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THE ATTITUDINAL EFFECTS OF GENDER MIX IN UNION COMMITTEES

DAFNA N. IZRAELI*

This study examines the impact of the gender mix of union committees in Israel on the attitudes and perceptions of committee members. The author finds that both male and female members of committees with a male majority were more likely than members of committees with a female majority to believe that men have greater leadership skills than women and that women are elected primarily to represent women rather than all workers. Also, in neither type of committee were men perceived to represent only men or did women rate their influence equal to that of men.

ALTHOUGH there is growing concern over the underrepresentation of women in the governing bodies of trade unions, little attention has yet been paid to the organizational conditions likely to affect the way in which women perform their roles, once elected or appointed to these bodies. The purpose of this paper is to explore some effects of one such condition, the gender mix or proportion, within the union structure. More specifically, the paper examines, through an analysis of data on union committee members in Israel, the influence on a number of attitudes of the fact that women usually constitute only a minority of the leaders in male-dominated organizations.

Theoretical Considerations

The social context within which people interact shapes their attitudes and beha-

avior.¹ The gender proportion of the membership of a group or organization is one characteristic of the social context that, according to Kanter, has a significant impact on social interaction.² Much of the typically "female" behavior observed in the study of women at work, such as a lack of career commitment, low aspirations, conformity, avoidance of risk, and emphasis on social relations rather than on task, may be explained, contends Kanter, by the fact that women usually form only a small minority within a male-dominated context, rather than by innate female traits. In fact, women's "fear of success," identified by Horner,³ appears to be evident only in a male-dominated field;⁴ this effect is

¹Melvin L. Kohn and Carmi Schooler, "Occupational Experience and Psychological Functioning: An Assessment of Reciprocal Effects," *American Sociological Review*, Vol. 38, No. 1 (February 1973), pp. 97 - 118.

²Rosabeth Moss Kanter, *Men and Women of the Corporation* (New York: Basic Books, 1977), pp. 206 - 42.

³Matina S. Horner, "Toward an Understanding of Achievement Related Conflicts in Women," *Journal of Social Issues*, Vol. 28, No. 2 (Spring 1972), pp. 157 - 75.

⁴David W. Tresemer, "Fear of Success: Popular but Unproven," *Psychology Today* (March 1974), pp. 82 - 85.

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therefore essentially one of group proportions rather than of a gender-based characteristic.

Some decades ago, Bierstedt made a similar observation when he noted that majorities "determine to an extensive degree the general characteristics of a social group."⁵ Thus, when the proportion of women in a group is small, they are more visible and isolated from the men who, because of their numerical dominance, determine the culture of the group.⁶ Visibility heightens the salience of ascribed roles and generates pressure for women to perform in accordance with expectations of their gender's role. Isolation results in low power and consequently greater conformity with the dominant culture.

Performance pressures generated by high visibility and relative isolation may be important factors in women's underachievement, as shown in a study that compared the grades of female students in a male-dominated law school with those of female students in a law school in which the percentage of women was significantly higher.⁷ In the school in which women constituted only 20 percent of the student body, they exhibited greater performance pressure (less participation in class), social isolation, and role entrapment (avoiding traditionally female specialties) than in the school in which women constituted 35 percent of the student body. In the latter school, too, a larger percentage of women than men earned outstanding grades and a smaller percentage of women than men did unsatisfactory work—results that were not the case in the former school.

Variations in the proportion of interacting social types (in this case, men and women) alter the social context within which interaction takes place, argues Kanter, and they affect behavioral and

attitudinal outcomes.⁸ In other words, where proportions are reversed and women form the majority of the group, we may expect that some of the attitudes and perceptions typically found in male-dominated groups will be reversed. The general purpose of this study is to examine the empirical validity of this contention.

The Union Context

This study examines the effects of gender mix in the context of the union structure. The data are derived from a larger study of Israeli local union officers,⁹ known as workers' committee members. The workers' committee serves as the plant-level leadership of the trade union department of the Histadrut, the General Federation of Labor, which represents approximately 80 percent of all wage and salaried workers in Israel.

