part-time. The senior management team includes one woman. The Chief Executive Officer and five of the six Vice-Presidents are men. The manager of the newest branch, which opened in 1992, is the first woman branch manager. She was promoted from within.

Because of the strong traditions surrounding promotion in the retail sector, it may take some time to identify unknown systemic barriers. It may be the case in some areas that a female candidate would have to really shine in order to break the paradigm, and the paradigm can be hard to break. Vice-President of Personnel Hal Murray hopes that by looking at career paths that have not been traditional in the retail sector, Calgary Co-op can remove some systemic barriers. For example, one person recently moved directly from head cashier to assistant grocery manager. Generally, people would need experience on the floor in order to move to the position of assistant grocery manager. Since the direct path from head cashier to assistant grocery manager is a non-traditional one, and since promotion paths in the entire retail sector are characterized by historical

traditions which resist change, what might seem like a minor adjustment from outside the sector is in fact a major departure, an experiment.

Mr. Murray identified the meat area as one example of retail work that is still very male-dominated. This may change as meat starts coming out of the plant already trayed and packaged. There has been a physical aspect to jobs in the meat area in the past, but the jobs are not quite as physical as they used to be. However, they are still male-dominated.

In order to consider alternative career paths in retail operations, management has to re-examine assumptions about qualifications for particular jobs. Sometimes, Mr. Murray said, organizations have a tendency to concentrate too much on task knowledge and not enough on management and people skills. The example of the head cashier moving up to assistant grocery manager is one that is helping the organization to broaden its thinking beyond the task focus. Training within the co-op is presently mostly task-oriented. All staff are trained in customer service as well. Supervisory training is primarily only open to full-time people. Part-time people can attend if the training sessions are not full.

A recent reorganization of the plant bakery is another example of where the Co-op has re-examined and adjusted traditional career paths. Presently the top levels in the bakery are male-dominated and the lower levels are female dominated. There was considerable discontent in this division because there were cases where people would be "stuck" at the same job indefinitely. The union was extremely dissatisfied with the situation. The Co-op's industrial relations manager designed a training plan to address this. Each of three job levels has been broken down into five modules. Rotation among those modules at his or her level is mandatory for each employee. Once an employee has been trained in four of the five modules at her or his current level in this way, she or he begins to learn the modules for the next higher level. The employee will then have the opportunity to work at the next level as needed, for example, for vacation relief. When employees do so, they will be paid at that level. Both female and male employees can now see a clear promotion path and the opportunity to follow it. The bakery manager and the union are pleased with the new arrangement.

The bakery example is an illustration of a program that may benefit women in terms of eventual promotion, but it is not an initiative that was brought in specifically to help women advance. It ensures that each employee will develop a skill base on the job. It is also a learning experience for both the Co-op and the union, since in other areas within the organization positions are more stratified. This initiative could eventually broaden ways of thinking about how the work force can be arranged.

Calgary Co-operative Association is presently undertaking a strategic planning initiative. In the course of this initiative, career counseling was identified as an area where more could be done. Presently, career counseling is available to any staff person, but has been done on a limited scale until now—usually when an employee initiates the discussion. The Co-op has a policy in place to deal with complaints of sexual harassment. If a case comes forward, staff submit unsigned statements concerning the problem. The Personnel Department determines whether there is substance to the allegations, and may undertake discreet investigations. If Personnel determines that there is substance to the complaint, letters are sent to complainants assuring them that they are absolutely protected from recrimination if they will provide signed letters of complaint. Then, employees are interviewed to establish details of the complaint. There is a separate opportunity for the person against whom the complaint was laid to respond. The organization will take appropriate action, up to and including termination. The policy is intended to try to lessen the degree of fright that is associated with bringing forward a complaint. Management circulated a

policy statement about sexual harassment and posters from Human Rights which address the issue. Other claims of intimidation and personal harassment are also investigated.

Equity in the democratic/membership structure

The male/female ratio among the membership of Calgary Co-op is unknown, but women make the greater percentage of purchasing decisions. Alberta legislation prevents dual memberships in co-operatives. This means that most families will have one membership and one eligible voter. It is up to the family to decide whether this voter is male or female.

No formal initiatives are in place to ensure representation of women in the democratic structure, but women have been actively recruited from time to time by other board members on an individual basis. There has always been at least one woman on the board; often there has been a lone female board member. Presently, three of the nine board members are women. The Board Chair is a man.

Many of the current board members gained early experience with the Co-op as members of the Member Relations Committee. This committee traditionally has good representation of women among its members.

4.4 Co-operative Housing Association of Ontario (CHAO)

The Organization

CHAO was incorporated in early 1987. The Association brings together non-profit organizations working in the co-operative housing sector in Ontario. Its members are co-operative housing resource groups, federations, and staff groups. CHAO provides a vehicle for these organizations to share information and skills, and to liaise with various levels of government. One of the tasks of the organization is to examine the problems encountered by the non-profit co-operative housing sector and to attempt to develop solutions to them.

The organization has always depended for its funding on development-based revenue. This income depends on government allocation of funding for new co-operative housing units. An Endowment Fund which is designed eventually to stabilize the organization was recently created.

The Association is a relatively 'flat' organization. There are about 11 permanent employees and a number who are temporary. Staff and elected officials carry a heavy work load. Major work projects include: extensive consultation with members to develop positions and recommendations for co-operative housing policy which are then relayed to government; responding to members on operational matters; working with various levels of government to try to ensure timely and fair allocation of housing units for development in the co-op sector; and, production of member education materials.

Co-operative housing is a sector characterized by intense work loads and by staff and elected roles that require specialized technical and/or political knowledge. Women have always had a high profile in the co-operative housing sector in Canada.

Dale Reagan, Executive Director of CHAO, pointed out that the housing co-op sector deals with people who are living together, so working in the sector is not just a matter of running an effective organization. Co-operative housing constitutes a community where values are important. Equity and fairness are questions, along with other questions of value, in housing co-ops. People who work in the sector have often come out of the movement; they personally share those values.

Still, there are many housing co-operatives and federations where women do not experience the equity that is characteristic of CHAO.

Equity among employees

According to CHAO staff members who are responsible for equity programs, gender balance has been an important consideration within the housing sector historically.

CHAO's personnel policy manual sets out a number of helpful policies: use of sick leave for care of sick children; priority in scheduling vacation for people with children; unpaid parental leave; and, reimbursement of child care costs for employees who attend meetings outside regular hours.

Staff try to ensure that staff meetings function as a forum in the sense that people pay attention to who gets to speak, and about what. People take care to involve the full range of staff in decision-making, to the point where each staff person's needs may be incorporated into a final recommendation. This is more a cultural trait of CHAO than it is prescribed policy, although specific policy does give staff the right to bring up issues.

Third tier organizations can play a strong role in promoting equity.

Over and above these policies, the organization has a new employment equity policy at a draft stage. Women are well represented in management positions at CHAO. The new policy initiative represents an effort to formalize equity practices which are already in place. The policy draft, which addresses the gender mix and barriers to certain groups, will be reviewed and discussed both by staff and by the board. The process of formalizing policy allows CHAO to:

make sure practices *are* truly fair;

entrench appropriate practices so that as staff changes, the practices remain;

and, create models that can be shared with member organizations. Since the CHAO board has taken some initiatives in this area, the member organizations are now looking at these issues as well.

CHAO is also undertaking a pay equity review, partly to ensure that the organization is meeting provincial legislative requirements, partly to formalize what are in fact current employment practices, and partly to create models that can be shared with other organizations. CHAO will complete the review process and post results by December 31, 1993.

The Association is addressing human rights in the workplace as well. This review will address compliance with the Ontario Human Rights Code, issues of harassment, and broad issues of discrimination. Staff is now working from a rough draft to make recommendations to the board.

Staff and elected officials recognize that the high stress level, the lack of an extended career path in the sector, the specialized nature of the work, and the high cost in training people into their roles all mean that turnover represents a costly risk to the organization. Therefore, it is desirable to find ways of keeping employees. One recent initiative has been a policy proposal that would allow all employees to accumulate the right to take paid leave after five years. There would not be a prescription regarding how the time would be spent; however, the expectation would be that the employee would take some time to take a course or to engage in reflection related to the job. The proposal is not yet policy, and its implications are still being debated in the sector.

There is not a wide range of career opportunities within the co-operative housing sector. Possibilities include management of individual co-ops, positions with federations, resource

groups, or provincial or national organizations. With the exception of managing a housing co-op, all of those positions can be financially precarious. Also, most of the organizations are small and there is not a lot of staff turnover. Since the field is so specialized, one thing that CHAO does is try to make employees' jobs interesting. However, it is difficult to move from one area to another within the organization without going back to school and acquiring a different set of skills.

Equity in the democratic/membership structure

Gender equity on the volunteer side is an emerging issue, but women are active at all levels of the democratic structure in co-operative housing. The President and Past President of CHAO are both women. Part of CHAO's current work plan is to begin to examine the face of leadership within the movement with its member organizations. At this stage, involvement of women in elected roles does not need promotion, just consciousness. There is work to be done in terms of other under-represented groups. Within the regional federations, there is a move to try to raise awareness of equity issues within the regional federations. The Co-operative Housing Foundation of Canada is also looking at its board structure with regard to under-represented groups.

Third tier organizations such as CHAO can play a strong role in promoting equity. They can provide a variety of project funding, for example for policy development, training, and special forums. If one or more of the members proposed a special forum to talk about issues of under-representation CHAO would consider assisting with resources and financial help.

Part of CHAO's leadership role is also to develop policy models that can be shared. Third tier organizations can take the lead in establishing the type of education about equity that is available the sector, and in addressing systemic barriers such as those which assign voting rights to one person per household rather than to every adult household member.

4.5 Co-op Atlantic

The Organization

Co-op Atlantic is a second-tier co-operative which serves 170 members. The membership includes conventional consumer co-ops, direct charge co-ops, agricultural co-ops and societies, buying clubs and other co-ops. Although most members of Co-op Atlantic today are conventional and direct charge consumer co-ops, the organization grew from agricultural origins. The Maritime Livestock Board was founded in 1927 and became the Canadian Livestock Co-operative in 1930. In 1944, Canadian Livestock Co-operative (Maritimes) became Maritime Co-operative Services Ltd. The name was changed to Co-op Atlantic in 1975. Members of Co-op Atlantic represent 202,000 member households throughout the four Atlantic provinces and the Magdalen Islands.

Co-op Atlantic conducts wholesale operations on behalf of its members. It also offers members specialized services in management, merchandising and accounting, and training for employees, directors and members. Atlantic Peoples Housing Ltd., a subsidiary, is involved in real estate development, non-profit senior citizen housing, and management of continuing housing co-ops.

Equity among employees

Co-op Atlantic is in the process of developing an employment equity policy. Gail Stevens is Manager of Personnel, Planning and Development for Co-op Atlantic. She has developed a consultation process to gather employee input to help the organization make decisions about

policy. In her experience, the appropriate process for a cultural development initiative—and that is what employment equity is—is not to have management alone develop it. The people who will be affected by the initiatives need to be involved in a meaningful way in the content of the decisions.

Ms. Stevens' goal is to articulate policy choices so that employees can see and understand them. As part of the employment equity initiative, she works to identify and highlight, for employees, the value-based decisions that need to be made. She considers empowerment of people part of her work, to help them learn how institutions exercise power, and how employees can exercise their own power. If people experience decision-making power as they address employment equity, she hopes that in the future they will be more comfortable making decisions in relation to other policy areas.

Ms. Stevens has identified several policy points related to employment equity. Each of these will be addressed with an information sheet for employees. The information sheet will frame the issue, and will have a tear-off piece on which employees can write their comments and send them to her. Earlier this year, she addressed the management staff of Co-op Atlantic at their annual information sharing meeting and told them how she intended to proceed. She also launched the Employment Equity process via a specific newsletter. This communication has been followed up by the information sheets.

