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Tokenism and Women in the Workplace: The Limits of Gender-Neutral Theory*

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The concept of "tokenism" has been used widely to explain many of the difficulties women face as they enter traditionally male occupations. Tokenism explains women's occupational experiences and their behavioral responses to those experiences in terms of their numerical proportion, suggesting that barriers to women's full occupational equality can be lowered by the hiring of more women in organizations that are highly-skewed male. This paper suggests that the tokenism hypothesis has not been subjected to rigorous testing and that the research that does exist should lead us to question the adequacy of the concept. This paper concludes that a gender-neutral theory such as tokenism is of limited value in explaining the experiences of either men or women in a society where gender remains important. Further, the focus on tokenism may hinder women's progress to the extent that it turns our attention away from an analysis of the effects of sexism in the workplace and the society as a whole.

Since the publication of Rosabeth Kanter's *Men and Women of the Corporation* in 1977, the concept of "tokenism" has been widely incorporated into the study of women who work in nontraditional jobs. Many of women's negative experiences on the job and, in particular, their inability to achieve equality have been attributed to their token status—their low proportion in a workplace dominated by men. Kanter and others have suggested that women's position in male-dominated organizations will improve if their proportion is substantially increased and their token status eliminated:

If the ratio of women to men in various parts of the organization begins to shift, as affirmative action and new hiring and promotion policies promised, forms of relationships and peer culture should also change (Kanter, 1977:209).

The structure of male domination [in the armed forces] can be changed if the proportion of women is significantly increased (Rustad, 1982:228-29).

Increasing the number of women in managerial positions will help alleviate some of the problems (Forisha and Goldman, 1981:6).

. . . a more limited suggestion for dealing with the problems emanating from the token status of policewomen includes a substantial increase in the number of female officers. This would reduce the isolation and effects of tokenism, and probably would improve women's position in the power structure of the department, as well as increase their opportunities (Martin, 1980:212).

. . . as long as the numbers of elected women are few, they will have a different impact on their peers. The theorems drawn from Kanter do not suggest any reason to expect change simply because the minority performs well. To receive "regular" treatment, the minority must cease to be a minority (Stiehm, 1982:63).

This paper proposes that the effect of women's low proportion on their occupational experiences has not been subjected to adequate examination and that, without evidence of a causal link between relative numbers and occupational consequences, there is no reason to assume that increasing the number of women in an organization will necessarily improve their conditions of employment. It may even be the case that increasing the number of women, without addressing the sexist attitudes imbedded in male-dominated organizations, may exacerbate women's occupational problems. More generally, this paper suggests that a gender-

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neutral concept such as tokenism is inadequate for understanding and solving gender problems in the workplace because it ignores the content of relationships between men and women in a society plagued by sexism. There may be many reasons for advocating the hiring of more women in male-dominated occupations, but there is little evidence that such a strategy will produce equal conditions of employment for women once they are employed.

Emergence of the Concept of Tokenism

The term "token" has been used in a variety of ways that are related to Kanter's use of the term. Perhaps Judith Long Laws (1975) can be credited with the first popularization of the concept with her analysis of the special problems faced by women who have entered the male-dominated academic setting. Laws's focus on the token's marginal status as a participant who is permitted entrance, but not full participation, makes the token similar to Georg Simmel's (1950) "stranger" and Everett Hughes's (1945) "outsider": someone who meets all of the formal requirements for entrance into a group but does not possess the "auxiliary characteristics" (especially race, sex and ethnicity) that are expected of persons in that position. Consequently, they are never permitted by "insiders" to become full members and may even be ejected if they stray too far from the special "niche" outlined for them.

The term token has also been used in the sociological literature to refer to persons (usually women or minorities) who are hired, admitted or appointed to a group *because* of their difference from other members, perhaps to serve as "proof" that the group does not discriminate against such people. Charles Marden and Gladys Meyer (1973) found this kind of tokenism especially prevalent in the South, where schools and businesses would sometimes admit a few token blacks in hopes of satisfying the desegregation orders of the federal government. In this case, tokenism is used to imply that, because of discrimination, the number of tokens admitted to a group is smaller than the number qualified for admittance (Cook, 1978; Podmore and Spencer, 1982). In a different context, however, Jeffrey Riemer (1979:96) identifies "token women" as women who may be unqualified to hold jobs in, for example, the male-dominated building trades and are hired "primarily because they are women."