The committee is made up of part-time officers elected usually every two years. In industrial firms, the focus of this paper, there frequently are two separate committees, for blue-collar workers and for clerical and professional workers. The members of the blue-collar workers' committee are elected in one of two ways: by all blue-collar workers in the firm acting as a single constituency, with each voter allotted a number of ballots equal to the total number of members to be elected to the committee; or by individual department or occupational groups acting as separate constituencies, with each voter allotted a number of ballots equal to the number of representatives on the committee allocated to the respective department or occupational group. Of particular interest in this study is the fact that once elected by their constituency, the members collectively represent all the employees in the plant; negotiations over working conditions and other matters take place between management and the committee as a whole.

The workers' committee is also respon-

⁵Robert Bierstedt, "The Sociology of Majorities," in Robert Bierstedt, *Power and Progress: Essays on Sociological Theory* (New York: McGraw Hill, 1974), p. 217.

⁶Kanter, *Men and Women*, pp. 206–07.

⁷Eve Spangler, Masha Gordon, and Ronald M. Pipkin, "Token Women: An Empirical Test of Kanter's Hypothesis," *American Journal of Sociology*, Vol. 84, No. 1 (July 1978), pp. 160–61.

⁸Kanter, *Men and Women*, p. 212.

⁹Dafna N. Izraeli and Ada Poraz, *Women and Men as Shop Stewards in Israeli Industry*, research report, in Hebrew (Tel-Aviv: Institute of Social and Labor Research, Tel Aviv University), 1980.

sible for administering the collective agreement that applies to its constituency and for ensuring management's compliance with that agreement.¹⁰ In addition, union officers have partial or total control over several staffing functions and play an important role in influencing a wide variety of decisions that affect working conditions. In this study, committees of which women constituted a minority of the membership were compared with those of which women constituted the majority, to examine whether gender ratios affect perceptions and attitudes that may influence committee members' execution of their role.

A Group Typology

Kanter distinguishes four types of group composition that form a continuum of gender ratios.¹¹ At one extreme are homogenous groups, those composed of only "one significant social type." At the other extreme are balanced groups, in which the proportions are approximately equal and in which individual differences are more important than social type (in this case, gender). Between the two extremes are skewed and tilted groups. Kanter labels the components of skewed groups, in which proportions are roughly 15 to 85, as "tokens" and "dominants." Tokens are so called because they tend to be treated as symbols, as representatives of their social category, rather than as individuals; dominants, because they dominate the culture of the group and determine the game rules to which all must conform. The subgroups of tilted groups, in which proportions are roughly 35 to 65, Kanter labels "minority" and "majority." The dynamics in tilted groups are similar to those found in skewed groups, but they are less exaggerated.

This paper focuses on tilted groups and compares groups tilted in favor of men with those tilted in favor of women. It examines the effects of "boundary heightening" and "role entrapment," as well as changes in

perceived influence when men or women compose the majority or the minority of the group's membership. This design permits examination of Kanter's contention that group proportion has a compelling impact on the group, no matter which sex constitutes the majority or the minority; and changes in the ratio of the genders should lead to a corresponding change in attitudes.

Hypotheses

Boundary Heightening

Referring to skewed groups, Kanter proposes that the presence of tokens leads to boundary heightening by the dominants,¹² that is, to their exaggerating each of their perceived distinctive traits and of other differences between them and the tokens. Believing their commonality threatened, the dominants greatly magnify the importance of gender differences, for example, and the tokens, having little choice, accept the culture or norms imposed by the dominants. In other words, the few are under pressure to conform to the social definitions provided by the many. According to Kanter, we may expect similar dynamics in tilted groups, but to a lesser degree. Bierstedt's analysis, however, suggests that the threat perceived by the majority might be even greater in tilted than in skewed groups, since "majority-minority tension appears to be least when the majority is large, the minority small, and greatest when the minority threatens, by increased size, to become the majority."¹³ In the present study, boundary heightening in the male-tilted committees was predicted to manifest itself in more positive perceptions of the leadership skills of men than of women.

HYPOTHESIS 1. Members of male-tilted committees are more likely than members of female-tilted committees to perceive men as having greater leadership skills than women.