Co-op Atlantic has an Employment Equity Committee, the make-up of which is reasonably representative of different levels within the organization.

The slogan for employment equity initiatives at Co-op Atlantic is "Fairness is important." The process Ms. Stevens is using is based on several assumptions:

1. There is no way fairness can be built for the target employee groups (visible minorities, women, people of Aboriginal ancestry, people with disabilities) unless there is fairness for all employees.

2. The existing tradition of promotion from within will be retained and promoted (75 % guideline.)

3. Regardless of a person's position status, all employees are competent to assess employment equity issues from an organizational perspective (beyond the experience of their particular jobs).

4. Employment equity initiatives will not be supported enough to succeed unless all employees are part of the decision process.

An organization does not have to hire or promote incompetent people in order to meet equity goals. There are highly qualified people available from all target groups, or people with capabilities to be developed for the future vacancies.

The basis of Co-op Atlantic's employment equity initiative is to make procedures fair for everyone, including white males. If there are rational, job-related criteria for making decisions about development and promotion, then procedures are more likely not only to be fair, but also to be perceived to be fair. Favouring any one group would perpetuate stereotypes.

Ms. Stevens identified certain value-based questions concerning affirmative action that need to be answered. (She defines affirmative action as "a series of special measures to gradually increase the representation and distribution of people with under-represented traits in workplaces." For example, affirmative action could be a selection criterion to consider in addition to job-related qualifications. In the case where the "best" applicant is not clearly identifiable from

a short-list of qualified applicants, the qualified person with an under-represented trait would be selected for that position.)

One of the value based questions is: Does the organization want to operate according to affirmative action when it does internal development, that is, when people within the organization are chosen for development opportunities such as training, lateral transfers, and special projects?

One possibility that employees discuss is a procedure where those who wish to have development opportunities would self-identify. Then they would be tested and assessed according to some set of rational, job-related criteria. Or, employees may, as a group, prefer to stay with the present system where supervisors and managers identify individuals according to their perceptions of high potential employees. In this case the managers and supervisors will continue to bring employees along in their particular functional areas.

A second question that will be discussed is: Does the organization want to practice affirmative action in the of selection of employees in internal positions and/or external recruiting? Here, the challenge is to preserve the need for the organization to exercise its managerial decision-making power to fulfill its mandate to govern, and at the same time build in systems that limit this power so that a decision maker does not make a decision which exercises unfair discrimination.

Presently, the recruitment officer screens applicants down to about three, based on qualifications. The supervisor can decide how to proceed from that point. He or she can decide to conduct interviews alone, to have the recruitment officer assist, or, in rare cases, to have the recruitment officer conduct the interviews and make the decision. Co-op Atlantic could choose to retain this system and risk that a supervisor or manager might inadvertently make a decision based on prohibited grounds, or they could choose a procedure where the selection would be by a small committee. The committee might include, in addition to the supervisor and the recruitment officer, a peer of the supervisor and perhaps a future peer of the applicant. That way, if a person from a target group is denied a position, it will be the result of a three-party decision rather than one person's decision. A committee would retain the managerial discretion needed to govern, but would reduce the singular decision-making power of one individual. Such a committee could also be expected to reject an applicant with an under-represented trait, if that person was not equally qualified.

Some employees may need extra encouragement before they will consider self-identifying for development. Ms. Stevens expects to hold discussions with support staff that will help them to consider their options. Also, she is developing a two-day course with Atlantic Council of Co-operatives on four areas, three of which are designed to help employees to speak more assertively. These three areas are communication, team building, and stress management. She hopes that this type of training will better equip employees to participate in the decision making process and to think about their own roles within the organization. This program is not a condition of employment, so it will be up to supervisors and employees to see the value of the training.

Another value-based decision that will be put to employees is: Do we want work-family policies? This depends on how Co-op Atlantic defines "employees". This question has more than one layer. Does Co-op Atlantic define employees as people who are likely to have central family responsibilities or not? If it is true that in Canada only sixteen per cent of families are "traditional nuclear families," how can this reality be incorporated into the way the organization treats its people? This is not marked as a women's issue, but as an issue for all employees. Family responsibilities include not only parenting, but elder care as well.

In today's employment market, employees generally accept conditions they find unattractive because they have no alternative. If, however, they perceive that their employer does not offer them conditions that they value, and other organizations do, they will tend to look elsewhere.

The above questions are among a larger set of value-based decisions that the organization and its employees will address. For example, the people at Co-op Atlantic may indicate a preference for change in some of the organization's assumptions about "who employees are", or they may decide not to. Co-op Atlantic could achieve a good employment equity track record either way, Ms. Stevens said. If the policies and practices do not change, it will mean that they will have to work harder to seek out candidates from the target groups that fit the present employee profile.

Another area Co-op Atlantic will address is sexual harassment policy. The law requires the organization to have a sexual harassment policy in its agricultural operations now. Co-op Atlantic will discuss a similar policy for general harassment. If the organization is to have fairness for all, there needs to be a general harassment policy so that when supervisors discipline employees, they do so in ways that would not reasonably be perceived as harassment on prohibited grounds.

According to Ms. Stevens, the vulnerability of the participatory process in which Co-op Atlantic is engaging is that people are accustomed to traditional top-down management decision-making about policy; they do not have a history of getting together and talking in groups about issues. It has to be clear to employees that these issues will be relevant to their work lives at Co-op Atlantic.

If it is true that in Canada only sixteen per cent of families are "traditional nuclear families," how can this reality be incorporated into the way the organization treats its people? This is not marked as a women's issue, but as an issue for all employees.

Employee input will be invited through a dialogue-based process. Different employee groups can ask for information and dialogue sessions. Ms. Stevens will receive notes from these groups as well as make her own. She will also receive the tear-offs people send her from information sheets. She has an anonymous hot-line for people to call in with comments. At the time of this study, it is too early to tell to what extent employees will take up the questions that are being put to them.

Equity in the democratic/membership structure

Co-op Atlantic has a ten-member board, with one member from each of ten electoral zones. Presently, one of the ten directors is a woman. A past president of Co-op Atlantic is a woman. In the last decade, there have been only three different women on the board. According to an article in *The Atlantic Co-operator* (September 1992), the female board member has noted a dramatic increase in female participation during her seven years of experience with zone conferences and local boards.

The Proposal for Renewal document (March 1991) prepared by the Member and Public Relations Department for a committee of the membership (the Resolution 11 Committee) recognized the under-representation of women as participants in stakeholder control structures. However, presently there is no concrete plan to encourage more women to participate as board members or delegates to Co-op Atlantic.

4.6 Concluding remarks

Initiatives within the case study organizations range from collections of practices that have emerged over time in organizations where leadership has been supportive, to full-scale climate

assessments and formalized programs. The preceding summaries for the beginning of an "idea bank" of approaches and programs. Other co-operatives can draw on these ideas as they develop their own approaches to equity.

PART FIVE: CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE CASE STUDIES

The broad aim of this research was to uncover and document helps and hindrances women have encountered in their experience as elected officials and as employees in decision making positions in co-operatives. Co-operatives will benefit from applying the findings to planning approaches which address their placement in the community and the marketplace, and their relevance to all groups among the membership.

The recommendations presented here are drawn directly from information gathered through the Research for Action project, which focused on uncovering helps and hindrances to women in decision making positions. Since the recommendations do not, for the most part, draw on a review of theoretical literature and other research, they are not exhaustive. They suggest ways organizations can build on the successes and address the barriers the Research for Action project identified. To illustrate the link between recommendations and the context from which they are drawn, recommendations are incorporated within the relevant sections below.

The discussion of findings below follows the flow of the full report. The first two parts summarize findings from interviews with elected officials and the next two sections summarize findings from interviews with female staff in decision making positions.

5.1 Elected group: build on positive experience

Base of experience

Women come to elected roles with skill bundles they have collected from other volunteer and community roles, from paid work, and from family life. Various training grounds exist from which people later move to positions as delegates or board members. Participants emphasized several ways in which early experience equipped them for their positions. It allowed them to:

- develop a profile among the membership;
- see how others fulfill their leadership roles, and to envision themselves in the same positions;
- prepare for the politics of elected bodies; and,
- become familiar with the organization, thus reducing the intimidation factor associated with holding an elected office.

Recommendations

1.1 Communicate, through public documents and personal behavior, recognition of the value and relevance of previous experience, including experience traditionally associated with women's lives, which candidates bring to elected roles.

1.2 Actively recruit members of under-represented groups to committees and to the board. Encourage preparation for elected roles through committee membership.

1.3 Identify avenues for members to develop a visible profile, and encourage candidates from under-represented groups to take advantage of these. Examples are: committee positions; community projects and other special projects; member relations initiatives which link the organization more closely with under-represented groups.

1.4 Support committee members in their roles by establishing terms of reference and by having past chairs orient new chairs to the job.

1.5   Offer self-development workshops to help people prepare to take on public roles. Recognize at the same time that relevance to people's needs and a climate of support for diversity in an organization will do more to establish equity than will personal development for individuals from under-represented groups.

Philosophical fit

Elected officials draw support from knowing they are involved with an organization that works toward, or has the potential to work toward, goals that are consistent with their own. One research participant suggested more women would be interested in sitting on the board if her co-operative's role in the community was more evident in its public profile.

Recommendations

1.6   Through member orientation and communication, work to address members' perceptions of the organization overall. Be clear about the co-operative's profile—its services, its relevance.

1.7   Publicize elected positions as avenues through which people can contribute to their community.

1.8   Identify and publicize ways in which co-operatives do or can make a difference in people's lives.

Learning as a benefit of the role

The learning, both formal and informal, which accompanies the responsibility of elected office is not only a necessity which enables people to serve properly; it is also a personal benefit. This learning ranges from financial management to leadership, confidence, and group dynamics. Among other things, research participants said training helps them to:

- speak intelligently to members about co-operation and the co-operative system;

- become familiar with services offered by centrals and federations;

- learn details about functional areas from the staff responsible for those areas; and

- identify the appropriate division of responsibilities among board and management.

Recommendations

1.9   Publicize the opportunities an elected position presents for people to learn new skills and to broaden their networks.

1.10 Offer training which deals not only with the specific organization, but which also places the organization within the larger co-operative and credit union movement as a whole.

1.11 Have senior staff sit down with the board and "walk" board members through their functional areas.

1.12 Clarify board and management roles through training, clear communication processes and terms of reference.

Sources of support: organizational climate, key people, family, employers

There were many instances where women were not optimistic about the climate of support for women in their organizations as a whole, but most could identify key individuals on staff and on the board who recruit women and/or help to create a climate that supports women. Important support comes from other women who introduce new board members to how things are done. Personal contact with committed women and men who are active locally, regionally, and nationally in the co-operative movement inspires some women, and serves to keep others going in the face of barriers.

Family members and employers are essential sources of support. Those who have less flexible work or family lives feel additional pressure.

Recommendations

1.13 Show leadership at the senior level to create a climate of support for women in leadership positions. Recognize that the more women employees who are in decision-making positions, the more there will be a climate that encourages women to seek election.

1.14 Establish avenues for members and elected officials to communicate with committed, supportive individuals in co-operatives beyond the local level. This can happen through sector-specific meetings, through attendance at co-operative forums, and through cross-sector regional and national co-operative training events, committees and task forces.

1.15 When child care or elder care is necessary in order for a board member to attend meetings or training events, cover expenses.

5.2 Elected group: address existing barriers

Political Process Concerns

Anxiety surrounds running for and holding office. Elections can be grueling political contests. The information members have on which to base their choice in large co-operatives is thin and elections can be biased in favour of the familiar names of incumbents.