Rosabeth Kanter (1977) greatly expanded and formalized the concept of tokenism by including it as one of three major components of her theory of organizational behavior. That theory grew out of her study of a large corporation, "Indsco," which had recently begun to sexually integrate its management ranks. In spite of affirmative action efforts, the large majority of women at Indsco remained concentrated in typically female jobs; among those who did move into management positions, many failed to achieve equality with men. Kanter found that female workers at all levels often engaged in "typically female" work behavior which was then pointed to by others within the organization as "proof" that women were unsuited for traditionally male jobs.

Kanter's position is that women's occupational experiences are less related to their "femaleness" than to the structural constraints inherent in the occupational positions women fill. First, those positions normally lack power; women then exhibit behaviors typical of powerless organizational members: rigidity, authoritarianism and the use of coercion over subordinates. Second, the positions women fill typically lack advancement opportunity; women respond with lowered aspirations, parochialism and heightened commitment to nonwork rather than work activities. And finally, even when women work in the management ranks, filling positions similar to those of men in terms of power and opportunity, they often work in predominantly male groups and suffer from the detrimental effects of tokenism. According to Kanter, tokenism emerges in groups that are highly skewed, with a preponderance of one type of worker over another up to a ratio of 85:15. In the management ranks at Indsco, men

were the "dominants" and women the "tokens" and, as such, were "often treated as representations of their category, as symbols rather than as individuals" (Kanter, 1977:209).

Through observations and interviews with corporate women, Kanter identified the consequences of being the few among the many, consequences which include not only women's treatment by others, but women's behavioral responses to the differential treatment they receive. For example, simply because of their obvious contrast to dominants, tokens are highly visible and intensely scrutinized by others. This heightened visibility creates overwhelming pressure to perform successfully, and tokens tend to respond with either overachievement or underachievement, each of which presents obstacles to further advancement. Tokens also suffer from boundary heightening, an exaggeration by dominants of the differences between tokens and themselves, and tokens may respond by either accepting outsider status or striving to become an insider (although obviously never a complete one). While the outsider becomes isolated from the group and is excluded from the informal interactions that may be important to advancement, the insider trades the support of other tokens for that of dominants. Finally, Kanter identifies the problem of assimilation, or the tendency for dominants to distort the characteristics and behaviors of tokens to fit their stereotyped images of the token category; token women can either fight assimilation (a very difficult enterprise) or accept some form of "role encapsulation." Kanter found that women of the corporation most often did the latter, adopting one of four typically female caricatured roles (the mother, the pet, the seductress or the iron maiden), each of which limited women's advancement opportunity.

There are many ways, then, that tokenism seems to be detrimental to corporate women who have broken into the management ranks. Their token status elicits certain behaviors from dominants; the behavior of dominants constrains women's own choices; and women's resulting behavior then influences dominants' evaluations of them. Tokenism is also psychologically damaging to women, hampering their ability to perform successfully on the job. "Tokenism is stressful; the burdens carried by tokens in the management of social relationships take a toll in psychological stress, even if the token succeeds in work performance. Unsatisfactory social relationships, miserable self-imagery, frustrations from contradictory demands, inhibition of self-expression, feelings of inadequacy and self-hatred, all have been suggested as consequences of tokenism" (Kanter, 1977:230).

Although Kanter's entire study is oriented toward explaining the organizational behavior of women (and, in particular, the failure of women at Indsco to achieve occupational equality with the men), her theory for doing so is explicitly gender-neutral. She claims that, when men (or any group) are faced with blocked opportunity and a lack of power, they respond in a way similar to Indsco's managerial women. "Every statement that can be made about what women typically do or feel holds true for some men. As we have seen throughout this book, what appear to be 'sex differences' in work behavior emerge as responses to structural conditions, to one's place in the organization" (Kanter, 1977:262). When referring to tokenism, Kanter's entire vocabulary is purposely gender-neutral. She does not refer to men and women, but to dominants and few. She does not refer to male-dominated groups, but groups that are skewed. And, most importantly, she avoids any reference to sexism as she outlines the consequences of tokenism. According to Kanter, any group in the extreme minority will suffer consequences similar to the managerial women in Indsco. Women "echoed the experiences of people of any kind who are rare and scarce: the lone black among whites, the lone man among women, the few foreigners among natives. Any situation where proportions of significant types of people are highly skewed can produce similar themes and processes. It was rarity and scarcity, rather than femaleness per se, that shaped the environment for women in the parts of Indsco mostly populated by men" (Kanter, 1977:207).