¹⁰Arie Shirom, "Workers' Committees in the Israeli Labor Relations System: An Appraisal," *Industrial Relations Journal*, Vol. 2, No. 1 (Spring 1971) pp. 66-74.

¹¹Kanter, *Men and Women*, pp. 208-209.

¹²Rosabeth Moss Kanter, "Some Effects of Proportions on Group Life: Skewed Sex Ratios and Responses to Token Women," *American Journal of Sociology*, Vol. 82, No. 5 (March 1977), p. 975.

¹³Bierstedt, "The Sociology of Majorities," p. 210.

Since the cultural association of leadership and maleness is so strongly entrenched, we did not expect that members of female-tilted committees would perceive women as having greater leadership skills than men.

Role Entrapment

Stereotypical assumptions about and expectations of a minority lead to role entrapment, whereby members of the minority are perceived to be symbols, or representatives, of their group to a greater extent than are members of the majority. Members of the minority, more than those of the majority, are treated as status specialists, elected to look after the special interests of their group. Responding to these expectations, the minority frequently justifies its membership in the group by accepting this narrow definition of its function.

HYPOTHESIS 2. (a) *The proportion of committee members who view women as elected specifically to represent women is greater in male-tilted than in female-tilted committees.* (b) *The proportion of committee members who view men as elected specifically to represent men is greater in female-tilted than in male-tilted committees.*

Influence

Other things equal, the majority of a group is more influential than the minority. As Bierstedt observes, "Given the same organization, the larger number can always control the smaller, can command its service, and secure its compliance."¹⁴ According to Kanter, power inequality is less intensive in tilted than in skewed groups because in the former, members of the minority are better able to form coalitions.¹⁵ These coalitions are often precarious, however, since members of the majority may seek to divide and rule. We can, therefore, expect that members of the majority perceive themselves having more influence than members of the minority perceive themselves having.

At the same time, we cannot ignore the

fact that power is strongly associated with being male. "Sex-role stereotyping," observes Unger, "may more accurately be viewed as power typing."¹⁶ The findings of a recent Israeli study of stereotyping among university students¹⁷ support those of American studies¹⁸ in which the distinguishing male stereotypes form a cluster of traits related to power, such as being strong, authoritative, and forceful initiators and leaders. It is doubtful whether, in relation to perceived influence, the effect of proportions cancels out the effect of gender. Using self-reported influence as a measure, this study, therefore, predicted that members of a male majority would rate their influence significantly higher than the influence a female minority would rate themselves as having; but the opposite would not be the case if gender ratios were reversed. We hypothesize, however, that the perceived power disparity would be greatly reduced in female-tilted committees.

HYPOTHESIS 3. *The difference between men and women in their perceptions of their own influence is greater in male-tilted than in female-tilted committees.*

HYPOTHESIS 4. *Within gender groups (that is, comparing women with women and men with men), members of the majority believe that they have greater influence than do members of the minority.*

The Sample

The sample employed in this study was all unionized firms in Israel that met the following three criteria: those in one of the three female-labor-intensive industry categories in Israel—food and tobacco, textiles and clothing, and electrical and electronics; those employing 100 or more workers; and those in which at least one member of the workers' committee was a

¹⁴Rhoda K. Unger, "Male is Greater than Female: The Socialization of Status Inequality," *The Counseling Psychologist*, Vol. 6, No. 2 (1976) pp. 2-9.

¹⁷Data from unpublished masters' thesis research conducted in 1981 by Esther Elam and entitled "Sex Characteristic Stereotypes of Israeli Students," Department of Sociology, Tel Aviv University.

¹⁸See, for example, Eleanor Maccoby and Carol Nagy Jacklin, *The Psychology of Sex Differences* (London: Oxford University Press, 1974), pp. 254-65.

¹⁴Ibid., p. 218.

¹⁵Kanter, *Men and Women*, p. 209.

woman. Of the 65 firms that met these criteria, 57 (87.7 percent) were included in the final sample; four were excluded because of their distance from the investigators; one, because management refused to cooperate; and three, because the chairpersons of the workers' committees refused to cooperate, stating that they were soon approaching or in the process of elections.