There can be a negative change in the way people treat board members once they are elected—a "we/they" division between board and membership. Some "play up" to the board; to others, board members are the people making unpopular decisions.

Recommendations

2.1 Improve the democratic climate of the organization through meaningful consultation processes which allow all members to bring their views to the board and membership for consideration.

2.2 Institute regular reviews (interviews with members and elected officials, hearings, avenues for anonymous registration of concern) to continually monitor and evaluate the organization's political climate in light of the following questions:

Are elections characterized by negativity more than by a climate of opportunity for candidates to offer their skills to the membership?

Do members have adequate, appropriate information on which to base their choices among candidates?

Do the actions of the board and staff, and do member orientation programs, work to eliminate division between the board and members?

Does the board, and do committees reflect the constituency the board hopes to serve? Does the organization define its constituency as one that reflects the diversity of the Canadian population?

Negative climate

Co-operative leaders need to ask whether their board and delegate body create a climate that turns women away. Research participants identified signs of a chilly climate, including:

- exclusion of women from more prestigious committees or offices on the board;

- a perception among some board members that the recording role is appropriately filled by a woman;
- resistance to gender neutral language;
- the assumption that the lone woman at the table represents "all women."

Recommendations

2.3   Establish a clear policy to deal with instances of sexual harassment in the democratic structure. Communicate the policy clearly to all elected officials and staff.

2.4   Incorporate discussion of climate issues and material about differential treatment of women into board training programs. Include discussion of the importance to the board of people with varied backgrounds and leadership styles.

2.5   Adopt a communications policy which includes guidelines on the use of inclusive language and non-sexist communication.

2.6   Institute regular reviews (interviews with members and elected officials, hearings, avenues for anonymous registration of concern) to continually monitor and evaluate the climate for elected officials in light of the following questions:

Are women, by design, tradition, or perception of their level of capability, excluded from certain offices on the board? Are they expected to fill gender-stereotyped roles on the board?

Do women on the board need to work harder to establish their credibility than men do?

Is the burden of advocating for women employees and members, and for inclusive language carried solely by female board members?

Weight of role

The stresses of elected office include divisive issues, legal responsibility, unclear roles, physical fatigue and time pressure. Co-operatives can help elected officials meet responsibilities to their families and communities with family-friendly policies that make commitment to the co-operative possible.

For women, the stress of an elected position can be compounded by the loneliness of being the only woman or one of few women in that position, and by the sense of being marked as different because they sound different, look different and dress differently from their male counterparts. To be seen as different is to be more closely watched. Some research participants were keenly aware of having to prove their credibility to an extent that was not required of their male colleagues.

Recommendations

2.7   Conduct exit interviews with female board members to learn of barriers they encountered or supports that were particularly helpful to them.

2.8   Ensure elected roles are characterized by reasonable work loads and flexibility, such that people who have family responsibilities and people who work in jobs with low flexibility can participate.

5.3 Employee group: build on positive experience

Positive climate

Attitudes of co-workers and management affect both the daily experience and the long-term success of female employees. A climate that accepts women in decision making positions comes

about only with commitment from senior management. Research participants gave examples of how acceptance, encouragement, a sense of belonging, and flexibility in hours for employees who have children or elders in their care, create a supportive climate.

Recommendations

3.1 Senior management must demonstrate a clear and articulate commitment to addressing barriers to all under-represented groups through practice and policy.

3.3 Senior management must address negative peer group attitudes through leadership, example, and commitment to appropriate training programs.

3.4 Allow flexibility in determining hours of work.

Encouragement and recognition

Research participants recognized the role that supportive managers and supervisors played, either through direct encouragement or through seeing their potential and giving them the opportunity to take on challenges and show initiative.

Recommendations

3.5 Encouragement and recognition is a responsibility of management and supervisory staff, who should:

demonstrate confidence in women employees;

assist employees to identify opportunities to take on new challenges and expand the scope of their positions; and,

support employees in meeting these new challenges with appropriate training, release time, teamwork and resources.

Models and mentors

It is important for women to see other women in senior roles from an early stage in their careers. The more a woman sees other women in senior roles, the more likely she is to consider promotion possible, and to prepare for it.

Mentorship often occurs informally. A formal mentorship program creates opportunities for a greater number of female employees to take advantage of mentor relationships.

Recommendations

3.6 Facilitate mentor relationships in one or more of the following ways:

establish, or provide access to, training which helps employees to choose mentors and to be effective mentors;

establish panels of senior employees with whom other employees can meet and from whom they can learn as a group;

match new women employees with senior women employees in mentor pairs;

establish procedures for employees who wish to terminate participation or switch to a new mentor.

Opportunity

Clear promotion procedures should be coupled with enough flexibility that employees with initiative have room to expand their jobs. A clear path to promotion lowers the chance that informal mechanisms that disadvantage some groups will continue to operate. Flexibility is important, since some jobs evolve during a person's tenure as the organization grows, affording the incumbent the opportunity to grow with the job.

Recommendations

3.7 Where appropriate, accommodate employees' initiatives to expand the scope of their positions. Support employees in meeting these new challenges with appropriate training, release time, teamwork and resources.

3.8 Ensure open recruitment channels for women to pursue non-traditional jobs. Establish appropriate guidelines for advertising jobs and conducting interviews.

3.9 Establish training across functional areas to de-segregate primarily male and primarily female career paths.

Training

Research participants emphasized that employees need information about opportunity and eligibility for training. People cannot self-identify for development programs if they are not aware of the possibilities. Opportunities for cross-training on the job in a variety of work areas, with release time to take advantage of such training, have been crucial for some research participants. Decisions about training should not be in the hands of supervisors alone.

Recommendations

3.10 Publicize training possibilities to all staff so they can self-identify for opportunities.

3.11 Go beyond granting the opportunity to self-identify for training. Encouragement is important.

3.12 Establish training opportunities for part-time staff.

3.13 Facilitate access to training events outside the organization, such as "Women in Management" seminars, where women can share concerns and approaches with other women.

3.14 Recognize the limitations of a women-only approach in training by developing training programs that address equity issues with all staff.

5.4 Employee group: address existing barriers

Negative climate

One woman noted that, especially in her field, which is a non-traditional area for women, a woman has to be especially tenacious in establishing her credibility. By virtue of being part of what is still a relatively new phenomenon, a woman in senior management is inevitably visible in a way her male peers are not.

Some women feel strong resistance when they raise questions about sexism, sexual harassment, and gender neutral language. This resistance pressures them to curb the extent to which they speak out. Individual women should not have to carry the responsibility to monitor inappropriate communication, humour and behaviour.

The traits an organization values in its senior management are coded into its climate. Some women find their work styles do not fit with hierarchical bureaucratic structures and adversarial ways of addressing labour relations. One research participant said she would rather work according to a more collaborative style than was typical in her organization. Different leadership

styles of men and women are a subject of debate in management literature.[6] It is in some sense fruitless to argue whether men and women differ in their management styles in some essential way, that is, whether women and men are "born" different from each other. Both negative and positive stereotypes attached to clusters of traits we associate with women and men have historically resulted from this type of argument. What is important is that women and men do have differences in experience and socialization that are complicated to unravel. It is also important to recognize that lack of fit between their own preferred management style and that of the organization is a recurrent theme for some women (and probably for some men). Employers need to ask themselves what management style their organizations value, and why.

Recommendations

4.1   Establish a clear policy to deal with instances of sexual harassment. Communicate the policy clearly to all elected officials and staff.

4.2   Institute regular reviews (interviews with employees, hearings, avenues for anonymous registration of concern) to continually monitor and evaluate the organizational climate in light of the following questions:

Do employee groups at all levels reflect the constituency the organization hopes to serve? Does the organization define its constituency as one that reflects the diversity among the Canadian population? Is it normal, not exceptional, to see women in leadership positions?

Are provisions such as flexible hours and cross-training available consistently throughout the organization, or only in areas where supervisors support change?

Are newly promoted women watched more closely than newly promoted men by their peers and by management?

Are work methods and corporate structure styled after adversarial or collaborative models?

Unclear career paths

Since experience across a variety of work areas is increasingly seen as a prerequisite for promotion, opportunity to train across functional areas is crucial. At the same time, inherited assumptions about the set of skills required for promotion to a particular position should be examined. Promotable talent need not show a clear match with the attributes of the person who last held a job. In fact, looking for a match can perpetuate biases which have less to do with how a job ought to be done than with how it has always been done in the past. When criteria are re-thought to ensure that the appropriate set of skills, properly weighted, are the basis for assessment, the result may be an expanded or different pool of candidates for promotion.

Recommendations

4.3   Monitor differences in wages between areas where women achieve management positions and areas where they do not, to determine if management positions held by women are less valued.

4.4   Establish avenues for cross-training and for advancement from the functional areas where the greatest number of female employees begin their careers, for example, clerical or cashier positions.

4.5   Assess prerequisites for promotion to specific positions to determine areas where the organization is limiting itself to a male-only pool of candidates for promotion.

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[6] See, for example, Helgeson, Sally, *The Female Advantage*. New York: Doubleday, 1990; Fierman, Jaclyn, "Do women manage differently?" *Fortune*, December 17, 1990.

Health, stress, workload and family

The increased stress and work load that accompany promotion lead to a two-dimensional struggle for balance. One challenge is to juggle the commitments within the job; the other is to balance the job with life outside the office. Without the unpaid work that employees do in their homes and communities, much of the paid work that makes up the formal economy would not continue. Given high work loads and the still-strong societal pattern that leaves women bearing the greater share of domestic work and child and elder care, senior positions can become unmanageable for some. As responsibilities in the home come to be shared more equally, policies which accommodate workers' multiple responsibilities will aid both women and men. At the same time, such policies can increase the likelihood that men will take on a larger share of the domestic load.

Recommendations

4.6   Audit the organization's effect on health, family and community

Are work loads such that all employees can achieve a reasonable balance between work, personal life, and responsibilities to family and community.

Does policy grant flexibility for women and men to take family sick leave, and to rearrange hours of work to meet family responsibilities?

5.5 The role of larger co-operatives

It would be naive to assume that change across the co-operative system will occur without leadership from the system's largest and most influential organizations. Larger organizations, particularly second and third tier co-operatives, have the opportunity to encourage and support meaningful, sustainable equity initiatives.

The profiles of case study organizations in Part Four of this report sample the range of approaches major co-operatives in Canada are taking to address meaningful representation of all groups in elected and management positions. These initiatives show various levels of complexity, from traditions that have been fostered over time in a supportive atmosphere, to comprehensive new programs that result from concerted efforts which begin at senior levels in the organizations. These examples illustrate a recognition of the responsibility co-operative organizations have to address employment equity and equitable representation in democratic structures. They also illustrate the range of tools available to do so.

Leadership among larger organizations implies a commitment to change. As Marie Claire Malo noted in a presentation to the Canadian Association for Studies in Co-operatives, co-operatives are exposed to "the current prevailing rules of thought and operations" in the business and social environment. She went on to say that, "They are, however, at the same time agents, agents of ... economic and social transformation ....."[7] Malo referred specifically to the role women played in the development of Quebec's consumer co-operatives, but her point is relevant to the role co-operatives have taken historically in creating change.

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[7] Marie Claire Malo, "Customers or activists?" in Bold, June and Hammond-Ketilson, Lou, editors, *Empowerment Through Co-operatives: Selected Papers from the 1990 Meetings of the CASC.* Saskatoon: Centre for the Study of Co-operatives, 1991, p. 79.

Recommendations

5.1   In order to encourage co-operatives that may be unwilling or unable to undertake equity initiatives in isolation, second and third tier co-operatives should:

5.2   Show leadership in initiating efforts and in encouraging and supporting efforts made by co-operatives to address equity for under-represented groups in management, staff and democratic bodies. Examples are: provide staff and/or speakers; sponsor workshops; train workshop facilitators; ensure that issues related to equity for under-represented groups appear on agendas at conferences where co-operative representatives meet.