The Importance of Tokenism to the Study of Women in Male-Dominated Organizations

Although the concept of tokenism is formulated in such a way as to allow examination of the work behavior of any group in the minority, it has proved most useful for examining women in nontraditional jobs where recent trends toward occupational integration have often placed them in highly skewed situations. It is in these settings, Kanter suggests, that behaviors and attitudes that "appear sex-linked . . . can be better understood as situational responses, true of any person in a token role" (1977:221).

When women working in nontraditional jobs have reported experiences similar to the occupational consequences outlined by Kanter, researchers have often attributed those consequences to tokenism without fully exploring the concept. In her book about policewomen, Susan Martin (1980:213) outlines numerous sources of women's problems on the job, but identifies tokenism as being particularly important: "Women's status as tokens and their lack of power and opportunity for mobility—or the belief that mobility is blocked—leads to demotivation, lower levels of performance, and diminished aspirations for the future." Veronica Nieva and Barbara Gutek (1981:68) follow Kanter in suggesting that "the pressures that affect female newcomers occur around people of any category who find few of their kind among others of a different type." Michael Rustad's (1982:xix) study of women in the military probably goes the furthest in attributing women's occupational problems to tokenism; it is the framing concept for his entire study, which "describes the daily lives of contemporary female soldiers and the conflicts they face as token women in formerly male jobs in the U.S. Army in Europe." Several other studies have used the tokenism concept in a similar way (Adams, 1984; Forisha and Goldman, 1981; Hammond and Mahoney, 1983; Jurik, 1985; O'Farrell and Harlan, 1982; Stiehm, 1982; Yoder et al., 1983; 1985).

Many of these researchers (Forisha and Goldman, 1981; Martin, 1980; Rustad, 1982; Stiehm, 1982) agree with Kanter (1977:283) that "number-balancing should be the ultimate goal." Thus, tokenism is being used not only to understand women's occupational problems, but to suggest policies for promoting women's progress in traditionally male jobs. Kanter and the others make a number of additional policy recommendations as well and do not suggest that a balanced work force alone will eliminate all of women's problems on the job, but they do imply both that balance is a necessary precondition to women's equal treatment on the job and that any movement toward balance will itself lead to some improvement; substantially increase the number of women and other improvements will follow. But is it that simple? Will increasing women's proportion in newly integrated occupations lessen women's problems on the job and further their achievement in those occupations? In order to assess these issues, it is first necessary to critically evaluate the logic of tokenism and the available empirical evidence regarding the importance of relative numbers to workers' occupational experiences.

Evaluating Tokenism

Kanter's focus on the importance of the numerical composition of social collectivities follows a strong theoretical tradition within sociology in general (Blau, 1977; Homans, 1974; Simmel, 1950) and within race relations research in particular (Allport, 1954; Blalock, 1967; Frisbie and Neidert, 1977; Giles, 1977; Marden and Meyers, 1973), but Kanter's analysis is contrary to much of the literature on minority relations. That literature suggests that issues of power, privilege and prestige are considerably more important than numbers for understanding relations between dominant and subordinate groups (Gittler, 1956; Noel, 1968; Yetman, 1985). And, in fact, in evaluating the impact of changing proportions, a number of researchers

have supported a conclusion the opposite of Kanter's: that as the number of minority (subordinate) members in proportion to majority (dominant) members increases, tensions and hostilities are likely to increase rather than decrease (Allport, 1954; Blalock, 1967; Frisbie and Neidert, 1977; Giles, 1977; Marden and Meyer, 1973).

Kanter did not test her specific hypotheses concerning the effect of low proportion on women's occupational experiences. She used the inductive approach in her research at Indsco: she observed how women were treated in the corporate setting; she observed how women reacted to that treatment; and she observed that in all cases where women were in high-level positions, they were an extremely low proportion of the work group. On the basis of this case study, she made a causal connection between numerical composition and women's experiences. Her study did not include a test of the relationship in other organizations or within a variety of work groups (with different proportions) within Indsco.