In each sample firm, interviews were conducted in 1978 or 1979 of members of the blue-collar workers' committee. Responses were obtained from 259 union officers (111 women and 148 men), who constituted 80 percent of the total membership of the committees under study. The committees ranged in size from three to 21 members, and the number of women on each committee, from one to seven. The mean committee size was 6.9 and the mean number of women members was 2.2. A strong correlation was found between the proportion of each sex on the committee and its proportion among the blue-collar workers in the firm ($r = .71$).

In accordance with the hypotheses, only tilted committees were selected for further study. (Skewed committees were not included in this analysis because the number of male token members in the sample was too small to permit statistical testing of hypotheses.) The tilted committees were classified as follows.

Male-tilted committees: those with 20 to 40 percent female members and 60 to 80 percent male members. There were 25 such committees, and 30 female and 69 male members of these committees were interviewed. The committees operated in firms where female employees constituted, on average, 42.6 percent of the work force.

Female-tilted committees: those with 20 to 40 percent male members and 60 to 80 percent female members. There were 10 such committees, and 30 female and 15 male members of these committees were interviewed. The committees operated in firms where female employees constituted, on average, 73 percent of the work force.

Hereafter, members of the 20 to 40 percent proportion are referred to as minorities and those of the 60 to 80 percent

proportion as majorities. The term "proportion" is used to refer to the categories majority and minority, while the term "group type" is used to refer to the tilt (male or female) of the committees.

Measures

Boundary Heightening

Attitudes toward the relative leadership skill of each sex were measured by the following questions asked of committee members:

There are people who think that there is no real difference in the behavior of men and women. There are people who think there is a difference. Indicate your opinion by replying "men," "women," or "no difference" to each of the following questions: Who is generally more loyal to the workers? Who is ready to fight more for all the workers? Who is better able to stand up against pressure? Who knows better how to be persuasive? Who exerts more pressure on management?

In our pilot study, conducted prior to this study, the above five characteristics or skills were mentioned most frequently by workers as important for effective performance of the role of union officer.

In a test of whether attitudes concerning leadership skill were more favorable to one sex than to the other, responses were recorded as "women" = 1, "no difference" = 2, and "men" = 3; and a scale of leadership skills with a range from one to three was constructed from the combined average score on the five questions. The reliability of the index was tested using Cronbach's coefficient alpha for internal consistency, with the result that alpha equalled .78.

Role Entrapment

Whether group members were viewed as symbolic representatives of their status category was measured by two open-ended questions: "Why is a women needed on the committee?" and "Why is a man needed on the committee?". The responses were classified by three independent judges and, for the purpose of this paper, were collapsed into two main categories: that women (men) are needed to represent or look after workers of their own sex; and other

Table 1. Analysis of Variance in Attitudes Toward the Relative Leadership Skills of Men and Women,[†] by Group Type and Sex of Respondent.

<i>Source of Variance</i>	<i>Sums of Squares</i>	<i>Degrees of Freedom</i>	<i>Mean Squares</i>	<i>F</i>
A. Male- versus Female-Tilted Committee	2.70	1	2.70	15.77***
B. Sex of Respondent	4.22	1	4.22	24.67***
Interaction A × B	.00	1	.00	.00
Residual	19.14	112	.17	
Total	29.82	115	.26	

[†]*Values:* 1 = women have greater skills; 2 = there is no difference; and 3 = men have greater skills.
****p* ≤ .001.

Table 2. Analysis of Variance in Attitudes Toward the Relative Leadership Skills of Men and Women,[†] by Proportion and Sex of Respondent.

<i>Source of Variance</i>	<i>Sums of Squares</i>	<i>Degrees of Freedom</i>	<i>Mean Squares</i>	<i>F</i>
C. Membership in Majority versus Membership in Minority	.02	1	.02	.09
B. Sex of Respondent	7.55	1	7.55	44.19***
Interaction C × B	2.68	1	2.68	15.68***
Residual	19.14	112	.17	
Total	29.82	115	.26	

[†]*Values:* See Table 1.
****p* ≤ .001.

responses, including “there is no special need for a woman (man).”