5.3   Establish a clearinghouse to collect, develop and disseminate material that will support equity initiatives. Examples are: model family-friendly policies; model communications policies that use inclusive language, and are sensitive to gender and race bias; step-by-step guides for establishing equity programs; workshop resource material.

5.6 Concluding remarks

This report presents recommendations based on primary research with a group of case studies in various regions of Canada. With the exception of Co-op Atlantic, the cases represent primarily English-speaking Canada. The Conseil Canadien de la Cooperation recently released two reference guides which resulted from an action research project concerned with women in co-operatives.[8] There is much to be learned by reviewing initiatives and recommendations other organizations and research studies have proposed. Canadian co-operatives are now in a position to benefit from a synthesis of their own research with guidelines developed by various human rights bodies, and research by large employers, including universities across Canada.[9]

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[8] See "Lancement des guides de référence" in *CASC Newsletter* (Canadian Association for Studies in Co-operatives, December 1993, for more information.

[9] See, for example, *Reinventing Our Legacy.* Saskatoon: University of Saskatchewan, 1993.

APPENDIX 1: RESEARCH APPROACH AND PROCEDURES

The "universe" of co-operatives from which we could choose five for further study was as large as the number of co-operatives in Canada. To make the choice manageable we spoke with people from several organizations who were in a position to make recommendations. These included staff of the Centre for the Study of Co-operatives, contact people from the Co-operatives Secretariat in Ottawa and the Canadian Co-operative Association, and members of the CCA Task Force on the Status of Women. Each of these contacts, of course, suggested other people to contact. In addition, Leslie Polsom, the librarian at the Centre for the Study of Co-operatives tracked down references to equity initiatives in Canadian co-operatives.

From this bank of possibilities we selected five co-operatives that together made up a sample that:

- included primary as well as second tier co-operatives;

- held potential for fruitfulness of inquiry (That is, they included co-operatives from which we judged we could expect to learn something about factors that assist women in achieving decision-making positions.);

- included organizations from sectors where women have historically held more influence, for example, housing, as well as sectors where women continue to be under-represented, for example, agriculture;

- represented a variety of geographic regions and business sectors; and

- was comprised of co-ops where we expected to be greeted with responsiveness, since this was crucial to the depth of information we would receive.

Ultimately, the sample consisted of five co-operative organizations: Co-op Atlantic, Co-operative Housing Association of Ontario; Saskatchewan Wheat Pool; Calgary Co-op; and, VanCity Savings and Credit Union.

Preliminary inquiries to find a co-operative in Quebec to include in the study were unsuccessful. Exchange of information can be difficult given not only the language barrier but also the structural division reflected in anglophone co-operatives' affiliation with one national organization and francophone co-operatives' affiliation with another. We had difficulty tracking down contact people within the short time frame available to identify a suitable case. These difficulties, combined with the fact that we were looking for in-depth information in a research area that proved to be sensitive for many, and discussion of which can be layered with subtleties even when the language is common, led us to judge that it was unreasonable for the project's resources to support a Quebec case.

We contacted chief executive officers of each of the five chosen co-operatives by letter to introduce the research project. The president of CCA co-operated with a letter of encouragement that accompanied my request for participation. When we subsequently contacted them by telephone, all five organizations agreed to participate in the study. We relied on the chief executive officers, or the contact persons to whom they referred us, to identify individuals who might participate as research subjects. In some cases, these contact people had a large number of women from which to choose. In others, the pool of women who held management positions was small. In cases where there was one or were no women board members, delegates participated.

In-depth interviews lasted from one hour to three hours each. They were conversational in tone and flexible enough that, though they explored pre-determined themes, they also allowed themes which originated with research participants to emerge.

Presentation of results

   While it would be useful to readers to know more about the individual research participants, confidentiality precludes presentation of seamless profiles which would preserve their backgrounds and experiences intact.

   Presentation of results in Parts Two and Three of this report follows a format which mirrors the research interpretation process. Each sub-section begins with excerpts from interview notes. These excerpts do not represent the exact words of the people who were interviewed; however, they are taken from research notes which participants reviewed and approved. Interpretation, expansion and analysis follow these excerpts. The excerpts which are reproduced at the head of each section are not meant to illustrate the entire discussion relevant to that section. They are chosen for their ability to illustrate select points only, and to give readers a taste of original material. Their placement at the head of a section mirrors the research process: analysis builds on what research participants report.

   Employees and elected officials were treated as separate groups for purposes of interpretation. Information from each of these two groups is organized according to the logic that emerged from the interview notes. This means research results are presented according to a different set of categories for each group.

   Concentration on the stories of individuals can tend to individuate the results. It is easy with this sort of reporting for both writers and readers to cast responsibility for a person's advancement or lack of advancement with the individual. In fact, a complex interplay of personal, organizational, and social forces are at work. To be seen in its appropriate context, a study such as this must be treated as a companion to theoretical approaches which consider roles North American society has constructed for men and women and how these roles are learned; ways power is currently played out in society, and who benefits from the status quo. Where reasonably possible, we have tried to set the information from this research project in a larger framework. However, the information on which the report is based is a bank of personal stories related by individuals.

APPENDIX 2: BASELINE DATA SURVEY

1. Introduction

A survey of all members of the Canadian Co-operative Association (CCA), the organizations that had agreed to participate in the Women in Co-operatives case study research, and the CCA itself, was conducted to develop baseline data on women's participation as elected officials and management employees.

CCA is the national association of English-speaking co-operative organizations. CCA members include regional and provincial, co-operative and credit union organizations owned, in turn, by autonomous local co-operatives and credit unions. Members include organizations in agriculture and fisheries, consumer and supply, financial, and service sectors. The national organization runs programs and activities in the following areas: education; government affairs; research and policy formation; co-operative formation; and, information distribution.[10]

Thirty-six surveys were distributed; eighteen were completed and returned, for a return rate of 50%.

The questionnaire included three components: background information (labeled 'A' within each section); survey questions (labeled 'B' within each section); and, analysis (labeled 'C' within each section). The background information allowed respondents to compare their organization to national statistics. The twenty survey questions distributed throughout the questionnaire asked for statistical data. The third component, analysis, helped respondents examine the current level of women's participation in their own organizations. Analysis questions were identified as optional in the covering letter distributed with the questionnaire.

The questionnaire's three-dimensional design made it a learning tool for organizations as well as a data gathering vehicle. We encouraged organizations to save a copy to adapt to their future needs, or the needs of their member organizations. By asking respondents to use the optional analysis questions to reflect on the data from their own organizations, the research project advanced awareness of the issues concerned and, it is hoped, increased the probability that respondents will be receptive to future proposals for change.

The survey instrument was developed by Myrna Barclay to complete her MBA studies. It was pre-tested by a human resource manager in a major co-operative organization.

The questionnaire incorporates principles associated with action research: an organization must provide people with information and a reason to change; it must also engage them in the process of change if the exercise is to be truly successful. The background information and the optional analysis questions are designed to help respondents share the researchers' interest in the problem. The emphasis in action-oriented research is on action flowing from the research, not simply on analysis of the data.

Action research methodology is used to change corporate cultures; such change involves people's attitudes and beliefs and is a difficult task. Many organizational decision-makers are unenthusiastic about taking action to seek gender parity. Others see such action as both desirable and vital to the future success of their organization.

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[10] *Canadian Co-operative Association* [information brochure]. Ottawa: CCA, 1991.

2. Findings

The response rate for the survey was 50%; eighteen of thirty-six questionnaires were returned. The survey results represent totals of 11,980 employees in sixteen organizations and 157 board members in fourteen organizations. Because some questions did not apply to some respondents, and some questions were not answered, the number of responses to specific questions fell below eighteen. The findings which follow include the number of responses from which the findings are calculated in each case. Since this study focused almost exclusively on second and third tier co-operatives, the membership profile section of the questionnaire was not applicable. This section would be useful to first tier co-operatives who wish to adapt the questionnaire to analyze their own organizations.

Relative numbers of women in the organizations

Statistics Canada reports that women comprise 45% of the work force.[11] For the sixteen co-operative organizations that reported total numbers of employees, 43.24% of employees were female. Percentages ranged from a work force that was 92% female in one service co-operative to 18.9% female in a manufacturing organization.

The range in financial and service co-operatives combined was from a 60% female work force to a 92% female work force. Eight of the eleven organizations in these categories had work forces that were 70 % or greater female. The three agricultural co-operatives that responded reported women to be 27% of the work force or lower.

Relative numbers of women and men in management

The total number of persons in management positions for 16 organizations reporting was 1881. Of these, 30.8%, or 580, were women. Questionnaire respondents were asked to use the following management categories:

     (i) senior   comprised of the chief executive officer and managers/executives reporting to the CEO;

     (ii) middle   comprised mainly of those reporting to senior managers;

     (iii) junior   comprised mainly of: those reporting to middle management; and, entry level management positions.

If an organization was not large enough to have three management categories, the respondent was to use only senior and middle management categories. The breakdown for all levels of management is as follows:

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[11] Statistics Canada. *Labour Force Annual Averages, 1992.* Ottawa: Statistics Canada, 1993. Cat. No. 71-220.

	Number			Women as
	Women	Men	Total	% of total
Senior management	16	116	132	12.1
Mid-management	115	302	417	27.6
Junior management	449	883	1332	33.7
Total management	580	1301	1881	30.8

Table 1:   Women and men in three levels of management (16 co-operative organizations).
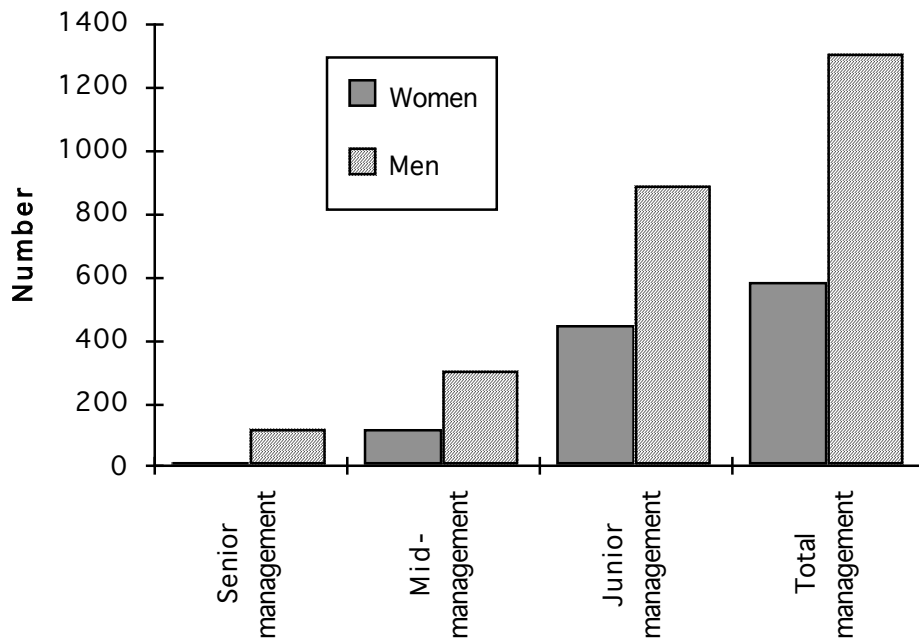
Chart 1:   Women and men in three levels of management (16 co-operative organizations).

Of the chief executive officers in the seventeen organizations which reported for that question, one was a woman.

Relative numbers of women and men in management, by sector

Respondents self-identified their organizations according to sector. Total numbers and percentages are recorded in the following charts for agriculture and for finance. Total numbers are too small in the case of service co-operatives to make a breakdown by percentages meaningful. The numbers of respondents for manufacturing and for trade are too small to report aggregate data and preserve confidentiality.