Kanter did offer support for tokenism from other settings, but it is limited. She interviewed a blind man who said he often felt conspicuous and pressured to succeed when working in a group of sighted people. She also presented the results of an experimental study (Taylor and Fiske, 1976) in which subjects who watched a film of group activity were found to pay more attention to a single black man in an otherwise all-white group than they did to any of the individual white men. Subjects who watched films of integrated groups paid equal attention to blacks and whites. (No film depicted a group with black members and a white token.) Finally, Kanter cited a study (Segal, 1962) in which male nurses were isolated by their female co-workers. Although they were sometimes treated with deference by the women, they still experienced "role encapsulation" because, as tokens, they were treated as symbols. According to Kanter, "deference can be a patronizing reminder of difference, too" (1977:241).

Since publication of Kanter's book, there has been a lot of attention given to the idea of tokenism, but only a few empirical tests of the hypothesis. A 1978 study by Eve Spangler and her colleagues is the most supportive. They conducted research on female law students, examining the effect of sex ratios on women's achievement. They used data from two law schools, one with 33 percent women in the student body (School A) and the other with 20 percent women (School B). Although neither school fit Kanter's definition of highly skewed, School B was more skewed than School A. Spangler and her colleagues measured three hypothesized consequences of tokenism: performance pressure, social isolation and role entrapment. They concluded that women in School B (the more highly skewed) felt more performance pressure than those in School A: the women's grades were lower than their male peers; the women in School B spoke in class less than the men; and the women in School B gave more thought to quitting than did their male counterparts. There were no statistically significant differences in social isolation. Role encapsulation was measured by preference for law specialties, and the results were contradictory. In School A (the less skewed), women were more likely than women in School B to choose "typically feminine" specialties, but women from School B were more likely to avoid the high-prestige law specialty of corporate law.

On the basis of the performance measures, the researchers claim support for the "attendant disabilities" that follow from tokenism. Their results do support Kanter's theory, but there is reason to accept them cautiously. For one thing, actual performance may not be an adequate measure of performance pressure. And if women's performance is lower, that in itself might account for their greater tendency to consider quitting. It may also be important that the data for this study came from only two schools, and there could be reasons, besides sex ratios, for women's inferior performance in the more skewed environment. We know very little about these two schools other than that School A (the less skewed) is a nonelite law school while School B (the more skewed) has an elite status. Based on this difference alone, one might identify a number of alternative explanations for the difference between male and female achievement scores. Spangler's data, then, lend support to Kanter's hypotheses regarding tokenism, but they are far from conclusive.

A 1983 study by Dafna Izraeli also offers limited support for the effects of tokenism. She studied Israeli union committees that varied from sexually-balanced to highly skewed male. She did find more evidence of both boundary heightening and role encapsulation in the more highly skewed groups, but the differences were significant only with regard to women's attitudes about their own roles. Men in the more balanced groups did not hold more profemale attitudes than males in the skewed groups.

Other tests of tokenism have produced results more clearly opposite from Kanter's. A study by Scott South et al. (1982) tested women in several different work groups within a single organization, ranging from those highly skewed male to those highly skewed female. In measuring women's isolation from the work group, they found no support for the hypothesis that token women have less contact with male co-workers and supervisors than do nontoken women. Nor were there differences between token and nontoken women with regard to contact with and support from female co-workers. South et al. (1982:587) conclude that "contrary to Kanter's (1977) theory, token women are not found to face more severe organizational pressure than nontokens."

A study by Anthony Dworkin et al. (1983) tested the effects of token status among public school teachers by studying groups that varied by sex and race. They did find some effects, especially in work commitment and alienation, but only when tokens of lower status (women, minorities) were introduced into higher status work groups (male, white); high status tokens did not suffer negative consequences when placed among workers of lower status.

Finally, a recent study by Nina Toren and Vered Kraus (1987) substantiates Rose Laub Coser's (1981) conclusion that academic women do better in terms of rank, promotion and tenure when they work in the male-dominated "hard sciences" than in the humanities and social sciences where women have greater representation. Toren and Kraus (1987:1092) conclude that "the fate of minorities is not determined by their relative size alone."