Influence

Respondents were asked to rate the amount of influence they had on other members of the workers' committee, on fellow workers, and on management, using a scale from one to five. An index of influence was constructed from the combined average score on those three questions. The reliability coefficient of the influence index was that alpha equalled .76.

Results

The hypothesis that members of male-tilted groups hold more stereotypical views concerning the gender basis of leadership skills was tested using 2×2 between-subjects analysis of variance (ANOVA) with group type (male-tilted or female-tilted) and sex of the respondent as independent variables and attitude toward the relative leadership skills of men and women as the dependent or criterion variable. As predicted, and as shown in Table 1, a main-group effect was found: relatively more members of male-tilted than of female-

tilted committees believe men to be more endowed than women with leadership skills ($\bar{x} = 2.44$ and $\bar{x} = 1.94$, respectively, although these averages are not shown in the table). A main sex-of-respondent effect was also found, however, with men expressing stronger favorable attitudes than women toward male superiority ($\bar{x} = 2.49$ and $\bar{x} = 1.96$, respectively). Group type (the tilt of the committee) explained 22 percent of the variance in the dependent variable, while the sex of the respondent explained 27 percent of the variance. No interaction effect was found, indicating that group type affects both sexes in the same manner. When an ANOVA using proportion (membership in the majority versus membership in the minority) rather than group type as the independent variable was computed (Table 2), however, the interaction between proportion and sex was significant.

In Table 3, we see that for committee members in the minority, sex makes no difference in their attitudes toward the relative leadership skills of men and women. Among those in the majority, however, there is a significant gender difference: men are more biased than women.

Table 3. Means of Attitudes Toward Relative Leadership Skills of Men and Women, by Proportion and Sex.[†]

<i>Sex of Respondent</i>	<i>Majority</i>	<i>Minority</i>
Males	2.56 (N = 53)	2.22 (N = 13)
Females	1.81 (N = 27)	2.15 (N = 23)

[†]Values: see Table 1.

Hypothesis 2 predicted that the proportion of committee members who viewed women as role specialists, elected to look after women's interests, would be greater in male-tilted than in female-tilted committees and that the opposite would be true for men as role specialists. Although not shown here in a table, the results support the first part of the hypothesis but not the second. In male-tilted committees, 77 percent of the members interviewed replied that a

woman is needed on the committee to represent women (72.5 percent of the male majority and 87.1 percent of the female minority), whereas in female-tilted committees, only 51.1 percent of the members interviewed replied that way (53.3 percent of the female majority and 46.7 percent of the male minority). This difference is significant (Kendall's Tau_b = .259, $p = .01$). On the other hand, with regard to a man being needed on the committee to represent men, only 28 percent of the members of male-tilted and 20 percent of those of female-tilted committees agreed, and that difference is not significant.

Hypothesis 3, that the gender difference in perceived influence would be greater in male-tilted than in female-tilted committees, predicted an interaction effect between the gender of the respondent and group type. To test that hypothesis, an analysis of variance was first computed, with group type (the tilt of the committee) and sex of the respondent as independent variables and self-reported influence as the criterion variable. The interaction effect, as shown in Table 4, was not significant. Although the difference in means between men and women on female-tilted committees was smaller than that on male-tilted committees (difference = .32 and .57, respectively), that difference between means was not great enough to reject the null hypothesis. Hypothesis 3 thus was not supported.

Hypothesis 4 predicted that members of a majority would perceive themselves as more influential than members of a minority would perceive themselves. An ANOVA with proportion and sex of the respondent as independent variables and self-reported influence as the criterion variable was computed as shown in Table 5. The results show no significant effect of proportion; and Hypothesis 4 was not supported. An unexpected two-way interaction effect was found, however.