	Number			Women as
	Women	Men	Total	% of total
Senior management	1	26	27	3.7
Mid-management	18	123	141	12.8
Junior management	138	559	697	19.8
Total management	157	708	865	18.2

Table 2: Women and men in three levels of management (3 agricultural co-operatives; 865 management personnel).
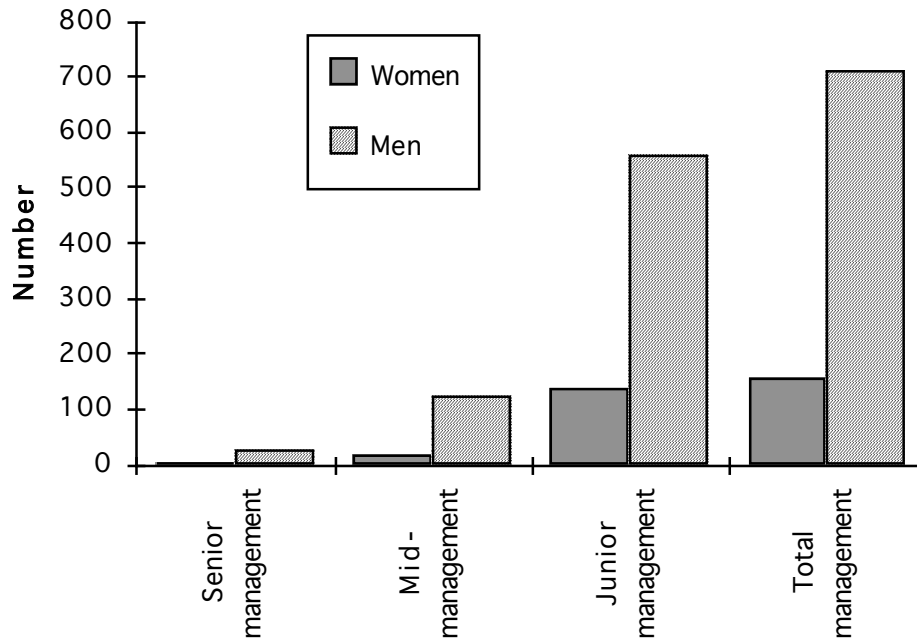
Chart 2: Women and men in three levels of management (3 agricultural co-operatives; 865 management personnel).

Finance

	Number			Women as
	Women	Men	Total	% of total
Senior management	6	72	78	7.7
Mid-management	76	142	218	34.9
Junior management	246	173	419	58.7
Total management	328	387	715	45.9

Table 3: Women and men in three levels of management (8 financial co-operatives; 715 management personnel).
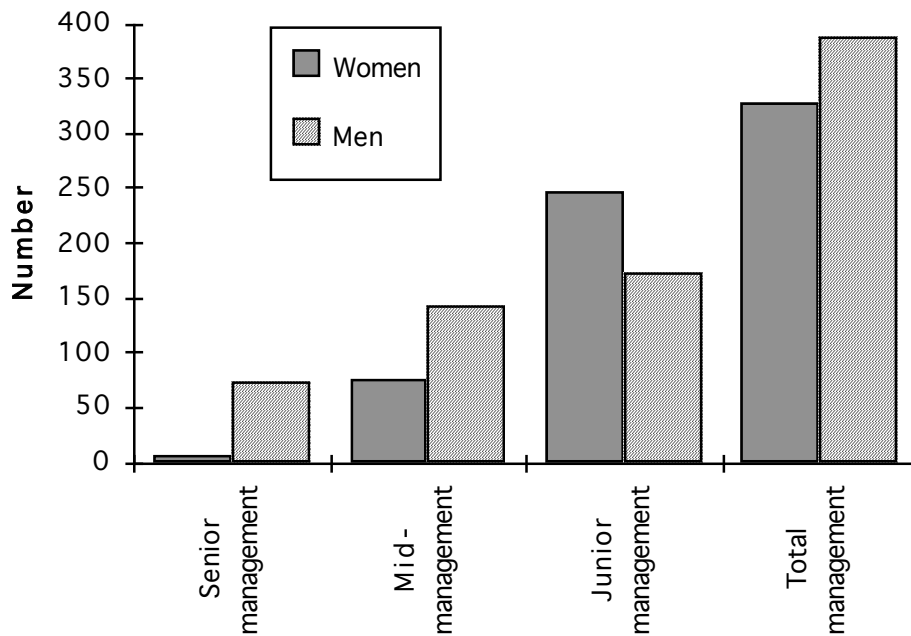
Chart 3: Women and men in three levels of management (8 financial co-operatives; 715 management personnel).

Service

	Number		
	Women	Men	Total
Senior management	8	7	15
Mid-management	14	7	21
Junior management	0	0	0
Total management	22	14	36

Table 4: Women and men in three levels of management (3 service co-operatives; 36 management personnel). **Note:** N is too small to convert to meaningful percentages.
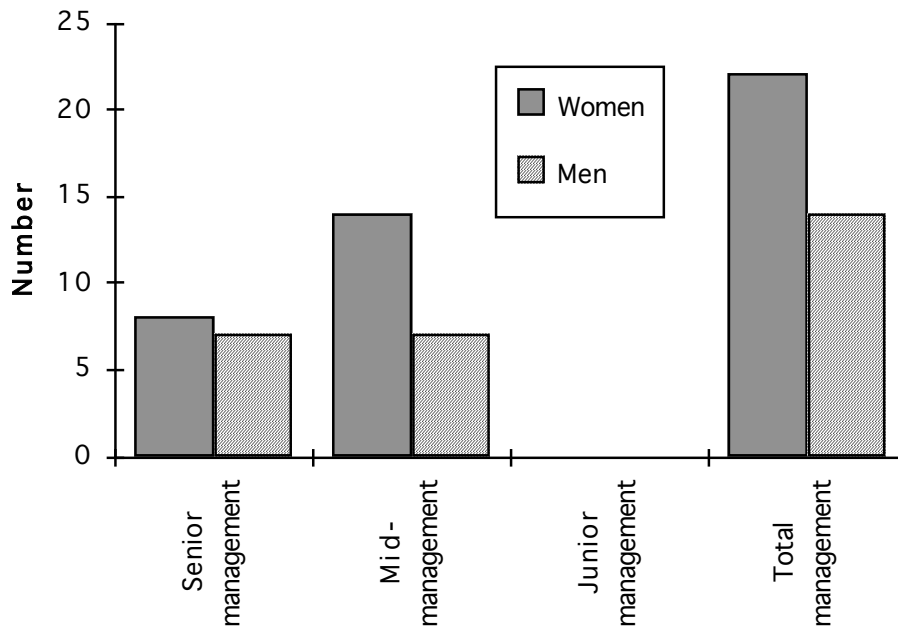
Chart 4: Women and men in three levels of management (3 service co-operatives; 36 management personnel).

Women's salaries as a percentage of men's

Eleven organizations reported sufficient salary data for full-time employees to make calculation of average salaries possible. Together, these organizations represent 6,074 employees, over twenty-six hundred of which are women.

For all organizations combined, female management salary as a percentage of male management salary is 82.58%; female non-management salary as a percentage of male non-management salary is 81.42%. However, when the salary for all females as a percentage of salary for all males is calculated, women's salary as a percentage of men's falls to 77%. The overall average is lower because it incorporates information about distribution of men and women at different job levels; it indicates that women are concentrated in positions where the salary is lower than average. Statistics Canada reports that in 1992, women working full-time earned 71.8% of what men earned.[12] The average for the eleven co-operatives that reported compares favourably.

	Female	Male	Female as % of total
Average management salary	44505.07	53890.87	**82.5**
Average non-management salary	28287.39	34744.40	**81.4**
Average salary for all employees	31144.94	40445.84	**77.0**

Table 5:   Female and male salary distribution in eleven co-operatives (6,074 employees).

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[12] *Salary gap between women, men narrows,* StarPhoenix (Saskatoon), January 18, 1994.
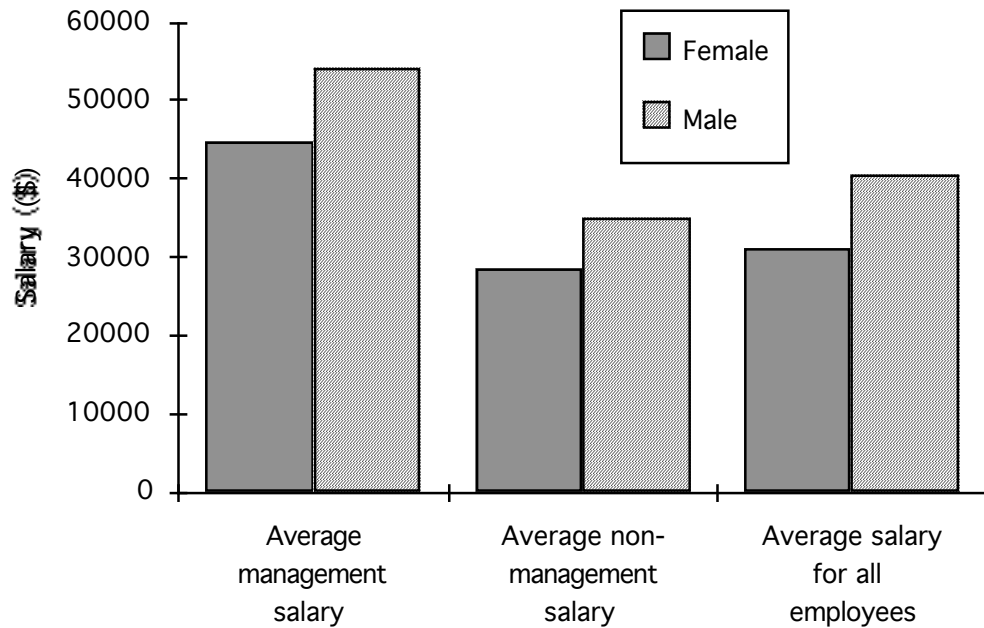
Chart 5: Female and male salary distribution in eleven co-operatives (6,074 employees).

Salary comparisons by sector

Questionnaire respondents self-identified their organizations according to sector. Comparisons are shown here for agricultural, service, and financial sectors, the only sectors for which enough organizations responded that data could be combined and confidentiality preserved.

Agriculture

	Female	Male	Female as % of total
Average management salary	39405.17	51334.08	76.8
Average non-management salary	26410.30	35027.04	75.4
Average salary for all employees	28733.14	38963.23	73.7

Table 6: Female and male salary distribution in three agricultural co-operatives (4980 employees).
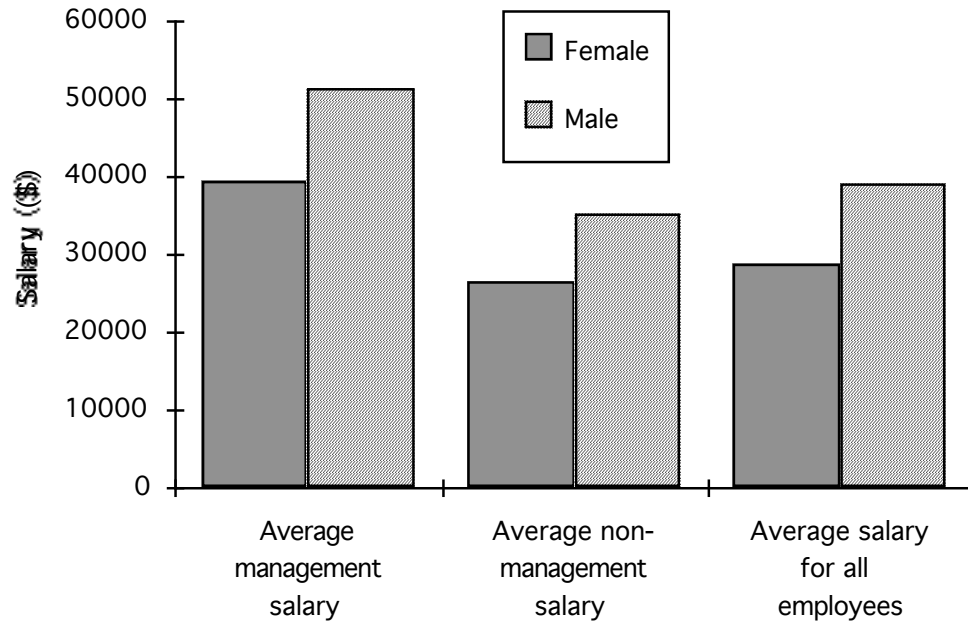
Chart 6: Female and male salary distribution in three agricultural co-operatives (4980 employees).