Other research, while not designed to test tokenism, can also be helpful in evaluating the effects of numerical proportions. Cynthia Epstein's (1981) work, for example, offers some support for the positive effect of increased numbers. She found that over a 20-year period, as the number of women in law school continually grew, women became less visible (attracting less extra attention) and male opposition to them declined. On the other hand, when Anne Harlan and Carol Weiss (1981) examined female managers in two companies, they found that those in the least skewed environments suffered more negative consequences, reporting more performance pressure and more opposition from male co-workers. Kay Deaux and Joseph Ullman (1983) examined two steel companies and found male attitudes toward women to be more negative in the one in which more women were employed. In the automobile industry, James Gruber and Lars Bjorn (1982) found that male sexual harassment of women became more frequent and more severe as women's numbers became more proportionate to those of men.

It is not at all clear, then, that it is small numbers that are responsible for the most serious problems women face in nontraditional settings. Moreover, data from settings in which men are tokens in female-dominated occupations suggest that small numbers have very different consequences for males than for females. Carol Schreiber (1979) reports that both men and women in nontraditional jobs experience opposition, harassment and teasing from their opposite-sex co-workers but that these experiences are much more intense for women moving into traditionally male craft jobs than for men entering clerical occupations. Liliane Flöge and Deborah Merrill (1985) similarly found that while female physicians seem to suffer from the negative effects of tokenism, male nurses do not. Fottler (1976) also found little evidence of resistance by female nurses to the male nurses he studied, and although several other studies do report that male nurses experience opposition (Auster, 1979; Segal, 1962; Silver and McAtee, 1972), in none of these was it severe enough to present an obstacle to men's continued employment. One male nurse even describes the benefits of being a lone male, claiming

that he is "singled out by male doctors as the most competent nurse" and "is always told what's happening with the patients" even though he is "not the nurse assigned to the patient" (Benokraitis and Feagin, 1986:84).

In other female-dominated professions, token men have been found to face some special problems, but they have not been debilitating. According to Patrick Lee (1973:85), the male teacher may be perceived as deviant and must be "rather impervious to social innuendo." Kelvin Seifert (1973:169) found that in "the process of disproving children's sex-role stereotypes the male teacher may have to endure a bit more rejection from them than will a female teacher of comparable talent and temperament." And finally, Alfred Kadushin (1976:442), who began his study of male social workers expecting to find considerable "role strain" and problems with female co-workers, concluded that "most respondents did not find their status to be particularly troublesome." Only 10 percent reported problems with female co-workers, and those most often centered around issues of sexuality and women's misinterpretation of men's friendly interactions with them. In fact, the most common problem for male social workers revolved around their interactions with men in their communities who often perceived them as "odd" because of their occupational choice. This is consistent with research by Linda Nilson (1976) and Richard Levinson (1982), who found that "outsiders" tend to rank males in traditionally female jobs as low in status and that male respondents are particularly harsh in this regard. Thus, the detrimental effects for males in female dominated jobs may be more apparent off the job than on. In fact, Kadushin (1976:441) concludes that "regardless of problems that might exist, it is clear and undeniable that there is a considerable advantage in being a member of the male minority in any female profession."

The most obvious advantage for men moving into the "female professions" is that they may have more opportunity to advance than do their female colleagues (Grimm and Stern, 1974). In the field of social work, for example, when women held more than two-thirds of the positions, men were still more likely to hold administrative jobs and were more likely to be elected as officers in professional voluntary organizations (Rosenblatt et al., 1971; Gripton, 1974). With 81 percent of librarians women, males were more likely to be appointed head librarians, and at an earlier age (Blankenship, 1971). With only 15 percent of elementary school teachers being male, 79 percent of principals were male (Gross and Trusk, 1976). And although male nurses represented only 1 percent of the profession, they were highly over-represented as nursing directors and presidents of nursing associations (Robinson, 1973). This is quite different from the experiences of women who have entered professions traditionally practiced by men. Women have received no advantages and have, in fact, encountered resistance during their education and training and, once in the profession, opposition, hostility and rejection from male peers and supervisors (Bourne and Wikler, 1978; Epstein, 1971; 1980; Theodore, 1971; White, 1975).

A final example of men's less traumatic experience in entering predominantly female work groups can be found in the sexual integration of the guard forces of women's prisons. My own research (Zimmer, 1986) focused primarily on the integration of male prisons and the problems women faced on the job, but I did have the opportunity to interview several men who had recently begun to work in a woman's prison. In direct contrast to the kinds of problems women reported in entering an all-male work force, the men reported no opposition from female staff or supervisors. In fact, the female warden at one women's prison told me that hiring men was "the best thing that could have happened around here." Again, this is in direct contrast to the feelings of most male wardens who have accepted the entrance of women only under the order of law and often after considerable resistance.