Table 6 shows that, with respect to self-reported influence, gender made no difference for majority members but was significant for minority members: men in the minority perceived themselves as more influential than women in the minority

Table 4. Analysis of Variance in Self-Reported Influence, by Group Type and Sex of Respondent.[†]

<i>Source of Variance</i>	<i>Sums of Squares</i>	<i>Degrees of Freedom</i>	<i>Mean Squares</i>	<i>F</i>
A. Male- versus Female-Tilted Committee	7.87	1	7.87	12.64***
B. Sex of Respondent	7.40	1	7.40	11.88***
Interaction A × B	.47	1	.47	.75
Residual	87.20	140	.62	
Total	99.05	143	.69	

[†]Influence scores ranged from 1 (low) to 5 (high).

*** $p \leq .001$.

Table 5. Analysis of Variance in Self-Reported Influence, by Proportion and Sex of Respondent.[†]

<i>Source of Variance</i>	<i>Sums of Squares</i>	<i>Degrees of Freedom</i>	<i>Mean Squares</i>	<i>F</i>
C. Membership in Majority Versus Membership in Minority	.92	1	.92	1.47
B. Sex of Respondent	2.06	1	2.06	3.30
Interaction C × B	7.43	1	7.43	11.93***
Residual	87.20	140	.62	
Total	99.05	143	.69	

[†]Influence scores ranged from 1 (low) to 5 (high).

*** $p \leq .001$.

perceived themselves. Also, although women rated themselves as more influential when they were in the majority than when in the minority, the opposite was true for men, an effect that will be discussed in the following section.

Table 6. Means of Self-Reported Influence, by Proportion and Sex.[†]

<i>Sex of Respondent</i>	<i>Membership in Majority Proportion</i>	<i>Membership in Minority Proportion</i>
Male	3.76 (N = 69)	4.16 (N = 15)
Female	3.84 (N = 30)	3.19 (N = 30)

[†]Influence scores ranged from 1 (low) to 5 (high).

Discussion

This study examined two contentions raised by Kanter: that the relative number of a social category in a group affects the attitudes of the group's members; and that the attitudes of members of tilted groups are the same no matter which category constitutes the majority. Greater support was found for the first contention than for the second.

Members of male-tilted groups were more likely to believe that leadership skills are gender-based than were members of female-tilted groups. In this regard, the attitudes of women in the minority were more similar to those of men in the majority than to those of women in the majority, suggesting the existence of a group culture.

The proportion (majority versus minority members) was also significantly related to the way in which women's role on the committee was defined. In male-tilted committees, more of both sexes confined women to the role of gender specialist than did members of female-tilted groups. Also, in male-tilted committees, an even larger percentage of the female minority than of the male majority held the view that women were elected to represent women, a fact suggesting that role entrapment is "forced" upon women not so much by the male majority as by norms, imported from the broader social context, that require women to legitimate their presence in a male domain. Even in female-tilted committees, more than half of the female members stated that women are elected to represent women.

Another possible interpretation of this finding, however, is that it reflects female militancy and the influence of the feminist movement, rather than role entrapment.¹⁹ This possibility is not likely, however, since the women's movement in Israel is small and of very limited influence, especially among blue-collar industrial workers, from which this sample is drawn.²⁰ Furthermore, there is evidence that the women in this sample held a traditional view of the special needs of female workers. When asked if they had ever raised issues of special concern to women in committee meetings, approximately half said they had, and of these almost all gave examples of such issues as hygienic conditions in the plant or transportation schedules, but not equal pay and opportunity, which would reflect a more militant orientation.

Boundary heightening was not found when women constituted the majority of the committee, and no matter which sex was in the majority, men were not perceived as gender specialists. In other words, we do not have a clean structural effect but rather one influenced by cultural norms. Bound-

ary heightening was much weaker in female-tilted groups, probably because the items in the measure of leadership skills tapped into male stereotypes as well as into aspects of effective leadership.²¹ Similarly, the idea that male leaders represent people in general is so deeply entrenched in our mode of thinking that the statement that women represent all workers and men only the male workers appears ludicrous to most people.

With regard to influence, proportion had a different effect on men than on women. Women who were in the majority felt more influential than those in the minority, but the opposite was true for men; that is, male minorities rated their influence higher than did male majorities. It seems that being in a group, the majority of whose members are women, enhanced a man's image of his own influence. This finding may be interpreted within the context of Kanter's general argument about tokenism. When men constitute a minority, they are likely to be gender-typed and cast in the stereotypical masculine role of leader. In other words, female majorities may provide males with societal mirrors and actually help them to feel more influential.