Financial

	Female	Male	Female as % of total
Average management salary	46608.22	58061.26	**80.3**
Average non-management salary	29031.07	33129.49	**87.6**
Average salary for all employees	32115.47	45595.38	**70.4**

Table 7: Female and male salary distribution in eight financial co-operatives (2724 employees).
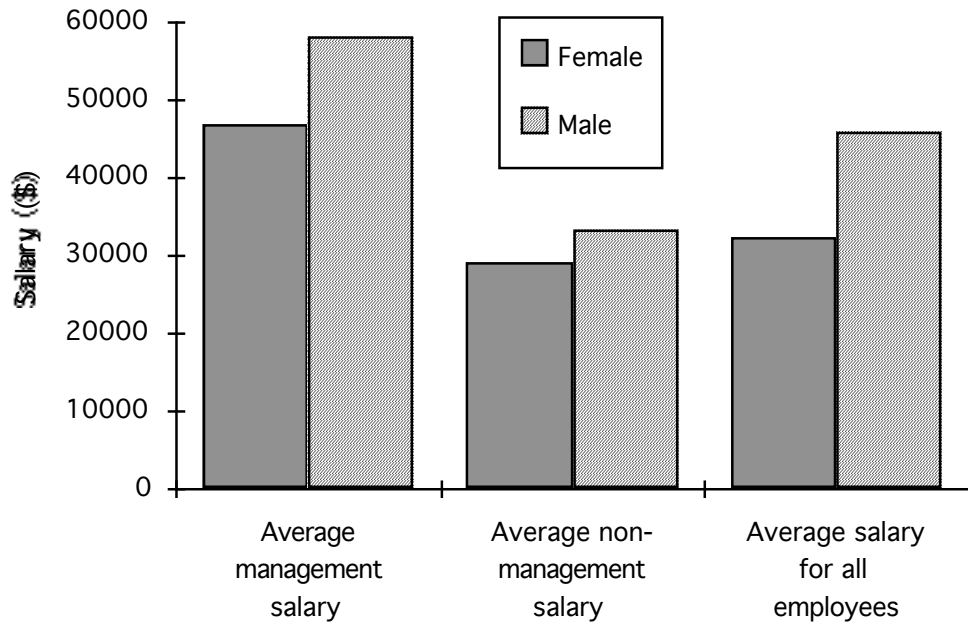
Chart 7: Female and male salary distribution in eight financial co-operatives (2724 employees).

Service

	Female	Male	Female as % of total
Average management salary	62781.00	71224.00	**88.1**
Average non-management salary	34505.21	38022.00	**90.8**
Average salary for all employees	38694.22	65187.27	**59.4**

Table 7: Female and male salary distribution in three service co-operatives (122 employees).
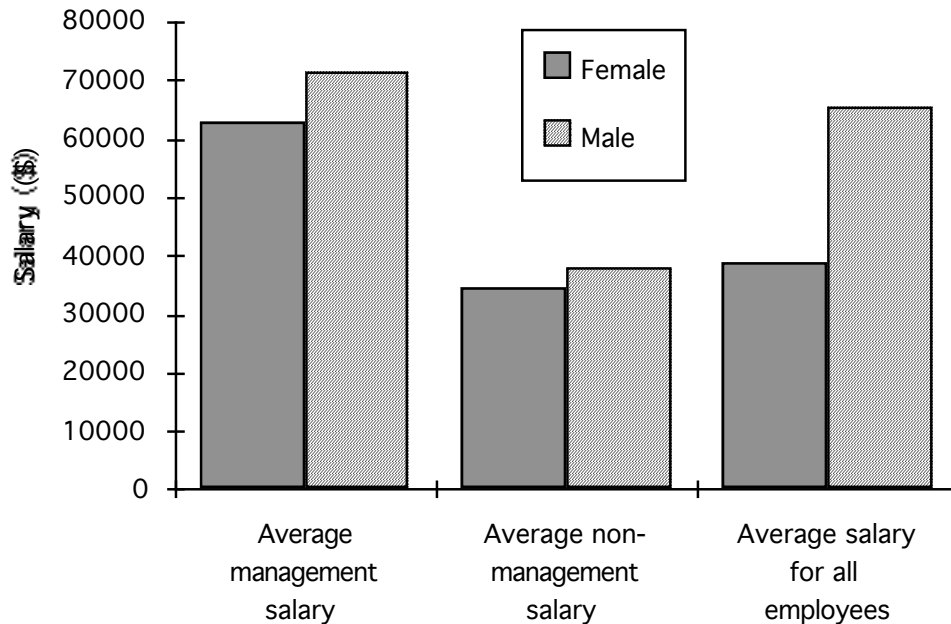
Chart 7: Female and male salary distribution in three service co-operatives (122 employees).

Segregation of jobs by gender

A 1984 study of 400 companies in the United States found that 59% of those companies had perfectly sex-segregated jobs. In other words, in 59% of the companies studied, there were no jobs held by both women and men. Over the 400 companies, less than 10% of the work force were in jobs that included both sexes.[13]

The twelve co-operatives that reported their percentages of segregated jobs showed a wide range of response. In one small organization there was not one job description that was held by both women and men. On the other hand, one large company reported 75% of its jobs were not sex-segregated. In other words, both women and men could be found in 75% of the jobs.

Of the twelve organizations that recorded the relative position of female-only jobs, eleven reported that most of the job titles held by women only are in the lower half of the salary grid.

Of the thirteen organizations that recorded the relative position of male-only jobs, eleven reported that most of the job titles held by men only are in the upper half of the salary grid, one reported that most are in the lower half, and one reported a half and half split between the upper and lower halves of the grid.

These findings are consistent with Statistics Canada findings: in 1991, 29% of female employment was in clerical occupations, compared with 6% of that of men.[14]

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[13] Bielby, W. and Baron, J. N. "Organizational Barriers to Gender Equality: Sex Segregation of Jobs and Opportunities." In Rossi, A. S., *Gender and the Life Course.* New York: Aldine, 1988.

[14] Ghalam, Nancy Zukewich. "Women in the Workplace." *Canadian Social Trends,* no. 28, Spring 1993.

Relative numbers of female and male directors

Fourteen co-operatives reported numbers of men and women who serve as directors and officers. This represents a total of 157 board members. Of these, 31, or 19.7% are women. Of the co-operatives that reported, women tended to be better represented in organizations that identified themselves as service co-operatives.

Previous research provides a basis for comparison. A 1986 national survey of co-operative and credit union directors found a gender breakdown of 23% female and 77% male.[15] Apland surveyed Saskatchewan co-operative directors in 1986 and found a gender breakdown of 24% female and 75 % male.[16] A 1991 board survey of 19 member co-operatives of the Canadian Co-operative Association found a gender breakdown of 12% female and 88% male.[17]

Not enough data were received to report numbers of male and female delegates and committee members.

Concluding remarks

The findings from this survey represent roughly half of the major co-operatives that make up the membership of CCA. For the co-operatives that reported, women make up just over 30% of management, but they are concentrated at the junior level, and under-represented in senior management. Positions that tend to be held by women only are concentrated in the lower half of the salary grid, while the opposite is true for positions held by men only. This distribution is reflected in the finding that, overall, women's salary as a percentage of men's is 77% among survey respondents.

These data supply a baseline against which Canadian co-operatives can track future improvements in the status of women in their organizations. The findings of this quantitative study complement the qualitative findings from the case study component of the Research for Action project.

[15] Holland, D. *Directors' Education, Training and Development Needs Survey.* Saskatoon: Co-operative College of Canada, 1986.

[16] Apland, L. *Election of Directors in Saskatchewan Co-operatives.* Saskatoon: Centre for the Study of Co-operatives, University of Saskatchewan, 1986. Occasional paper 87-01.

[17] Barclay, M. *Toward Balance: Gender Issues and Co-operatives.* Ottawa: unpublished, 1991.

Questionnaire

I. CO-OPERATIVE EMPLOYEES

A. Background Statistics

- Women comprise 45.3% of the work force and this percentage is increasing with time (Statistics Canada (SC), 1991).

- Statistics Canada tracks the percentage of women employed in major industrial categories in Canada. See Appendix I for your industry data.

- 70.4% of the part-time jobs in Canada are held by women, compared with 75% in 1975 (SC, 1991).

- 27% of the women who work part-time would like to work full-time but could not find full-time work. This compares to 23% in 1988 (SC, 1991).

B. Basic Employee Profile
Please compare your answers to questions 3 and 6, above, to the background data for your industry in Appendix I.

1.   What is the total number of employees on your payroll? (Include both full-time and part-time.) _____ (number)

2.   How many female employees do you have? _____ (number)

3.   What percentage of your employees is female? _____%

4.   How many part-time employees do you have on payroll? _____ (number)

5.   How many part-time employees are female? _____ (number)

6.   What percentage of your part-time employees are female? _____ %

C. Analysis

a)   How do you compare to the industry standard for <u>full-time</u> female employees?
       _____ a higher percentage than the industry, or
       _____ a lower percentage than the industry

b)   How do you compare to the industry standard for <u>part-time</u> female employees?
       _____ a higher percentage than the industry, or
       _____ a lower percentage than the industry

c)   What industry group listed in Appendix I did you use for the comparison?

       _____

d)   Why do you think your organization has a higher or lower percentage of female employees than the industry as a whole?

       _____

       _____

e)   If you hire part-time staff, what are your reasons for choosing part-time over full time?

_____

_____

_____

f)   Could your current part-time jobs be designed as full-time jobs? Why or why not?

_____

g)   Do you provide pension and benefits to part-time staff?

_____

_____

_____

II. CO-OPERATIVE MANAGEMENT

A. Background Statistics

- Although 40.4% of Canadian managers are women, they still tend to be over-represented in the "traditional" fields of teaching, medicine and health (SC, 1991).

- Women held the overwhelming majority of clerical occupations (80.7% in 1991) and were significantly represented in service (57%) and sales (46%) occupations. Together, these three groups employed 56% of employed women in 1991 and 58% in 1988, while male employment is more evenly distributed and men are more represented in the higher-paying occupations.

- The Bank of Montreal has 28,000 employees. 75% of these are women, but only 9% of executives and 13% of senior managers are women. 34% of mid-management and 79% of junior management are women (BM, 1991).

- In a 1991 survey of 19 co-operatives, 16% of the top three levels of management were women and one of the 19 co-operative organizations had a female chief executive (Barclay, 1991). See Appendix II for details and sector breakdown.

B. Management Profile

7.   What is your total number of management employees? _____ (number)

Consider the following management categories:

i)	senior management	comprised of the chief executive officer and managers/executives reporting to the CEO
ii)	middle management	comprised mainly of those reporting to senior managers
iii)	junior management	comprised mainly of: those reporting to middle management; and, entry level management positions

Please review your management structure and job classifications in order to divide your managers into these three groups. If your organization is not large enough to have three layers of management, divide your management into two groups — senior and middle.