These examples of men's experiences as tokens suggest that being the "few" in a highly skewed work group has very different consequences for men and women. Kanter (1977:212) did suggest that tokenism only affects "significant types" of workers and allowed that the actual consequences of tokenism might differ depending on "the specific kinds of people and

their history of relationships with dominants." But this idea was not well integrated into her organizational theory and, consequently, has been ignored by others who have used the concept. Even in her own discussion of the behavior of female tokens, Kanter ignored the fact that the history of relationships between men and women in this society is sexist in nature. This may be why, as we have seen, the effects of tokenism almost disappear when they conflict with traditional gender relationships. When males are tokens, the disadvantages of being the few are minimal and, under some circumstances, turn into advantages. When female tokens become more numerous, the disadvantages of tokenism may actually increase (Deaux and Ullman, 1983; Gruber and Bjorn, 1982; Harlan and Weiss, 1981). Harlan and Weiss (1981) suggest that as the number of women increases, they present more of a threat to men who then react by tightening boundaries and increasing their opposition and harassment. Cynthia Epstein (1981:193-94), who finds that it is "easier for women to function effectively in law firms where there are several women partners instead of one," also finds that "at the same time that forces move a system to open there are also forces that move it toward closure. These may be forces that seek to encapsulate and resist the newcomers, especially as their numbers grow."

This latter observation by Epstein is certainly more consistent with the theory and evidence regarding race relations and relative numbers, where resistance by whites often increases with an increase in the number of minorities. In that context, we can only make sense of the importance of numbers by understanding that blacks represent a subordinate and relatively powerless group in American society. The proportions themselves are otherwise meaningless. It does not, for example, make any sense to talk about "tipping points" when whites move into black neighborhoods, although the opposite situation is an important concern (Marden and Meyer, 1973). There may, of course, be important consequences when whites move into black neighborhoods in greater numbers, but it is certain they will not be the same ones as occur when blacks move into white areas. Whatever effects there might be for the "few" among the "many," they can only be understood by giving priority to the ongoing relationships between the two groups and, in particular, the status and power differentials between them. In a racist society, race-neutral theories of race relations make little sense. And in a sexist society, gender-neutral theories of organizational behavior may mask rather than explain reality.

Implications for Policy

By explicitly eliminating sex as a variable in her theory of organizational behavior, Kanter was able to avoid the victim-blaming trap that places much of the cause of women's failure to achieve occupational equality on women themselves. There is a large literature that takes this more individualistic approach, focusing on how girls' socialization and educational experiences leave many women unprepared for and uncomfortable in traditionally male jobs (Bourne and Wikler, 1978; Hillsman and Levenson, 1982; Ireson, 1978; Marini and Brinton, 1984; Reskin and Hartmann, 1986; Strober, 1984; Wolf, 1981). Kanter's book is an important contribution to the literature on women and work because it provides a structural analysis of the organization that is missing in so much of the research on women. But while taking the blame off women, this approach also avoids blaming men for the detrimental conditions under which many women work. In Kanter's view, *both* men and women are "trapped" in a set of organizational structures that perpetuate stereotypes and perpetuate the status quo of sexual inequality. She suggests that it is organizational structures, rather than people, that must change. To overcome the problems she attributes to tokenism, more women should be hired in organizations where the workforce is now highly-skewed male.

The major limitation of this approach is its failure to acknowledge the degree to which

organizational structures and the interactions that take place within them are imbedded in a much broader social system of structural and cultural inequality between the sexes. This does not mean that changing organizational structures in the workplace will have no effect. But in a sexist context, such changes may produce few benefits for women because even when organizational structures are set up to eliminate discrimination, males may be able to develop informal strategies for applying discrimination and limiting women's chances for success. In fact, Judith Gerson and Kathy Peiss (1985) have suggested that as women cross formal boundaries into male occupations, micro-level boundaries may emerge in the form of male informal group behavior, serving to maintain women's marginal and subordinate position. Nijoli Benokraitis and Joe Feagin (1986:30) have outlined many such subtle and covert forms of sexism in the workplace, behavior that is "visible but often not noticed because we have internalized sexist behavior as 'normal,' 'rational,' acceptable or customary."