The difference in the responses of the sexes to variations in proportions suggests that the superior power of the majority is not a *social* fact, as Bierstedt claimed it to be,²² but a *cultural* fact. The concept of majority thus has more to do with institutionalized dominance than with numerical advantage in any specific situation. The fact that so few respondents perceived men to be gender specialists—that, no matter what their proportion in the committees, men were perceived as representing all workers—supports the contention that the concepts of majority and minority reflect more than relative numbers. Men are, so to speak, sociologically the majority group, and their majority status in the larger society is imported into the group situation and appears highly resistant to the effects of relative numbers.

¹⁹This idea was suggested by an anonymous referee.

²⁰Dafna N. Israeli, "Avenues into Leadership for Women: The Case of Union Officers in Israel," *Economic and Industrial Democracy*, Vol. 3, No. 4 (November 1982), pp. 515–29.

²¹This idea was suggested by an anonymous referee.

²²Bierstedt, "The Sociology of Majorities," p. 218.

The higher status that men enjoy²³ and the stereotype that associates male characteristics with leadership qualities²⁴ provide men with a large measure of social credit in the form of initial expectations for competence and influence.²⁵ These expectations have a self-fulfilling power. The lack of initial expectations for women's competence and clout puts the "burden of proof" on women to demonstrate that they are capable of union leadership. But being in the minority on a union committee creates conditions that make it difficult for women to prove their competence; the low expectation concerning their leadership skill, the narrow vision of their role on the committee, and their own sense of low efficacy handicap them in performing the role of union officer — a role variously described in the literature as spokesperson, representative, negotiator, monitor, bargainer, mediator, initiator, facilitator, or all of these functions.²⁶ People who perceive themselves as lacking in influence are not likely to seize the initiative, resist pressures, and behave in other ways that will establish them as

leaders.²⁷

In short, the election or appointment of women to union office is no assurance that they will have a reasonable opportunity to play a leadership role, particularly so long as they constitute only a small minority of union leaders. Since it is not likely that the proportion of women in leadership positions will change radically in the near future, given the absence of affirmative action policies, strategies are needed to help the few women leaders overcome the consequences of their minority status. One such strategy is the formation of separate women's support groups or networks for the purpose of leadership training and power enhancement. Lockheed and Hall have found, for example, that women who have had an opportunity to develop expectations of their own competence to accomplish a particular task, within the context of a homogeneous group, are later more active and influential in mixed-sex groups than women who have not had such an opportunity.²⁸

Finally, note that this study focused solely on the perceptions of the union leaders concerning their influence and skills. Future research on the effects of gender proportions in unions should also inquire into the perceptions of workers and managers and should examine behavioral measures associated with variations in the gender mix.

²³Marlaine E. Lockheed and Katherine Patterson Hall, "Conceptualizing Sex as a Status Characteristic: Applications to Leadership Training Strategies," *Journal of Social Issues*, Vol. 32, No. 3 (Summer 1976), pp. 111 - 23.

²⁴Gary Powell and D. Anthony Butterfield, "The 'Good Manager': Masculine or Androgynous?" *Academy of Management Journal*, Vol. 22, No. 2 (June 1979), pp. 395 - 403.

²⁵B. J. Meeker and P. A. Weitzell-O'Neill, "Sex Roles and Interpersonal Behavior in Task Oriented Groups," *American Sociological Review*, Vol. 42, No. 1 (February 1977), pp. 91 - 105.

²⁶Bruce Partridge, "The Activities of Shop Stewards," *Industrial Relations Journal*, Vol. 8, No. 4 (Winter 1977 - 78), pp. 28 - 42.

²⁷Ellen Lenney, "Women's Self Confidence in Achievement Settings," *Psychological Bulletin*, Vol. 4, No. 1 (January 1977), pp. 1 - 12.

²⁸Lockheed and Hall, "Conceptualizing Sex as a Status Characteristic," pp. 119 - 20.