8.   Please complete this chart to find your female/male management ratio:

Category	# in Category	# Women	% Women	# Men	% Men
Senior Mgt.					
Middle Mgt.					
Junior Mgt.					
TOTAL MGT.					

9.   Is your chief executive _____ female or _____ male?

C. Analysis

It is quite easy to determine if women are under-represented at the different management levels, but more difficult to determine what barriers women face in management careers and what organizations can do to remove barriers. A focus group or groups, selected from your female manager population is often a very good way to uncover the barriers particular to your organization.

a)   Do you have a smaller percentage of women managers at the senior level as compared to the junior and middle levels?

_____ yes
_____ no

b)   If yes, what reasons might explain this situation?

_____

_____

_____

_____

c)   If no, and you have a larger percentage of women managers at the senior level as compared to the junior and middle levels, what reasons might explain this situation?

_____

_____

_____

_____

Discrimination is defined: "to make a distinction in favour of or against a person or thing on a categorical basis rather than according to actual merit." There are two main types of barriers women face in organizations. Individual discrimination involves attitude and opinions. Systemic discrimination involves organizational rules and procedures which often are not intended to discriminate, but do so by their differential impact. The following questions will help you analyze the extent of <u>individual</u> discrimination in your work place. Please answer yes or no in the space provided.

d)_____ Is sexist language present in the work place? (Examples: Are women referred to as ladies or girls? Is the term 'farmer' considered to refer only to men? Are jokes that degrade women common in conversation?)

e)_____ Is an 'old boys' network' present that excludes women from social activities? (An old boys' network of managers favours those who think, act, live, or even look like themselves. This is also referred to as 'management cloning'.)

f)_____ Does the organization take sexual harassment complaints seriously and address the cause? (If there are few complaints, do not assume that this is not a problem in your work place, as studies show 40% to 90% of women have experienced sexual harassment on the job. Instead, examine the procedures to file a complaint to see if they deter use. Ask your female employees if they know of actual situations that went unreported and if they know why they went unreported.)

g)_____ Does your organization reflect gender balance and use non-sexist language in annual reports, publications, advertising, photographs, and delegations to meet with public officials?

III. LENGTH OF SERVICE

A. Background Statistics

• Women with children under 6 years old are participating in the labour force at a higher rate (64%) than the average rate of all women (58.2%). Implications: fewer young women are leaving the work force while their children are preschool age and child care will continue to be an issue in this country (SC, 1991).

• The Bank of Montreal survey of employees found that women have longer service records than men at every level of the bank except senior management, where their presence is a relatively recent development. This contradicted a widespread company belief that women have babies and then quit their jobs (BM, 1991).

B. Length of Service Profile

Please divide your employees into the four categories listed in the following chart. If you do not have three levels of management, use only middle and senior categories.

Add the years of service of each person in the category and divide by the number of people in the group. For example, to find the average length of service for non-management males, add the years of service that all non-management males have with your organization and divide by the number of non-management males.

The last line of the chart requests the average length of service of all female and all male employees.

CATEGORY	AVERAGE FEMALE YEARS	AVERAGE MALE YEARS
Non-management		
Junior management		
Middle management		
Senior management		
All Employees		

10. On average, do women have shorter or longer service records than men in your organization? (check one)

　　　　　＿＿＿＿＿ longer
　　　　　＿＿＿＿＿ shorter

C. Analysis

a) Looking at your total employee group, do your female employees have a: (check one)
　　　＿＿＿＿＿ shorter length of service than your male employees?
　　　＿＿＿＿＿ longer length of service than your male employees?
　　　＿＿＿＿＿ about the same length of service as your male employees?

b) Looking at the trend from length of service of male non-management employees through to male senior management employees, does the length of service increase as you progress up the organizational hierarchy?

　　＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿

c) If not, what might be the reasons for this situation?

　　＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿

　　＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿

　　＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿

d) Looking at the same trend for your female employees, does the length of service increase as you progress up the organizational hierarchy?

　　＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿

e) If not, what might be the reasons for this situation?

　　＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿

　　＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿

　　＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿

f)   Do you have a program/plan to help support staff advance into junior and middle management positions?

_____

_____

_____

_____

g)   If yes, is there any reason that this plan/program may not apply to women in the same way that it applies to men?

_____

_____

_____

_____

IV. INCOME

A. Background Statistics

- Full year, full time female employees earned an average of 67.6% of the amount that full year, full time men earned in 1991. In 1988, the comparable statistic was 65.8% (SC, 1991).

- In the managerial and administrative occupation category alone, the comparable statistic is lower — 60.9% (SC, 1990)

- Lack of education is not a barrier to women's advancement at the Bank of Montreal. Their 1991 survey found that at the non-management and junior management levels — the prime feeder routes to more senior jobs — more women than men have university or college degrees (BM, 1991).

- The Bank of Montreal compared females and males by scores in the top two performance tiers of their performance appraisal system and found that higher percentages of women are rated in the top two tiers of performance at all levels — management and non-management (BM, 1991).

- The traditional male-only breadwinner family is disappearing. It comprised 9/8% of families in 1990, down from 35% in 1971 (SC, 1990).

- Elderly single women are among the poorest Canadians. In 1990, 33.1% of women in the labour force participated in private pension plans compared with 41.1% of men. This statistic is related to women's concentration in both part-time work and in industries where pension plan coverage is less extensive than in industries where men predominate (SC, 1990).

B. Income Profile

This section considers the wage gap, if any, between full-time female and male employees in your co-operative.

Please use the following charts and compare the average female and male income in your organization. If you feel the income data is too confidential, please just use the charts to guide your calculations and leave Charts 1 and 2 blank — although we would appreciate data in boxes (9) through (14) in Chart 2. Questions 12 to 14 can be answered without disclosing payroll information.

To calculate the requested percentages, start with your total payroll costs for full-time staff in Chart 1. Then, separate management and mon-management payroll data. Next, separate female and male payroll data into each of the four sub-categories. Proceed to Chart 2.

CHART 1
Full-time payroll ($)

$_____

Management ($)   Non-Management($)

$_____ $_____

Female Mgt. ($)   Male mgt. ($)   Female non-mgt ($)   Male non-mgt($)

$_____ $_____ $_____ $_____
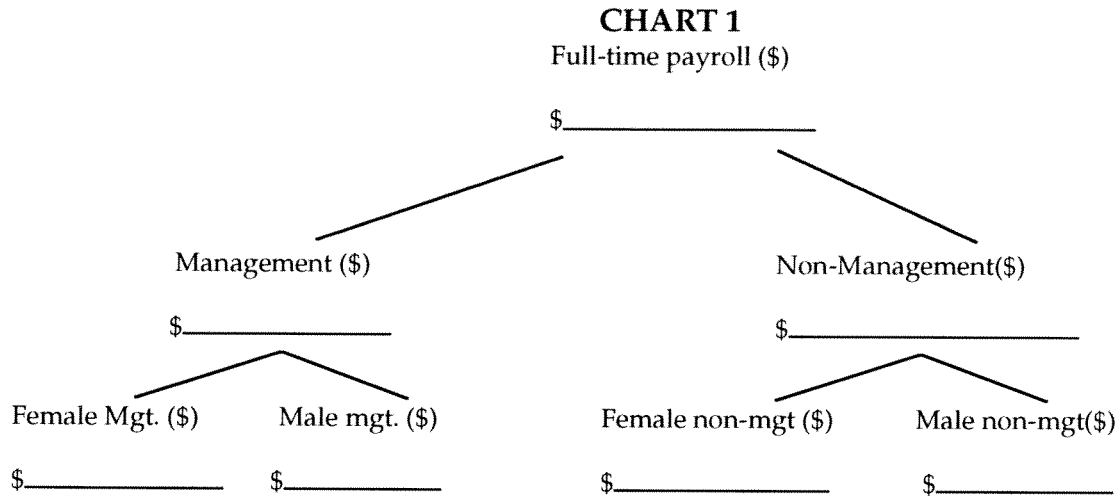
To complete Chart 2, take the payroll costs in each of the four categories from Chart 1 and move them into the corresponding boxes in Chart 2. Then, divide these numbers by the actual number of employees in each category. This will give you the average income per category. You will be able to compare full-time male and female incomes by completing the last two lines of the chart. To calculate, add male management and non-management payroll costs (Boxes [2] & [4]) and divide by the sum of Boxes [6] and [8]. Use the same process to find the total average female income. Statistics Canada compares such information by showing the female income as a percentage of the male income.

CHART 2

CATEGORY	PAYROLL $	# OF EMPLOYEES	AVERAGE INCOME
Female Management	[1]	[5]	[9]
Male Management	[2]	[6]	[10]
Female Non-management	[3]	[7]	[11]
Male Non-Management	[4]	[8]	[12]
All Males	[2] & [4]	[6] & [8]	[13]
All Females	[1] & [3]	[5] & [7]	[14]

11. To find out what full-time management women earn in your organization as a percentage of what full-time management men earn,

   Calculate: Average mgt. female income [9]/average mgt. male income [10] =
   _____ x 100 = _____%

12. To find out what full-time non-management women earn in your organization as a percentage of what full-time non-management men earn,

   Calculate: Average non-mgt. female income [11]/average non-mgt. male income [12] = _____ x 100 = _____%

13. To find out what full-time women earn in your organization as a percentage of what full-time men earn,

   Calculate: Total average female income [14]/total average male income [13] = _____ x 100 = _____%

C. Analysis

a) How does your organization compare to the Statistics Canada figure of full-time women earning 66% of what men earn? (check one)
   _____ above
   _____ below
   _____ about the same

b)   If there is a wage gap, is it larger between female and male management jobs or between female and male non-management jobs?

_____

_____

c)   What reasons might explain this situation?

_____

_____

_____

_____

d)   If you have permanent part-time employees, are contributions to your pension plan mandatory?_____

e)   If no, what reasons explain this situation?

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

f)   Is your pension plan a "money-purchase plan" or a "defined-benefit" plan?

_____

g)   Which of the following family-friendly human resource policies does your organization have in place? Such policies help employees balance work and family commitments.

_____   flexible work hours
_____   use of sick leave to care for family members
_____   job-sharing
_____   employee assistance programs
_____   financial support during maternity, paternity, adoption leaves
         (beyond legislated requirements)
_____   financial support for child care costs
_____   on-site child care
_____   flexible benefit plans
_____   extended benefit coverage to include dependent elderly relatives
_____   child or elder care referral services
_____   unisex pensions (blends male & female life expectancy)
others not listed?

_____

_____

V. JOB CLASSIFICATIONS

A. Background Statistics

- Eight years ago, a study of 400 U. S. companies found that 59% of those companies had perfectly sex segregated jobs — in other words, no jobs that were held by both women and men. Less than 10% of the work force were in jobs that included both sexes (Bielby & Baron, 1984).

B. Job Design Profile

14. How many different job descriptions does your organization have? _____
    (For example, receptionist, administrative assistant, information officer, department manager, vice-president, chief executive officer. Group similar yet distinct jobs together.)

15. Of these different jobs, how many are held by:
both women and men	_____ (number)
women only	_____ (number)
men only	_____ (number)

16. What percentage of your work force is in those jobs held by both women and men? _____%
    (To calculate, count the total number of people currently in the group of jobs held by both men and women, and divide this number by your total number of employees. Then multiply by 100.

C. Analysis

a) How does your organization compare to the 1984 study that found that less than 10% of the employees in the companies surveyed were in jobs performed by both men and women?

    _____less sex segregation than in the 1984 study (greater than 10%)
    _____about the same as in the 1984 study
    _____more sex segregation than in the 1984 study (less than 10%)

b) Would you say most of the job titles currently held by <u>men only</u> are in the upper or lower half of your salary grid?
    _____ upper
    _____ lower

c) Would you say most of the job titles currently held by <u>women only</u> are in the upper or lower half of your salary grid?
    _____ upper
    _____ lower

d) What do you think explains your organization's statistics on sex-segregated jobs?