Men's negative behavior toward women in the workplace, then, seems to be much less motivated by women's presence in a numerical minority than by men's evaluation of women as a social minority—an opinion based on notions of inferiority rather than scarcity. Anthony Astrachan's (1986) interviews with men working in a wide range of occupations show that men continue to resist the presence of women in the workplace and long for a return to the "good old days" when men and women remained in separate spheres. And although men may find it more difficult to intimidate women and discriminate against them in a workforce where women predominate, they may not be deterred simply because the number of women increases, even to the point of "balance." In fact, some of the available evidence suggests that the opposite is true.

Tokenism alone, without attention to sexism, offers little insight into the organizational behavior of women or the relationships that develop between women and men in newly integrated occupations. Kanter and Stein (1980) present the theory of tokenism in a value-neutral format in the book *The Tale of "O"—On Being Different in an Organization*. When different types of individuals are presented as Xs and Os, it is easy to see how relative numbers might produce particular results in an environment where individuals are devoid of content. But this may tell us very little about how observers react to tokens from categories of people that are value-laden. Recent research on tokenism, especially that of Izraeli (1983) and Toren and Kraus (1987), suggests that the social attributes of tokens and dominants are at least as important as numbers in determining their fate. Xs and Os also fail to reveal any of the differences in power that exist between real categories of people. Research conducted by Gail Fairhurst and B. Kay Snavely (1983) leads them to conclude that the effects of tokenism may be either amplified or attenuated by one's access to organizational power. They believe that relative numbers must be examined in conjunction with Kanter's concept of organizational power. I am suggesting that sources of informal power, based on power differences outside the organization, must be considered as well (Benokraitis and Feagin, 1986; Gerson and Peiss, 1985). Patricia Yancey Martin (1985) maintains that additional organizational factors such as group size, group task and hierarchical structure also interact with numerical proportions to produce different outcomes.

There is still much to be learned about the effects of numerical scarcity in different contexts. But, at this point, it does not seem that scarcity alone explains the reaction of men to women co-workers; nor is there any evidence to suggest that women's occupational problems can be alleviated by achieving numerical equality. The problem is not just that tokenism is an inadequate explanation for women's occupational difficulties; the bigger problem is that a focus on tokenism diverts attention away from sexism—not only away from the sexist behavior of individual males in the workplace, but away from the sexist society in which the workplace itself is embedded. Tokenism does not help us to understand the ways in which both occupational sex segregation and women's experiences on the job are woven into the most

basic structures and cultural values of American society. Karen Oppenheim Mason (1984:169) explains why a broader analysis is necessary:

Occupational segregation is unlikely to disappear or even lessen appreciably unless major revisions occur in our ideology of gender and the division of labor between the sexes. . . . Ultimately, job segregation is just a part of the generally separate (and unequal) lives that women and men in our society lead, and, unless the overall separateness is ended, the separateness within the occupational system is unlikely to end, either.

Mary Frank Fox and Sharlene Hesse-Biber (1984:199-200) go even further in connecting women's experiences in the workplace to the social structure:

In order to change women's status at work . . . we must understand the relationship between women, work, and the other institutional systems. Improvement in female occupational status entails more than change in the behavior of individual women—or even of men. It involves, instead, alterations and adjustments in the behavior and operation of each of society's basic institutions—its family, schools and colleges, employers and unions, laws, and political institutions. Moreover, there is probably no single point where we can exert pressure and expect the other institutions to follow suit. . . . Rather, in order to improve women's plight in one sphere, we must also make adjustments in the others.

This analysis suggests why, without changes in the broader society, there may never be a sufficient number of women employees to sexually balance most male-dominated occupations. It also suggests why workplace conditions for women cannot be substantially eased through an elimination of their token status. For women, the reality of sexism makes tokenism a relatively minor factor in their lives, and policies that strive to eliminate tokenism without attacking sexism are bound to fail (Martin, 1985; Toren and Kraus, 1987). The development of policies to effectively fight sexism promises to be much more difficult than changing the proportions of men and women in work groups, but real change in women's lives, on and off the job, must come from an attack on sexism in its many forms rather than from an attack on tokenism in the workplace.

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