    _____

    _____

    _____

    _____

    _____

Some organizations have tried to re-design jobs, or to restructure 'pink collar ghetto' jobs, which are defined as female occupations characterized by low pay, low status, restricted opportunity for advancement, and sometimes employment insecurity.

e) Do you have any comments on the job re-design approach to organizational change, for example, dealing with the 'pink collar ghetto' through job enrichment or job enlargement programs?

_____

_____

_____

_____

VI. CO-OPERATIVE MEMBERSHIP

If organizations rather than individuals make up the membership of your co-operative, you can go on to the next section, VII. Co-operative Boards of Directors.

A. Background Statistics

• Women make up almost 51% of the Canadian population (SC, 1991).

B. Membership Profile

17. Please provide a gender breakdown of your membership and compute the female and male percentages of your total membership.

Total # of Members	# of Female Members	Female % of Total	# of Male Members	Male % of Total

C. Analysis

a) Does your co-operative have: more male members than female _____, or
more female members than male _____

b) What reasons might explain this situation?

_____

_____

_____

_____

c) Do government legislation, your co-operative by-laws, or your membership criteria have any rules or requirements that seem neutral but may disproportionately screen out women? For example, only one membership or only one vote per family?

_____

_____

_____

_____

d) Does an estimate of the gender breakdown of the people who actually use/buy your services/products match the gender breakdown of your membership?

_____ yes

_____ no

e) If not, what might be the reasons for this situation and what, in your view, are the business implications of the mismatch?

_____

_____

_____

_____

VII. CO-OPERATIVE BOARDS OF DIRECTORS

A. Background Statistics

- A 1986 national survey of co-operative and credit union directors found a gender breakdown of 23% female and 77% male (Holland, 1986).

- A 1991 survey of 19 member co-operatives of the Canadian Co-operative Association found a gender breakdown of 12% female and 88% male. No Board chairs/presidents were female; 8% of the vice-chairs/presidents were female and 7% of other board officers were female (Barclay). See Appendix III for sector breakdown.

- A 1986 survey of Saskatchewan co-operative directors found a gender breakdown of 24% female and 75% male. Men dominated retail, credit union and agricultural co-operative boards. Women dominated health care, housing and day care co-operative boards (Centre for the Study of Co-operatives, 1986). See Appendix IV for a sector breakdown.

B. Director Profile

18. Please provide a gender breakdown of your Board of Directors and Executive Committee/Officers and compute female and male percentages. Other Board Officers include treasurer, secretary, or other at-large members of the Executive Comittee.

CATEGORY	Number in Category	# of Female(s)	Female % of Total	# of Male(s)	Male % of Total
Total Board					
Chair/President					
Vice-Chair/Pres.					
Other Board Officers					

C. Analysis

a)   Does your Board give specific instructions to nominating committees to seek female
     candidates: _____ yes
                              _____ no

b)   In the selection of Board or membership committees, or special task forces and delega-
     tions, does the Board ensure the participation of women? If so, in what ways?

     _____

     _____

c)   If not, what reasons might explain this situation?

     _____

     _____

     _____

     _____

VII. CO-OPERATIVE DELEGATES

Please complete this section using your delegate list from your last annual meeting. **If you do
not have delegates, please proceed to the last section, IX. Co-operative Membership Com-
mittees.**

B. Delegate Profile

19.   Please provide a gender breakdown of your delegates and compute the female and male
      percentages of your total delegate body:

Total # of Delegates	# of Female Delegates	Female % of Total	# of Male Delegates	Male % of Total

C. Analysis

a) What reasons might explain the gender balance or imbalance of your delegate statistics?

_____

_____

_____

_____

IX. CO-OPERATIVE MEMBERSHIP COMMITTEES

B. Committee Profile

20. Please provide a gender breakdown of all non-Board, volunteer committees and compute the female and male percentages of your total committee numbers. **Please exclude Director serving on such committees as they have been counted previously.**

Total # of Committees	# of Females	Female % of Total	# of Males	Male % of Total

C. Analysis

a) How do you recruit for committees? Are they often a source for recruitment for the Board of Directors?

_____

_____

_____

_____

b) What reasons might explain the gender balance or imbalance of your committee statistics?

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

c) Do you have further comments regarding the analysis of your membership committees' data or pertinent action plans currently under consideration?

_____

_____

_____

_____

APPENDIX I

WOMEN IN THE LABOUR FORCE

Table 11. Full-time and part-time employment, by industry and occupation, Canada, 1978, 1983 and 1988 – concluded

	Women	Men	Women as a % of total	% Full-time	
				Women	Men
	000s			%	

1988

Full-time employment

	Women	Men	Women as a % of total	Women	Men
Industries	4,013	6,350	38.7	74.8	92.4
Agriculture	91	278	24.7	66.4	90.8
Other primary industries	32	253	11.2	86.5	98.4
Manufacturing	554	1,472	27.3	92.3	97.9
Construction	57	625	8.4	72.2	96.6
Transportation, communications and utilities	193	654	22.8	84.6	96.6
Trade	612	1,037	37.1	63.4	86.3
Finance, insurance and real estate	372	269	57.9	84.4	93.7
Services	1,803	1,296	58.2	70.9	85.4
Public administration	299	465	39.1	89.0	96.9
Occupations	4,013	6,350	38.7	74.8	92.4
Managerial, administrative and professional	1,362	1,841	42.5	81.5	96.2
Clerical	1,267	366	77.6	76.7	87.8
Sales	326	545	37.4	60.8	86.2
Services	559	540	50.9	61.1	78.4
Primary occupations	86	447	16.1	69.4	91.8
Processing, machining and fabricating	300	1,258	19.3	92.0	97.5
Construction	13	669	1.9	86.7	97.1
Transport equipment operating	24	397	5.7	68.6	94.3
Materials handling	77	288	21.1	81.9	85.0

				% Part-time	

Part-time total

	Women	Men	Women as a % of total	Women	Men
Industries	1,355	527	72.0	25.2	7.7
Agriculture	46	28	62.2	33.6	9.2
Other primary industries	5	4	55.6	13.5	1.6
Manufacturing	46	32	59.0	7.7	2.1
Construction	22	22	50.0	27.8	3.4
Transportation, communications and utilities	34	23	59.6	14.9	3.4
Trade	355	165	68.4	36.7	13.7
Finance, insurance and real estate	68	18	79.1	15.4	6.3
Services	741	221	77.0	29.1	14.6
Public administration	37	14	72.5	11.0	2.9
Occupations	1,355	527	72.0	25.2	7.7
Managerial, administrative and professional	309	73	80.9	18.5	3.8
Clerical	385	51	88.3	23.3	12.2
Sales	210	87	70.7	39.2	13.8
Services	357	149	70.6	39.0	21.6
Primary occupations	38	40	48.7	30.6	8.2
Processing, machining and fabricating	26	33	44.8	8.0	2.6
Construction	•	20		•	2.9
Transport equipment operating	11	24	31.4	31.4	5.7
Materials handling	17	50	25.0	18.1	14.7

Note: Industry and occupation data, beginning in 1984, are coded according to the revised Standard Industrial Classification (1980) and the Occupation Classification Manual (1980).
Source: Labour Force Annual Averages, 1975-1983 and 1981-1988, Statistics Canada, Catalogue 71-529.

This table is reproduced by authority of the Minister of Industry, 1994 from : Statistics Canada. *Women in Canada: A Statistical Report*, Second Edition, Catalogue 89-503E, 1990, p. 86.

APPENDIX II

SURVEY OF 19 CO-OPERATIVES — MANAGEMENT

MANAGEMENT	FEMALE %	MALE %
Total of 3 Levels	16%	84%
CEO*	4%	96%
Senior Mangers/Vice Presidents**	20%	80%
Managers Reporting to Senior Management — Next Level	15%	85%

*   (includes those Corporate Secretaries hired by and responsible directly to the Board in addition to the CEO)

**   (report to CEO) or the Corporate Secretaries included in the CEO* category)

The sample size was 593: 93 women and 500 men. Source: Barclay, 1991.

SURVEY OF 19 CO-OPERATIVES
SECTOR BREAKDOWN—MANAGEMENT
(FEMALE AS % OF TOTAL NUMBER)

	All Co-ops	Credit Unions (4)	Pools (3)	Retail/ Supply (5)	Other Financial (4)	Health (1)	Nat. Assn /Fedn. (2)
TOTAL OF 3 LEVELS	16%	19%	9%	8%	17%	85%	57%
CEO/CORP. SEC.	4%	0	0	0	0	0	50%
SR. MGT/VPs	20%	33%	11%	5%	7%	92%	50%
NEXT MGT LEVEL	15%	15%	9%	10%	21%	N/A	60%
ACTUAL # OF WOMEN IN ALL 3 LEVELS	93	10	12	18	26	11	16
ACTUAL # OF MEN IN ALL 3 LEVELS	500	43	125	195	123	2	12

SURVEY OF 19 CO-OPERATIVES - BOARD OF DIRECTORS

CO-OP DIRECTORS	FEMALE %	MALE %
Total Board	12%	8%
Chair/President	0	100%
Vice President(s)	8%	92%
Other Officers/ Executive Committee	7%	93%

The sample size was 249: 29 women and 220 men. Source: Barclay, 1991

SURVEY OF 19 CO-OPERATIVES
SECTOR BREAKDOWN — BOARD OF DIRECTORS
(female as % of total number)

	All Co-ops	Credit Unions (4)	Pools (3)	Retail/ Supply (5)	Other Financial (4)	Health (1)	Nat. Assn /Fedn. (2)
TOTAL BOARD	12%	11%	0	8%	8%	58%	23%
PRESIDENT	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
VICE-PRESIDENT	8%	14%	0	0	0	100%	33%
EXEC. CMTE.	7%	5%	0	5%	0	60%	11%
ACTUAL # OF WOMEN ON BOARDS	29	6	0	5	5	7	6
ACTUAL # OF MEN ON BOARDS	220	48	33	56	58	5	20

APPENDIX IV

Election of Directors in Saskatchewan Co-operatives

TABLE 1: Sex of respondents*

Type	Male	Female	No response
	(%)	(%)	(%)
Credit union	91.2 (563)	8.3 (51)	0.5 (3)
Retail	82.6 (347)	16.9 (71)	0.5 (2)
Agicultural implement	85.7 (6)	0.0 (0)	14.3 (1)
Health care	31.8 (7)	68.2 (15)	0.0 (0)
Housing	46.2 (24)	53.8 (28)	0.0 (0)
Wheat pool	100.0 (14)	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)
Day care	11.1 (19)	85.4 (146)	3.5 (6)
Recreational	64.9 (233)	32.9 (118)	2.2 (8)
Agricultural	86.5 (166)	12.0 (23)	1.6 (3)
Other	80.0 (64)	17.5 (14)	2.5 (2)
Totals†	74.6 (1,443)	24.1 (466)	1.3 (25)

*Total figures for each category are indicated in parentheses.
†21 observations are missing because of incomplete questionnaires.

Source: Lars Apland, "Election of Directors in Saskatchewan Co-operatives," in Murray E. Fulton, ed., Co-operative Organizations and *Canadian Society: Popular Institutions and the Dilemmas of Change, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1990.)*

Is there anything else you would like to tell us about the participation of women in co-operatives? If so, please us this space for that purpose.

THANK YOU FOR COMPLETING THIS QUESTIONNAIRE

AND

FOR PROVIDING VALUABLE ANALYSIS OF YOUR DATA

YOU WILL RECEIVE A SUMMARY OF THE SURVEY RESULTS